

September 2023

STRATEGIC ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Amherst, New York

PREPARED FOR:

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1 INTRODUCTION

The Town's leadership has recognized the importance of having a focused, proactive economic development strategy that defines a specific vision and niche for Amherst within the highly integrated greater Buffalo/Niagara marketplace. As a result, the Town has been engaged in a process to formalize its economic development efforts in a manner that meets the defined economic development goals within context of the community's greater comprehensive plan and other town plans/goals.

The town completed an Economic Study in 2016 that examined the changing demographic, economic, and real estate market forces that were driving growth in the community. Two central recommendations from this study were:

- Take a more holistic look at the Town's economic development activities.
- Engage in more proactive efforts such as industry targeting, marketing, and site assembly.

In response to these recommendations, the Town established an Economic Development Department in 2018. Since its inception, the department has worked in partnership with the Amherst Industrial Development Authority to improve the Town's relationships with the real estate and business communities, to retain and attract businesses to operate in Amherst, and has increased the Town's involvement to make projects and initiatives, such as Amherst Central Park, succeed.

Following the COVID-19 pandemic, the Town further engaged in formalizing an economic development strategy through its Advance Amherst Recovery Plan. In 2021, the Recovery Plan was released offering five primary economic development directives:

- Develop a Strategic Plan for Economic Growth
- Cultivate International Business
- Provide Startup and Business Incubation Support
- Provide Small Business Support
- Facilitate Commercial Revitalization

This Strategic Economic Development Plan (SEDP) is the culmination of these previous efforts, building upon the work product and implementation concepts from the 2016 and 2021 studies with a highly detailed strategic organization and implementation plan to give the Economic Development office and the Industrial Development Authority the framework to succeed. It intends to assist the Economic Development Department execute a strategic approach that utilizes resources and partnerships for promoting long-term sustainable economic growth, greater returns on local investment, improved job creation and retention, increases in per capita



income and property values, enhancements in the local tax base, and strengthened regional networks.

The SEDP is not intended to replace policies and initiatives set forth in the existing Comprehensive Plan. Rather, this plan intends to build upon existing land-use agreements, providing a strategic framework that connects real estate to economic growth and sustainability. Economic development strategies were crafted within the context of Amherst, considering the Town’s character, scale, and community development objectives.

The Town’s elected leadership, administration, business community, and key stakeholders were engaged over a year-long process to identify locally-relevant economic development goals, review the market findings and opportunities, and prioritize recommended strategies. Further, this SEDP would not have been possible without the participation and commitment of the Town’s professional staff and a highly engaged group of community stakeholders assembled to represent the diverse business and community interests within Amherst. This group met several times with RKG Associates during the course of the SEDP development process. Their collective input and guidance ensured that the SEDP goals and objectives were relevant and timely while recommendations are achievable. The Working Group consists of the following members:

Name	Affiliation
A.J. Baynes	Amherst Chamber of Commerce
James Boglioli	Benderson Development
Carlton Brock	Amherst Industrial Development Agency
Carolyn Casilio	The Casilio Companies
Jasmine Chen	Western New York Chinese Chamber of Commerce
David Chiazza	Iskalo Development Corp.
Paul Ciminelli	Ciminelli Real Estate Corporation
Dr. Gary Olson	Daemen University
Rick Gardner	University at Buffalo
Kim Beldon Grant	Invest Buffalo Niagara
William Heussler	Hanna Commercial Real Estate
Chris Holden	Ivoclar Vivadent Inc.
Michael Hughes	Kaleida Health
Thomas Kucharski	Invest Buffalo Niagara
Angela Laviano Hamister	Hamister Family Foundation
Patrick Matthews	Excelsior Orthopaedics
Dave Mingoia	Amherst Industrial Development Agency
Michael Montante	Uniland Development Company
Sibu Nair	Governor’s Office
Ben Oblatz	First Amherst Development Group
Eric Recoon	Benderson Development
Adiam Tsegai	SUNY Erie (Erie Community College)



Ben Ansell	Town of Amherst, Economic Development Department
Annette Herrman	Town of Amherst, Economic Development Department
Daniel Howard	Town of Amherst, Planning Department
Emily Melski	Town of Amherst, Economic Development Department
Angela Panaro Rossi	Town of Amherst, Economic Development Department

RKG Associates, under the guidance of town staff and the Working Group, presents this Strategic Economic Development Plan to the Town and recommends the Amherst elected leadership adopt this Plan to guide the next iteration of economic development investments and efforts into the near future.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A. INTRODUCTION

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B. MAJOR FINDINGS

1. Socioeconomic Findings

Amherst's population experienced a moderate increase while the Buffalo MSA's population experienced a moderate decrease. Amherst's premium quality-of-life amenities, including the town's high-quality public schools, high-end housing opportunities, and accessible healthcare services contribute to its population growth. This also has helped contribute to an expansion of household growth.

Amherst's labor market is vulnerable to shortages as the senior population increases and the prime-working age population (35-64) decreases. Over the previous decade, seniors represented most of the Town's population growth. As the town's prime-working age population decreases, fewer workers are available to support community services and replace leadership roles left by seniors. Given the likelihood of impending labor market shortages, Amherst must work to attract and retain young workers while implementing strategies that support job growth inside the community. This includes improving the entrepreneurial environment and spreading awareness of local workforce development programs.

Amherst's household income is significantly higher than Erie County and the Buffalo-Niagara MSA. As of 2020, Amherst's median household income is nearly \$20,000 higher than Erie County and the Buffalo MSA. While a large concentration of high-income households supports fiscal sustainability, the lack of income-diversity suggests key segments of the workforce are likely excluded from living in the town. This includes workers in the service-based industries and healthcare services. As other areas of Erie County (e.g., Buffalo) put stronger emphasis on income-equity as part of their economic development strategies, labor market pressures are expected among key sectors in Amherst's economy.



Amherst's diversifying population is helping offset population losses. Between 2010 and 2020, Amherst's white population faced severe losses while non-white residents fueled the town's overall population growth. Many incoming non-white residents emigrated from countries such as Asia and Latin America. The increasing racial and cultural diversity can help expand the entrepreneurial base.

Housing diversity integrated with urban amenities will be critical to long-term economic sustainability. As the demand for suburban office parks continues to decline and business operations push towards highly amenitized, walkable economic activity centers, Amherst's labor market and overall economy is vulnerable to contractions over time. Enhancing the Town with more workforce housing options and greater public transportation connectivity can help foster entrepreneurial development, business recruitment and retention, and help attract young professionals looking for a more urban, walkable environment.

2. Real Estate Findings

Suburban development patterns have limited Amherst's economic development opportunities. Shifts in workplace preferences have depreciated the economic value of suburban office parks and regional shopping malls such as the Boulevard Mall. (As virtual-working environments normalize and businesses relocate to more highly amenitized live-work-recreate centers, Amherst's existing commercial model will increasingly become outdated. The Town's business recruitment and retention efforts are projected to become more limited in the long run if the town's existing employment centers (e.g., office parks) are not modified to reflect shifts in corporate preferences.

Future real estate investments will primarily be redevelopment/infill development initiatives. The Town of Amherst is largely built out with very few developable parcels remaining. Consequently, most catalytic real estate investments will involve redevelopment of outdated buildings or infill development to strengthen the marketability of existing properties. Declining suburban office parks and regional shopping malls are ripe for redevelopment/infill development projects. That said, redevelopment/infill development will require a scale of development much higher than the Town is accustomed to. Creating higher density activity centers can strengthen the town's desirability for business location, create new, diverse housing opportunities, and develop the amenity-rich centers being sought by the marketplace.

Developing live-work-recreate activity centers can be a tool to attract workers. Given the Town's aging population and declining working-age population, the labor pool is declining. Attracting young professionals will be critical to reduce the magnitude of labor market shortages. This can be done through enhancing Amherst's built environment with additional live-work-recreate activity centers.



3. Target Industry Findings

The identification of the Town’s target industries involved a complex vetting process, accounting for multiple factors. This includes an assessment of local socioeconomic trends, real estate conditions, and conversations with economic development stakeholders (business representatives). In addition to these factors, a cluster analysis was performed to understand Amherst’s industry strengths. Following this assessment, RKG identified the following target industries for the Town of Amherst to pursue in the near-term:

- *Healthcare Services and Medical Tourism*
- *Professional Services and Information Technologies*
- *Cottage Manufacturing*
- *Entrepreneurial Development*

The following table indicates subindustries that fall under each of the above identified target industries. Market indicators suggest that these subindustries can support further employment expansions within the Town of Amherst. If applicable, a subindustry will correspond with a specific 6-digit NAICS code.

Healthcare Services and Medical Tourism	
Subindustries	NAICS Code (If Applicable)
Continuing Care Retirement Communities	623311
Assisted Living Facilities for the Elderly	623312
Medical Laboratories	621511
Fitness and Recreational Sports Centers	713940
Sports Training and Rehabilitation Services	N/A
Offices of Physical Therapists	621340
Offices of Physicians	621111
Free Standing Ambulatory Surgical Facilities	621493
Professional Services and Information Technologies	
Subindustries	NAICS Code (If Applicable)
Professional, Scientific, Technical Services	541990
Software Publishers	511210
Computer Systems Design Services	541512
R&D- Physical, Engineering, and Life Sciences	541715
Architectural, Engineering, and Related Services	541300
Advertising, Public Relations, and Related Services	541800



Cottage Manufacturing

Subindustries	NAICS Code (If Applicable)
Cutlery and Hand Tool Manufacturing	33221
Furniture Manufacturing	337000
Communications Equipment Manufacturing	334200
Medical Equipment and Supplies Manufacturing	339100
Metalworking Machinery Manufacturing	333500
Food Products/Beverage Production	N/A
Semiconductor and Electrical Component	334400
Turned Product Manufacturing	332721

Entrepreneurial Development

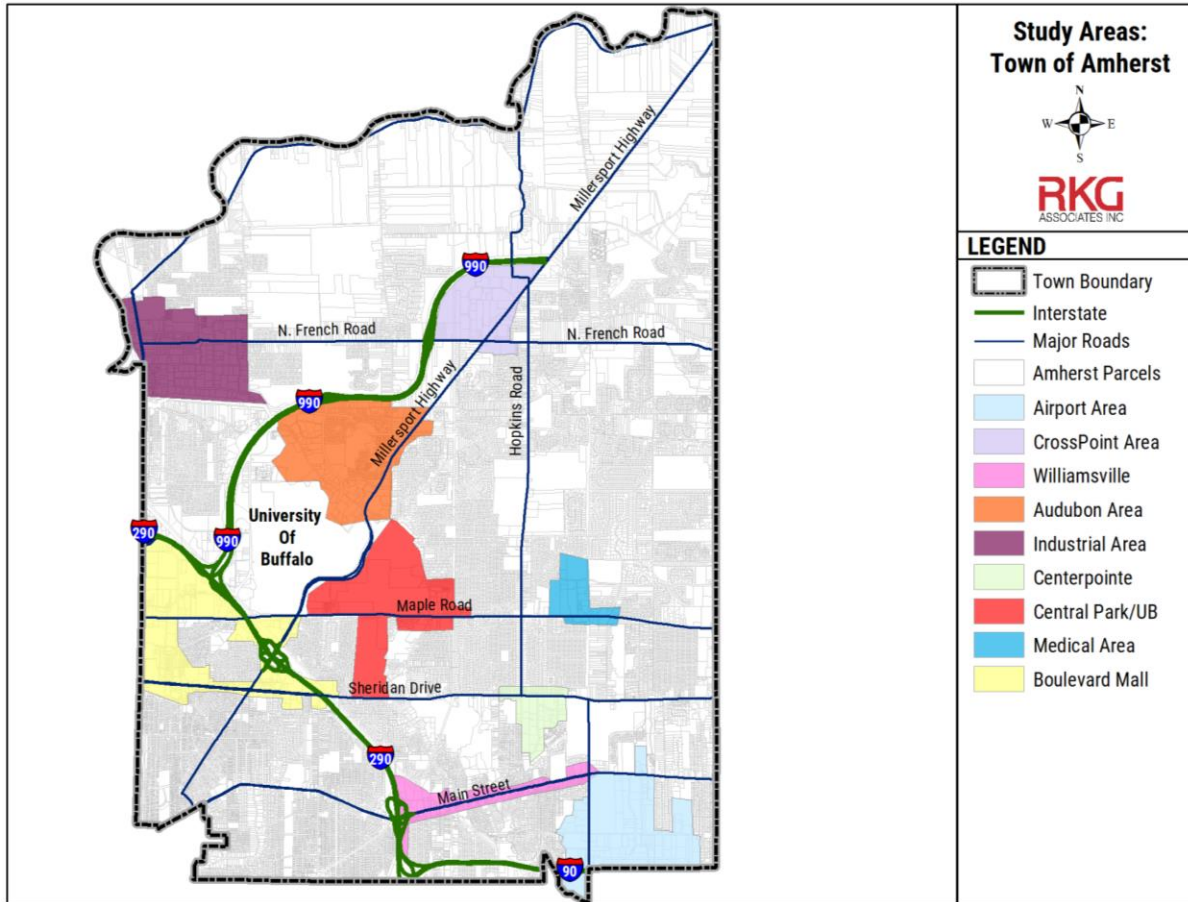
Subindustries	NAICS Code (If Applicable)
Food Products/Beverage Production	N/A
Professional, Scientific, Technical Services	541990
Software Publishers	511210
Architectural, Engineering, and Related Services	541300
Advertising, Public Relations, and Related Services	541800

C. OPPORTUNITY SITES ANALYSIS

Strategic real estate investments can be a vital part of the Town’s economic development efforts and help sustain industry expansions. As workplace preferences shift among workers and businesses, businesses are compelled to adapt and invest in spaces that reflect changes in market demand. For instance, suburban office parks, which consume most of Amherst’s office market, increasingly fall out of favor. Businesses are increasingly investing in spaces located in vibrant live-work-play activity areas, such as downtown urban centers. This trend is projected to accelerate as virtual-work models continue to normalize, encouraging businesses to downsize their workspace requirements. RKG Associates worked with the Town of Amherst to identify and assess study areas that can be re-envisioned to adapt to shifts in the marketplace. Based on a variety of locational and market factors, nine study areas within the town were identified and assessed for potential development opportunities.

- Airport Area
- CrossPoint Area
- Williamsville
- Audubon Area
- Industrial Area
- Centerpointe
- Central Park/UB
- Medical Area
- Boulevard Mall

The Opportunity Sites chapter details specific recommendations in each area. The following is a summary of the economic development potential for these activity centers.



1. Airport Area

Several large-scale parcels are available for development which could be used to expand the live-play-create activity center concept in Amherst, a focus on light-production based uses integrated with lifestyle amenities. The proximity to SUNY Erie offers the opportunity for the community college to be a collaborative partner, investing in potential workforce development programs and providing equipment for publicly accessible makerspaces. Logistics operations such as distribution centers and warehousing uses should also be considered for the area.

2. Williamsville East

Williamsville East’s historical charm positions the area to preserve economic sustainability. Its unique village character cannot be refabricated, increasing the value of Williamsville East. Walkability in retail destinations will remain an in-demand asset for consumers. The remaining vacant parcels along Main Street can be targeted for infill development opportunities, strengthening Williamsville East’s pedestrian connectivity in the short-term.



3. Williamsville West

Re-investments into existing properties with declining economic values can re-strengthen marketability—incompatible shopping centers, outmoded office parks etc. The intended vision is to extend walkability patterns towards I-290 and expand the pedestrian-scale of Williamsville.

4. Centerpointe

Several properties are underutilized, a strong stimulus is needed for in-fill development or redevelopment projects to revitalize declining commercial activities. These opportunities can capitalize on the proximity to Wegmans, an anchor grocery institution that attracts consistent consumer activities. The intended vision is to revitalize commercial activities through projects that accommodate prevailing market preferences. In particular, work-live-play destinations that can stimulate business investment and attract young professionals, desperately needed in Amherst as the population continues to age.

5. Medical Area

Insufficient healthcare workers are available to support projected healthcare demand. The challenge of recruiting and retaining medical professionals has escalated, particularly for hospitals. Relative to other medical practices, hospitals are a demanding environment vulnerable to inducing occupational stress and workforce burnout. Developmental and design interventions can counteract work-related stressors, while improving the area as a place to live, work, and play. For instance, a greater concentration of food outlets could substitute driving to lunch with walking. Consequently, alleviating associated time and financial costs can exacerbate occupational stress. Moreover, as the Town's costs-of-living continue to rise and investments in healthcare services target other areas of Erie County, the competition for healthcare support workers will tighten. Parcels can be used to develop price-diverse housing options that provide living opportunities for nurses and medical assistants. that are in closer proximity to their workplace.

6. CrossPoint

Like many suburban office parks, the intended vision is to preserve and revitalize underutilized economic activities. While the 'flight to quality' is a common trend among businesses moving into office spaces, CrossPoint's inaccessibility to amenities will reduce the long-term demand for its Class A office buildings. While post-pandemic work models become more popular, businesses will continue to seek out areas that offer connectivity and walkability to services. RKG strongly recommends that CrossPoint embrace a diversity of commercial activities and capitalize on market demand shifts to reposition the park's economic trajectory. Several opportunities exist to transform this area into an active mixed-use activity center. This may include redeveloping many of the office buildings that are underutilized.



7. Audubon Area

The intended vision for the area is to capitalize on the proximity to University at Buffalo's North Campus, which is concentrated with STEM-degree seeking students. Concentration can encourage the development of a built environment that facilitates multiple modes of circulation and collaboration among students, researchers, professors, and existing employers. Mixed-use, town-center style developments are credited for catalyzing knowledge-sharing activities, the foundations for innovative entrepreneurial opportunities. RKG envisions Audubon's built environment to be enhanced through an integration of community-based attractions—multifamily housing, open spaces, parks, retailers, coffee shops/cafes, bars/restaurants etc.; overall, a walkable environment that spurs social connection and innovation.

8. Central Park/UB

Sports tourism and sports medicine has been discussed as a potential economic development prospect within the Town of Amherst. This area is envisioned to be a hub for advancing the local sports medicine industry. UBMD Orthopedics and Sports Medicine is moving their offices next to the Northtown Center at Amherst, which could be instrumental to industry growth. Mobilized through a series of public-private partnerships, youth athletes at Northtown can be exposed to state-of the art medical procedures, athletic medicine, and performance training via UBMD practices. Localizing athletic competitions near UBMD's new offices, in coordination with Amherst's Youth and Recreation programming can enhance sports medicine research and marketing for regional indoor sports tournaments (especially hockey). This symbiotic partnership can be a cost-effective strategy to exponentially grow jobs and local spending capacities.

9. Boulevard Mall Area

Economic competitiveness in the 21st century is fueled by workers with high levels of education, employed in the fields of science, medicine, and technology. Existing and projected market trends demonstrate that these workers prefer to live and work in a pedestrian-friendly built environment, abundant with vibrant retail amenities. The area lends itself to supporting this environment, especially given the available redevelopment opportunities and abundance of underutilized parking lots. RKG recommends the removal of prohibitive parking requirements, replacing underutilized parking lots with pedestrian-friendly amenities.

D. IMPLEMENTATION

The implementation strategy is a culmination of the outreach efforts, the consultant's empirical research, feedback from local and regional implementation partners, the direction of the Working Group, and input from Amherst staff and the Industrial Development Agency (IDA) leadership. The initial portion of this section details the principles and goals identified and defined by the Working Group in partnership with Amherst's economic development and planning staff and



the IDA. This section is followed by discrete recommendations and implementation steps to assist the Town in refocusing its economic development effort to improve efficiency and effectiveness.

1. *Economic Development Goals*

The assembled Working Group (listed in the Introduction Chapter) represents the various public and private perspectives that influence—and are influenced by—the Town’s economic development efforts. This Working Group provided guidance and feedback throughout the development of this plan. As part of that effort, a comprehensive outreach strategy was held to identify, refine, and prioritize the Town’s economic development goals that were initiated through previous efforts. These goals were presented and reviewed with the Working Group, who provided feedback on refining and prioritizing these goals. The following list represents the culmination of this input and selection process.

- **Expand the Town’s business retention efforts to reach all existing businesses.**
- **Create a regulatory environment that promotes business growth within context of the Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Ordinance.**
- **Continue to attract professional services businesses to Amherst.**
- **Strengthen and expand the Town’s/region’s medical tourism/medical service base.**
- **Grow the Town’s existing sports tourism infrastructure.**
- **Expand the Town’s entrepreneurial ecosystem through proactive engagement and additional resources.**
- **Create dynamic employment centers through place-based strategies that meet evolving demand from employers and workers.**
- **Encourage development that complements the scale and character of the adjacent community while protecting and expanding the Town’s existing public amenities.**
- **Enhance the Town’s housing supply to attract workers, offer options for existing residents, and strengthen business retention and expansion.**
- **Create formulaic incentives that create nexus between desired economic development outcomes and local partnership.**
- **Strengthen the connection between business and training providers to reach residents, existing businesses, and prospective businesses.**
- **Engage existing and potential businesses in creating a coordinated outreach campaign.**
- **Increase awareness and support for economic development within the Town.**
- **Provide the information necessary for local decision makers to make informed choices.**
- **Continue to modernize and expand the Town’s marketing outreach efforts.**
- **Scale economic development outcomes to investment.**
- **Strengthen the technical capability and capacity within the Town’s economic development department.**
- **Maximize the capacity, resources, and expertise of local, regional, and state implementation partners.**



2. Implementation Matrix

The following Implementation Matrix presents the full range of objectives and corresponding action items for the Town's consideration. As noted, this matrix should serve as a reference document as the economic development staff craft their annual business plan. The timelines, estimated costs, and implementation partners for each action item identified in the matrix reflect RKG Associates professional recommendation guided by input from Town staff and the Working Group. The final timing, focus, and potential costs for each action item should be refined by staff and/or the responsible implementation partner when implementation occurs.



LEGEND

Implementation Leaders

Public

AM	Town of Amherst
ER	Erie County
MU	Other Municipalities
NY	State of New York (Empire State Development)
WI	Village of Williamsville

Partners


AB	Business Advisory Board
BN	Buffalo Niagara Partnership
BS	Buffalo State University (SBDC)
CC	Chambers of Commerce
DU	Daemon University
EC	SUNY Erie (ECC)
IB	Invest Buffalo Niagara
ID	Amherst Industrial Development Agency
UB	University of Buffalo
VB	Visit Buffalo Niagara

Private

C	Consultant
F	Financial Institutions
I	Industry Leaders
N	Neighborhood Residents
O	Property Owners
R	Realtors/Brokers

Cost Estimate Legend:

ST	Staff Time
A	Under \$1,000
B	\$1,000 to \$10,000
C	\$10,000 to \$50,000
D	\$50,000 to \$100,000
E	\$100,000 to \$250,000
F	\$250,000 to \$500,000
G	Over \$500,000

 Action



Town of Amherst, New York Strategic Economic Development Plan Implementation Matrix		Implementation Lead		Implementation Timing (Year)										Estimated Cost	Cost Type		
		Public/NP	Private	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10				
BUSINESS RETENTION AND EXPANSION																	
Objective 1.1	Create a more comprehensive business contact list to ensure retention and expansion efforts reach all Amherst businesses																
Action 1.1.1	Create a single database of all Amherst businesses based on lists already available (e.g., secondary data vendors, partner organization membership lists...)	AM, ID, IB, CC	C													C	One Time
Action 1.1.2	Engage the state to collect list of all businesses registered within the Town of Amherst	AM, NY														ST	Annual
Action 1.1.3	Work with property owners and landlords to collect business contact information	AM, ID, CC	O, I													ST	Annual
Action 1.1.4	Provide opportunity for businesses to register/review their information in the business list through the Town's economic development website	AM	O, I, R													Included 5.4.1	Annual
Action 1.1.5	Implement volunteer walks, having 10-15 volunteers canvas the Town's various activity centers to gather contact information	AM, CC	O, I													A	Bi-Annual
Action 1.1.6	Ask industry roundtable members to advertise volunteer walks and engage their relationships to build the database	AM	O, I													ST	Bi-Annual
Action 1.1.7	Consider developing a business registration requirement for the Town collecting contact and industry information only	AM, WI														ST	Annual
Objective 1.2	Implement annual business survey each year in partnership with local chambers of commerce																
Action 1.2.1	Establish a fixed date (e.g., week) that the survey will be released. This should be consistent year over year. Recommend the Fall	AM, ID, CC	O, I													A	Annual
Action 1.2.2	Work with the chambers, IDA, and industry roundtables to refine questions and expand awareness of the survey each year	AM, ID, CC, AB	O, I													ST	Annual
Action 1.2.3	Invest in multimedia marketing and outreach at least 2 months prior to the release of the survey each year (e.g., print, social media, direct outreach)	AM, ID														Included 5.4.2	Annual
Action 1.2.4	Share general results of the survey with roundtables, partner organizations, and the community through the monthly newsletter	AM														ST	Annual
Action 1.2.5	Use results of survey to prioritize retention/expansion visits for the year	AM														ST	Annual
Action 1.2.6	Work with respective roundtables about industry-specific findings from survey to determine annual action items	AM, AB	O, I													ST	Annual
Action 1.2.7	Retain all survey results to create a longitudinal assessment tool (e.g., Excel database) that can help economic development efforts become more predictive to changing market climates	AM														ST	Annual
Action 1.2.8	Consider partnership with adjacent municipalities to implement a broader survey effort (increased responses, shared costs)	AB, WI, MU, ER														ST	Annual



Town of Amherst, New York Strategic Economic Development Plan Implementation Matrix		Implementation Lead		Implementation Timing (Year)										Estimated Cost	Cost Type	
		Public/NP	Private	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10			
BUSINESS RETENTION AND EXPANSION																
Objective 1.3	Proactively outreach to existing businesses through 1-on-1 meetings															
Action 1.3.1	Use the comprehensive business list to identify new companies to visit and track past visit efforts. Do not concentrate on the same businesses year over year	AM, AB	I												ST	Continuous
Action 1.3.2	Establish quotas for number of monthly visits, starting with ten (10) per month, expanding as more staff is hired and/or volunteers trained	AM													ST	Continuous
Action 1.3.3	Use business survey results to prioritize outreach efforts to companies that indicate growth needs or challenges to maintain operations	AM, AB, ID													ST	Annual
Action 1.3.4	Coordinate with economic development partners for business visits (e.g., chambers to visit members)	AM, ID, CC													ST	Continuous
Action 1.3.5	Maintain database of visited businesses to track frequency and results of the visit through a Consumer Relationship Management (CRM) software	AM, ID													B	Annual
Action 1.3.6	Create a direct "help line" initiative on the Town's economic development website that allows businesses to connect to an economic development staff member for assistance	AM	C												Included 5.4.1	One Time
Action 1.3.7	Activate business ambassadors to assist in outreach, providing them training on questions to ask and how to track the conversation	AM, AB	O, I												Included 5.6.1	Annual
Objective 1.4	Build additional industry roundtables in a number of different market areas															
Action 1.4.1	Have an industry roundtable for every key market sector including [1] Retailers; [2] Small Businesses; [3] Professional Services; [4] Real Estate/Commercial Property Owners; [5] Healthcare; and [6] Minority-Owned Businesses	AM, AB	O, I, R												ST	One Time
Action 1.4.2	Make sure all partner organizations have representation on roundtables that crossover missions	AM, AB, CC, ID, DU, UB, EC	O, I, R												ST	One Time
Action 1.4.3	Meet each roundtable quarterly or semiannually as necessary, with one meeting targeted immediately after the release of the business survey results	AM	O, I, R												A	Quarterly
Action 1.4.4	Use roundtable meeting to discuss: [1] market climate; [2] regulatory issues; [3] growth opportunities; [4] implementation coordination	AM	O, I, R												ST	Annual
Action 1.4.5	Use feedback from roundtables to help set annual action plan	AM, AB													ST	Annual
Objective 1.5	Actively engage Amherst's home-based businesses															
Action 1.5.1	Create and implement a marketing campaign to home-based businesses to provide contact information to the Town	AM, AB, CC	O, I												A	Annual
Action 1.5.2	Use state data to identify home-based businesses (based on a geospatial analysis of business address)	AM, NY													ST	Annual
Action 1.5.3	Consider implementing a separate home-based business survey from the main survey targeted with questions more relevant to these entrepreneurs	AM, ID, CC, AB	O, I												ST	Annual
Action 1.5.4	If enough interest, create a home-based business roundtable to augment the others	AM, AB	O, I												ST	Quarterly



Town of Amherst, New York Strategic Economic Development Plan Implementation Matrix		Implementation Lead		Implementation Timing (Year)										Estimated Cost	Cost Type	
		Public/NP	Private	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10			
BUSINESS RECRUITMENT																
Objective 2.1	Become more proactive with regional and statewide partners in business recruitment															
Action 2.1.1	Engage industry roundtables and individual businesses to generate potential recruitment leads through vertical and horizontal supply chains	AM, IB, ID, BN, NY													ST	Annual
Action 2.1.2	Engage with regional partners (e.g., Empire State Development, Invest Buffalo Niagara, Buffalo Niagara Partnership...) quarterly or semi-annually on recruitment trends, opportunities, and local priorities	AM, IB, ID, BN, NY													A	Annual
Action 2.1.3	Maintain local property and land database, coordinating with partners on maintaining an accurate and up-to-date list	AM	C												Included 3.2.1	Annual
Action 2.1.4	Collaborate on leads collected through business outreach and marketing efforts	AM, IB, ID, BN, NY													ST	Annual
Action 2.1.5	Work with local partners to build relationships with site selectors in target industry sectors, adding them the Town's economic development newsletter distribution list	AM, IB, ID, BN, NY, CC	O, I												ST	Annual
Action 2.1.6	Create a municipal economic development coalition focused on information sharing, best practice engagement, and collaboration on cross jurisdictional needs/opportunities (e.g., workforce development)	AM, MU, EC, IB													ST	Annual
Objective 2.2	Expand start-up and entrepreneurial development services open to all businesses															
Action 2.2.1	Expand information seminars in partnership with local (e.g., Clarence) and county partners on how to start, operate, and grow a business	AM, MU, BS, ER													B	Annual
Action 2.2.2	Engage local HR, engineering, accounting, and legal professionals to create a database of potential consultants for entrepreneurs to use	AM, MU, BS, ER	O, I												ST	Annual
Action 2.2.3	Provide financial assistance for entrepreneurs and small businesses to access critical services such as human resources assistance, financial planning assistance, and legal assistance	AM, MU, BS, ER													D	Annual
Action 2.2.4	Fund the training of 2-3 new mentors each year, selecting within business sectors that are underrepresented, particularly women and people of color	AM, MU	O, I												B	Annual
Action 2.2.5	Proactively market small business initiatives to existing businesses, focusing on home-based businesses using updated business tracking data	AM, ID													ST	Annual
Action 2.2.6	Modify incentive programs to offer financial support to startups and small businesses to locate and grow in Amherst (e.g., one-time grants for creating jobs above area median income), requiring participation in an entrepreneurial training program	AM, ID, AB													D	Annual
Action 2.2.7	Work with local banks to create a PPP revolving loan fund that offers low/no-interest loans and/or gap financing to start-ups and small businesses seeking to grow. Target an 80% private/20% public resource pool	AM, MU, ER	F												F	One Time
Objective 2.3	Scale proactive marketing and recruitment efforts to best leverage the Town's resources and market reach															
Action 2.3.1	Partner with local and state entities to market through relevant digital and print mediums annually	AM, ID, IB, BN, NY	C												C/D	Annual
Action 2.3.2	Host a searchable online database of available commercial space and land for prospectus businesses to review	AM													A	Annual
Action 2.3.3	Create a 'tip line' for citizens to call/e-mail/text ideas on business recruitment and any leads they may have on businesses that may wish to relocate or expand to Amherst	AM	C												Included 5.4.1	One Time
Action 2.3.4	Develop/refine the Town's business recruitment collateral (see OUTREACH, COMMUNICATION, AND MARKETING section)	AM													Included 5.1.1	Annual



Town of Amherst, New York Strategic Economic Development Plan Implementation Matrix		Implementation Lead		Implementation Timing (Year)										Estimated	Cost
		Public/NP	Private	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Cost	Type
ASSET DEVELOPMENT															
Objective 3.1	Create/update small area plans for the Town's primary economic activity centers														
	Action 3.1.1 Use the Opportunity Sites chapter of the SEDP as an initiation point for engagement and action	AM, WI												ST	Annual
	Action 3.1.2 Develop internally OR engage a consultant team to develop detailed small area plans for each activity center, starting with the Boulevard Mall area	AM, WI, AB	C											B/E	Annual
	Action 3.1.3 Encourage elected leadership to engage in the study and champion the results	AM, AB												ST	Annual
	Action 3.1.4 Create a marketing brochure for each employment center/commercial corridor that encapsulates the vision	AM, WI, ID	C											Included 5.1.7	Bi-Annual
	Action 3.1.5 Enact regulatory changes to allow defined visions to occur (see TOOLBOX DEVELOPMENT section)	AM, WI, ER												ST	One Time
Objective 3.2	Maintain a locally-comprehensive comprehensive property and asset database														
	Action 3.2.1 Inventory all existing vacant commercial and industrial land and buildings in collaboration with local real estate listing entities	AM	I, O, R											ST	Annual
	Action 3.2.2 Connect with all property owners to detail price, availability, and vision for those asset; include in online listings	AM	I, O, R											ST	Annual
	Action 3.2.3 Create a web-accessible database of those assets to connect to the economic development website	AM	C											Included 5.4.1	One Time
	Action 3.2.4 Create an 'open source' database for property owners and brokers to submit new listings and changes to existing listings	AM	C											Included 5.4.1	One Time
	Action 3.2.5 Work with regional and state implementation partners to make sure their asset lists are current and complete	AM, ID, IB, BN, NY												ST	Annual
	Action 3.2.6 Maintain regular communication with property owners to ensure occupied/developed land is removed	AM, ID, CC	O, I											ST	Annual
Objective 3.3	Work with property owners to ensure economic development plans are consistent with short-term and long-term investment strategies														
	Action 3.3.1 Create a comprehensive ownership database of all commercial properties in each of the opportunity sites to begin a dialogue about their property interests and investment priorities	AM, ID, CC	O, I, R											C	Annual
	Action 3.3.2 Engage in dialogue with owners, particularly catalytic parcels, on a regular basis to track changing strategies and create new opportunities	AM	O, I, R											ST	Annual
	Action 3.3.3 Create a catalyst sites prospectus, defining property ownership, implementation concepts, and available incentives to help bring the vision to fruition	AM	C											Included 5.1.6	Bi-Annual
Objective 3.4	Consider creating an Economic Development Opportunity Fund														
	Action 3.4.1 Create a fund dedicated to [1] land acquisition for economic development purposes and [2] gap financing in real estate developments with economic development benefits	AM, ID	F											ST	One Time
	Action 3.4.4 Seed the fund with \$500,000 for initial operations	AM, ID	F											F	One Time
	Action 3.4.2 Create a board of directors comprised of public, staff, and private sector representatives to review applications and negotiate agreements	AM, ID	O, I											ST	One Time
	Action 3.4.3 Develop specific criteria for access to fund resources (e.g., minimum job creation, minimum, capital investment, creation of workforce housing, blight removal...) including performance requirements and claw back provisions	AM, ID												ST	Annual



Town of Amherst, New York Strategic Economic Development Plan Implementation Matrix		Implementation Lead		Implementation Timing (Year)										Estimated	Cost		
		Public/NP	Private	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Cost	Type		
TOOLBOX DEVELOPMENT																	
Objective 4.1	Match land use regulations to economic development vision, particularly in economic activity centers																
	Action 4.1.1 Rezone land based on the results of the small area planning process	AM, WI														ST	As Needed
	Action 4.1.2 Consider creating higher density housing zones in/adjacent to activity centers to accommodate housing growth commensurate with job growth	AM, WI														ST	As Needed
	Action 4.1.3 Consider overlay districts in areas where rezoning will be too difficult or time consuming	AM, WI														ST	As Needed
	Action 4.1.4 Consider a full update to the Town's comprehensive plan to reflect recent and emerging changes in the Town's growth and development goals including the newly defined vision for its employment centers	AM, WI	C													E	One Time
Objective 4.2	Create economic development incentives that match the Town's priorities and performance expectations																
	Action 4.2.1 Scale incentives based on size of prospect, particularly targeting startup and small businesses (fewer than 5 jobs)	AM, ID														ST	One Time
	Action 4.2.2 Create a scoring matrix that prioritizes location of the investment, type of business, size of project, quality of jobs, benefits packages offered, and any other characteristic valued by the Town	AM, ID														ST	One Time
	Action 4.2.3 Create specific incentive levels based on the scoring for projects	AM, ID														ST	One Time
	Action 4.2.4 Engage with local (e.g., the IDA) and state partners to implement similar requirements for investments in the Town	AM, ID														ST	One Time
	Action 4.2.5 Require claw back provisions in all incentive packages to ensure compliance with stated agreements	AM, ID														ST	Continuous
	Action 4.2.6 Tie any incentives to businesses with less than five (5) employees to participating in the Town's small business development program/mentorship program	AM, ID														ST	Continuous
Objective 4.3	Build more consistent and predictable review and approval processes																
	Action 4.3.1 Provide access to expedited review processes for any project in an identified opportunity area	AM, WI														ST	One Time
	Action 4.3.2 Integrate greater administrative approvals (department heads) for projects/applications that fall below a certain size (e.g. any sign application less than 2'x2' can be approved administratively)	AM, WI														ST	Continuous
	Action 4.3.3 Incorporate concurrent review for all real estate development applications that require multiple department reviews	AM, WI														ST	Continuous
	Action 4.3.4 Set review time limits for all reviews of projects that involve Town or IDA funds.	AM, WI														ST	Continuous



Town of Amherst, New York Strategic Economic Development Plan Implementation Matrix		Implementation Lead		Implementation Timing (Year)										Estimated	Cost
		Public/NP	Private	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Cost	Type
OUTREACH, COMMUNICATION, AND MARKETING															
Objective 5.1	Create the marketing collateral consistent with the Town's refocused efforts														
	Action 5.1.1 Create all materials listed below in print and digital format, updating regularly (minimum once a year)	AM	C												
	Action 5.1.2 Create target industry-specific fact and information sheets	AM	C												
	Action 5.1.3 Refine the existing marketing document to reflect recommended changes where applicable (e.g., incentives)	AM	C												
	Action 5.1.4 Create quality of life information sheets on livability and amenities in Amherst	AM	C												
	Action 5.1.5 Create materials to market the new ombudsman program	AM	C												
	Action 5.1.6 Create a property prospectus book detailed in 3.3.3 (digital only)	AM	C												
	Action 5.1.7 Create employment marketing brochure detailed in 3.1.4	AM	C												
Objective 5.2	Create a regular (monthly) newsletter focusing on recent, current, and future economic development activities														
	Action 5.2.1 Highlight recent economic development activity and successes, maintaining a 'running tally' dashboard of accomplishments for the year	AM, AB													
	Action 5.2.2 Publish regular opinion editorials from business owners, partner organizations, or invited guests focused on topics that influence (or are influenced by) economic development in Amherst	AM, AB													
	Action 5.2.3 Include separate topic-themed Town Supervisor/Economic Development Director messages in each newsletter	AM, AB													
	Action 5.2.4 Implement, monitor, and report the results of opinion polls and business surveys through the newsletter	AM, AB													
	Action 5.2.5 Highlight a different Town businesses (preferably from the target industries) in each newsletter that have invested, expanded, or created new jobs	AM, AB													
	Action 5.2.6 Target writing two (2) or three (3) industry/market white papers each year focused on educating local businesses and residents about current or impending market shifts and how they will impact local/regional businesses	AM, AB, ID	O, I, R												
Objective 5.3	Implement a proactive community engagement and education initiative														
	Action 5.3.1 Hold an annual Town hall meeting open to the public (and televised) to discuss accomplishments and ongoing efforts for the previous/upcoming year	AM, ID	N												
	Action 5.3.2 Implement a biannual resident survey to gauge the goals and concerns of Amherst residents about the Town's economic development efforts. Use the results to inform any changes to approach	AM, ID	N												
	Action 5.3.3 Hold a community outreach meeting in each employment center annually to engage business leaders and residents on economic development issues, opportunities, and challenges those areas are facing	AM, ID	N												
	Action 5.3.4 Host up to three (3) expert panelist discussions on topics of economic development each year. These discussions should address specific market/location opportunities and challenges facing local businesses	AM, ID	C												
	Action 5.3.5 Provide an online tool for citizens and groups to submit questions, provide feedback on content, or request meetings on the economic development website	AM, ID													



Town of Amherst, New York Strategic Economic Development Plan Implementation Matrix		Implementation Lead		Implementation Timing (Year)										Estimated	Cost
		Public/NP	Private	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Cost	Type
OUTREACH, COMMUNICATION, AND MARKETING															
Objective 5.4	Enhance Amherst's electronic and social media presence and activity														
	Action 5.4.1 Update the Town's economic development website based on the functional changes in scope/mission	AM	C											C	One Time
	Action 5.4.2 Ensure weekly use of social media platforms (e.g., SnapChat, Instagram, Twitter, Facebook...)	AM												Included	One Time
	Action 5.4.3 Host the annual business and biannual citizen surveys on the website in its own section, with results of previous efforts posted for public review	AM												Included	One Time
	Action 5.4.4 Use the website to collect information, allow individuals to sign up for the newsletter, and better engage economic development staff	AM												Included	One Time
	Action 5.4.5 Create a citizens section on the website with access to educational information, the annual survey and results information, contact information for the assigned staff liaison, and the newsletter registration	AM												Included	One Time
Objective 5.5	Create an economic development dashboard on the Town's economic development website to provide real-time information about the activity and successes of local economic development efforts														
	Action 5.5.1 Establish a formal economic development dashboard to track performance across each of these topic areas: [1] retention, [2] recruitment, [3] entrepreneurial development, [4] workforce development, [5] fiscal sustainability	AM, ID												ST	One Time
	Action 5.5.2 Retention metrics should include: [1] site visits performed, [2] ombudsman assists, [3] jobs retained/expanded, [4] capital investment, [5] network event attendance, [6] prospect contacts	AM, ID												ST	Semiannual
	Action 5.5.3 Recruitment metrics should include: [1] number of prospects, [2] successful projects, [3] total jobs created, [4] average annual wage, [5] total capital investment, [6] debrief highlights from lost opportunities	AM, ID												ST	Semiannual
	Action 5.5.4 Entrepreneurial metrics should include: [1] enrollment inquiries, [2] business enrollment, [3] graduations, [4] jobs created, [5] debrief on businesses leaving the mentorship program	AM, ID												ST	Semiannual
	Action 5.5.5 Workforce metrics should include: [1] programs offered, [2] program applications and enrollment, [3] internships, apprenticeships, and employment placements, [4] businesses assisted, [5] business inquiries	AM, ID												ST	Semiannual
	Action 5.5.6 Fiscal sustainability metrics should include: [1] number of incentives, [2] dollar value of incentives, [3] jobs created/preserved from incentives, [4] capital investment created, [5] new tax revenues, [6] other benefits (e.g., infrastructure investments)	AM, ID												ST	Semiannual
	Action 5.5.7 Provide regular updates to the Town Supervisor and Town Board (recommended semi-annually)	AM, ID												ST	Semiannual
Objective 5.6	Activate existing business leaders in economic development efforts														
	Action 5.6.1 Develop at least five (5) business ambassadors, individuals who can work with economic development staff to promote Amherst and engage existing/prospective business owners in targeted industries. Train more as necessary	AM, AB	O, I											A	Bi-Annual
	Action 5.6.2 Develop a network of mentors in each of the target industries, focusing on developing women, minority and young business owners to reach the Town's diverse business base	AM, AB	O, I											Included 2.2.4	Annual
	Action 5.6.3 Develop at least four (4) engaged Amherst residents as advocates that can assist in community outreach and resident interaction	AM, AB	N											A	Bi-Annual
	Action 5.6.4 Create a Business-2-Business database that businesses can access to find specific services/networking opportunities	AM, AB												A	Continuous



Town of Amherst, New York Strategic Economic Development Plan Implementation Matrix		Implementation Lead		Implementation Timing (Year)										Estimated	Cost		
		Public/NP	Private	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Cost	Type		
ORGANIZATION AND COORDINATION																	
Objective 6.1	Formalize staffing roles and responsibilities within the economic development department, expanding staff capacity to fully achieve the stated economic development goals																
	Action 6.1.1	Retain the director position to oversee daily and strategic economic development efforts	AM													ST	One Time
	Action 6.1.2	Formalize a small business outreach and development position to oversee the business survey, outreach visits, and small business engagement efforts	AM													ST	One Time
	Action 6.1.3	Formalize an ombudsman position to oversee business assistance regards to obtaining Town approvals across the full spectrum of business requirements (e.g., licenses, permits, approvals, rezonings, incentives...)	AM													ST	One Time
	Action 6.1.4	Formalize a market director position to oversee the creation and development of all virtual and physical collateral, manage the Town's economic development website, and oversee all social media and networking events	AM													ST	One Time
	Action 6.1.5	Increase the business retention and expansion efforts by one (1) full-time professional	AM													D	Annual (Salary)
	Action 6.1.6	Hire an economic development deputy director to augment administrative capability and expand the Town's efforts in entrepreneurial development	AM													D	Annual (Salary)
Objective 6.2	Enhance strategic relationships with local and statewide implementation partners																
	Action 6.2.1	Create a quarterly coordination meeting schedule with Invest Buffalo Niagara, Buffalo Niagara Partnership, and the Industrial Development Agency	AM, ID, IB, BN													A	Quarterly
	Action 6.2.2	Establish a semiannual strategic meeting schedule with other regional and statewide partners	AM, CC, NY, UB, DU, EC, VB													A	Semiannual
	Action 6.2.3	Provide quarterly/semiannual reports to regional and statewide partners on activity and successes	AM													ST	Quarterly
	Action 6.2.4	Establish a formal quarterly or semiannual coordination meeting with neighboring municipalities to address regional and cross-boundary market issues	AM, MU, ER													ST	Quarterly
	Action 6.2.5	Consider co-locating the Town's economic development staff with the Amherst Industrial Development Agency to enhance collaboration and make access for businesses more convenient	AM, ID													B	One Time
Objective 6.3	Create a Business Advisory Board to help with strategic planning and implementation of the Town's economic development strategic plan																
	Action 6.3.1	Create an official Town advisory board of 11 to 17 business leaders and implementation partners (e.g., post-secondary education institutions) interested and willing to participate in the Town's economic development effort	AM													ST	One Time
	Action 6.3.2	Host monthly meetings with the advisory board on projects, activity, and strategy to garner advice and assistance in implementation	AM													ST	One Time
	Action 6.3.3	Have the Town Supervisor appoint at least one (1) member of the advisory group, though avoid having elected officials attending the meetings	AM													ST	One Time
	Action 6.3.4	Create a committee structure to focus efforts in coordination with the Town's focus areas; [1] Workforce Development, [2] Business Retention, [3] Marketing and Outreach, [4] Business Recruitment	AM													ST	One Time
	Action 6.3.5	Ensure each committee is chaired (or co-chaired) by voting board members	AM													ST	One Time
	Action 6.3.6	Consider creating a 501(c)(3) to house the advisory board, creating an official memorandum of understanding and bylaws for the group	AM													ST	One Time



2 SOCIOECONOMIC ANALYSIS

A. INTRODUCTION

The Buffalo-Niagara Falls Metropolitan Statistical Area (Buffalo-Niagara MSA) is a region that has struggled with a declining population and labor market. Despite these challenging conditions for promoting economic development regionally, the Town of Amherst has managed to experience positive growth, undergoing consistent household base expansions while developing a strong employment base. Amherst's economic development strategy is largely predicated on the town's availability of premium quality-of-life amenities, highly regarded educational opportunities, and nationally recognized healthcare systems. Despite the presence of these assets, evolving macroeconomic forces are concerning for Amherst's long-term economic sustainability. This includes an aging population, declining demand for suburban office parks, and increasing competition in other parts of the region. This Socioeconomic Analysis examines these threats as well as other economic trends and conditions unfolding in Amherst. In the face of a restructuring marketplace, the results of this analysis aim to shape policies and programs that will help Amherst sustain its economic vitality now and into the future.

B. MAJOR FINDINGS

Amherst's population experienced a moderate increase while the Buffalo MSA's population experienced a moderate decrease. Amherst's premium quality-of-life amenities, including the town's high-quality public schools, high-end housing opportunities, and accessible healthcare services contribute to its population growth. This also has helped contribute to an expansion of household growth.

Amherst's labor market is vulnerable to shortages as the senior population increases and the prime-working age population (35-64) decreases. Over the previous decade, seniors represented most of the Town's population growth. As the town's prime-working age population decreases, fewer workers are available to support community services and replace leadership roles left by seniors. Given the likelihood of impending labor market shortages, Amherst must work to attract and retain young workers while implementing strategies that support job growth inside the community. This includes improving the entrepreneurial environment and spreading awareness of local workforce development programs.

Amherst's household income is significantly higher than Erie County and the Buffalo-Niagara MSA. As of 2020, Amherst's median household income is nearly \$20,000 higher than Erie County and the Buffalo MSA. While a large concentration of high-income households supports fiscal sustainability, the lack of income-diversity suggests key segments of the workforce are likely excluded from living in the town. This includes workers in the service-based industries and healthcare services. As other areas of Erie County (e.g., Buffalo) put stronger emphasis on income-



equity as part of their economic development strategies, labor market pressures are expected among key sectors in Amherst's economy.

Amherst's diversifying population is helping offset population losses. Between 2010 and 2020, Amherst's white population faced severe losses while non-white residents fueled the town's overall population growth. Many incoming non-white residents emigrated from countries such as Asia and Latin America. The increasing racial and cultural diversity can help expand the entrepreneurial base.

Housing diversity integrated with urban amenities will be critical to long-term economic sustainability. As the demand for suburban office parks continues to decline and business operations push towards highly amenitized, walkable economic activity centers, Amherst's labor market and overall economy is vulnerable to contractions over time. Enhancing the Town with more workforce housing options and greater public transportation connectivity can help foster entrepreneurial development, business recruitment and retention, and help attract young professionals looking for a more urban, walkable environment.

C. METHODOLOGY

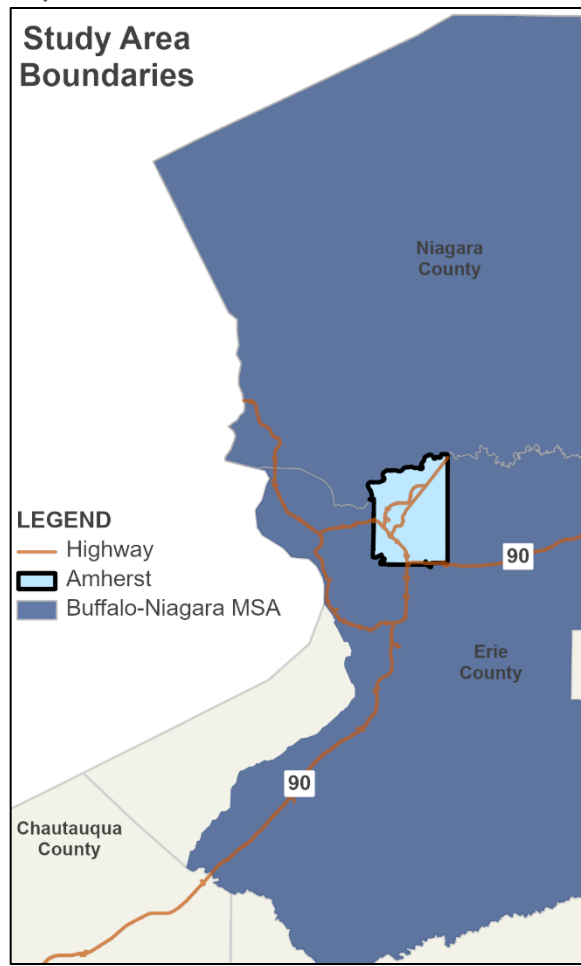
1. Geographic Focus of Analysis

Amherst is located in Erie County and is an economic hub of the Buffalo–Niagara MSA. This chapter evaluates Amherst's demographic and economic conditions, drawing comparisons with Erie County and the broader MSA region. Highlighting key differences and similarities helps define Amherst's role for advancing economic development objectives in the region. Map 2-1 illustrates the Buffalo-Niagara MSA, which is a combination of Erie County and Niagara County.

2. Data Sources

The Socioeconomic Analysis assesses various demographic and economic data metrics. Demographic data comes from the U.S. Census Bureau as well as estimates and projections from ESRI. ESRI is a nationally recognized third-party data provider that uses U.S. Census data to generate its estimates and projections

Map 2-1



Source: Town of Amherst, RKG Associates, Inc., 2022



for geographic areas. Economic data on workforce characteristics, mostly came from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) and Lightcast. Lightcast provides labor market conditions of geographic areas nationwide, including the zip codes (14068, 14051, 14221, 14226, and 14228) that comprise the Town of Amherst.

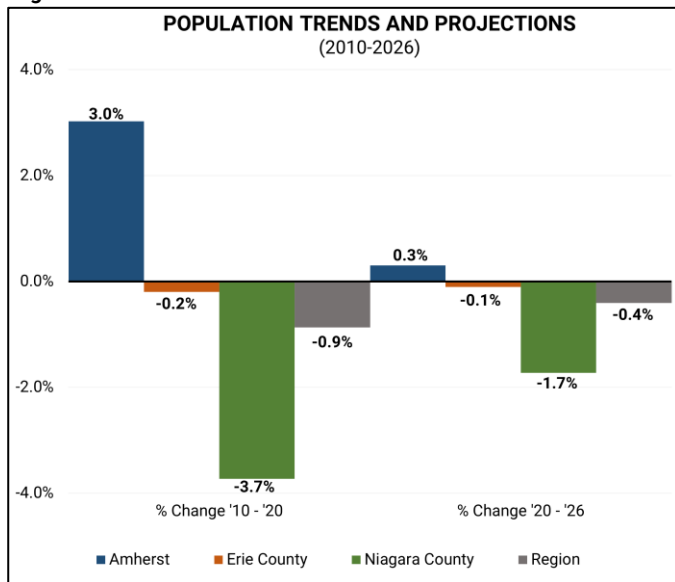
D. DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

This Demographic Analysis evaluates demographic conditions and trends in the Town of Amherst and throughout the Buffalo-Niagara MSA. The evaluation highlights potential impacts to the local economy and community that can help shape Amherst’s future economic development efforts.

1. Population Trends and Projections

The Buffalo-Niagara MSA’s declining population rates have resulted from the region’s economic stagnation, which is evident in the net decline in jobs since 2010 including several industry contractions. Niagara County accounts for most of the region’s population losses (Figure 2-1). Population growth generally stems from two sources, attraction of retired-aged persons and in-migration due to job growth. The Buffalo region also is not a top destination for retirees. While the region’s economic climate has not supported substantial job growth, Amherst has managed to sustain moderate population growth. Between

Figure 2-1



Source: U.S. Census, Esri, RKG Associates, Inc., 2022

2010 and 2020, the Town’s population expanded by 3.0 percent, from 122,363 residents to 126,064 residents. In part, Amherst’s positive growth rates are driven by its attractive quality-of-life assets, such as high-quality public schools, high-end housing opportunities, and accessible healthcare services. Effectively, Amherst provides substantial location (e.g., proximity to downtown Buffalo) and quality of life amenities that make it a highly desired location *within* the region.

While the region’s projected population growth rates are expected to decline, the rate of decline is less than rates seen in the previous decade. This comes at a time when the region begins to display signs of future economic development potential. Federal and state stakeholders seek to target investments in- and around- the City of Buffalo to pivot past economic decline and stimulate emerging industry specializations (e.g., advanced manufacturing). Investment



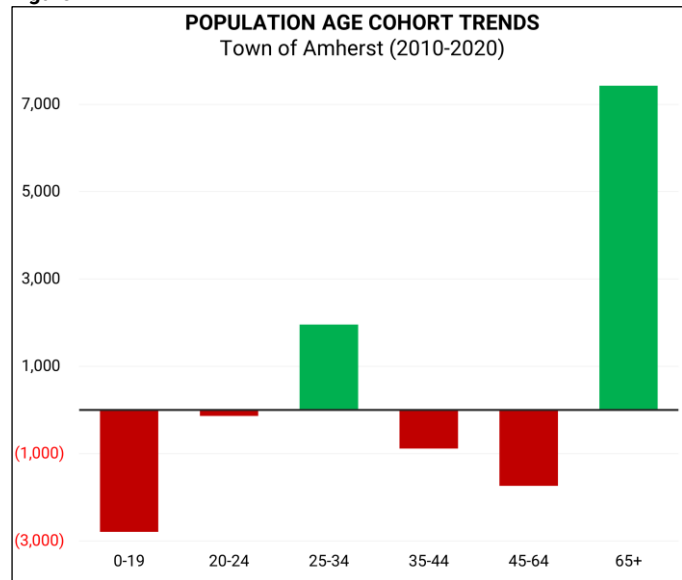
activities can be instrumental for expanding the region’s workforce, helping to ease evolving labor market pressures. Labor market pressures in Amherst are a combination of a growing senior population reaching the age of retirement while much of the Town’s working age population declines.

2. Population by Age

Between 2010 and 2020, Amherst’s senior population (65+) underwent rapid expansion from 21,820 persons to 29,247 persons while Amherst’s established working age population (Age 35-64) declined from 45,990 persons to 43,366 persons (Figure 2-2). Amherst’s growth in older residents is a result of both the disproportionate concentration of Baby Boomers reaching retirement age and the Town’s high housing costs/desirability in which to live. Much of Amherst’s housing is unobtainable to younger, working-aged residents in the region. As noted, the regional economic contraction is likely contributing to both local and regional decline in working-aged residents. Projections through 2026 indicate that Amherst’s population is projected to have a larger representation of seniors (25.6%) than the regional population (21.6%).

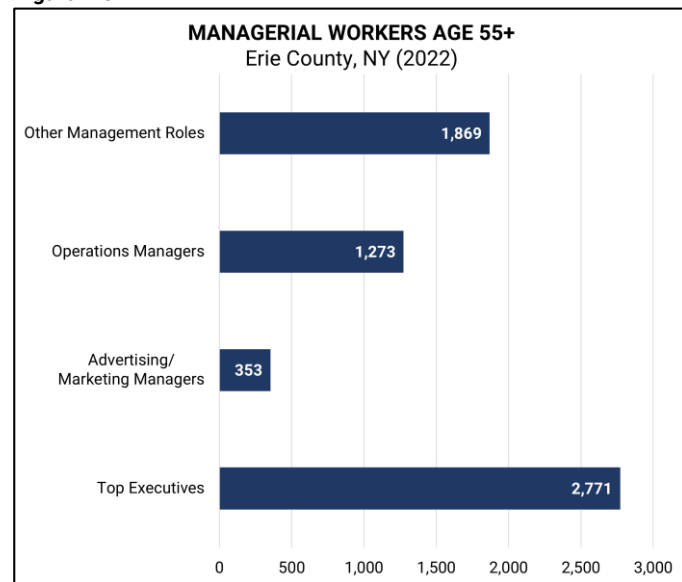
An expanding senior population alongside declining working age population can result in labor market shortages. As retirees exit the labor market and their professional roles, fewer workers are available for replacement, especially for many mid-level to upper-level management roles typically held by workers in their later years. The declining availability of qualified workers imposes high recruitment costs on local businesses. Given New York’s relative high cost to do business, many companies are seeking lower-cost markets to accommodate new job growth, relocating portions of their operations,

Figure 2-2



Source: U.S. Census, Esri, RKG Associates, Inc., 2022

Figure 2-3



Source: Lightcast, RKG Associates, Inc., 2022



or moving from the Amherst/Buffalo region altogether or hiring people living outside the region who work virtually.

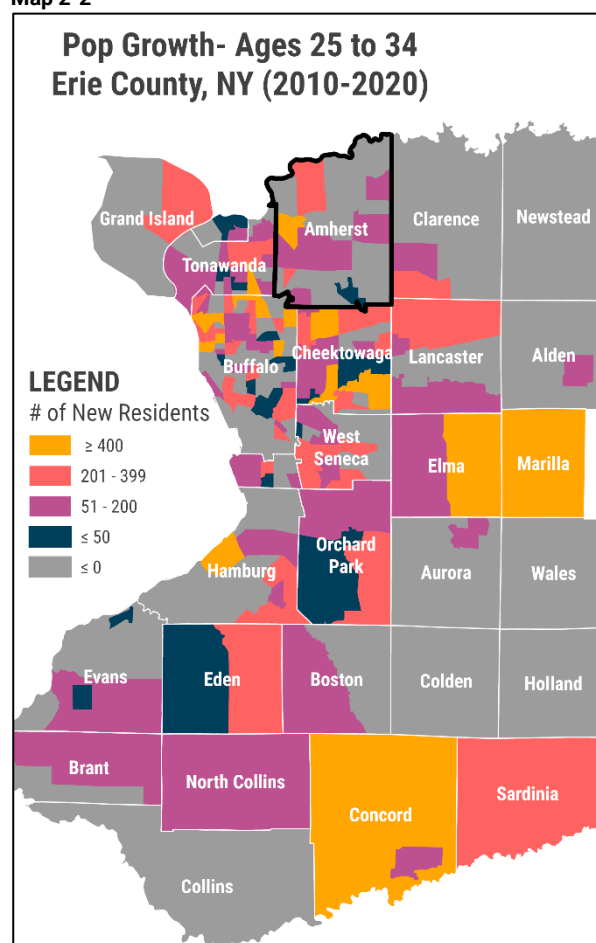
If employment trends continue in Amherst and the greater Buffalo market, even fewer workers will be available which can compound the town's labor market pressures even more. This can cause community development challenges too. Fewer workers mean less spending resources are available to finance community services such as healthcare and social services. Healthcare services are projected to rise in demand as the senior population grows in Amherst and across the region.

To lessen the magnitude of the Town's evolving labor market pressures, Amherst can undertake initiatives that work to expand the availability of workers. While an aging population creates labor limitations, it can also provide a source of opportunity. Retirees can play an instrumental role in enhancing entrepreneurial outcomes, assisting aspiring entrepreneurs to jumpstart and scale their operations. An abundance of workers in Erie County are reaching the age of retirement, particularly those that hold managerial roles (Figure 2-3).

The Town of Amherst can execute a proactive recruitment strategy targeting managerial workers reaching the age of retirement in Erie County, enlisting them for potential volunteering opportunities. Their depth of professional experience can be an asset to assist entrepreneurs, mold business development strategies, make informed decisions, and distribute resources effectively and efficiently.

While most population age segments declined, persons aged 25-34 expanded in Amherst and the rest of Erie County (Map 2-2). As workers early in their career, supporting the growth of this population is critical to sustaining local labor market conditions over time. Most young professionals moved to areas of Erie County outside Amherst, taking advantage of a more affordable cost-of-living and/or an urban lifestyle. In an effort to attract this population segment and enhance labor market conditions in the long-term, Amherst can execute initiatives that cater to their lifestyle preferences. This includes enhancing the

Map 2-2



Source: U.S. Census, RKG Associates, Inc., 2022



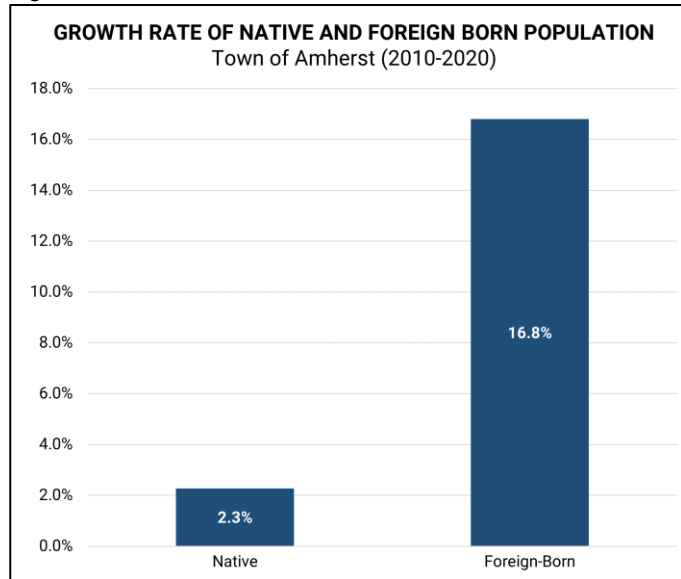
Town’s-built environment with work-live-play destinations; that includes a walkable environment with a price-diversity of rental housing options, nightlife opportunities, and experiential retailers (coffee shops, breweries/taverns etc.)

3. Foreign-Born Population

In Amherst, population growth rates among foreigners exceeded rates among native-born residents (Figure 2-4). In part, the increase of 14,590 foreigners to 17,041 foreigners reflects pro-immigration initiatives advanced by advocacy groups throughout Western New York. While a high rate of foreigners moved into Amherst, other parts of Erie County attracted most of the foreign-born population between 2010 and 2020 (Figure 2-5).

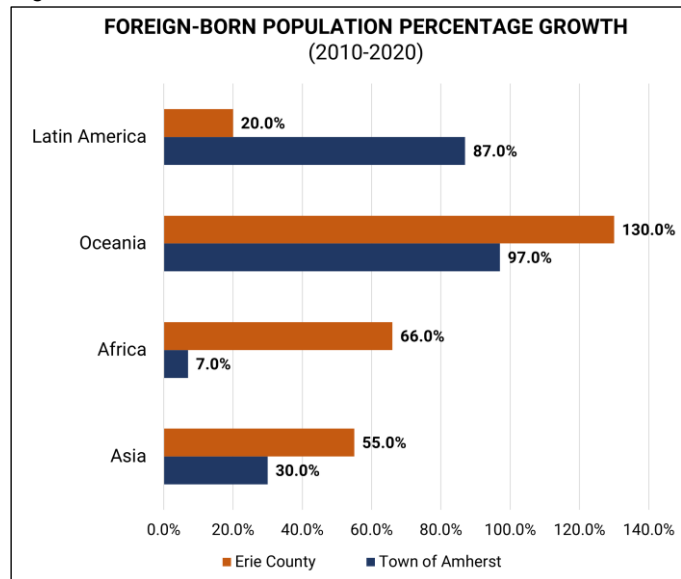
This is expected as other parts of Erie County offer a more accommodating environment for the foreign-born population. This includes a more affordable lifestyle, coupled with greater accessibility to jobs and social networks. A town-endorsed approach to attracting and empowering the foreign-born population can enhance Amherst’s job creation efforts, alleviate labor market pressures, and bolster key market segments. For instance, among the Asian foreign-born population living in Erie County, nearly one third is employed within the Education Services and Healthcare/Social Assistance industries. Healthcare services represent a critical component of Amherst’s local economy and are projected to increase in demand due to an aging population. Labor recruitment of foreigners employed in healthcare services can be strengthened through town-endorsed strategies that incorporate Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) metrics.

Figure 2-4



Source: U.S. Census, RKG Associates, Inc., 2022

Figure 2-5



Source: U.S. Census, RKG Associates, Inc., 2022



Historically in the U.S., the foreign-born population is credited for pursuing entrepreneurial opportunities, particularly within service-based industries. Amherst should consider the creation of a minority-based entrepreneurial development program that offers financial and technical assistance services. Often, such services are harder to access for aspiring minority entrepreneurs. A minority-based entrepreneurial development program could help bridge that gap, empowering the foreign-born population with the tools and resources to jumpstart their own businesses. This can appeal to racial/ethnic segments in general, regardless of nationality, who increasingly represent a larger share of Amherst’s population.

4. Racial/Ethnic Diversity

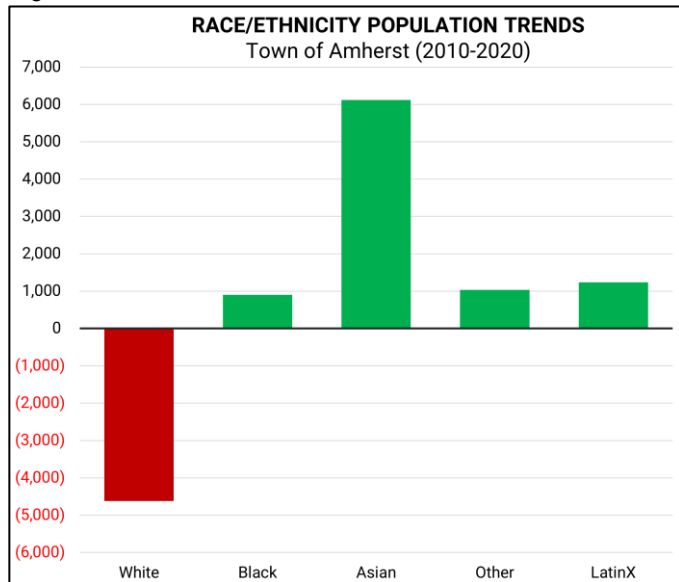
People of color are a major source of Amherst’s population growth in the previous decade. Between 2010 and 2020, the White population experienced a net-loss of over 4,500 persons while the non-White population experienced a net-gain over nearly 9,500 persons (Figure 2-6). Most of the net-growth is driven by the incoming Asian population, comprising roughly 65% of new residents in Amherst.

The Town’s increasing diversity creates a critical economic development asset, helping to alleviate the challenges associated with the Town’s struggling labor market. Moreover, a diverse community can help local businesses’ recruitment efforts, as young professionals prefer to live and work in places with greater proportions of racial and ethnic variation.

5. Households

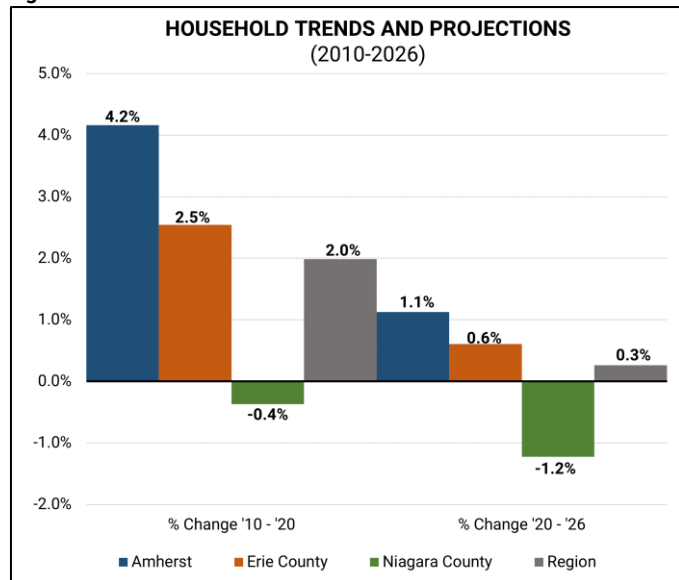
While Niagara County’s household base declined, the household base in Amherst and throughout the region has expanded (Figure 2-7). Household growth rates are exceeding population growth rates. The excess indicates that household sizes are decreasing (Figure

Figure 2-6



Source: U.S. Census, Esri, RKG Associates, Inc., 2022

Figure 2-7



Source: U.S. Census, Esri, RKG Associates, Inc., 2022



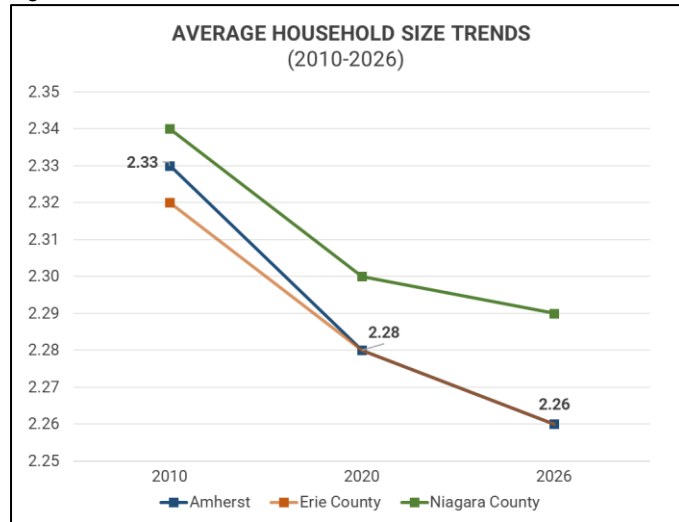
2-8). Typically, this is consistent with an increasing demand for rental housing units. Signs of increasing demand are evident with expanded construction of multifamily developments. Multifamily rental units can offer various economic development benefits, such as attracting a younger workforce (Millennials/Zoomers) who prefer residing in more affordable and transient living conditions.

The decrease in household sizes also coincides with an increasing senior population without children. Many are attracted to Amherst due to the Town’s prevalence of assisted living facilities and access to premium healthcare services. Given the influx of seniors into Amherst and consequential rise in demand for applicable services, the Town must incorporate strategies focused on attracting and retaining younger households. In turn, helping to improve labor market conditions and sustain fiscal health. This should include providing housing opportunities offered at price points that complement their earnings levels.

6. Income Levels

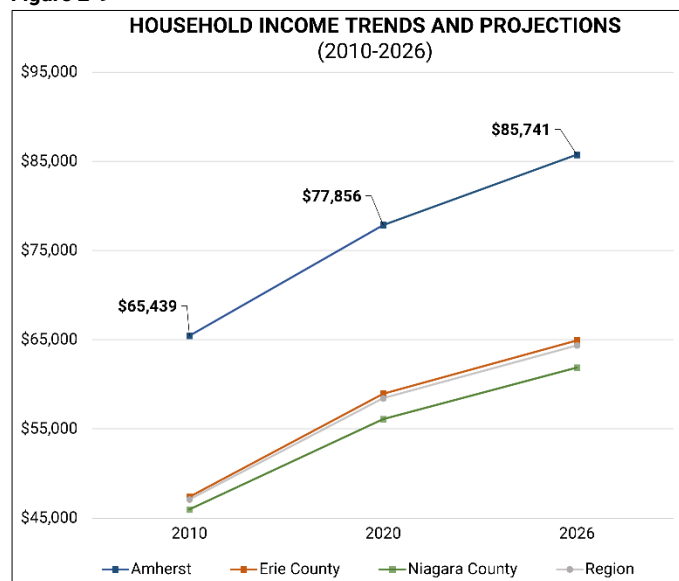
Amherst’s household income levels are higher than Erie County and the Region. As of 2020, Amherst’s median household income is \$77,856, nearly \$20,000 higher than Erie County and the Region (Figure 2-9). The availability of higher-end employment opportunities and quality of life amenities attracts many of the region’s affluent households; nearly 40% of households earn more than \$100,000. The benefits of having an affluent household base are clear, higher spending capacities result in higher fiscal capacities and potential revenue streams for local businesses. However, the disproportionate share of

Figure 2-8



Source: U.S. Census, Esri, RKG Associates, Inc., 2022

Figure 2-9



Source: U.S. Census, Esri, RKG Associates, Inc., 2022



affluent households can shine light on key economic development challenges. Most low-to-moderate income households are unable to afford to live in Amherst, many of which represent workers in the Town’s key market segments, such as service-based operations and the healthcare industry. The lack of access to affordable housing opportunities in Amherst can limit the number of workers that choose to pursue employment opportunities in Amherst.

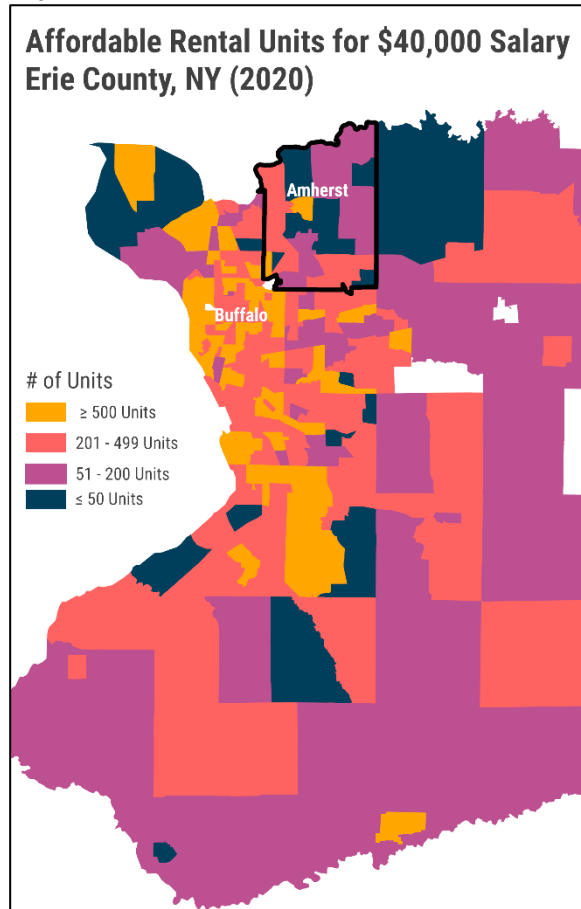
$$\begin{array}{c}
 \text{\$40,000/Annual Salary} \\
 = \\
 \text{\$1,000 or Less/Monthly Rent}
 \end{array}$$

Other parts of Erie County, especially the City of Buffalo, offer a greater number of rental housing units that accommodate workers earning \$40,000 (Map 2-3).

Key members of the Town’s workforce earn a median salary of less than \$40,000 (Figure 2-10), excluding many from living within Amherst. These individuals are less likely to seek employment opportunities within the Town’s boundaries, increasing service-based businesses’ vulnerability to labor market shocks.

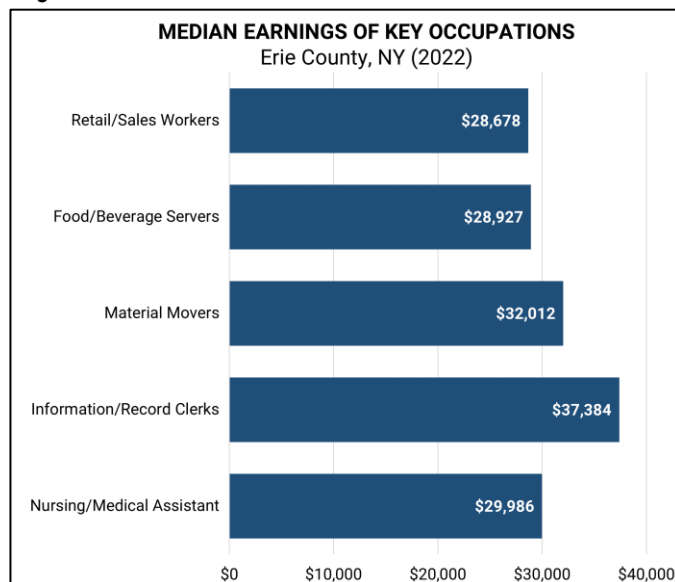
As greater investment activity pours into the City of Buffalo, workforce recruitment strains could impact retail stores, restaurants, and medical facilities.

Map 2-3



Source: U.S. Census, RKG Associates, Inc., 2022

Figure 2-10



Source: Lightcast, RKG Associates, Inc., 2022



E. ECONOMIC BASE ANALYSIS

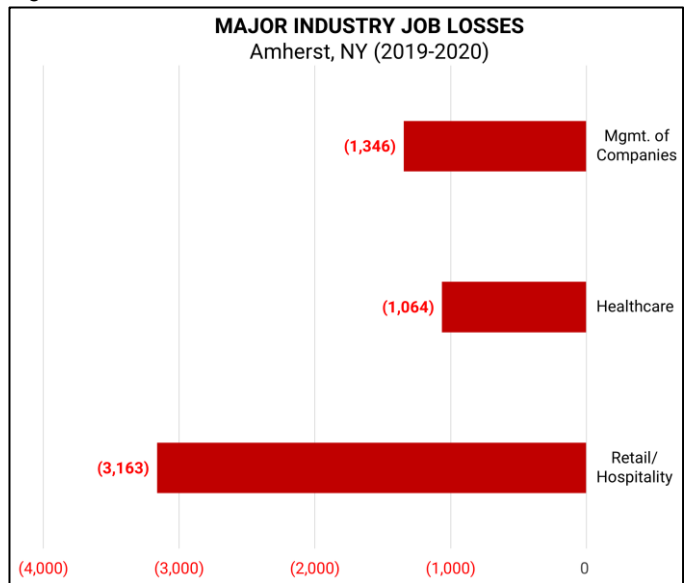
This Economic Base Analysis evaluates Amherst’s economic conditions and trends. This includes a discussion on unemployment trends, labor force characteristics, industry compositions, and the Town’s role in the broader Buffalo MSA. The results of the analysis can help Amherst shape future economic development programs and policies.

1. *Unemployment Trends*

The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted Amherst’s labor market, as the Town’s unemployment rate hovered below 5% prior to the pandemic but spiked to above 15% in April 2020 (Figure 2-11). The spike is largely a result of social distancing mandates, furloughing high proportions of workers in service-based industries.

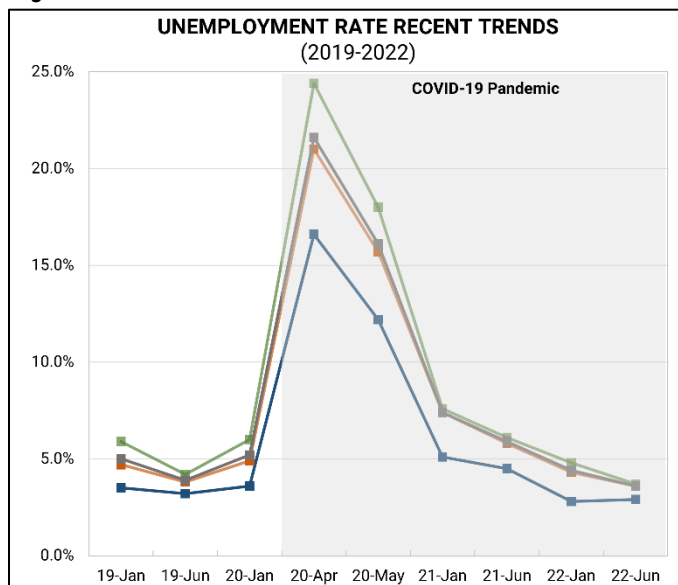
These industries represent a major component of the Town’s labor market, particularly businesses operating within Retail/Hospitality industry segments. Combined, both industries accounted for a net loss of nearly 3,200 workers in Amherst between 2019-2020 (Figure 2-12). Many retail/hospitality businesses reduced their operational capacities in wake of decreased consumer spending patterns. In comparison, consumer-based businesses serve a larger proportion of the region’s workforce. Therefore, the region’s unemployment rate experienced a higher spike, highlighting Amherst’s workforce advantages to weather the economic storm. Higher proportions of Amherst’s workforce are employed in white-collar industries that are better able to sustain operations and avoid layoffs through work-from-home opportunities.

Figure 2-11



Source: Lightcast, RKG Associates, Inc., 2022

Figure 2-12



Source: Lightcast, RKG Associates, Inc., 2022

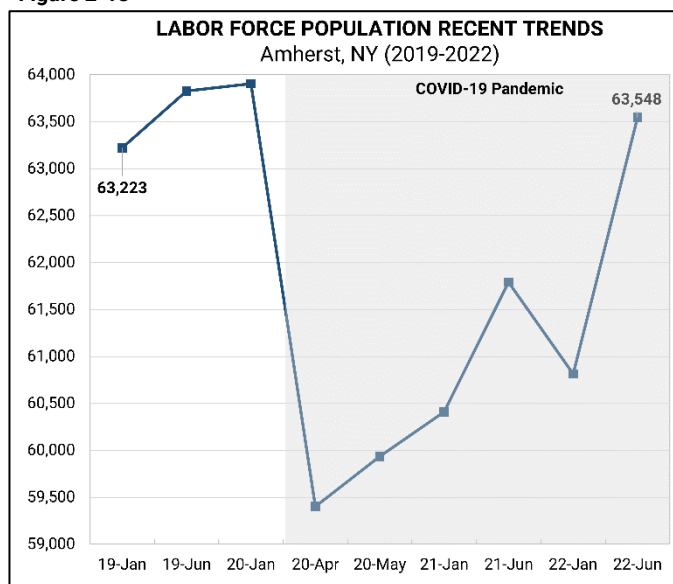


As the pandemic subsided, unemployment rates have mirrored pre-pandemic levels, demonstrating signs of economic resiliency in Amherst and throughout the region. However, the pandemic has redefined the workplace, as most white-collar businesses are employing hybrid-work models. Given that hybrid-work models, let alone complete remote-working models, will likely remain commonplace in the long-term, geography becomes less of a barrier for workers. In light of this, retaining a talented workforce and developing the local workforce will become increasingly important for the Town of Amherst.

2. Labor Force Participation Trends

The Town's labor force trends followed a similar narrative to the Town's unemployment trends. As the COVID-19 pandemic unfolded, Amherst's labor force participation dropped due to social-distancing mandates. As mandates were lifted, participation levels mirrored pre-pandemic levels (Figure 2-13). What is most important is ensuring labor force levels maintain stability in wake of evolving socioeconomic pressures. Amherst's senior population is increasing while its prime working population is decreasing. These dynamics point to a labor market shortage, reducing the ability for businesses to recruit workers. Therefore, businesses are at risk of ceasing their operations or relocating to another marketplace with better accessibility to qualified workers. While workers can be hired and work remotely, this doesn't translate to spending resources within the local economy. All that said, Amherst's economic development sustainability will rely on the growth of the local labor force.

Figure 2-13



Source: Lightcast, RKG Associates, Inc., 2022

3. Labor Force Population by Age

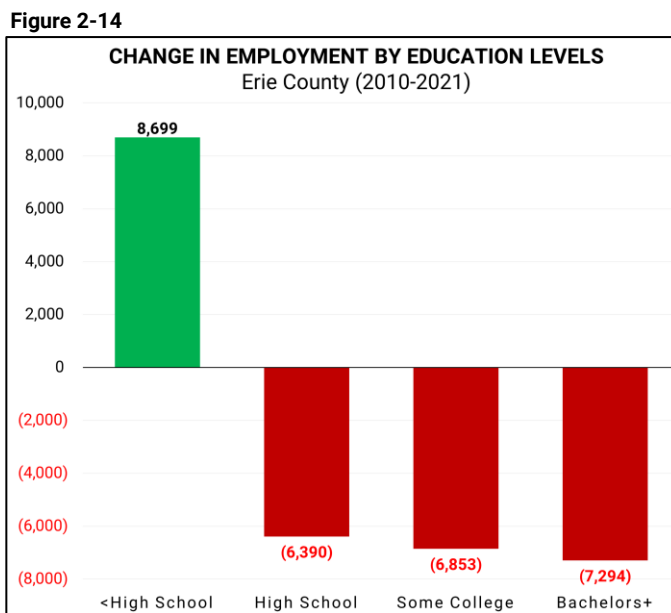
As of 2021, roughly one quarter of the County's labor force is aged 55 or older, indicating that many workers are reaching the stage of retirement (Quarterly Workforce Indicators). A large-scale transition to retirement can impose hazardous impacts on local businesses. Businesses are vulnerable to losing many workers with valuable skill sets and leadership qualities. Replacing these outgoing workers may include recruiting younger workers in the county, especially as job vacancies open up for upper-management positions. To transition to upper-management positions more effectively, younger workers may need to enhance their 'soft-skills' or project management skills. The creation of a mentorship program with the assistance of semi-retired and retired workers can help younger workers develop the prerequisite skills needed to perform the



diverse roles and responsibilities of a upper-management professional. Doing so increases the likelihood that businesses can stabilize their operations while retaining a physical footprint in the County. A mentorship program can achieve the best results through joint coordination with local and regional governments, including the Town of Amherst, Village of Williamsville, Erie County, and the City of Buffalo.

4. Educational Attainment

Erie County’s job base for higher-educated professionals faced a substantial contraction. Between 2010 and 2021, jobs that require a Bachelor’s Degree or higher decreased by 7,294 net-jobs, from 114,845 jobs to 107,551 jobs. (Figure 2-14). The reduction among jobs that require a post-secondary education can limit the County’s competitiveness for expanding businesses among knowledge-based industries. This includes Professional and Technical Services, Healthcare, and Information Technologies. These industries are credited for facilitating high-value economic expansions and long-term sustainability.



Source: QWI, RKG Associates, Inc., 2022

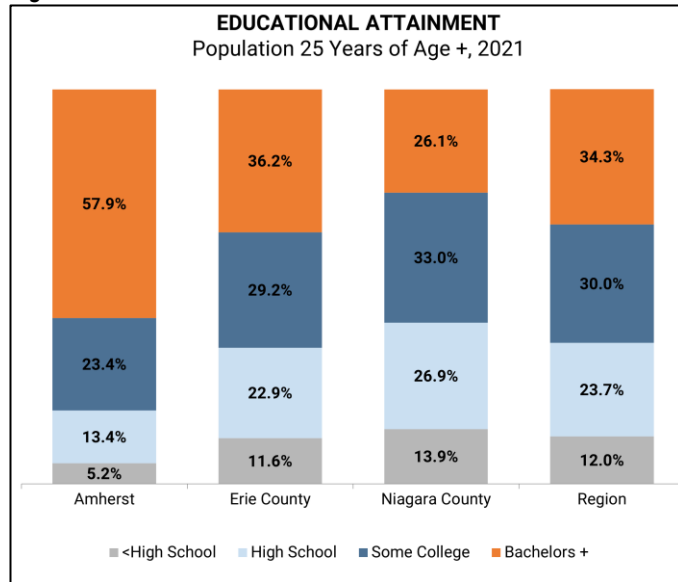
Businesses are left vulnerable, faced with recruitment and retention challenges as highly educated workers seek other marketplaces that offer more abundant job opportunities. This has already been a challenge in the region, perpetuated by college graduates. This includes graduates from the University of Buffalo (UB), many of whom are compelled to leave the region for jobs elsewhere therefore, contributing to a regional brain-drain that shrinks the labor pool for recruiting young-talented highly educated workers. For the purposes of this analysis, highly educated workers are defined as those with a Bachelor’s Degree or higher.

While business recruitment and retention remain challenging in the Town and region, opportunities exist to improve pathways to job creation. Specifically, working to promote entrepreneurship and support expansions of small-to-medium sized businesses. Despite a declining job market for highly educated workers, nearly 60% of Amherst’s existing population have attained a Bachelor’s Degree or higher (Figure 2-15). That said, a large proportion of the population are likely equipped with the knowledge capacity and resources to drive entrepreneurial outcomes.



The availability of a highly educated population offers the opportunity to bolster the Town’s entrepreneurial environment, equipping aspiring entrepreneurs with the tools and resources to jumpstart and expand their business ventures. Consequently, growing the base of businesses to recruit and retain the available talent that remains in the community. Bolstering the Town’s entrepreneurial environment should be a comprehensive approach, including efforts beyond increasing an entrepreneur’s access to technical and financial assistance. A community’s development patterns are critical for improving entrepreneurial and innovative outcomes. To that point, enhancing the Town’s-built environment with mixed-use destinations that emphasize price-diversity, accessibility, and connectivity is key.

Figure 2-15



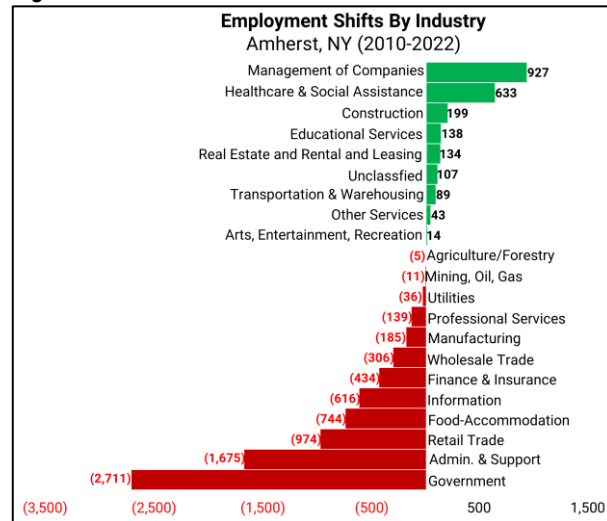
Source: U.S. Census, Esri, RKG Associates, Inc., 2022

5. Industry Analysis

Since 2010, Amherst has lost more jobs than it has gained (Figure 2-16). Most losses are attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic, as social distancing mandates forced many service-based operations to reduce their staff capacities. Public higher-educational institutions, which comprise a large proportion of Amherst’s workforce, sustained major job losses due to the transition to online-learning. University of Buffalo support staff (e.g., includes cafeteria workers) account for a large proportion of losses in the Government industry. As a state-funded university, these jobs are considered a part of the Government industry.

While the worst of the COVID-19 pandemic has subsided, the impacts on the workforce and business operations are long-lasting. The pandemic caused many workers to reconsider their long-term job prospects, in-favor of opportunities with higher-earnings potential and stability. The service-based workers in Amherst that lost their jobs may have been incentivized to do so. Often, however, they lack the

Figure 2-16



Source: Lightcast and RKG Associates, Inc., 2022



skills and/or qualifications needed to be competitive in the marketplace. Fortunately, the Town's availability of workforce development programs at local educational institutions can help workers interested in a career change, equipping them with the appropriate skillsets needed to succeed in in-demand job opportunities. The Town of Amherst can facilitate these efforts through proactive marketing and outreach of the available programs to interested community members.

Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated a move away from suburban office parks, as Amherst's office market experienced high vacancies. The hybrid-work model with virtual offices and the increased demand for office spaces in urban environments are likely to remain. Other parts of Erie County, including the City of Buffalo, offer these opportunities integrated with a robust network of workforce housing options and accessible public transportation systems. Both are critical for supporting service-based workers and young professionals in white-collar industries. For Amherst to sustain competitive labor market outcomes in its service-based industries and growing market segments (Management of Companies, Healthcare & Social Assistance), the Town should enhance its built environment to meet shifting workplace preferences. Such workplace preferences include walkability to amenities and services.

F. INSIGHTS & IMPLICATIONS

Despite historic economic challenges across the region, Amherst has managed to sustain economic vitality. In recent years, evolving socioeconomic threats imposed pressures on Amherst to sustain this vitality in the long-term. These include an aging population, declining working age population, and perpetual brain drain facilitated by outflows of college graduates across the region. These threats have imposed business recruitment and retention challenges while limiting future job creation efforts. Job creation is critical as Amherst's job base declined in the previous decade, reversing prior historical growth trends. While recruitment of businesses from outside the region will remain challenging, developing businesses from within the community can be a viable alternative for job creation. To do so, the Town of Amherst must execute a comprehensive approach to expand from the traditional industry recruitment in healthcare and production economies, and also promote entrepreneurship that capitalizes on the presence of a highly educated population.



3 REAL ESTATE MARKET ANALYSIS

A. INTRODUCTION

The growth of Amherst is consistent with the suburbanization of employment experienced throughout the United States. Amherst began as a bedroom community, offering price competitive housing options for middle and upper-income households within close proximity to a regional employment center (downtown Buffalo). Over time, businesses saw the benefit of locating their offices within these communities, providing shorter commutes and more spacious environments (that were less expensive) for the employees that lived within the community. This attraction catalyzed Amherst's gradual transition into an employment hub as businesses capitalized on the Town's availability of suburban office parks and relative affordability. This model proved successful for the Town for more than three decades.

Unfortunately, the suburban office park concept is losing favor within the office market sector due to shifts in workplace preferences and a renewed interest among many businesses to operate in urban settings. Working preferences have been evolving over the past decade and have accelerated due to office consumption changes heightened during the COVID-19 pandemic. As remote work and hybrid models are becoming more normalized, workers are seeking more amenitized, convenient, and vibrant employment settings. The push to have more walkable and integrated live-work-recreate employment centers have made the traditional suburban office park less attractive to employees, and therefore employers. While Amherst needs to retain its suburban residential character in established housing areas, the Town's long-term economic prospects are becoming vulnerable to having obsolete employment activity centers. This Real Estate Market Analysis assesses Amherst's residential and non-residential marketplace to understand recent trends, current conditions, and emerging opportunities. The results of this analysis will provide insight into potential modifications the town could make to its built environment that caters to shifting working preferences and evolving macroeconomic pressures.

B. MAJOR FINDINGS

Suburban development patterns have limited Amherst's economic development opportunities. Shifts in workplace preferences have lowered the desirability of suburban office parks and regional shopping malls such as the Boulevard Mall. As virtual-working environments normalize and businesses relocate to more highly amenitized live-work-recreate centers, Amherst's existing commercial model will increasingly become outdated. The Town's business recruitment and retention efforts are projected to become more limited in the long run if the Town's existing employment centers (e.g., office parks) are not modified to reflect shifts in worker and corporate preferences.



Future real estate investments will primarily be redevelopment/infill development initiatives. The Town of Amherst is largely built out with very few developable parcels remaining. Consequently, most catalytic real estate investments will involve redevelopment of outdated buildings or infill development to strengthen the marketability of existing properties. Less competitive suburban office parks and declining regional shopping malls are ripe for redevelopment/infill development projects. That said, redevelopment/infill development will require a scale of development much higher than the Town is accustomed to. Creating higher density activity centers can strengthen the town’s desirability for business location, create new, diverse housing opportunities, and develop the amenity-rich centers being sought by the marketplace.

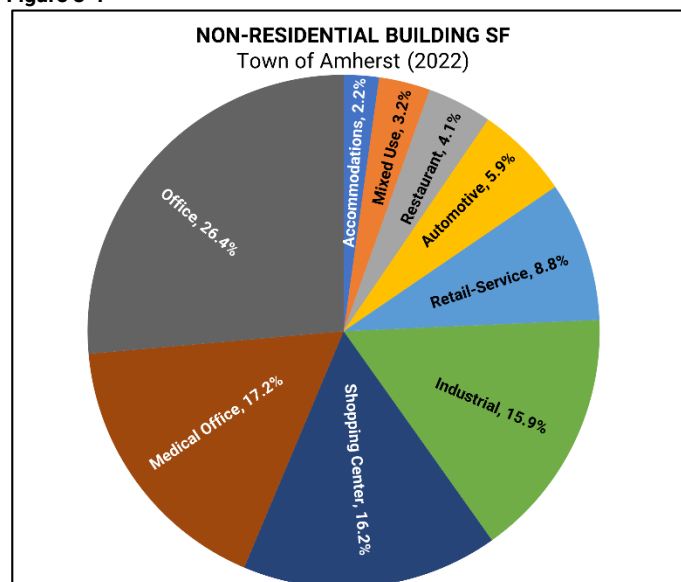
Developing live-work-recreate activity centers can be a tool to attract workers as well as businesses. Given the Town’s aging population and declining working-age population, the labor pool is declining. Attracting young professionals and a more diverse workforce will be critical to reduce the labor market shortages, incent businesses to remain in Amherst, and provide the necessary infrastructure to attract new employers. This can be done through enhancing Amherst’s built environment with additional live-work-recreate activity centers.

C. DEVELOPMENT TRENDS

1. Non-Residential Building Stock

The largest proportion of commercial building spaces are office uses, constituting over one quarter of the Town’s commercial building square footage (Figure 3-1). Data indicate that some of the Town’s less competitive office spaces are struggling to attract and retain tenants due to shifting workplace preferences among businesses. This includes an increasing demand for office spaces in urban settings and/or virtual environments. These shifts have accelerated business investment towards smaller office spaces, especially in areas that offer convenient accessibility to amenities and services.

Figure 3-1



Source: Town of Amherst, RKG Associates, Inc., 2022

While the interest in suburban office park concept diminishes, much of the Town’s existing inventory can be incorporated into infill development strategies to support prevailing market trends. In particular, redeveloping or



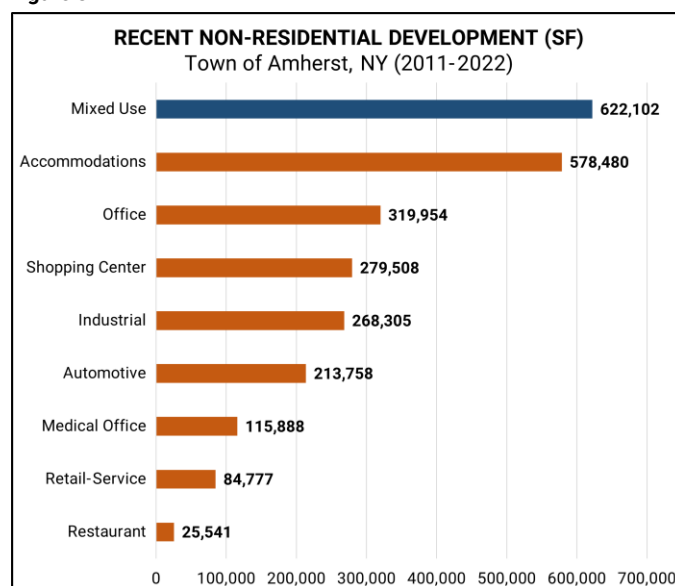
converting desolate office parks into live-work-recreate activity centers with a concentration of rental units, retail establishments, and office spaces distributed throughout a walkable environment. These types of activity centers can facilitate the Town’s business recruitment and retention efforts, which will become more limiting as employers downsize office spaces and maintain hybrid-work models.

Moreover, live-work-recreate activity centers can help attract young professionals, a workforce segment recognized for preferring to live in pedestrian-centric destinations. The ability to attract young professionals to Amherst is critical to sustaining the Town’s long-term labor market conditions for professional service sectors most prevalent in Amherst. This is particularly important for Amherst, as large proportions of the local and regional workforce are near retirement. Like suburban office parks, underutilized shopping centers are ripe for conversions to live-work-recreate activity centers. This includes the Boulevard Mall, which has lost economic vitality over time and consumes substantial commercial space that is ripe for revitalization. The decline in economic performance is largely due to growing competition regionally and the rise of e-commerce which has decreased the demand for physical retail spaces.

2. Recent Non-Residential Building Activities

In the previous decade, mixed-use developments constituted most non-residential construction activities (Figure 3-2). Relative to other non-residential building types in Amherst, mixed-use buildings are a relatively new concept. The practice of integrating retail and office uses and/or residential or retail is gaining traction among local developers, capitalizing on the concept’s marketability. Mixed-use developments can absorb greater cash flows too, which are increasingly difficult to capture as the Town’s land costs escalate. Permitting more mixed-use developments can benefit Amherst over time, expanding fiscal capacities and enhancing job creation. The Station, a University of Buffalo student-focused housing complex, represents most of the mixed-use development square footage in the previous decade. The Station, located near the UB campus, is considered a ‘proof of concept’ for the Town’s future development efforts, demonstrating the marketability of integrating ground-floor retail with residential units on the upper floors.

Figure 3-2



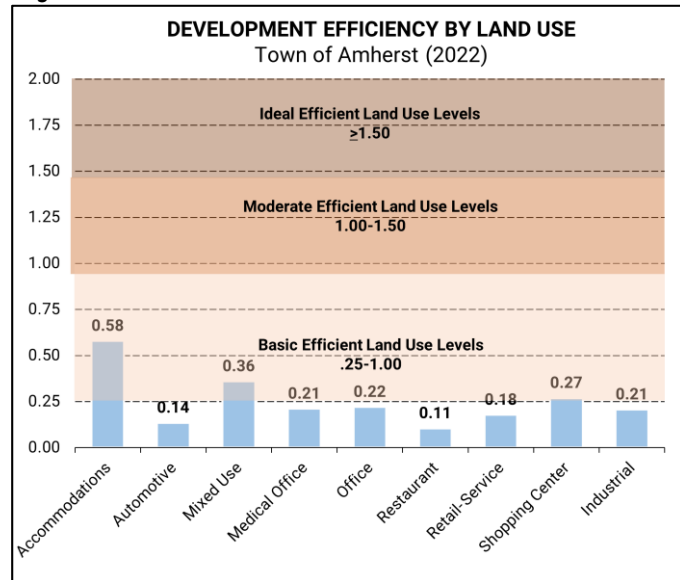
Source: Town of Amherst, RKG Associates, Inc., 2022



3. Land Use Efficiencies

A thriving live-work-recreate activity center is scaled for pedestrians, offering walkability to employment opportunities, key services, and lifestyle amenities. Consider Main Street in historic Williamsville where a pedestrian-scale connection is offered between retail stores, restaurants, and offices. Enhancing Amherst’s built environment with additional pedestrian-scale destinations will involve increasing developmental densities to strengthen walkability and connectivity. The Town has undertaken measures to do so, with the adoption of several mixed-use districts in 2019.

Figure 3-3



Source: Town of Amherst, RKG Associates, Inc., 2022

Amherst’s historic development patterns represent traditional suburbia, manifested through fragmented land uses and low Floor-Area-Ratio’s (FAR). The FAR measures the developmental density of a parcel in square feet, the floor size of built structures in relation to the size of the land parcel upon which it was built. On average, all of Amherst’s commercial building uses reported FAR’s well below 1.00 (Figure 3-3), indicating a large degree of separation from efficient development levels; FARs that are 1.50 or higher, and more strongly associated with development patterns that support walkability and connectivity.

Increasing density levels in strategic economic activity centers to enhance Amherst’s built environment is feasible, particularly within underutilized office parks and shopping centers where infill and redevelopment opportunities exist. Additional density to better support walkability is only one component of the equation, however. Other components must be accounted for to develop thriving live-work-recreate activity centers, and consequently strengthen the magnitude of economic development outcomes. A major component involves integrating a price-diversity of housing options that attract a diversity of household income levels, and ultimately, an expanded and diverse labor market to help local businesses’ recruitment efforts.

4. Residential Building Stock

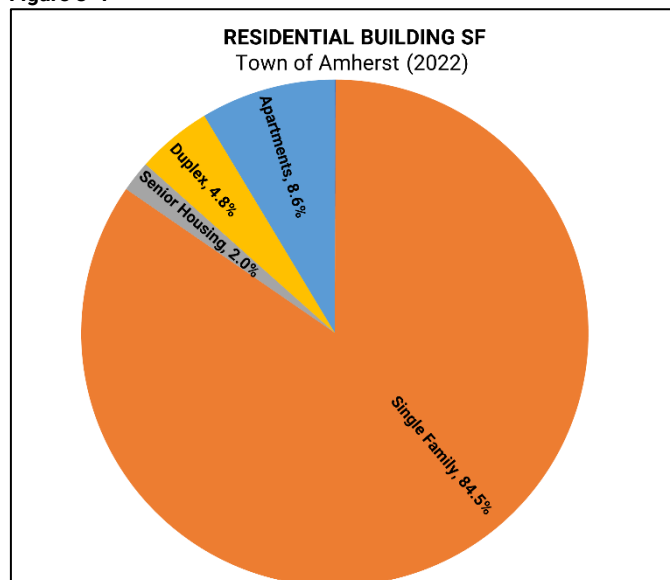
In many suburban communities nationwide, housing is predominately detached single-family homes. Amherst is no different, where nearly 85% of residential buildings are detached single-family homes (Figure 3-4). Most detached-single family homes are on the ownership market, and



unaffordable to key segments of the Town's (and region's) workforce, including young professionals. In particular, young professionals and service-based workers whose earnings levels are more compatible for rental housing opportunities.

Rental housing opportunities are severely underrepresented in Amherst. Apartments only constitute 8.6% of the town's residential building spaces (Figure 3-4). Of those units, many are unaffordable for working households. Figure 3-5 depicts downward pressure on the rental housing market. This scenario occurs when an insufficient number of units are available for higher income households, leading them to occupy units that would have been otherwise affordable for low-to-moderate income households. Renters at lower income levels are therefore pushed out of Amherst, forced to seek out living and working options elsewhere.

Figure 3-4



Source: Town of Amherst, RKG Associates, Inc., 2022

Many households priced-out of Amherst are represented in essential labor roles, particularly among service-based industries. Not proactively addressing their housing needs puts Amherst's long-term economic sustainability at risk, as fewer workers are available to sustain the quality and quantity of key services. The quality of services is an essential asset of Amherst's economic development infrastructure. A contraction of these services can impose intense pressure on the Town's effort to recruit and retain businesses, including those in white-collar industries.



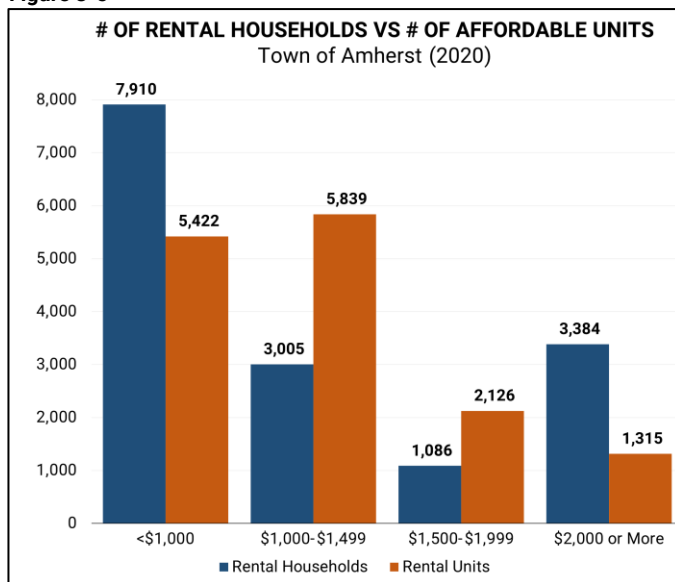
Amherst service-based businesses could see increasing competition for labor, especially as nearby communities (e.g., City of Buffalo) offer a more accommodating living environment for service-based workers—affordable housing options with greater accessibility to public transportation and job opportunities. Increasing the price diversity of rental units to support low-to-moderate income households can help sustain the Town’s service-based industries and bolster business recruitment and retention efforts.

5. Recent Residential Construction Activities

During the 2010s, the construction of apartments exceeded single family homes (Figure 3-6). This transition is a result of several market factors taking place. First, the Town has limited vacant parcels for development, prompting the need for higher density development to economically justify infill or redevelopment. Second, the locations of several potential investment sites are in areas that are not conducive to additional single-family development due to contextual and character issues (e.g., in commercial centers). Third, recent development coincides with the expansion of Amherst’s senior population, who seek out affordable ‘age-in-place’ opportunities that offer smaller living spaces and less maintenance requirements. Finally, there is targeted development to accommodate the Town’s substantial base of students from the University at Buffalo (UB). This includes The Station, a student-living complex that benefits from its proximity to UB’s campus, among others.

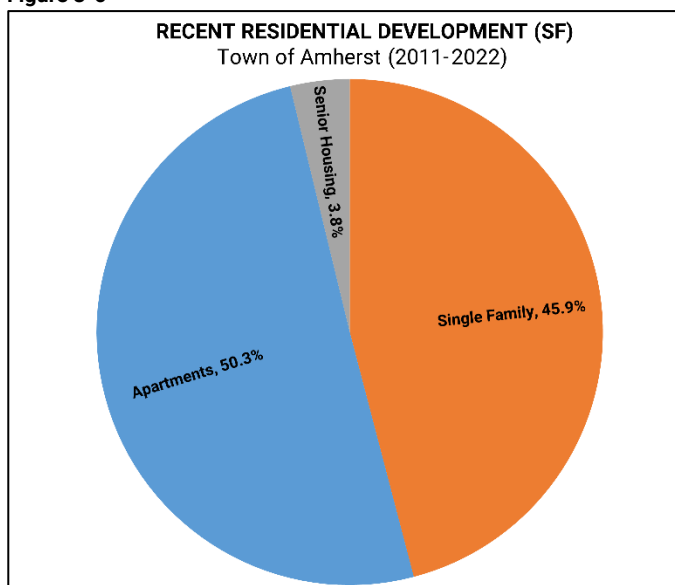
While additional apartment units are critical to advance the Town’s economic development objectives, most new units are isolated, requiring a car to reach the Town’s employment centers

Figure 3-5



Source: U.S. Census, RKG Associates, Inc., 2022

Figure 3-6



Source: Town of Amherst, RKG Associates, Inc., 2022



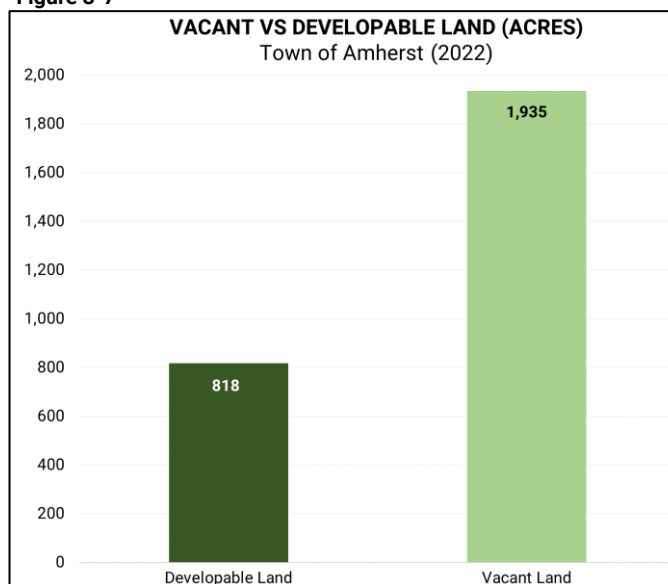
creating major impediment to attracting young professionals and service-based workers. Both are critical for enhancing Amherst’s labor market outcomes and overall economic competitiveness. Key locational considerations must be accounted for in future construction activities. Ideally, locating rental units where tenants can easily walk or take public transportation to nearby jobs and services. Further, future housing development should not solely target the rental housing market. The Town should also seek ways to expand the ownership market, particularly through diversifying the housing ownership typologies (e.g., townhouses and/or condos).

6. Developable Land Opportunities

Amherst’s stringent zoning regulations that promote suburban-scale development patterns, environmental constraints, and lack of available unimproved parcels are major reasons for the Town’s limited development opportunities. An abundance of wetlands is a primary environmental constraint in the northern portion of town, which limits substantial development activities from taking place. (Map 3-1).

In total, only 818 of the town’s 1,935 undeveloped, unrestricted acreage is not encumbered with wetland restrictions (Figure 3-7). All these limitations contribute to escalating land prices, subjecting developers to build higher density projects to justify the heightened costs of construction. Rising construction costs coupled with the limited availability of developable land demonstrate the importance of permitting higher densities in the Town’s primary commercial activity areas. Targeting infill and redevelopments on underutilized suburban office parks and shopping centers and pushing development opportunities in mixed-use districts.

Figure 3-7



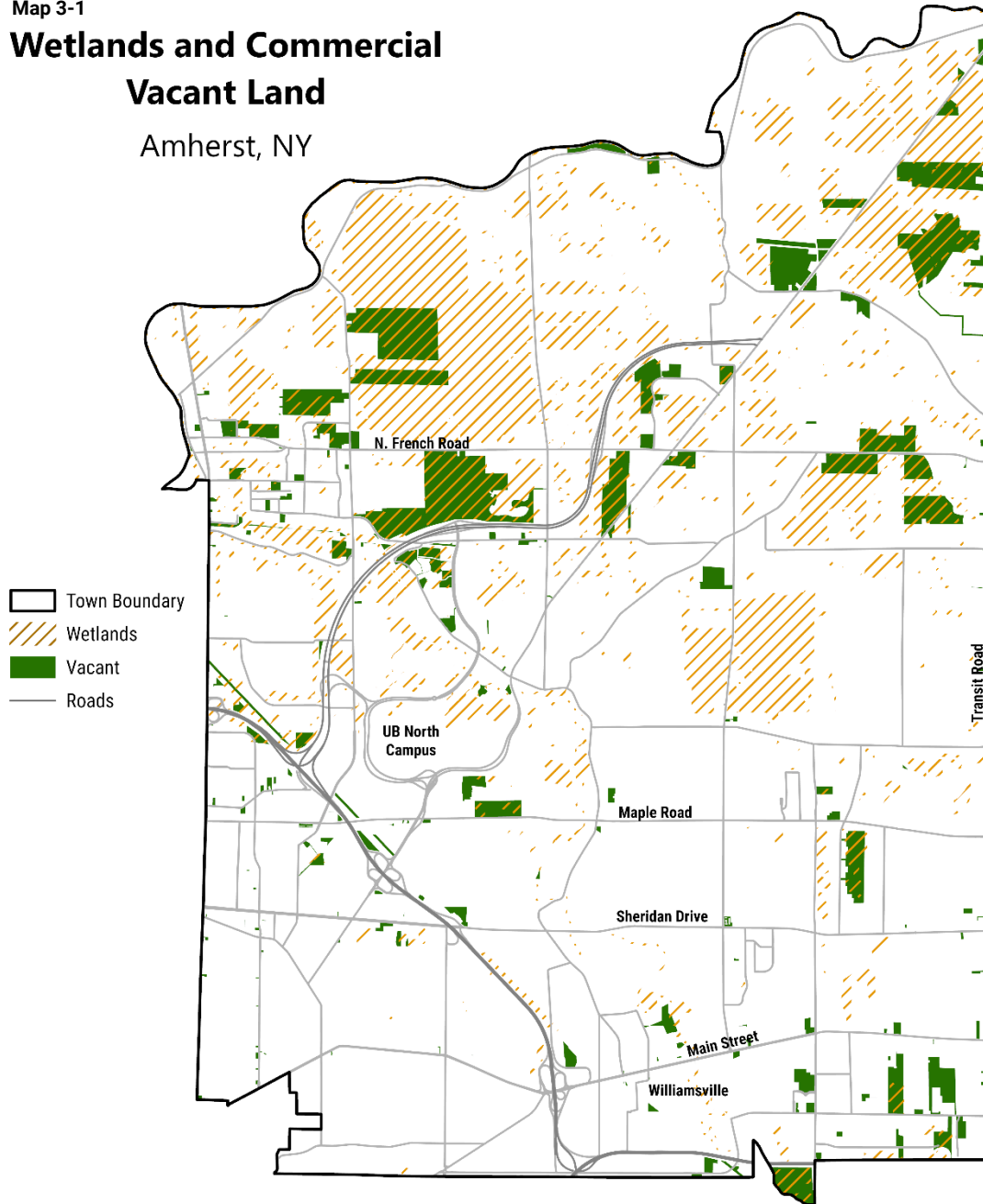
Source: Town of Amherst, RKG Associates, Inc., 2022



Map 3-1

Wetlands and Commercial Vacant Land

Amherst, NY



Source: Town of Amherst, RKG Associates, Inc., 2022



OFFICE MARKET

1. Submarket(s) Analysis

CBRE, a commercial real estate services firm, assesses office markets nationwide, including distinct submarkets throughout the Buffalo-Niagara MSA. According to CBRE, Amherst’s office market is represented in the East and North submarkets (Map 3-2). An evaluation of these submarkets offers insights on prevailing conditions and trends within Amherst’s office market.

Like many suburban marketplaces nationwide, office vacancies are prevalent in the East and North submarkets. In the East submarket, the vacancy rate is 9.8% whereas the vacancy rate in the North submarket is 12.1% (Figure 3-8). At these rates, over 600,000 square feet in the East submarket and over 1,000,000 square feet in the North submarket are free of economic generating activities. (Figure 3-8). The vacancies reflect each submarket’s large proportions of single-use office parks, which have reduced in demand over the previous few years. The reduction in demand for spaces in single-use office parks was especially accelerated during the COVID-19 pandemic, as many office users downsized their workspaces and/or transitioned to hybrid-work models.

Map 3-2– Office Submarkets



Source: CBRE, RKG Associates, Inc., 2022

Figure 3-8

East Submarket Office Space Supply		North Submarket Office Space Supply	
4 Quarter 2021 Data (CBRE)		4 Quarter 2021 Data (CBRE)	
Total Square Footage:	6.2 Million SF	Total Square Footage:	8.6 Million SF
Total Vacancy Rate:	9.8%	Total Vacancy Rate:	12.2%
'Class A'	4.5%	'Class A' Vacancy Rate:	16.1%
Net Absorption:	73,626 SF	Net Absorption:	(30,778 SF)
	Outlook		Outlook
	↑		█
	↓		↑
	█		↑
	↑		↓

Source: CBRE 2021, RKG Associates, Inc., 2022



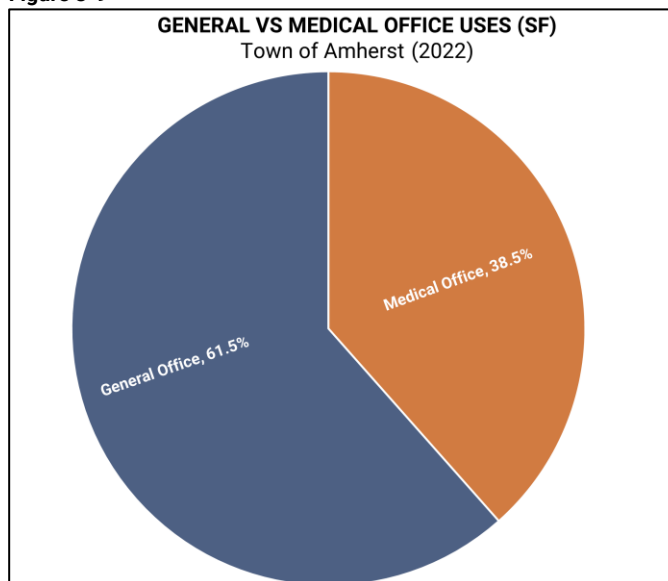
While the pandemic subsides, the hybrid work-model will remain normalized, prompting many Amherst companies to reevaluate their unused workspaces. For instance, Univera Healthcare, an Amherst-based company, leases 120,000 SF while fewer than 10% of their 540 employees work full-time on-site (The Buffalo News, 2022). Like Univera Healthcare, many companies in town face similar pressures, increasing the likelihood they discontinue their leases at existing spaces in favor of competing workspace models. This includes office models that foster collaboration and team building, such as co-working spaces and open layouts. Location has also become a priority, as companies prefer to operate near amenities and public transportation.

2. Key Office Market Trends and Considerations

a) **Medical Office Trends and Economic Development**

Medical offices comprise a considerable proportion of Amherst’s office market, consuming nearly 40% of the Town’s office space (Figure 3-9). The significant presence of medical uses supports Amherst’s robust healthcare industry, which serves as a major hub for Erie County and the Buffalo MSA. Local medical companies have undergone efforts to improve service delivery and enhance cost efficiencies. Many of these efforts are incorporated into strategic real estate initiatives, such as co-locating medical offices with retail uses and expanding outpatient care centers. Ultimately, these types of real estate investments can generate positive economic development outcomes. Co-locating medical offices can help attract and retain workers, a critical effort as competition for skilled healthcare workers escalates. Outpatient care centers can help alleviate overburdened emergency rooms at nearby hospitals and as a result, sustain the quality of healthcare services, an existing asset for recruiting businesses considering relocation.

Figure 3-9



Source: Town of Amherst, RKG Associates, Inc., 2022

b) **Growing vs. Dividing the Healthcare Pie**

While healthcare services expand into innovative real estate spaces, many expansions are not a function of absolute growth, but rather, a redistribution of the same level of services to newer and advanced medical spaces. This redistribution can be detrimental to vacated inventory, which may be hard to backfill as demand for medical services in the Town remains



fairly stable. Instead of the healthcare industry ‘pie’ expanding, it is being divided into smaller slices with similar employment and service levels.

While the regional population remains fairly stable, the Town of Amherst can explore other sources for increasing healthcare demand while revitalizing operations in previously occupied office spaces. ‘Medical Tourism’ appears to be an emerging market opportunity, which is the process of centralizing niche healthcare activities to attract patients from outside the immediate region. A popular example is Roswell Park, which recently expanded to Amherst as a center for cancer treatment and research

The creation of a sports medicine destination displays signs of future potential for fueling medical tourism in Amherst. UBMD Orthopaedics & Sports Medicine plans to open a world-class treatment complex within proximity to UB Athletic facilities, the Northtown Center, and proximity to the emerging Amherst Central Park. Co-locating near the Northtown Center offers an opportunity to create a destination for sports training, rehabilitation, and research. As a result, stimulating job opportunities for physical therapists and orthopedists. Over time, a stable sports medicine employment base can encourage entrepreneurial medical practices. Meanwhile, creating a demand for medical offices while helping to grow the healthcare industry’s ‘pie.’

c) Office Prospects in Amherst

Most of Amherst’s office buildings are large, set aside for expansive corporate operations. While businesses downsize their physical footprint due to hybrid-work models and move towards urban environments, most of the Town’s office spaces are ‘over-sized’ and less amenitized, reducing Amherst’s competitiveness for recruiting and retaining potential office tenants. As discussed earlier in this chapter, underutilized suburban office parks can be reimagined into live-work-recreate destinations to revitalize economic activities. Such destinations should include smaller office spaces (1,000 – 3,000 SF) or co-working spaces to accommodate today’s business needs more efficiently. This can help advance entrepreneurship, which is evolving into an integral source of job creation in Amherst. Further, creating these more dynamic locations will help the larger, corporate office buildings become more attractive as the amenity packages needed to satisfy workers are put into place.

D. Retail Market

1. Submarket(s) Analysis

Like the analysis of the office submarkets in the previous section, RKG evaluated retail submarkets represented in Amherst. According to CBRE, Amherst hovers within the ‘Boulevard’ and ‘Eastern Hills’ submarkets.

The Boulevard and Eastern Hills submarkets intersect with major road systems catalyzing the development of regional malls, major shopping centers, and big box stores. Frequent traffic



patterns fuel the revenue streams for these establishments. As of 2021, both submarkets report high vacancy rates (Map 3-4).

The high vacancy rates are attributed to shifts in consumption patterns, including the rising popularity of e-commerce and businesses needing less or no physical space. The convenience provided by shopping malls has become increasingly obsolete, as goods can be shipped directly to a household’s doorstep. The Boulevard Mall, which contributes to the Boulevard submarket’s high vacancy rate, has felt these impacts.

While vacancies remain high in these submarkets, other indicators suggest an optimistic outlook. Both reported increasing absorption rates and declining vacancies (Table 3-1). The performance of these submarkets is likely to remain steady in the near-term, especially since most of the region is auto dependent and population growth rates are fairly stable. In the mid-term to long-term, however, Boulevard and Eastern Hills submarkets are vulnerable to market contractions as consumer spending capacities decrease in wake of a thinning regional labor market.

Map 3-4– Retail Submarkets



Source: CBRE, RKG Associates, Inc., 2022

Table 3-1

Key Retail Submarket Indicators		
	Boulevard	Eastern Hills
Total Inventory (SF)	5.4 Million SF	4.0 Million SF
Total Vacancy Rate (%)	12.2%	10.5%
Change in Vacany Rate (%)	-2.1%	-0.5%
Net Absorption (SF)	114,337 SF	19,561 SF

Source: CBRE 2021, RKG Associates, Inc., 2022

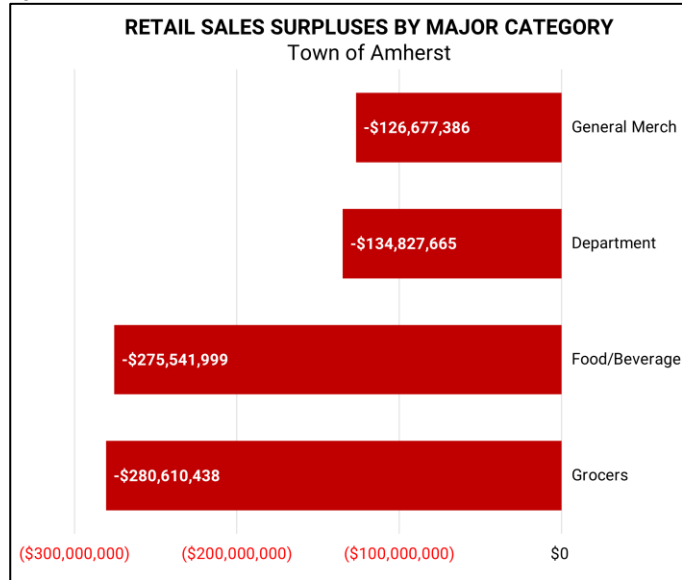


2. Key Retail Market Trends and Considerations

a) Amherst is a regional retail destination

In the Buffalo MSA, Amherst is considered a regional retail destination as retailers capture a surplus of \$569 million in total sales. A surplus indicates that retailers capture more sales than are executed by the town’s consumer base. Retailers are attracting many consumers living outside the Town of Amherst. Grocery Stores (e.g., Wegmans) and General Merchandise Stores (e.g., Target) represent a large proportion of surplus sales (Figure 3-10), suggesting a strong performance of the Town’s destination retail centers. This is largely a consequence of the Town’s proximity to major interstates, which has helped catalyze retail activities along Niagara Falls Boulevard and Transit Road.

Figure 3-10



Source: Esri, RKG Associates, Inc., 2022

b) Oversaturation fuels internal competition

While a surplus of retail sales can indicate strong market performance, it also points to an oversaturated marketplace. That is an excessive supply of retail stores exceeding the demand of Amherst’s consumer base. Many stores in Amherst are therefore vulnerable to shutting down due to intensified competition. For instance, the decline of the Boulevard Mall partly stems from the competitive advantages of General Merchandising Stores and Big Box Stores located in the Town and in the Malls case, just directly to the north (Boulevard Consumer Square).

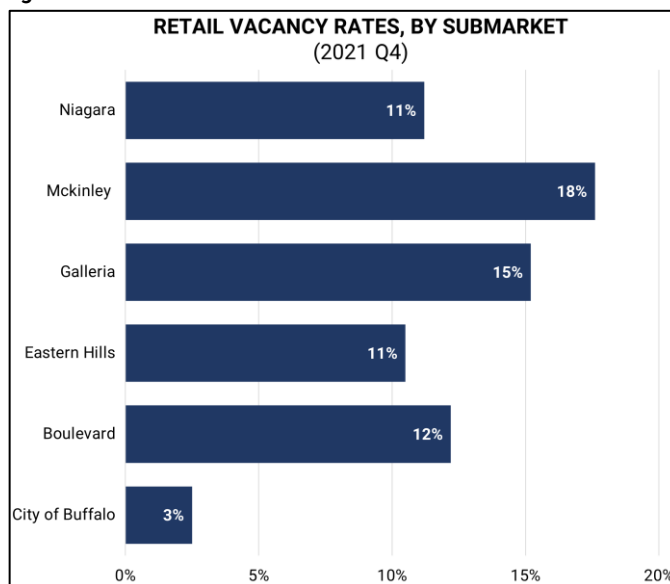
c) Connection between Retail Markets and Labor Markets

Market indicators suggest Amherst’s retail market will remain steady in the short term, as the region’s population growth rates are fairly stable. However, the region’s declining employment base and consequential reduced spending capacities imposes pressures on the long-term sustainability of Amherst’s retail market. Under these circumstances, national brand retailers with minimal ties with the local community are less likely to maintain operations in Amherst. While the performance of the labor market influences the strength and vitality of retail markets, Amherst can conduct efforts to support job creation. This includes investing in live-work-recreate destinations, which can attract and retain young professionals.



The City of Buffalo’s retail market has benefited through these types of investments, as their retail inventories report the lowest vacancies among all submarkets within the Buffalo-Niagara MSA (Figure 3-11). Incorporating similar development models in Amherst can help generate new sources of demand to sustain the Town’s retail market in the long term. Figure 3-11 represents the percentage of total retail spaces that are unoccupied in each submarket.

Figure 3-11



Source: CBRE 2021, RKG Associates, Inc., 2022

E. Industrial Market

1. Submarket(s) Analysis

According to CBRE, Amherst is located in the East and North submarkets (Map 3-4). Both submarkets appear to be in good condition, with high absorption rates and decrease in vacancies (Figure 3-12). These high-performance metrics are linked to rising demand for warehouse spaces, as logistics operations are expanding to meet increases in consumer spending. While ecommerce continues to expand, pent-up demand for warehouse spaces is expected to remain steady in the East and North submarkets. This is especially due to their inherent advantages that fuel logistics operations, strong accessibility to interstates and proximity to major markets.

Map 3-4 – Industrial Submarkets



Source: CBRE, RKG Associates, Inc., 2022

While the availability of existing inventory diminishes, construction activities of industrial properties are taking place in areas throughout the Buffalo MSA. Proposed projects are averaging between 50,000 SF and 150,000 SF, which requires substantial land resources to support such projects. While land resources are limited in Amherst, the Town is unequipped to absorb future construction. A more viable alternative to enhance the Town’s industrial market is to improve their existing



inventory. This includes reconfiguring flex spaces, which consume most of Amherst’s industrial market. These efforts can help advance emerging economic development opportunities—cottage manufacturing, research & development, entrepreneurship, etc.

Figure 3-12

East Submarket Industrial Space Supply		North Submarket Industrial Space Supply	
4 Quarter 2021 Data (CBRE)		4 Quarter 2021 Data (CBRE)	
	Outlook		Outlook
Total Square Footage:	24.7 Million SF	Total Square Footage (Manufacturing):	10.3 Million SF
Total Vacancy Rate:	1.7%	Total Square Footage (Warehousing):	5.9 Million SF
Y-o-Y Change in Vacancy Rate	(5.7%)	Vacancy Rate:	1.2%
Net Absorption:	807,631 SF	Net Absorption:	247,959 SF

Source: CBRE 2021, RKG Associates, Inc., 2022

2. Key Industrial Market Trends and Considerations

a) Flex Spaces Consume Most of Amherst’s Industrial Market

Amherst’s industrial market is predominantly flex spaces with very few serving production-based operations. Many existing flex spaces are occupied by professional-users and back-office users, attractive to businesses since rents can be lower than traditional office spaces. While many businesses seek to reduce their physical footprint due to work-from-home models, flex spaces in the town are prone to future vacancies. This offers a couple viable economic development opportunities. Existing spaces could be converted to support warehouse operations, as the region’s supply chain market continues to expand. Or rather, work to fill spaces with Research & Development opportunities.

b) Land Resources are Scarce in Amherst

Amherst’s low-density zoning regulations, abundant prevalence of wetlands, and lack of available unimproved parcels are a few reasons for the Town’s limited development opportunities. These limitations discourage future construction of industrial properties. While construction is unlikely, the town can take advantage of in-fill and redevelopment opportunities to facilitate the creation of cottage-production facilities. Cottage-production operations consume a smaller footprint than traditional manufacturing operations while generating fewer negative spillovers (e.g., noxious smells/sounds). Popular examples include micro-laboratories, furniture-making shops, and breweries. These types of operations can be integrated into live-work-recreate activity centers.



F. INSIGHTS & IMPLICATIONS

Labor market pressures, outdated development patterns, and resource reallocation to other areas of Erie County put the Town of Amherst at a crossroads. Remain 'Business as Usual' and maintain a suburban focus, limiting the town's economic growth. Or rather, accommodate prevailing market trends through improvements to the built environment that focus on promoting walkability and accessibility. As a result, encouraging job creation and retention in Amherst. Opportunities exist to do so, through the creation of centralized live-work-recreate activity centers that will integrate a few strategic components: increased densities for walkability, expanded availability of price-diverse housing opportunities near key services, and enhanced accessibility to public transportation.



4 TARGET INDUSTRY ANALYSIS

A. INTRODUCTION

This Target Industry Analysis aims to identify key industries poised to facilitate job growth in Amherst. The identification of industries incorporates a comprehensive assessment of Amherst’s economic development conditions. This includes assessing the Town’s availability of qualified workers, entrepreneurial environment, and business climate factors. This section includes: (1) a review of local and regional business climate factors; (2) an evaluation of Amherst’s workforce; (3) an assessment of Amherst’s entrepreneurial environment; and (4) a detailed review of the industries that demonstrate a growth potential in Amherst.

B. DATA SOURCES AND ANALYSIS CONSIDERATIONS

Portions of the section may focus on Erie County due to an unavailability of data for the Town of Amherst. This includes the section on workforce gaps by 2-digit Standard Occupational Classification (SOC), as 2022 unemployment data by 2-digit SOC is available for Erie County but not the Town of Amherst.

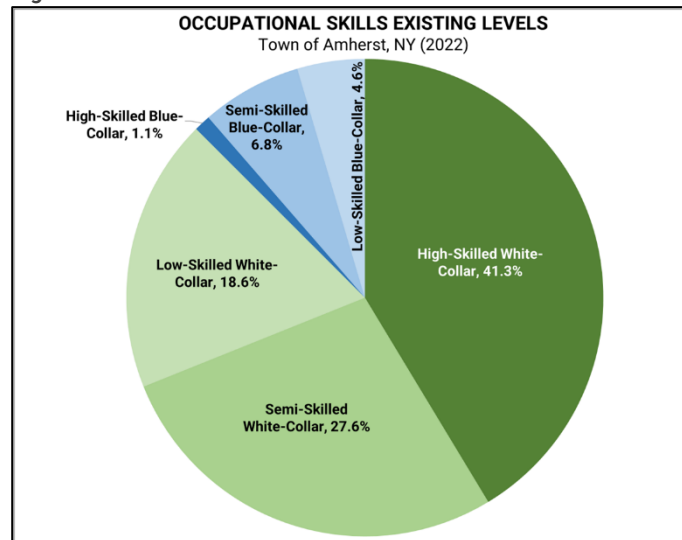
C. WORKFORCE ANALYSIS

1. Occupational Skills Snapshot

Amherst’s job market is largely customized for white-collar professionals, as most jobs are consumed by highly educated or experienced workers. As of 2022, over 40% of the # jobs in Amherst are considered ‘High-Skilled White-Collar’ positions (Figure 4-1). Many of these positions are represented in traditional white-collar sectors such as -healthcare, finance/insurance, research & development, etc. A significant proportion of High-Skilled White-Collar positions can be considered a boon to the Town’s economic development efforts, as many existing workers are equipped with the knowledge and skills to advance entrepreneurial opportunities.

While recruitment for businesses outside the region is expected to remain

Figure 4-1



Source: Lightcast, RKG Associates, Inc., 2022



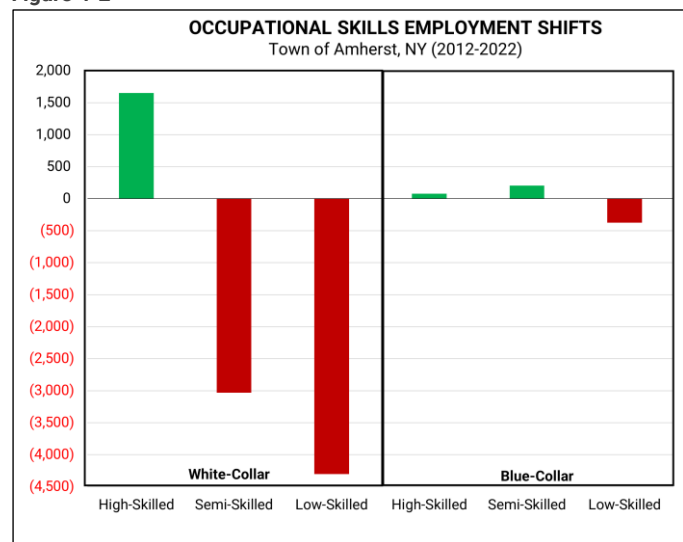
challenging, entrepreneurship is a feasible alternative for job creation in Amherst, especially as digitalized work models have caused businesses to reduce their dependence on capital-intensive operations to drive economic growth. This differs from traditional economies in which businesses put a greater emphasis on production-based operations utilizing manual labor. This gradual transition to a digitalized economy has unfolded in Amherst, as blue-collar positions represent a smaller share than white-collar positions in the Town’s job market. While large-scale manufacturing operations decrease in Amherst and the region, the existing base of blue-collar professionals can help contribute to entrepreneurial opportunities, particularly within ‘cottage-manufacturing’ operations.

2. Occupational Skills Employment Shifts

In the previous decade, critical segments of Amherst’s workforce have decreased. Between 2012 and 2022, nearly 7,500 jobs were lost among semi-skilled and low-skilled white-collar professionals (Figure 4-2). Many of these job losses stem from service-based industries, with most occurring during the COVID-19 pandemic due to social distancing restrictions. The decline of jobs among serviced-based workers can impose detrimental impacts on economic and community development in Amherst. A decrease in service-based jobs can correspond with a reduction of key community services in retail, hospitality, and healthcare.

Maintaining adequate levels of these community services is time-sensitive, as demand for services is trending upwards due to the Town’s expanding senior population. Moreover, recruiting and retaining businesses becomes more challenging as the capacity of local services reduces. While future losses among low-skilled and semi-skilled white-collar professionals are projected through 2032, the Town of Amherst must intervene accordingly to minimize the number of future losses. A comprehensive approach with several interventions offers the best chance of reducing future losses. This includes providing workforce housing opportunities and enhancing entrepreneurial opportunities for service-based operations.

Figure 4-2



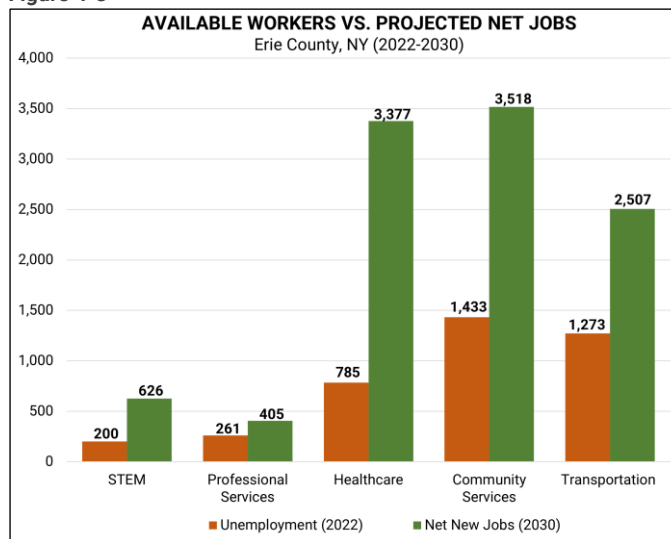
Source: Lightcast, RKG Associates, Inc., 2022



3. Workforce Development

Erie County’s labor market faces immense pressures to stabilize future levels of economic activities. Across multiple 2-digit SOC occupational segments, major gaps are projected between the county’s existing labor market levels and projected 2030 labor market levels (Figure 4-3). Gaps among healthcare occupations are particularly pronounced, imposing potential disruptions to Amherst’s provision of medical services. Medical services are expected to surge in demand as the Town’s senior population reaches unprecedented levels. While the ability to recruit and retain workers will remain cumbersome, and the region’s employment base shrinks, workforce development becomes a viable opportunity to create jobs and help meet projected 2030 levels.

Figure 4-3



Source: Lightcast, RKG Associates, Inc., 2022

Workforce development is a collection of strategies that equip existing workers with skills and/or qualifications, preparing them to meet the employment needs of local businesses. This is effectively facilitated through educational programs, offering structured curriculums that prepare graduates for local job opportunities. To Amherst’s advantage, the Town is equipped with local educational institutions—University at Buffalo (UB), SUNY Erie (ECC), Bryant & Stratton, and Daemen University. While programs are available, conversations with key stakeholders (colleges/universities, businesses, government agencies), suggested that educational institutions’ role of contributing to local job creation is underutilized. Key challenges cited in these conversations included a decline in college enrollment (ECC) as well as an insufficient labor pool with the needed skillsets or qualifications to perform various jobs in the town. Degree completion data indicate that Erie County is not producing enough workers in several key economic sectors (Table 4-1), which is resulting in loss of jobs within the region. Sectors include Business Operations Support and Assistant Services as well as Health and Medical Administrative Services.

Given the cited challenges, the Town of Amherst can improve their coordination and cooperation efforts between local community members, businesses, and colleges/universities.

Specific efforts may include:

Spreading Awareness of Available Programs to Schools in the County. As ECC seeks to reverse declining enrollment through future marketing initiatives, the Town can enhance



initiatives through proactive outreach to local high schools. Many high school students are not planning to attend four-year universities and ECC programs can offer students opportunities to prepare for high-demand professions that pay competitive wages. Increased outreach can help increase awareness of ECC programs while increasing the likelihood of enrolling and eventually entering in-demand job opportunities in the Town. Collaborative outreach efforts can be done with Erie BOCES too, increasing awareness of programs that prepare students in technical/trade fields.

Table 4-1

Degree Completions of Local Colleges Erie County, NY				
Description	Completions	2022 Jobs	12-'22 Change	Annual Openings
Business Operations Support and Assistant Services	30	73,682	(7,743)	10,485
Health and Medical Administrative Services	614	47,430	(7,367)	6,174
Health Professions and Related Clinical Sciences, Other	6	24,198	2,950	3,373
Practical Nursing, Vocational Nursing and Nursing Assistants	435	18,388	(279)	2,490
Precision Metal Working	71	16,802	977	2,019
Registered Nursing, Nursing Administration, Nursing Research	1,095	21,556	227	1,847
Data Analytics	5	15,667	79	1,713
Allied Health and Medical Assisting Services	62	12,397	535	1,488
Computer and Information Sciences, General	489	12,501	(1,773)	1,287
Computer Science	277	11,282	(1,216)	1,120

Source: Lightcast, RKG Associates, Inc., 2022

Facilitating Conversations Between Local Educational Institutions and Businesses. Many high-demand job opportunities do not require completion of a traditional 4-year degree. This includes administrative support roles and healthcare positions. While labor recruitment remains challenging for employers, facilitating greater cooperation between local educational institutions and businesses can streamline the creation of fast-track certificate programs that cater to industry demands.

Increasing Communication with Local Talent. A 'Brain-Drain' is a regional challenge, as many college graduates leave the region for job opportunities. Targeted outreach initiatives with upcoming graduates from University at Buffalo and non-profits (e.g., WNY Consortium of Higher Education) can help the Town understand their ideal working conditions and then formulate policies and programs that cater to their priorities.



D. ENTREPRENEURIAL ANALYSIS

While the Buffalo MSA struggles with brain drain and an aging labor force, recruiting businesses from outside the region will remain limited. Given these demographic limitations, allocating financial and time resources towards business recruitment and attraction can be an inefficient approach for the Town of Amherst. Rather, Amherst should consider the creation of policies and programs that facilitate entrepreneurial opportunities. This can be a more effective approach towards business expansion and retention given Amherst’s socioeconomic advantages for facilitating entrepreneurship. Including, the Town’s substantial population of existing sole proprietors, highly educated workers, and patent recipients.

A town-sponsored entrepreneurial development program in coordination with regional stakeholders (e.g., University of Buffalo, Small Business Development Center at Buffalo State University, financial institutions, etc.) can be a strategic platform for pooling financial and technical resources. This would not only enhance cost efficiencies but would assist aspiring entrepreneurs jumpstart and scale their operations with funding, mentorship opportunities, and technical consultations.

1. Self-Employed, Sole Proprietor, and Non-QCEW¹ Workers

As of 2022, the Town of Amherst has an estimated 24,500 workers that identify as either self-employed, sole proprietors, or non-QCEW workers (Table 4-2). Non-QCEW refers to workers not covered by unemployment insurance, not contracted in a traditional employment setting. Many

Table 4-2

Largest Self-Employed, Sole Proprietor, and Non-QCEW Workers Town of Amherst Zip Codes (2022)				
NAICS	Description	2012 Jobs	2022 Jobs	Net Change
531	Real Estate	2,757	3,631	874
523	Securities, Commodity Contracts, and Other Financial Investments	2,621	3,180	559
541	Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	2,662	3,032	370
611	Educational Services	1,015	1,466	451
524	Insurance Carriers and Related Activities	1,235	1,382	147
525	Funds, Trusts, and Other Financial Vehicles	956	1,378	422
551	Management of Companies and Enterprises	542	1,285	743
812	Personal and Laundry Services	1,253	1,162	(91)
621	Ambulatory Health Care Services	1,113	1,148	35
454	Nonstore Retailers	835	827	(8)
561	Administrative and Support Services	859	694	(165)
238	Specialty Trade Contractors	381	361	(20)
624	Social Assistance	564	352	(212)
453	Miscellaneous Store Retailers	386	350	(36)
485	Transit and Ground Passenger Transportation	34	310	276
722	Food Services and Drinking Places	300	310	10
711	Performing Arts, Spectator Sports, and Related Industries	350	254	(96)
811	Repair and Maintenance	249	240	(9)

Source: Lightcast, RKG Associates, Inc., 2022

¹ Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, or QCEW, reports data on jobs covered by state unemployment insurance (UI) and Federal workers covered by the Unemployment Compensation of Federal Employees (UCFE).

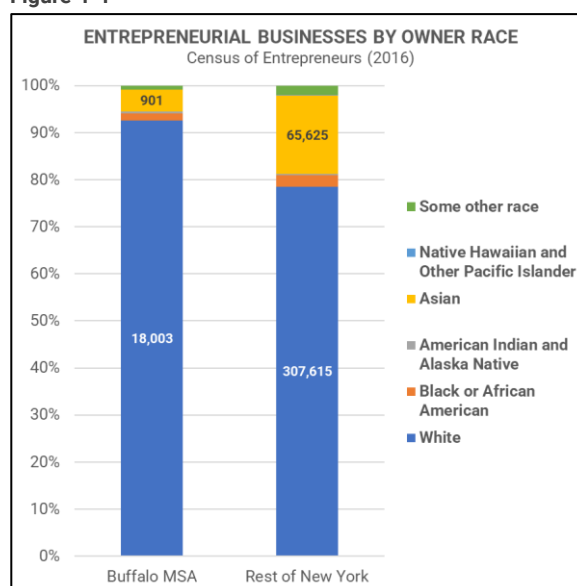


works in industries known for employing high concentrations of independent contractors, including Real Estate which absorbed the largest net gain of jobs in the previous decade among all other industries. The quantity of self-employed-sole-proprietor-non-QCEW workers expanded across a variety of industry segments. This includes Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services, an industry credited for producing high-wages and employing highly educated professionals. Which, consequently, can contribute to several long-term economic development benefits— business attraction and higher spending capacities, and ultimately fiscal-sustainability.

2. Minority Business Ownership

Relative to the region’s white population, minorities represent a substantially smaller share of entrepreneurial business owners (Figure 4-4). On a surface level, the substantial difference in representation reflects population trends within the region—historically, the number of whites have outweighed the number of minorities. On a deeper level, however, differences in representation reflects the stronger barriers aspiring minority entrepreneurs are more likely to encounter. This includes a reduced accessibility to financial resources and social networks. Moreover, are more likely to face language barriers.

Figure 4-4



Source: BLS, RKG Associates, Inc., 2022

Given Amherst’s expanding minority population, the Town must consider executing a proactive approach towards empowering their entrepreneurial spirit. Such efforts may be critical towards the town’s long-term economic sustainability, as jobs, and ultimately local spending capacities, are vulnerable to reductions. The Town should seek out regional stakeholders with similar objectives. While in its early stages, the Buffalo Niagara Partnership (BNP) jumpstarted the Minority-Owned Business Initiative (MBI), a pilot program focused on scaling the operational capacities of existing minority-based entrepreneurs.

3. Source of Capital & Assistance

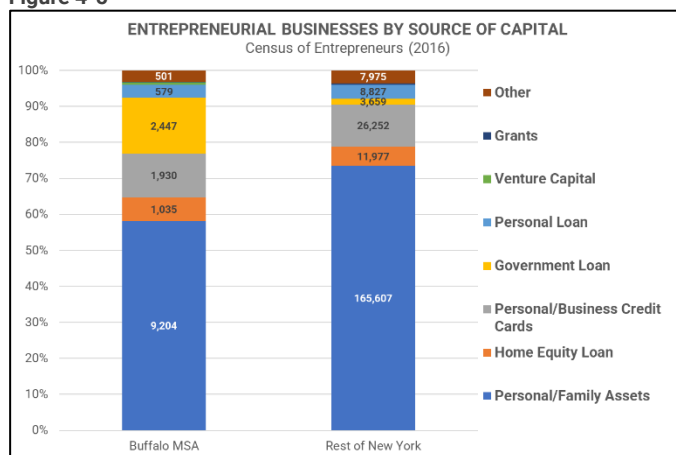
Entrepreneurs are more likely to use personal capital to finance their businesses (Figure 4-5). Nearly 80% of entrepreneurs in the Buffalo MSA whereas approximately 90% of entrepreneurs in other areas of New York used personal capital. Many are prone to stem from high-income households, able to practice risk-tolerance with commercial investments rather than the aspiring entrepreneur more likely exposed to disadvantaged financial circumstances. Such as young



entrepreneurs, foreigners, and minorities (more likely to practice risk-aversion). These groups are more prone to seek out other sources of capital such as government loans or grants.

Given the region’s depth of population segments under disadvantaged financial circumstances, the Town can help move the needle on this potential entrepreneurial marketplace. Partnerships with local banks and higher educational institutions would help to provide an investment vehicle for aspiring entrepreneurs seeking to commercialize their ideas. Similar initiatives are being executed in the City of Buffalo, such as Launch NY and 43North, which invests in early-stage startups with large financial backing from the State of New York. As federal and state-funds continue to target startup activities in the region, the Town should increase their involvement while proactively leveraging these resources.

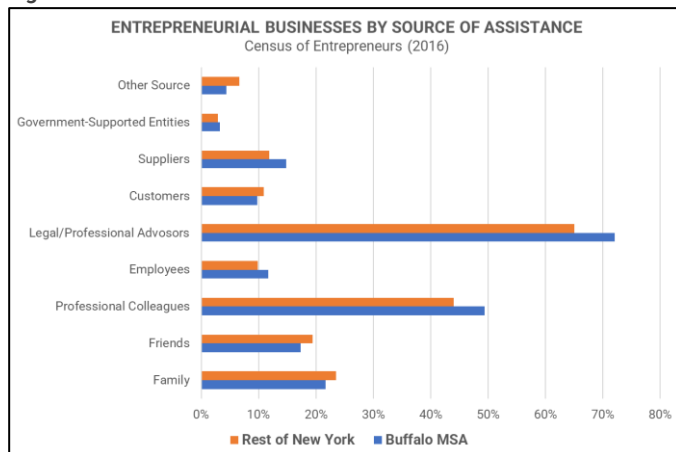
Figure 4-5



Source: BLS, RKG Associates, Inc., 2022

The Town’s lack of involvement for startup activities is demonstrated through an entrepreneur’s source of assistance and mentorship, reflecting the local culture and minimal infrastructure for entrepreneurial development. Government-Supported Entities have comprised a negligible amount of assistance for entrepreneurs (Figure 4-6). As Amherst seeks to expand its entrepreneurial development capacities, it should consider leveraging potential pro-bono resources for helping local entrepreneurs scale their operations. This includes partnering with organizations like SCORE that assist aspiring entrepreneurs with technical guidance and training opportunities.

Figure 4-6



Source: BLS, RKG Associates, Inc., 2022

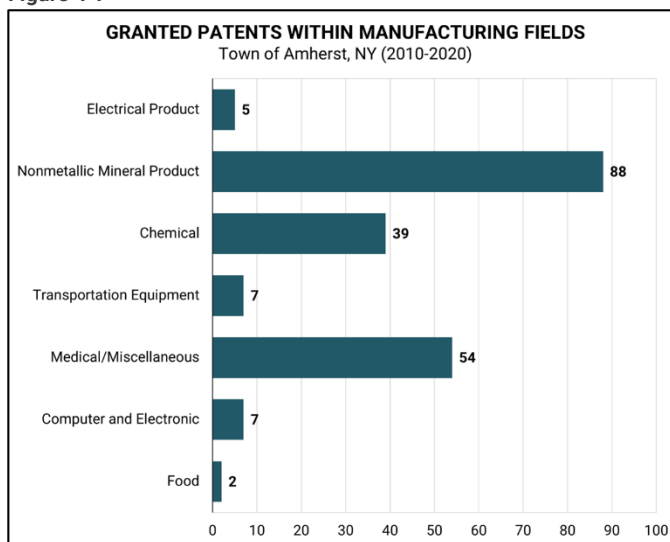
4. Patent Activities

Since 2010, a substantial number of patents were granted to Amherst-based corporations that relate to physical and medical sciences (Figure 4-7). The high-degree of patent recipients can



promote entrepreneurial and small business development opportunities, especially through Town-sponsored involvement. This can encompass a variety of activities to trigger market outcomes, including outreach initiatives to identify startup needs, financial assistance for scaling operations, and even the creation of cottage makerspaces. Market spaces are critical for facilitating Research & Development functions, creating accessibility to advanced machinery/high-tech equipment and for testing and experimentation. As federal and state investments target startup activities in high-tech sectors in Western New York, Amherst should coordinate with the University of Buffalo (UB) to attract higher levels of investment activities. A possible strategy could be to invest in off-campus makerspaces in proposed or planned economic activity areas—new mixed-use districts, redevelopment of Boulevard Mall---that involves UB support. UB could help design makerspaces to ensure they’re equipped with suitable technology and testing materials for driving research objectives and securing grants.

Figure 4-7



Source: USPTO, RKG Associates, Inc., 2022

E. BUSINESS CLIMATE FACTORS

Business climate factors measure the viability of local and regional economies for supporting business creation and growth. The main business climate factors include Financial Assets & Income, Businesses & Jobs, Housing & Homeownership, Healthcare, and Education (Table 4-3). Each of these factors includes a collection of quantified metrics, which can provide insights on the ‘business-friendliness’ of an area. For instance, a metric included in the Businesses & Jobs factor is the microenterprise ownership rate, the proportion of businesses in an area with 5 employees or fewer. A high microenterprise ownership rate, like in the State of New York (ranked 3rd among all U.S. states), suggests the state fosters a relatively strong environment for entrepreneurial opportunities. An understanding of these metrics, such as the microenterprise ownership rate, can influence the creation of policies and programs that bolster Amherst’s competitiveness as a place to do business. For instance, executing initiatives that improve the Town’s entrepreneurial environment and consequently, support the development of microenterprises.

The following analysis in this section incorporates data from Prosperity Now, a non-profit aimed at expanding economic opportunities among geographic areas nationwide. Most of the data is presented at the state level, which allows the Town of Amherst to evaluate their own economic



assets and constraints relative to the State of New York. RKG Associates highlighted the Town's most pressing economic assets and constraints, based on socioeconomic trends and interviews with local stakeholders.

1. Financial Assets & Income

Metrics among the Financial Assets & Income factor measure a resident's ability to accumulate wealth. Greater wealth accumulation increases the propensity for residents to cover living expenses and capture additional savings to finance workforce opportunities. Additional savings can help residents more easily pay tuition costs for workforce development programs at nearby educational institutions (e.g., UB, ECC) moreover, it can expand the financial capital needed to support entrepreneurial opportunities.

Income inequality among households is highest in the State of New York. This statistic is hardly surprising; New York City hosts many of the country's wealthiest households, skewing the state's wealth distribution towards the top income quintile. Its likely income inequality is an issue Amherst, given the large concentration of households earning well above the Town's median household income. Among the Town's existing base of low-to-moderate income households, many are prone to struggle with financial security, inhibiting their capacity to secure the assets and privileges more accessible to higher-income households like homeownership opportunities, higher education/trade school enrollment, capital accumulation to finance entrepreneurship.

The Town of Amherst should consider the creation of Individual Development Account (IDA) program, involving local financial institutions.² An IDA is a special savings account in which a low-to-moderate income household makes recurring deposits over a fixed time period. The participating financial institutions match deposits at a 1:1 or 2:1 ratio—the count holder receives a dollar for every dollar, or two dollars invested into the savings account. The additional funds generated from an IDA can help account holders save for postsecondary education, homeownership, or potential entrepreneurial opportunities. Financial institutions may welcome participation to meet obligations set for in the Community Reinvestment Act (CRA). An additional consideration is leveraging resources with refugee resettlement non-profits to increase competitiveness for federal refugee IDA grant programs.³

2. Businesses & Jobs

Metrics among the Business & Jobs factor measure the viability of advancing entrepreneurial opportunities. New York's proportion of small businesses is significant by U.S. standards, ranking 3rd among all U.S. states for the rate of microenterprise ownership. Microenterprises are businesses employing 10 employees or fewer. While the high ranking suggests the State of New York hosts a strong environment for advancing entrepreneurial opportunities, the Town of

² <https://www.fdic.gov/analysis/quarterly-banking-profile/fdic-quarterly/2007-vol1-1/idas.pdf>

³ <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/view-opportunity.html?oppId=339004>



Amherst may not be keeping up with state standards. RKG-conducted interviews with local entrepreneurs suggested the Town of Amherst's involvement in facilitating their small-business development ventures was minimal and tenuous. Common concerns voiced by small business owners include a lack of accessible information on how to start a business and navigate permitting process. Moreover, a consensus among interviewees was that greater assistance is given to large-scale businesses. Strengthening the support system to promote small business activities will be critical for Amherst's job creation efforts. Recruiting businesses from outside the region remains limited. And therefore, is less likely to contribute to job creation in the Town. The Town is equipped with a few ingredients for enabling small business development, including an evolving incubator program at UB, a substantive supply of underutilized office spaces, and low labor costs on a statewide level.

However, the Town of Amherst must improve its coordination and cooperation with local stakeholders to improve its support system for small businesses. That includes expanding communication with local educational institutions and increasing accessibility to regional Small Business Development Centers (SBDC) (at Buffalo State University). Moreover, it will involve creating a built environment that supports innovation and entrepreneurship, mixed-use destinations integrated with a variety of housing and social opportunities.

3. Homeownership & Housing

Metrics among the Homeownership & Housing factor measure the affordability of homes in an area. Providing a diversity of housing options at varying price points is critical for job creation. Businesses prefer to locate in areas that provide affordable housing opportunities for their workforce while workers prefer to live in areas with convenient access to jobs. By U.S. standards, the State of New York contains a large proportion of cost burdened renters, ranking 45th among all U.S. states. Cost-burdened renters are rental households paying more than 30% of their income on rent. While renters seek to minimize housing costs, Amherst's rental housing stock provides limited opportunities for renters to do so. Minimal rental options are readily available for key segments of the Town's workforce, including service-based workers and young professionals. Expanding the proportion of workforce housing options can therefore enhance the Town's business recruitment and retention efforts and attract young professionals to work and live in the town.

4. Healthcare

Metrics among the Healthcare factor measure the accessibility to medical services. By and large, business prefer to locate in areas with a sufficient quality and quantity of healthcare services. Much of the Town of Amherst is employed in the Healthcare & Social Assistance industry, contributing to the Town's reputation as a medical hub in the Buffalo-Niagara MSA. Millard Fillmore Suburban Hospital provides nearly 300 hospital beds, while offering a comprehensive array of surgical services. Renowned medical companies are represented in Amherst, including Kaleida Health, Roswell Park, and the Ambulatory Surgery Center of Western New York.



Ensuring the healthcare industry remains strong in Amherst will be critical to the Town’s long-term economic development efforts.

Table 4-3
2021 Business Climate Factors and Metrics

	State Ranking	Metrics Data	
	New York	United States	New York
FINANCIAL ASSETS AND INCOME			
Income Poverty Rate	37	12.7%	13.6%
Asset Poverty Rate	-	24.1%	26.9%
Net Worth	-	\$92,110	\$93,500
Unbanked Households	45	6.5%	8.7%
Underbanked Households	17	18.7%	17.2%
Liquid Asset Poverty Rate	12	36.9%	32.1%
Households with Zero Net Worth	-	15.7%	15.3%
Saved for Emergencies	45	57.8%	51.4%
Income Inequality	50	4.93 : 1	5.83 : 1
Income Volatility	23	20.1%	19.6%
Households with Savings Accounts	36	71.4%	69.4%
Consumers with Prime Credit	23	53.0%	56.7%
Access to Revolving Credit	3	74.0%	80.5%
Borrowers Over 75% Credit Card Limit	21	25.4%	23.5%
Severely Delinquent Borrowers	24	14.8%	12.8%
Consumers with Collections	2	21.2%	11.5%
Bankruptcy Rate	23	2.3%	1.7%
Fell Behind on Bills	28	13.2%	13.4%
Low Financial Well-Being	11	18.0%	16.0%
BUSINESSES & JOBS			
Microenterprise Ownership Rate	3	18.2%	21.0%
Unemployment Rate	34	3.7%	4.0%
Business Ownership by Gender	34	1.3x as high for men	1.4x as high for men
Business Ownership by Race	-	17.6%	20.8%
Business Value by Race, Employer Business	-	1.84 : 1	2.05 : 1
Business Value by Race, Nonemployer Business	-	1.47 : 1	1.89 : 1
Business Value by Gender, Employer Business	-	1.9x as high for men	1.8x as high for men
Business Value by Gender, Non- Employer Business	-	1.9x as high for men	1.7x as high for men
Underemployment Rate	34	7.3%	7.6%
Employers Offering Health Insurance	25	46.8%	47.6%
Low-Wage Jobs	10	18.7%	12.0%
Average Annual Pay	3	\$57,266	\$62,953
HOMEOWNERSHIP & HOUSING			
Homeownership Rate	50	63.9%	53.7%
Affordability of Homes	43	3.71 : 1	4.80 : 1
Housing Cost Burden - Renters	45	49.7%	52.0%
Housing Cost Burden - Homeowners	46	27.7%	32.8%
Foreclosure Rate	51	0.9%	2.4%
Delinquent Mortgage Loans	46	1.1%	1.4%
High-Cost Mortgage Loans	14	7.6%	3.9%
HEALTHCARE			
Uninsured Rate	50	10.4%	6.3%
Uninsured Low-Income Children	43	7.1%	3.2%
Employee Share of Premium	45	27.8%	22.9%
Employer Provided Insurance Coverage	46	59.5%	59.7%
Forgoing Doctor Visit Due to Cost	51	13.0%	11.0%
Poor or Fair Health Status	46	18.4%	17.1%
EDUCATION			
Early Childhood Education Enrollment	6	48.2%	60.1%
Four-Year College Degree	9	32.6%	37.2%
High School Graduation Rate	38	84.1%	80.4%
Disconnected Youth	30	11.3%	10.8%
Reading Proficiency - 8th Grade	29	33.6%	32.5%
Math Proficiency - 8th Grade	24	33.8%	33.5%
Borrowers with Student Loan Debt	27	21.9%	22.7%
Median Student Loan Debt	44	\$18,366	\$19,583
Severely Delinquent Student Loan Debt	7	15.2%	11.7%

Source: Prosperity Now, 2020



5. Education

Metrics among the Education factor measure the accessibility to quality educational institutions. The Town of Amherst is credited with having highly rated public schools, which can be especially attractive to businesses and households seeking to commit to a community in the long-term (Table 4-4). Amherst schools consistently score above State and County assessment metrics. Amherst also benefits from higher educational institutions, including University at Buffalo, SUNY Erie, and Daemen University. The presence of these institutions can facilitate co-ops and internships with local employers.

Table 4-4

Mean Test Scores					
Description	New York State	Erie County	Amherst	Williamsville	Sweet Home
Grade 3 English	600	597	605	607	598
Grade 5 English	599	596	609	609	598
Grade 8 English	600	596	603	606	603
Grade 3 Math	600	597	606	610	596
Grade 5 Math	600	596	604	611	597
Grade 8 Math	599	595	613	606	601

Source: NYDOE, RKG Associates, Inc., 2022



F. TOP SITE SELECTION FACTORS

Site-selection factors influence where businesses locate and retain their operations. To sustain economic competitiveness in the New Age Economy, access to knowledge and information resources is a priority for businesses. Consequently, many locate their operations near ‘knowledge hubs.’ Areas with large proportions of educated workers and a presence of research institutions. Boston and Atlanta are prominent examples of knowledge hubs. Area Development Magazine, a real-estate publication, ranks the most important site-selection factors each year, based on survey responses from upper management professionals of companies nationwide. Table 4-5 indicates the changing priorities of site-selection factors since 2010.

Table 4-5

Executives' Top Site Selection Criteria		
2020	2010	2000
Availability of Skilled Labor	Highway Accessibility	Highway Accessibility
Highway Accessibility	Labor Costs	Labor Costs
Energy Availability & Costs	Tax Exemptions	Availability of Skilled Labor
Quality of Life	Occupancy or Construction Costs	Corporate Tax Rate
Labor Costs	State & Local Incentives	State & Local Incentives
Occupancy or Construction costs	Corporate Tax Rate	Tax Exemptions

Source: Area Development Magazine, RKG Associates, Inc., 2022

According to Area Development Magazine, an area’s availability of skilled labor is the top site selection factor for businesses. ‘Skilled labor’ is a catch all term, describing workers possessing specialized skills developed from the completion of postsecondary education, exposure to technical training, or equipped with long-term work experience. Amherst is well-positioned in many of the top site selection criteria (Table 4-6).

SWOT ANALYSIS

1. Amherst Strengths

High Educational Attainment Levels. A large proportion of Amherst’s population have bachelor’s degree or higher (detailed in the socioeconomic chapter), which can be a strong asset for business retention and entrepreneurial development.

Quality-of-Life Assets. Amherst offers a variety of quality-of-life assets that are attractive to households. This includes, but is not limited to, highly rated public schools, low crime rates,



Table 4-6

Amherst Site Selection Criteria Competitiveness		
Rank	Factor	
1	Availability of Skilled Labor	
2	Highway Accessibility	
3	Energy Availability and Costs	
4	Quality of Life	
5	Labor Costs	
6	Occupancy or Construction Costs	
7	Corporate Tax Rate	
8	Tax Exemptions	
9	State and Local Incentives	
10	Inbound/Outbound Shipping Costs	

Source: Area Development Magazine, RKG Associates, Inc., 2022

and premium healthcare services. Additional households translate to a larger and growing labor force, and new opportunities for entrepreneurship.

Diverse Labor Market. The region’s labor market consists of a wide-range of skillsets and educational attainment levels which can foster economic expansions, regional innovation, and community-development benefits. The greater Buffalo region’s diversity can support a variety of business types in the service and production-based economies.

Healthcare Industry. Amherst is equipped with a variety of premium healthcare services that can support a diversity of population segments. Notable services include senior care, emergency medical services, and orthopedics. Recent investments to bring additional specialty care and surgery opportunities are reflective of Amherst’s strategic location within the region for medical provisions.

Educational Institutions. Amherst benefits from having ample and diverse educational institutions within the Town’s limits including one of two flagship universities within the State of New York. While there are several workforce development and educational programs available to train prospective workers for in-demand fields, not all of these programs are directly accessible within the Town (many are in Buffalo).



Retail and Services Market. As a regional retail destination, Amherst captures substantial consumer spending flows. This benefits the Town in terms of attracting and retaining business activity.

Diversifying Population. The Town’s diversifying population can generate a variety of economic development benefits, supporting innovation, entrepreneurship, and attractiveness towards Millennials/Zoomers (as detailed in the socioeconomic section).

2. Amherst Weaknesses

Economic Engagement. To date, the Town has not taken a strong, proactive approach to engage local educational institutions and businesses. Consistent engagement and coordination are critical to understand industry needs and identify emerging economic development opportunities that should guide the town’s direct efforts to attract, retain, and expand businesses.

Limited Developable Opportunities. There are limited vacant parcels available for development opportunities due to environmental constraints (see real estate chapter). The alternative is executing redevelopment/infill development projects, which are more complex, can involve exorbitant financial costs, and require higher development densities to justify.

Market Scale. The Amherst/Buffalo market is sizeable, but not scaled for very large prospects. In particular, the Town’s limited large, vacant parcels will limit the size of a project that can be accommodated. Further, the region’s decline in workforce will impact the potential for employment-heavy uses. To that point, opportunities for Amherst will be more abundant targeting small and mid-size businesses (under 250 employees).

Outsider Perceptions. The perception about the Buffalo region, particularly related to the region’s weather patterns, increase the challenge to attract households and businesses. Without fact-based marketing efforts relating to similar—and more robust markets—these perceptions will perpetuate.

Housing Diversity. Most of Amherst’s housing is owner-occupied single-family detached housing. The desirability of Amherst has made most of this supply unaffordable to key segments of the Town’s workforce. Moreover, the growing retiree population in Amherst further reduces available housing supply for working-aged households.

‘Brain-Drain’. Many college graduates leave the region in favor of employment opportunities elsewhere. This includes graduates in STEM-related fields which fuel the New Age Economy.

Disconnected Urban Fabric. Amherst’s development patterns are sparse and inconsistent with prevailing market preferences. In particular, the Town lacks a substantive base of live-work-recreate activity centers that are walkable and/or accessible (detailed in the Opportunity



Sites chapter). Creating more, connected amenity-rich employment centers in commercial activity areas that integrate workforce housing would strengthen the Town's prospects.

Workforce Trends. Amherst/Buffalo is adversely impacted by both declining regional labor force numbers and very low unemployment rate numbers (detailed in the socioeconomic chapter). These circumstances can discourage business investments due to recruitment limitations, particularly for large employers.

3. Amherst Opportunities

Entrepreneurship. The Town's small-business development ecosystem is limited. Minimal opportunities exist for aspiring entrepreneurs to learn how to jumpstart and scale their operations. Given that business recruitment outside the region will remain challenging, improving the local small-business development ecosystem can provide the Town a competitive advantage, help stimulate job creation, and expand economic growth.

Mixed Use Development. The suburban office park model is becoming out of favor with businesses and young professionals. Further, retirees are seeking alternatives to the traditional detached single-family house. Enhancing the built environment with vibrant, walkable employment centers integrated with housing variety can help Amherst capture future business investments.

Business Retention and Expansion. Strengthening and expanding the Town's proactive engagement with existing businesses can help the Town understand industry trends, operational challenges, and capitalize on emerging opportunities. This is a more cost-effective measure than active recruitment outside the region.

Coordination and Communication. The town should increase coordination and communication with key economic development players like local/regional governments, industry leaders and educational institutions. Economic development strategies are best implemented through partnerships, taking advantage of knowledge resources and cost-efficiencies. This is particularly true in the greater Buffalo region, as economic development has been as much about realigning activity within the region as it has been attracting new investment.

Community Engagement. Change can be scary, and sometimes require public investment. The Town must build support from community members to fully execute the unified economic development vision. Educating residents on the importance of economic development is critical to build support. Buy-in from community members can enhance Amherst's potential to capitalize on existing and emerging economic development opportunities.



Leveraging Diversity. Research has shown that foreign-born residents are more likely to start small businesses than the native population. This opportunity is particularly strong in Amherst, as many foreign-born residents have achieved high-levels of educational attainment. Empowering the foreign-born population and local minorities to pursue entrepreneurial opportunities can be instrumental to expanding entrepreneurship in target industry segments-healthcare practices, information technologies, etc.

4. Amherst Threats

Internal Competition. Development projects that reshuffle existing businesses within the region does not culminate in 'true' job creation and long-term economic sustainability for Amherst or the greater region. The Town should become more focused on creating net economic growth (particularly when using incentives) than enabling the potential for redistribution of businesses and jobs within the region.

Economic Concentrations. Amherst's economy is concentrated in a few sectors, particularly healthcare services. The lack of diversity increases the likelihood of market fluctuations. The Town's economic development efforts should prioritize increasing economic diversity while supporting and strengthening existing clusters.

Aging Labor Force. Labor market shortages are on the horizon as most workers near the age of retirement. Without a sufficient labor pool, business disinvestment is likely.

Scale-Appropriate Prospects. The Town's socioeconomic conditions and labor market trends are unfavorable to attract large-scale employers outside the region. Amherst should focus on attracting small- and mid-size businesses and improving the local entrepreneurial environment.

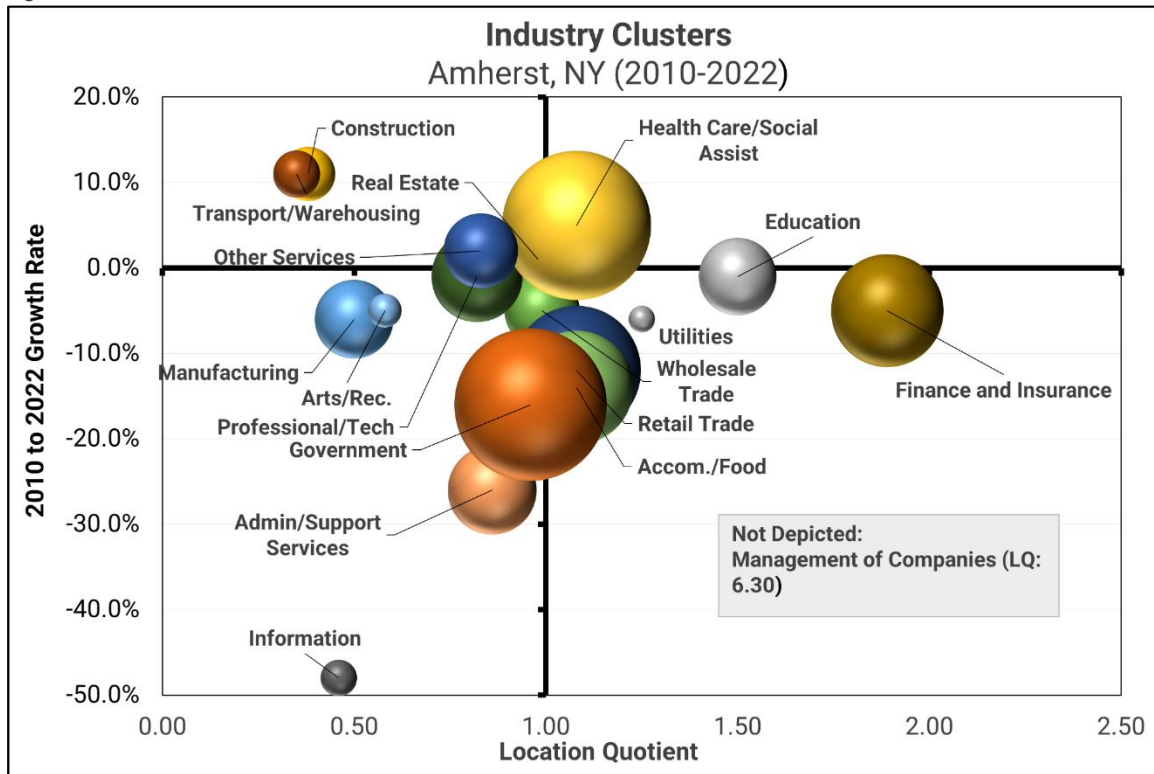
G. TARGET INDUSTRIES

The identification of the above target industries involved a complex vetting process, accounting for multiple factors. This includes an assessment of local socioeconomic trends, real estate conditions, and conversations with economic development stakeholders (business representatives). In addition to these factors, a cluster analysis was performed to understand Amherst's industry strengths. Figure 4-8 illustrates the three main drivers of an industry's cluster score: its size in terms of number of jobs in the Town of Amherst (bubble size), its location quotient (LQ) or job concentration relative to the Buffalo MSA (x-axis), and employment growth rate in the Town of Amherst (y-axis). The chart indicates that Amherst's largest job concentrations relative to the Buffalo MSA are Management of Companies (LQ: 6.30) and Finance and Insurance (LQ: 1.89).

Following this assessment, RKG identified the following target industries for the Town of Amherst to pursue in the near-term:



Figure 4-8



Source: Lightcast, RKG Associates, Inc., 2022

- *Healthcare Services and Medical Tourism*
- *Professional Services and Information Technologies*
- *Cottage Manufacturing*
- *Entrepreneurial Development*

Table 4-7 indicates subindustries that fall under each of the above identified target industries. Market indicators suggests that these subindustries can support further employment expansions within the Town of Amherst. If applicable, a subindustry will correspond with a specific 6-digit NAICS code.



Table 4-7

Healthcare Services and Medical Tourism	
Subindustries	NAICS Code (If Applicable)
Continuing Care Retirement Communities	623311
Assisted Living Facilities for the Elderly	623312
Medical Laboratories	621511
Fitness and Recreational Sports Centers	713940
Sports Training and Rehabilitation Services	N/A
Offices of Physical Therapists	621340
Offices of Physicians	621111
Free Standing Ambulatory Surgical Facilities	621493
Professional Services and Information Technologies	
Subindustries	NAICS Code (If Applicable)
Professional, Scientific, Technical Services	541990
Software Publishers	511210
Computer Systems Design Services	541512
R&D- Physical, Engineering, and Life Sciences	541715
Architectural, Engineering, and Related Services	541300
Advertising, Public Relations, and Related Services	541800
Cottage Manufacturing	
Subindustries	NAICS Code (If Applicable)
Cutlery and Hand Tool Manufacturing	33221
Furniture Manufacturing	337000
Communications Equipment Manufacturing	334200
Medical Equipment and Supplies Manufacturing	339100
Metalworking Machinery Manufacturing	333500
Food Products/Beverage Production	N/A
Semiconductor and Electrical Component	334400
Turned Product Manufacturing	332721
Entrepreneurial Development	
Subindustries	NAICS Code (If Applicable)
Food Products/Beverage Production	N/A
Professional, Scientific, Technical Services	541990
Software Publishers	511210
Architectural, Engineering, and Related Services	541300
Advertising, Public Relations, and Related Services	541800

Source: Lightcast, Internet Research, RKG Associates, Inc., 2022



1. Healthcare Services and Medical Tourism

Industry Specializations and Growth Potential
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outpatient services • Offices of physicians • Home health care Services • Ambulatory healthcare services • Retirement and assisted living communities • Offices of chiropractors • Offices of physical and occupational therapists

Amherst Advantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aging population in Amherst and throughout Region • Household base growth will stabilize service demand • Cost-effective medical services • Regional hospital presence • Educational institutions offering secondary degrees and certificates • Developing medical niches (e.g., sports medicine)

Amherst Challenges and Potential Limitations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nursing and medical assistant shortages • Minimal workforce housing opportunities • Lack of coordination with local and regional stakeholders • Duplication of medical services • Outside recruitment is problematic • Competition with City of Buffalo for healthcare workers

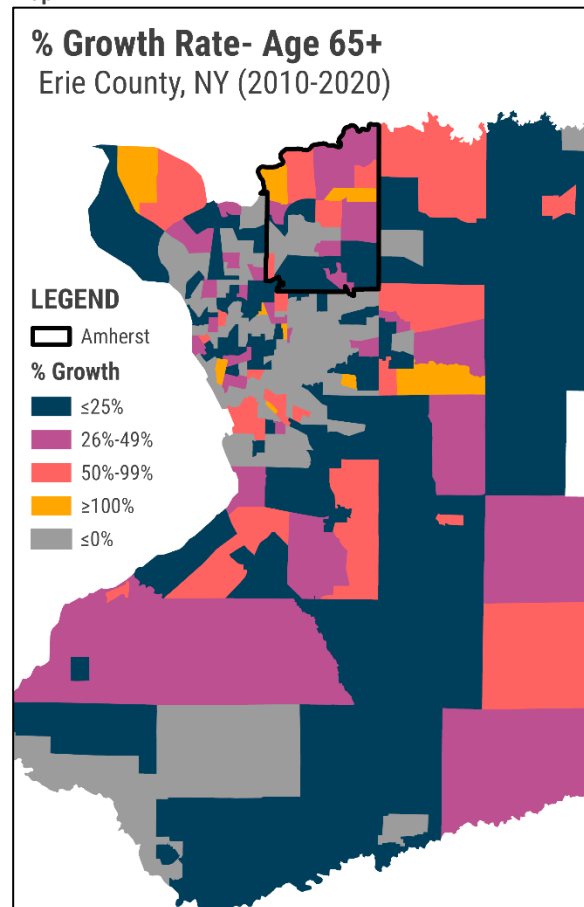
Initial Strategy Recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand rental options at a variety of price points • Embrace work-live-play development concepts • Increase cooperation with local governments (e.g., City of Buffalo) and healthcare providers • Connect medical services/research with ancillary activities (e.g., physical therapy with sports tournaments)

Demand for healthcare services is projected to increase as Erie County’s household base and senior population undergoes expansions. Impacts will be pronounced in Amherst, given the Town’s rapid growth rates among seniors relative to other parts of Erie County (Map 4-1).

An increasing demand for healthcare services have stimulated job expansions among key occupations (Figure 4-9). Substantial expansions occurred among Home Health Aides, aiding the Town’s large proportions of senior patients residing in nursing care facilities. The demand for Home Health Aides is projected to expand, either stemming from patients residing in local nursing care facilities or remaining at their place of residence.

Despite expansions among key healthcare occupations in the previous decade, labor market shortages appear to be projected throughout Erie County. For instance, nearly 1,500 new jobs among healthcare support roles (e.g., nursing/medical assistants) are projected to be created by 2030. Meanwhile, 442

Map 4-1



Source: U.S. Census, RKG Associates, Inc., 2022



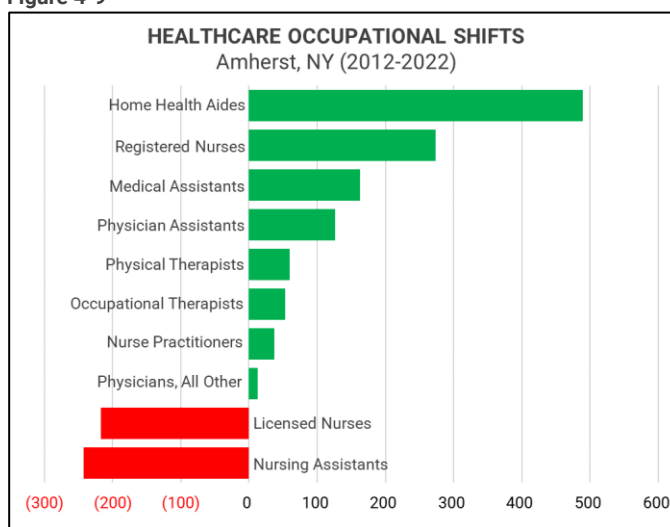
healthcare support workers are unemployed yet available for employment. Therefore over 1,000 new workers will be needed to meet projected 2030 employment levels (Figure 4-10). Erie County’s labor market already faces pressures from an aging population and declining working-age population, making it increasingly difficult to meet projected employment levels among healthcare occupations.

While Amherst and the rest of Erie County face population losses among critical workforce segments, bridging employment gaps among key healthcare occupations will largely depend on upskilling the existing workforce. Many key healthcare positions that face labor market pressures include support roles, such as medical and nursing assistants. Local educational institutions offer training programs for these roles. However, insufficient quantities of graduates are keeping pace to meet demand from county-based healthcare services (Figure 4-11). Many of these roles don’t require the completion of a Bachelor’s Degree, which could be marketed towards existing workers who never graduated college. This includes existing service-based workers in retail/hospitality roles, which could be attractive job transition given the higher earnings potential in healthcare support roles.

2. Professional Services/Information Technology

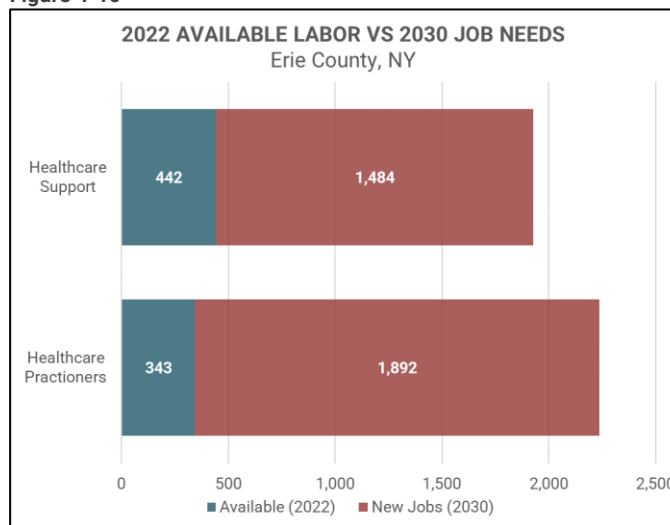
The Town of Amherst is equipped with a highly educated workforce and educational institutions that produce graduates in STEM-related fields. These assets can facilitate business expansions among Professional Services/Information Technology market segments. Focused on management & technical consulting services, software development, and computer systems design.

Figure 4-9



Source: Lightcast, RKG Associates, Inc., 2022

Figure 4-10

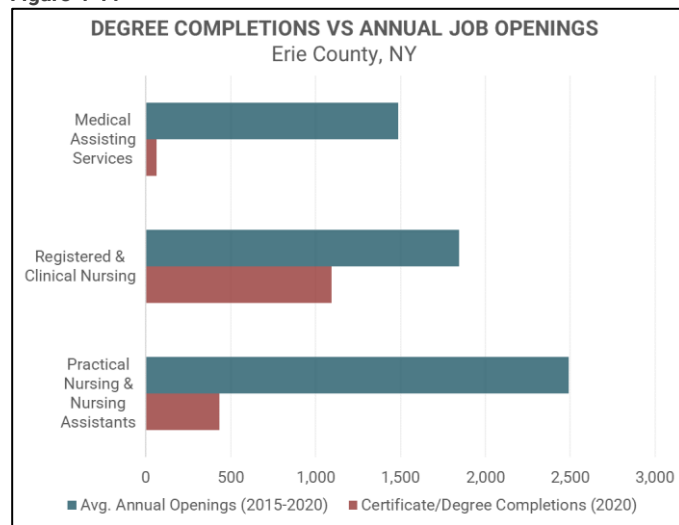


Source: Lightcast, RKG Associates, Inc., 2022



In 2020, educational institutions in Erie County produced hundreds of graduates in key STEM-related fields. Regional push-pull factors limit the Town’s ability to attract graduates among these fields, however. The push factor relates to the lack of jobs available to graduates. Many leave the region in pursuit of jobs elsewhere. The pull factor relates to investments targeting the City of Buffalo, where young skilled talent is more prone to locate if choosing to remain within the region. Buffalo offers more assets that accommodate the preferences of young workers—transit-oriented

Figure 4-11



Source: Lightcast, RKG Associates, Inc., 2022

development, multifamily housing, and innovative workspaces. Moreover, the city is attracting strong revitalization investment activities that is expected to catalyze expansions among Professional Services/Information Technology fields. This includes investments through the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus, 43 North, and Build Back Better.

<p>Industry Specializations and Growth Potential</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entrepreneurial and Small Business Development • Scientific Research and Development Services • Computer Systems Design and Related Services • Management, Scientific, and Technical Consulting Services • Software Publishers and Data Analysts 	<p>Amherst Advantages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Availability of skilled-workforce • Presence of STEM degree programs and graduates (e.g., UB, SUNY ECC) • Demand for computer programmers/scientists • Foreign-born population with high-levels of educational attainment • Growing infrastructure for small-business development and innovation (e.g., Patent Recipients)
<p>Amherst Challenges and Potential Limitations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Declining labor force across region • Many secondary-degree graduates leaving region • Recruitment from outside the region • Many workspace vacancies are in unfavorable locations (e.g., secluded office parks) • More resources towards STEM-fields expansions going to City of Buffalo (e.g., 43 North, Build Back Better, BNMC etc.) 	<p>Initial Strategy Recommendations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate mentorship opportunities with retired/semi retired professionals • Convert underutilized office spaces to flex/R&D spaces • Expand work-live-create developments • Assist patent recipients with site selection • Establish dialogues with graduates to identify talent needs

All that said, the Town of Amherst can restructure its development patterns and bolster its innovation environment to expand the local availability of young skilled talent in these advanced STEM-related fields. This includes an emphasis on work-live-play activity centers, conversions of underutilized office spaces to R&D spaces and coordinating with local patent recipients to identify potential sites for entrepreneurial opportunities. Entrepreneurial development will be a



primary priority for Professional Services/Information Technology-based fields as business recruitment outside the region remains limited.

3. *Cottage Manufacturing*

<p>Industry Specializations and Growth Potential</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Furniture Manufacturing • Cutlery and Handtool Manufacturing • Semiconductor and Electrical Component Manufacturing • Metalworking Machinery Manufacturing • Medical and Physical Sciences 	<p>Amherst Advantages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevalence of low/semi-skilled blue-collar workers • Presence of patent recipients in advanced manufacturing fields STEM degrees • WNY is attracting federal funds for advanced manufacturing • Availability of technical training/trade schools • Highway and airport accessibility
<p>Amherst Challenges and Potential Limitations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of land for industrial development • Many blue-collar workers facing retirement soon • Many STEM graduates leave region • Workspace vacancies are in unfavorable locations (e.g., secluded office parks) • Most advanced manufacturing resources targeting City of Buffalo 	<p>Initial Strategy Recommendations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate mentorship opportunities with retiring professionals • Expand work-live-create developments (e.g., cottage spaces) • Facilitate synergies between active manufacturing sites and patent recipients (e.g., computing) • Increase cooperation with local, regional, and state economic development players

Cottage manufacturing is a blanket term applicable to small-scale production-based operations, producing tangible goods for other businesses or consumers. This can encompass a variety of functions, including products developed from woodworking, metalworking, 3-D printing, brewing/distilling, etc.. Cottage manufacturing operations can be a value-added asset that easily integrates into work-live-play destinations, absent of the negative externalities commonly associated with large-scale traditional manufacturing operations—noise and sound pollution.

Cottage manufacturing is largely connected to community development, as many startups begin their operations in publicly accessible co-working spaces--makerspaces, shared kitchens, and industrial co-work buildings. The intent is to spur entrepreneurship through access to required infrastructure, tools, and equipment. While attracting large-scale manufacturers to Amherst is infeasible due to limited developable land opportunities and scalable industrial facilities, supporting entrepreneurship through cottage manufacturing is an economically viable alternative, especially capitalizing on the Town’s availability of highly skilled labor, presence of semi-skilled blue-collar workers, and prevalence of local stakeholders such as technical schools, community colleges.

4. *Entrepreneurial Development*

The Town can leverage its various assets to spur entrepreneurship, including its availability of underutilized office spaces and highly educated workforce. Even without a systematic Town-sponsored entrepreneurial program, Amherst has demonstrated itself to be a small-business hub.



Over 60% of businesses in the Town have between 1-9 employees, operating in a variety of market segments—service-based industries, legal operations, market/design consulting, etc. In the previous decade, Amherst underwent substantial expansions among self-employed, sole proprietor and non-QCEW workers.

<p>Industry Specializations and Growth Potential</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technology-Based Companies • Personal Services • Business-to-Business Services • Food and Beverage Production • Professional Services • Information Technology 	<p>Amherst Advantages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well educated workforce/resident base • High quality of life • Available office space • Existing/emerging live-work-play spaces • Affluence/potential investor market
<p>Amherst Challenges and Potential Limitations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of existing infrastructure/capacity • Not Coordinating and collaborating with regional partners (duplicating or competitive efforts) • Extremely aggressive efforts in Buffalo (competition) • Being too selective in industry targets 	<p>Initial Strategy Recommendations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create and implement a proactive engagement campaign within existing sole-proprietors and community residents • Define an entrepreneurial program based on feedback for business/resident community • Build the Town's capacity to support entrepreneurs • Develop collaborative relationships with existing partners (e.g., SBDC) to offer service in Amherst

In wake of a declining regional labor force and aging population, attracting employers to the Town of Amherst is limited. A viable alternative is to target investments that catalyze entrepreneurial opportunities, developing a critical mass to restore sustainable job growth and business expansions. Aspiring entrepreneurs will need appropriate access to financial assistance and support, which is severely limited in the Town. This is particularly critical for entrepreneurs in advanced technical fields, requiring substantial capital financing streams to access machinery and equipment.

5. Target Industries, By Location

While the Town should not discourage economic development opportunities based on location alone, there are different areas of Amherst that are better suited for different types of development. For example, encouraging production-based development is best located in the northwest part of the town or proximate to the airport. Simply put, there are direct (e.g., development scale and transportation access) and indirect (e.g., development clustering and adjacent use appropriateness) considerations when siting new businesses. In summary, different areas of the town are more conducive for different potential targets (Map 4-2).

Healthcare and Social Assistance

- Near hospital/medical operations
- Integrated within future mixed-use development projects



Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services

- Around educational institutions
- Integrated within future mixed-use development projects

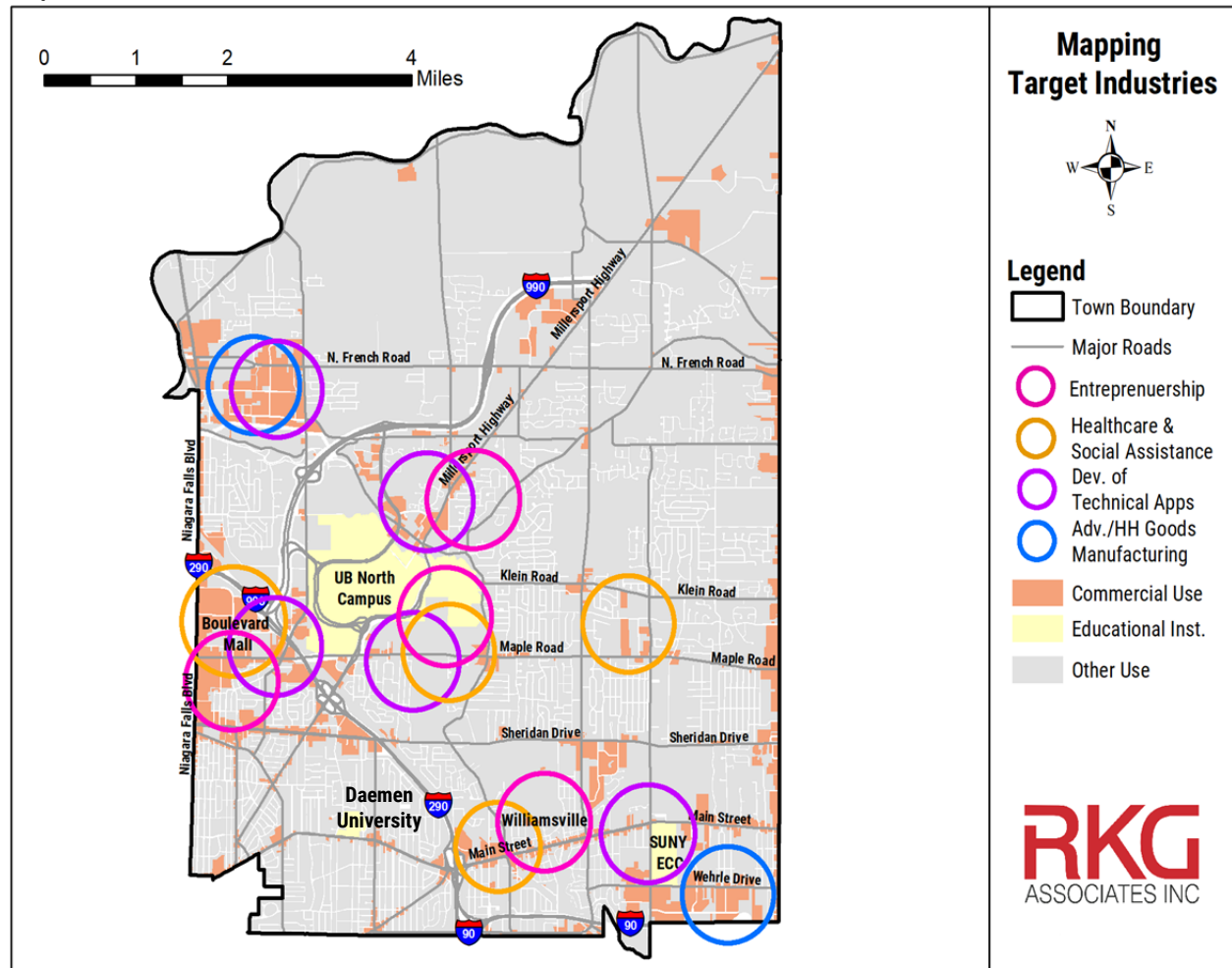
Manufacturing

- Near existing industrial sites (e.g., airport, Audubon etc.)
- Near dense development clusters (e.g., cottage production)

Entrepreneurial Development

- Near dense development clusters (e.g., Williamsville)
- Smaller available vacant parcels

Map 4-2



Mapping Target Industries



Legend

- Town Boundary
- Major Roads
- Entrepreneurship
- Healthcare & Social Assistance Dev. of
- Technical Apps
- Adv./HH Goods
- Manufacturing
- Commercial Use
- Educational Inst.
- Other Use





5 OPPORTUNITY SITE ANALYSIS

A. INTRODUCTION

Strategic real estate investments can be a vital part of the Town's economic development efforts. At a base level, real estate development spurs investment locally, creates housing opportunities, and stimulates job growth. More strategically, real estate investment can catalyze further private sector investment, better leveraging the community's regulatory and financial commitments. As workplace preferences shift among employees and businesses, property owners are compelled to adapt and invest in spaces that reflect changes in market demand. For instance, suburban office parks, which consume most of Amherst's office market, have fallen out of favor. Businesses are increasingly investing in spaces located in vibrant live-work-play activity areas, such as downtown urban centers. This trend is projected to accelerate as virtual-work models continue to normalize, encouraging businesses to downsize their workspace requirements. RKG Associates worked with the Town of Amherst to identify and assess study areas that can be re-envisioned to adapt to shifts in the marketplace. Based on a variety of locational and market factors, nine study areas within the town were identified and assessed for potential development opportunities (Map 5-1):

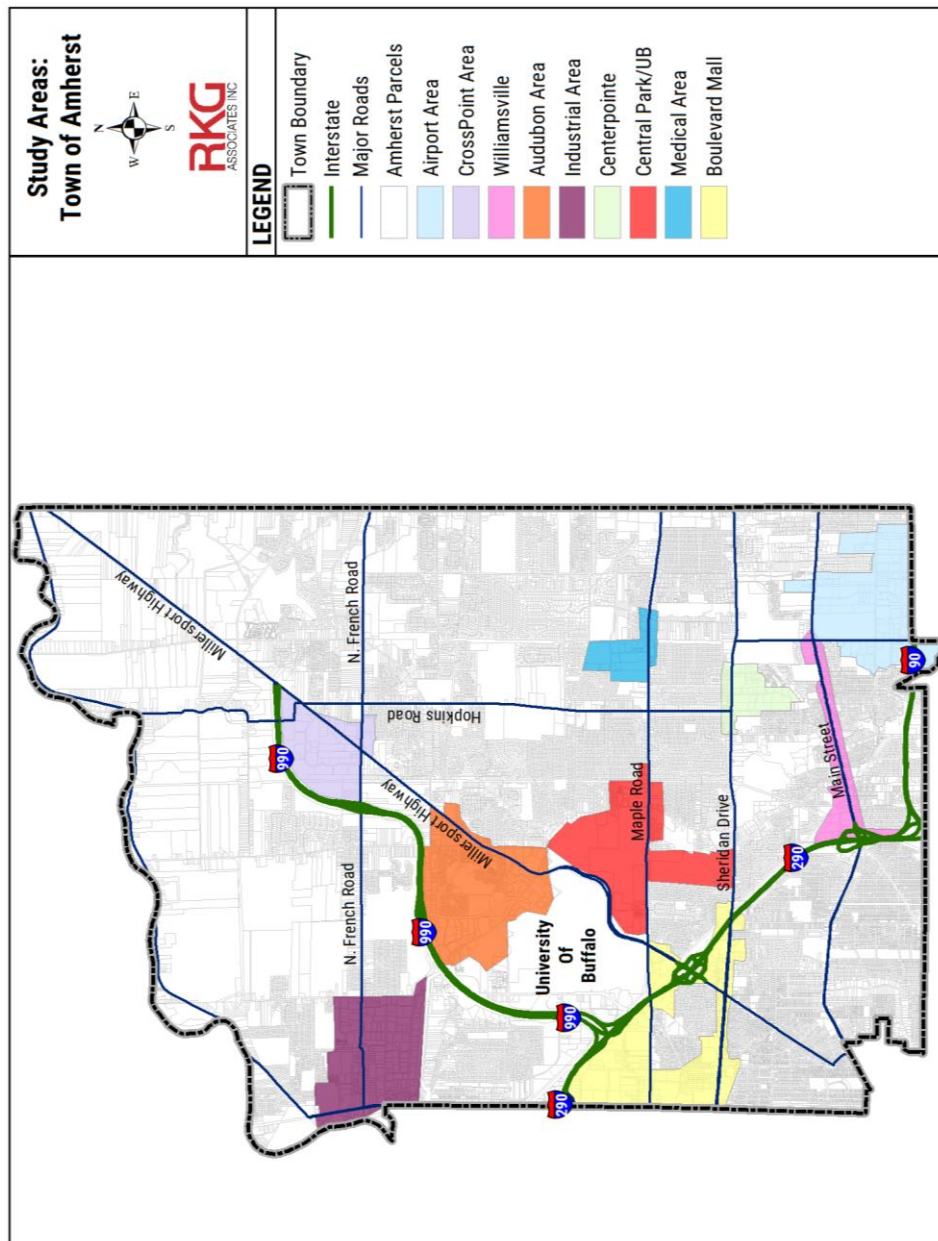
1. Airport Area
2. CrossPoint Area
3. Williamsville
4. Audubon Area
5. Industrial Area
6. Centerpointe
7. Central Park/UB
8. Medical Area
9. Boulevard Mall

High proportions of commercial activities are located in each study area, allowing for a strong foundation to continue building on. Various parcels were identified in each area to support infill development and redevelopment opportunities. Each parcel identified demonstrates a strong potential to capture business investment. Several physical, spatial, and political factors were considered to determine the properties with the greatest investment potential:

- **Parcel Size** – The size of the parcel determines the type of development opportunity. Smaller parcels are more likely to support vertical infill development and structured parking to maximize land use efficiencies.
- **Vacancies** – Undeveloped parcels and buildings with high vacancies offer a quicker transition to development opportunities.



- Environmental Constraints** – Many parcels can be constrained by New York State designated wetlands and potentially US Army Corp of Engineers designated wetlands that can limit the scope of development opportunities. The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation and Federal Fish and Wildlife wetlands are shown on each of the opportunity area’s development conditions map. Conditions should be confirmed for potential development.





- ***Land Uses*** – Incompatible land uses that conflict with the vision as defined by RKG for the activity area were considered for redevelopment opportunities (underutilized retail shopping centers in pedestrian-scale destinations)
- ***Priority Areas*** – Specific commercial areas contain properties that have generated interest and proposals from the development community (Boulevard Mall)
- ***Underutilized Properties*** – Parcels with Floor Area Ratios (FAR) below .25 are considered underutilized. Most parcels have very low FARs, reflecting the Town’s suburban development patterns.
- ***Employment Patterns and Daytime Population*** – Parcels within concentrated employment clusters where existing workspaces are underutilized due to virtual-work models (CrossPoint)
- ***Ownership patterns*** – Assessing properties of their existing ownership structures. Adjacent properties may have different owners, which can increase the complexity of investment strategies (Assemblage)
- ***Proposed & Planned Developments*** – To ensure recommended investment opportunities are compatible with the vision of proposed or planned developments in the Town’s pipeline.

The following sections discuss the existing development conditions and a proposed vision for each of the economic activity centers within Amherst. While aspirational, the proposed vision for each study area is not intended to replace policies and initiatives established in the existing comprehensive plan. Rather, the intent is to strengthen or redefine the areas to maximize their economic expansions while advancing towards the Town’s long-term economic development goals. Ultimately, these proposed opportunities need to be considered against the Town’s other short-term and long-term community goals when considering new investment projects.



B. OPPORTUNITY AREAS

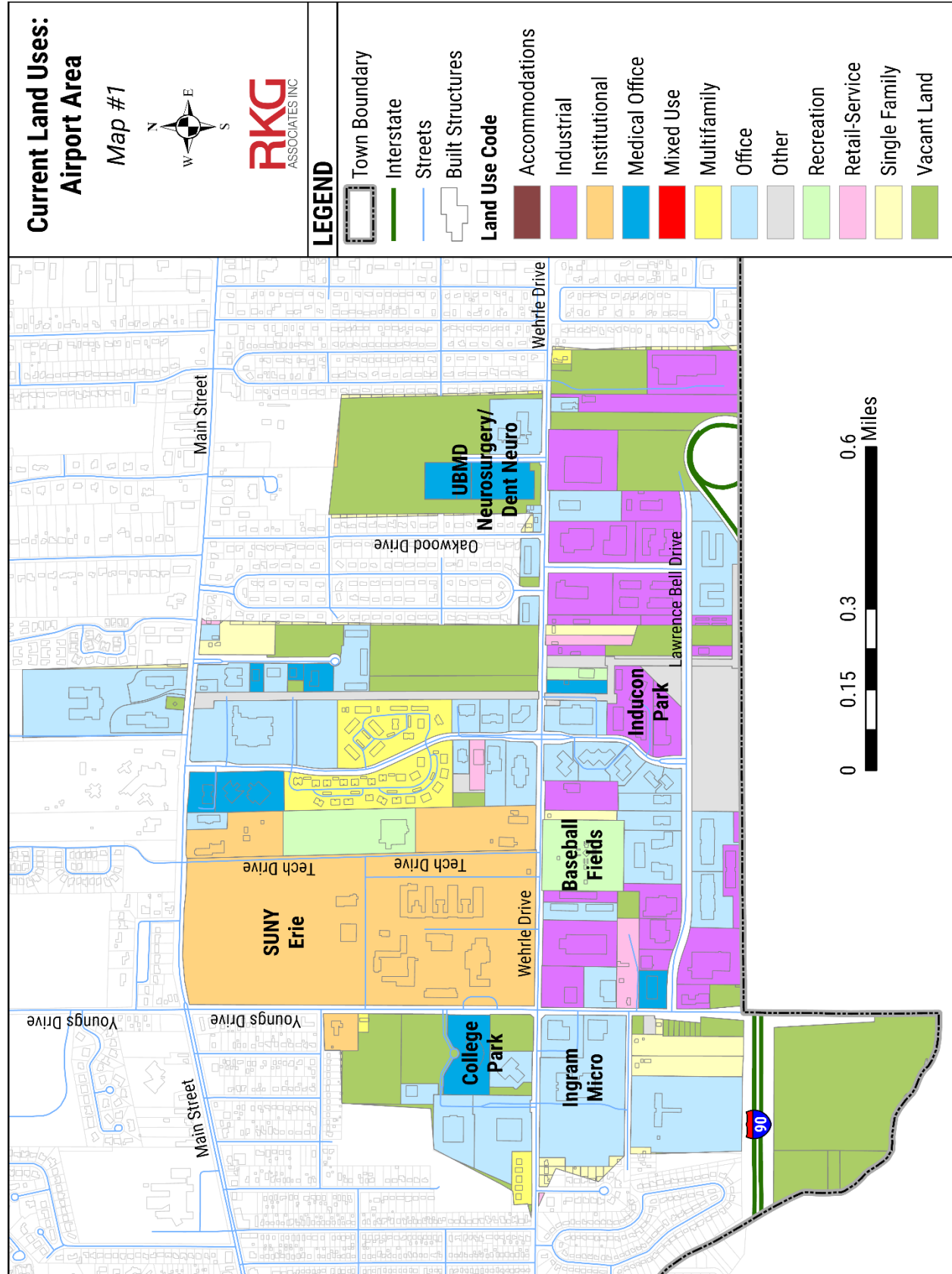
1. Airport Area

Overview

The Airport Area is located near the southeastern boundary of the Town of Amherst, just north of Buffalo Niagara International Airport. The area is predominately industrial/flex-uses, capitalizing on the proximity to Interstate-90 (See Airport Area Map #1). Inducon Park has attracted light-production based operations (cottage artisan, brewery) due to lower cost structures and available buildings that meet functional requirements.

Vision

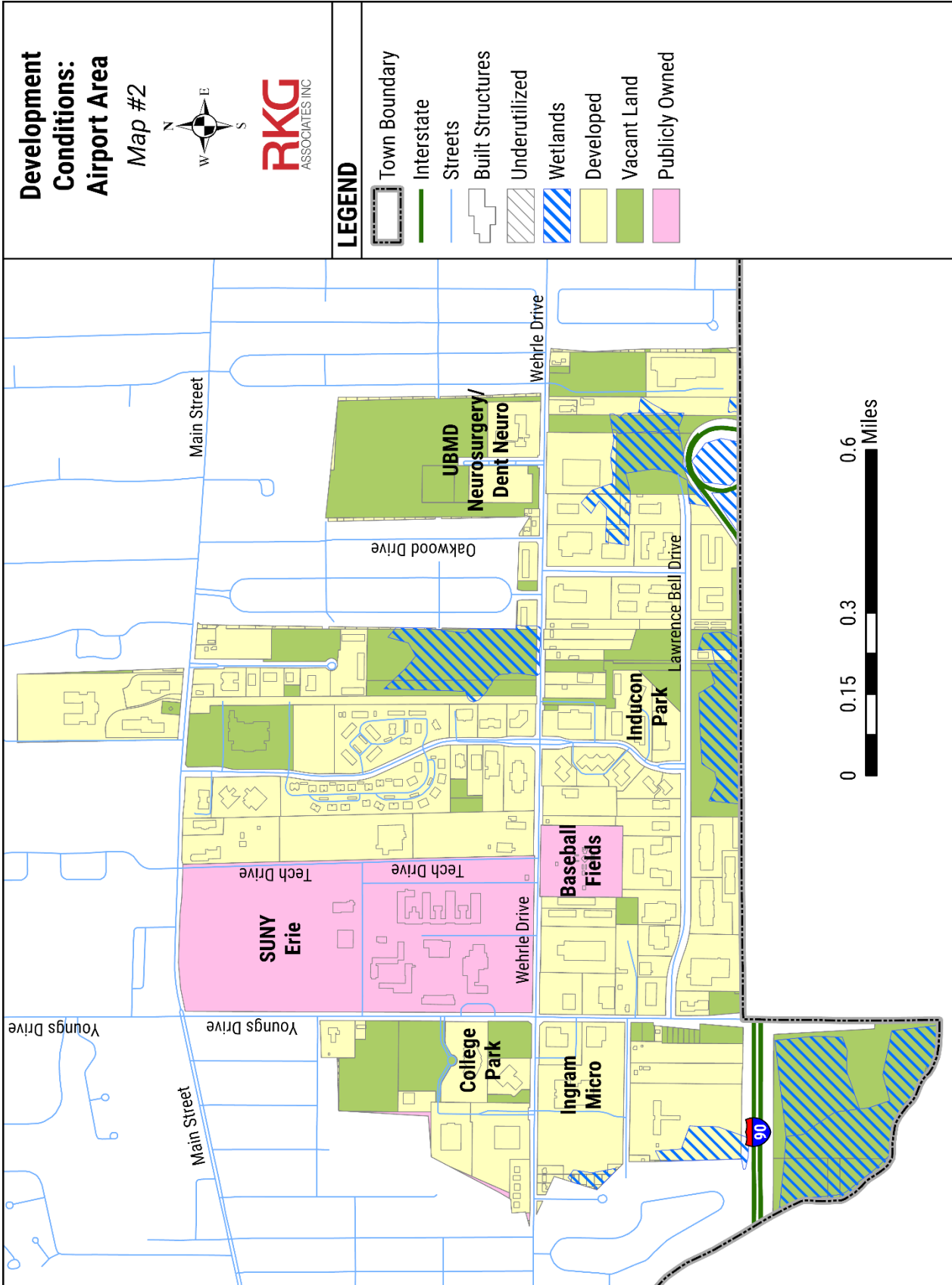
Several large-scale parcels are available for development which could be used to expand the live-play-create activity center concept in Amherst, a focus on light-production based uses integrated with lifestyle amenities. The proximity to SUNY Erie offers the opportunity for the community college to be a collaborative partner, investing in potential workforce development programs and providing equipment for publicly accessible makerspaces. Logistics operations such as distribution centers and warehousing uses should also be considered for the area.

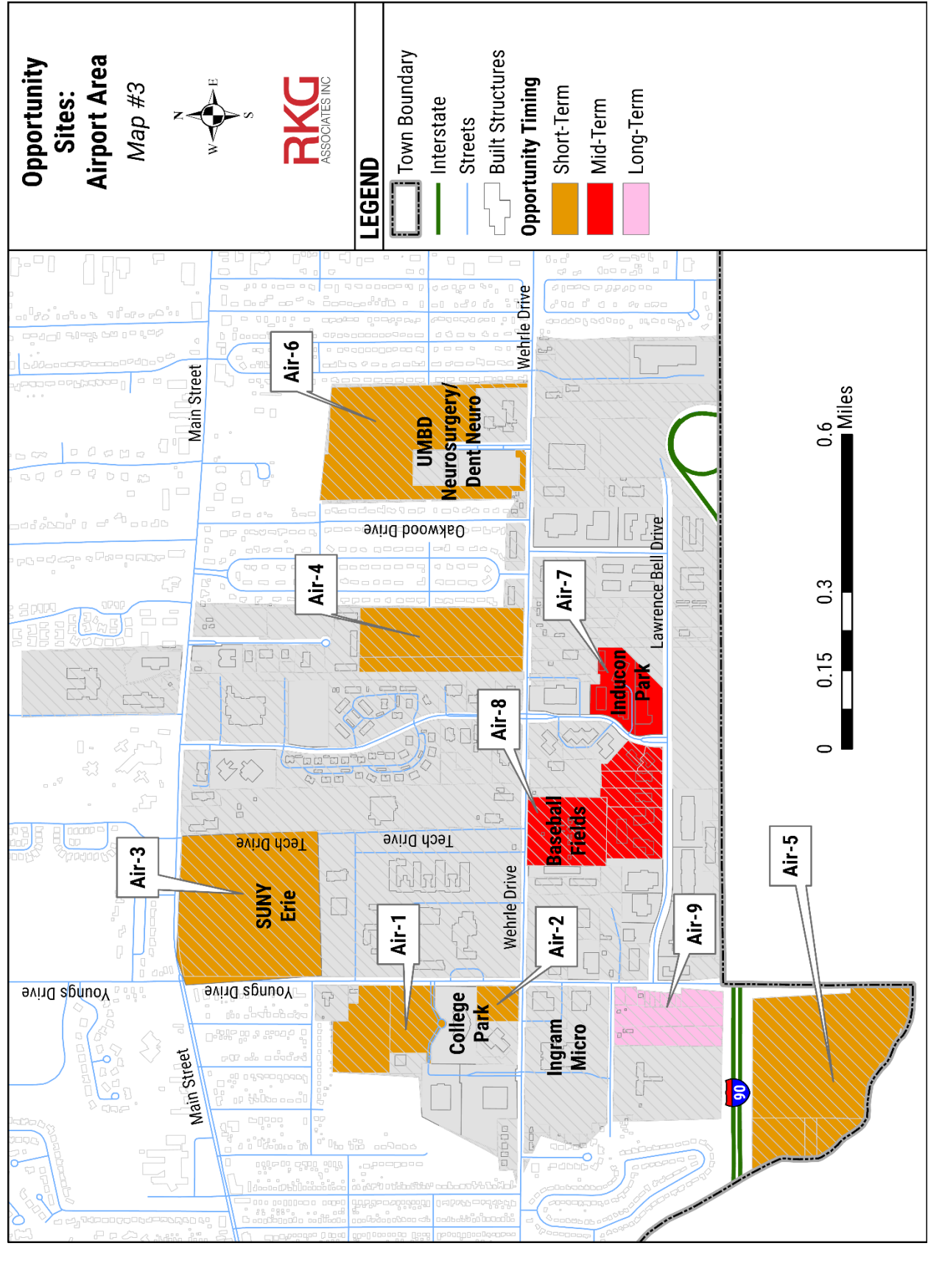




Short-Term Strategies (See Airport Area Map #3)

- AIR-1: Two vacant parcels are ripe for development of a live-play-create destination with a makerspace component. The living component of this destination would be multifamily units structured in a high-density, vertical development. The adjacency to SUNY Erie can support a potential public-public partnership, leveraging financial resources to fund equipment and machinery in makerspaces. SUNY Erie may be attracted to joining a partnership to enhance their workforce development outcomes.
- AIR-2: This vacant parcel can be developed to expand the live-play-create destination concept developed in AIR-2. Uniland Development owns the parcel and may be equipped with the technical capacity to expand upon the concept, given their diverse development portfolio-industrial, residential, and commercial buildings. Pedestrian connectivity (walking trails) between AIR-1 and AIR- 2 is a critical attribute to improve the success of the destination which would require coordination with the owner of the property separating AIR-1 and AIR-2.
- AIR-3: The northern portion of SUNY Erie’s campus is underutilized green space with plans to be developed into athletic and recreational fields. Cross-sector partnerships with SUNY Erie and local healthcare businesses can be formed, supporting efforts to create a medical/sports tourism destination.
- AIR-4: This vacant parcel is nearly 25 acres of undeveloped land. Acquest Development was granted approval to develop given previous wetland restrictions. The parcel can accommodate light industrial uses.
- AIR-5: Nearly 50 acres of vacant land are available for development. Tucked between the Buffalo International Airport and Interstate-90, this site is a prime location to be developed into light production-based uses.
- AIR-6: Just north of UBMD Neurosurgery/DENT Neuro is a 40-acre parcel prime for development opportunities. While a senior housing project was proposed for the site, the use would be extraneous considering the abundance of senior facilities throughout the Town’s limits. If a senior project is implemented, the project should be an integrated element among the development, not the core focus. Workforce housing opportunities for industrial workers should be an additional component.







Mid-Term Strategies (See Airport Area Map #3)

- AIR-7/8: Inducon Park is equipped with buildings that are built-to-suit for light industrial/manufacturing uses. While redevelopment has been proposed as a potential strategy, vertical mixed-use infill development projects can be a cost-effective strategy to strengthen the park's marketability. A live-play-create activity center concept can expand upon the investment momentum of short-term strategies (AIR-1/AIR-2) Must enhance connections to make Wehrle more hospitable.

Long-Term Strategies (See Airport Area Map #3)

- AIR-9: At the intersection of Wilson Road and Youngs Road are nearly 15 acres of tracts, consisting of vacant land and low-value single-family homes inconsistent with the long-term vision. An assemblage that results in a combination of light industrial/distribution uses could programmatically unite numerous opportunity sites adjacent to SUNY Erie and or the airport.



2. Williamsville East

Overview

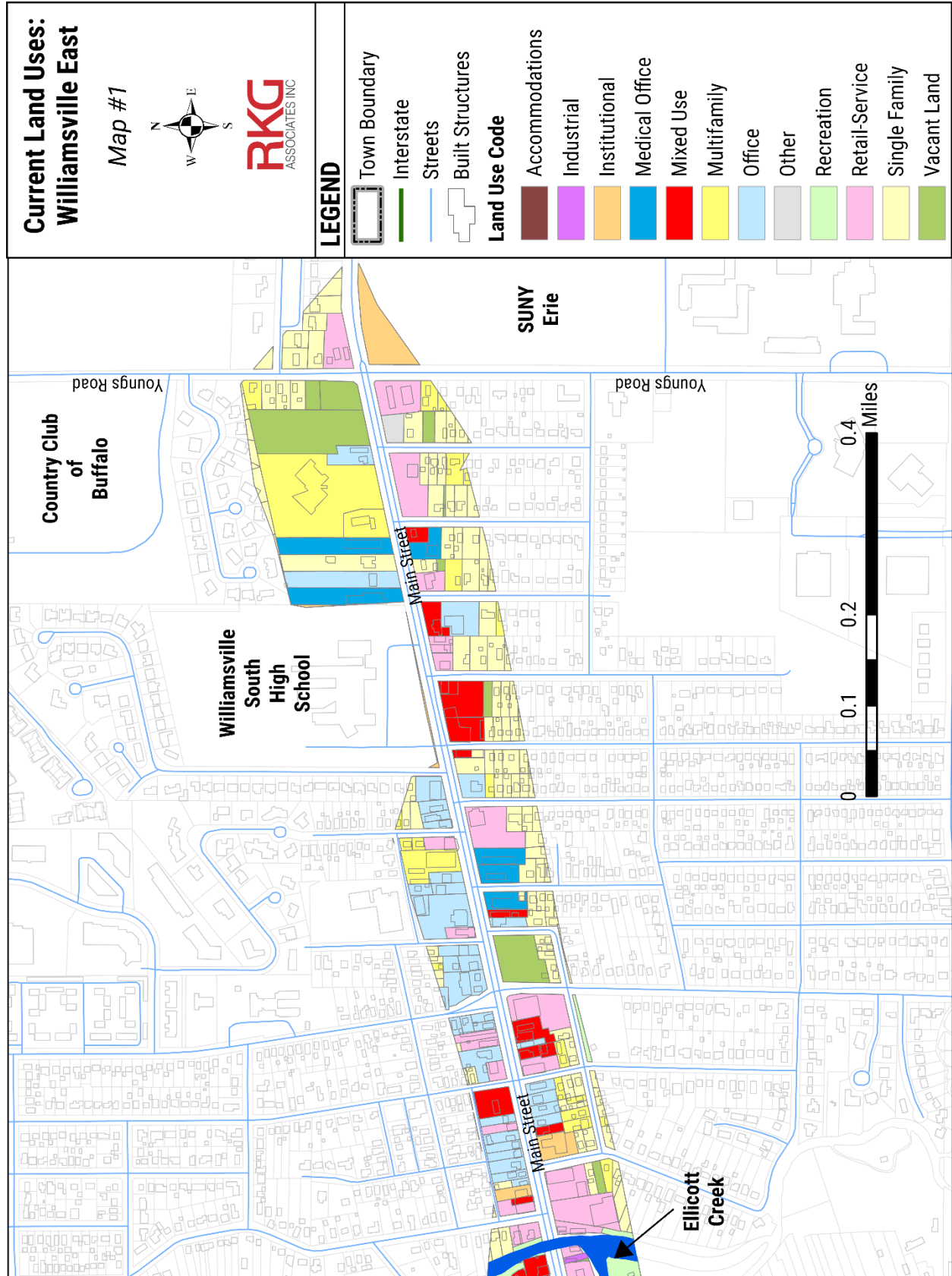
Williamsville East is bisected by Main Street, between Youngs Road and Ellicott Creek. Main Street is considered the most pedestrian-centric destination within the Town's boundaries integrated with independent retailers and historical architecture. These key ingredients have strengthened Williamsville market attraction, imposing premiums on construction. Substantial commercial and communal spaces exist around Ellicott Creek.

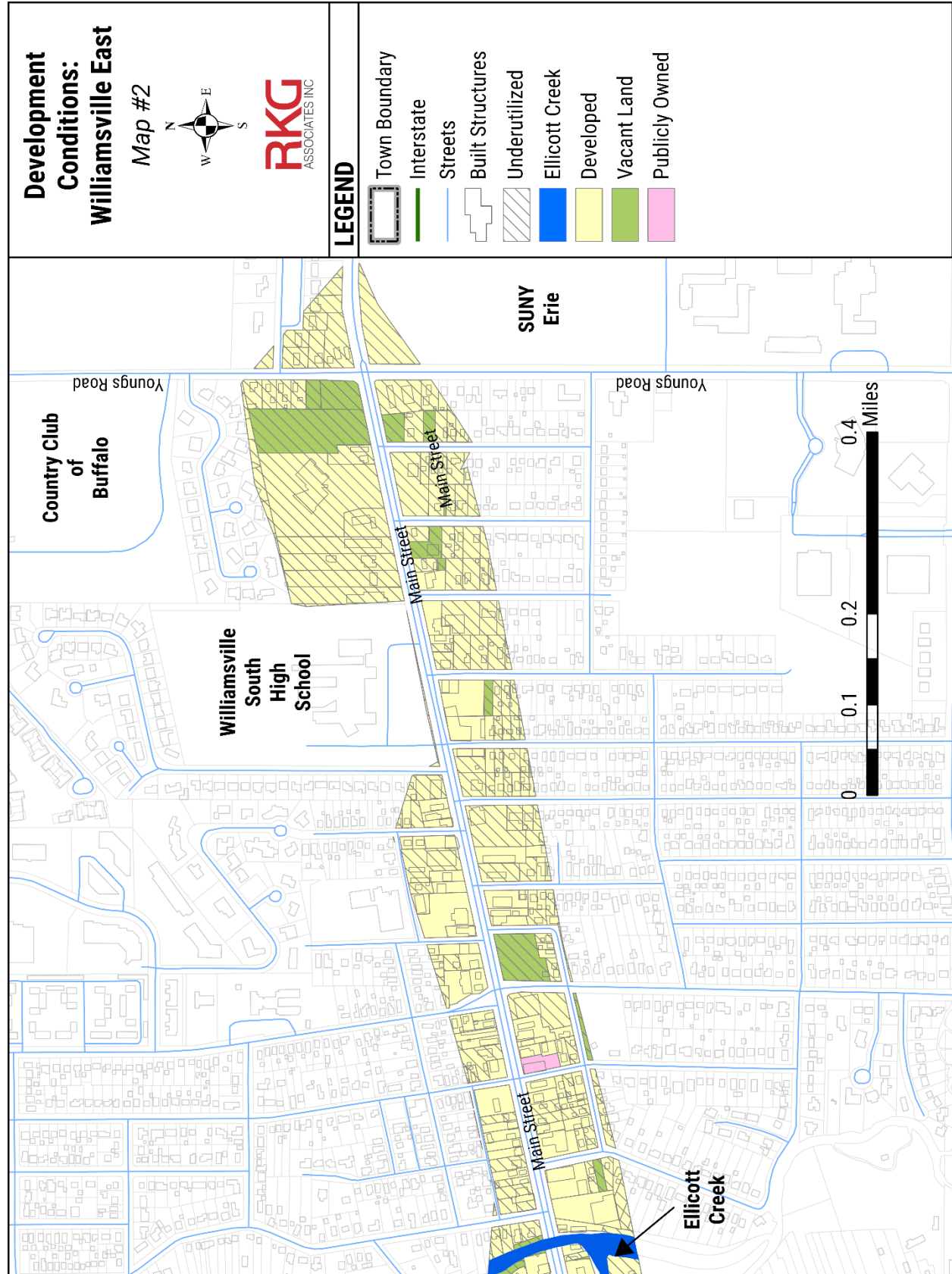
Vision

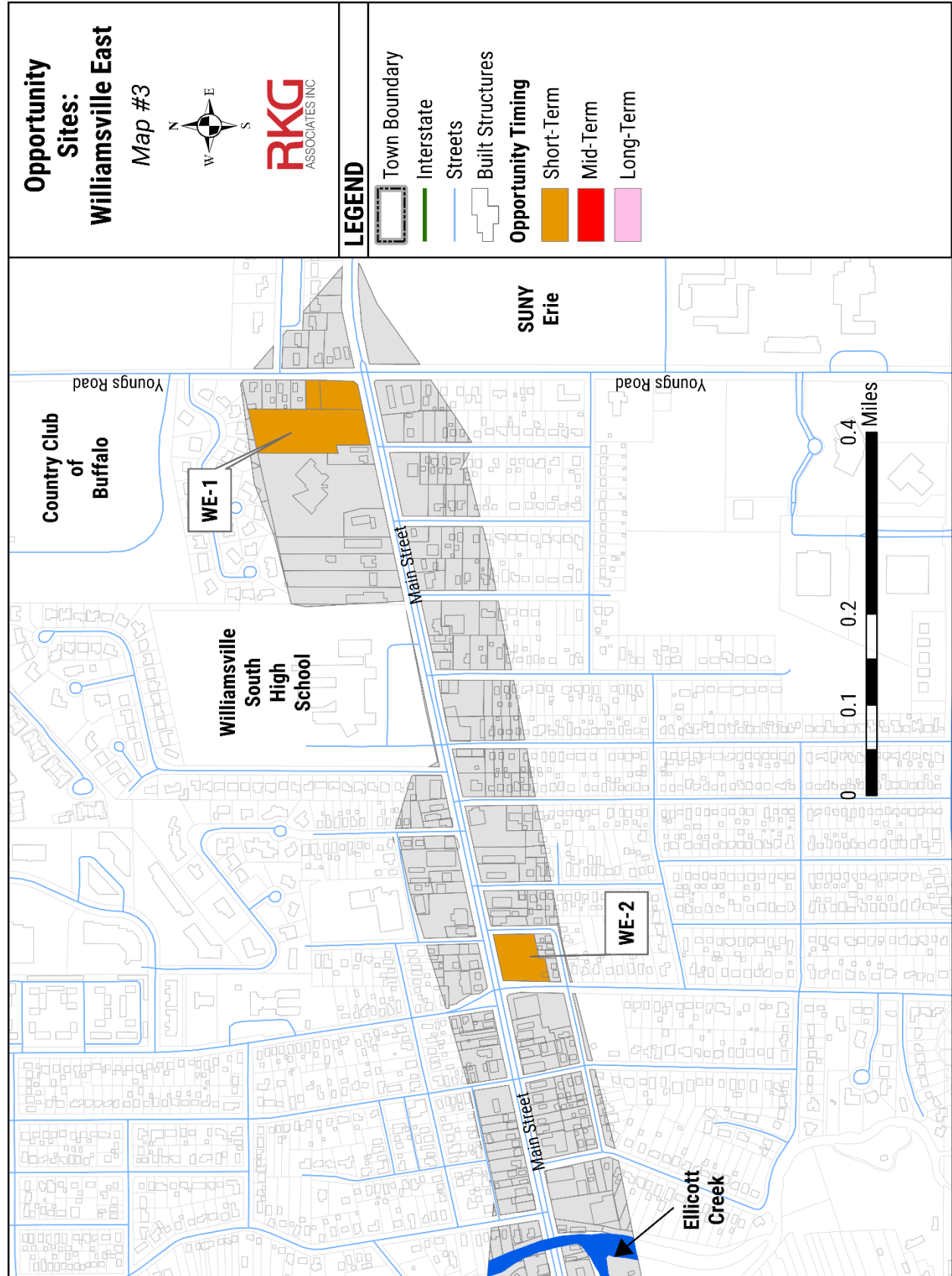
Williamsville East's historical charm positions the area to preserve economic sustainability. Its unique village character cannot be refabricated, increasing the value of Williamsville East. Walkability in retail destinations will remain an in-demand asset for consumers. The remaining vacant parcels along Main Street can be targeted for infill development opportunities, strengthening Williamsville East's pedestrian connectivity in the short-term.

Short-Term Strategies (See Williamsville East Map#3)

- WE-1, Assemblage/Infill Development: Northwest of the SUNY Erie campus are vacant parcels in a prime location to expand upon the medical/sports tourism destination concept. The proximity to future athletic fields on SUNY Erie's campus can advance the local sport medicine industry, providing performance training opportunities and preventative athletic medicinal practices. RKG envisions the site to be integrated with multifamily housing units and retail as value-added assets.
- WE-2, Infill Development: Additional ground floor retail uses with multifamily units can enhance Main Street's pedestrian scale vision. Permitting higher density projects is critical due to escalating land costs along Main Street. The Town should coordinate a public-private partnership between existing property owners for infill development projects with structured parking that strengthen the marketability of nearby commercial properties.









3. Williamsville West

Overview

Williamsville West extends between I-290 and Cayuga Road, bisected by historic Main Street. The farther from Cayuga Road and towards I-290, interparcel connectivity and developmental densities decline. Commercial developmental typologies are more reflective of suburban tracts, which include shopping centers and single-use office buildings integrated with expansive surface parking lots. Portions of I-290 are to be demolished over the next few years, paving the way for new investment opportunities.

Vision

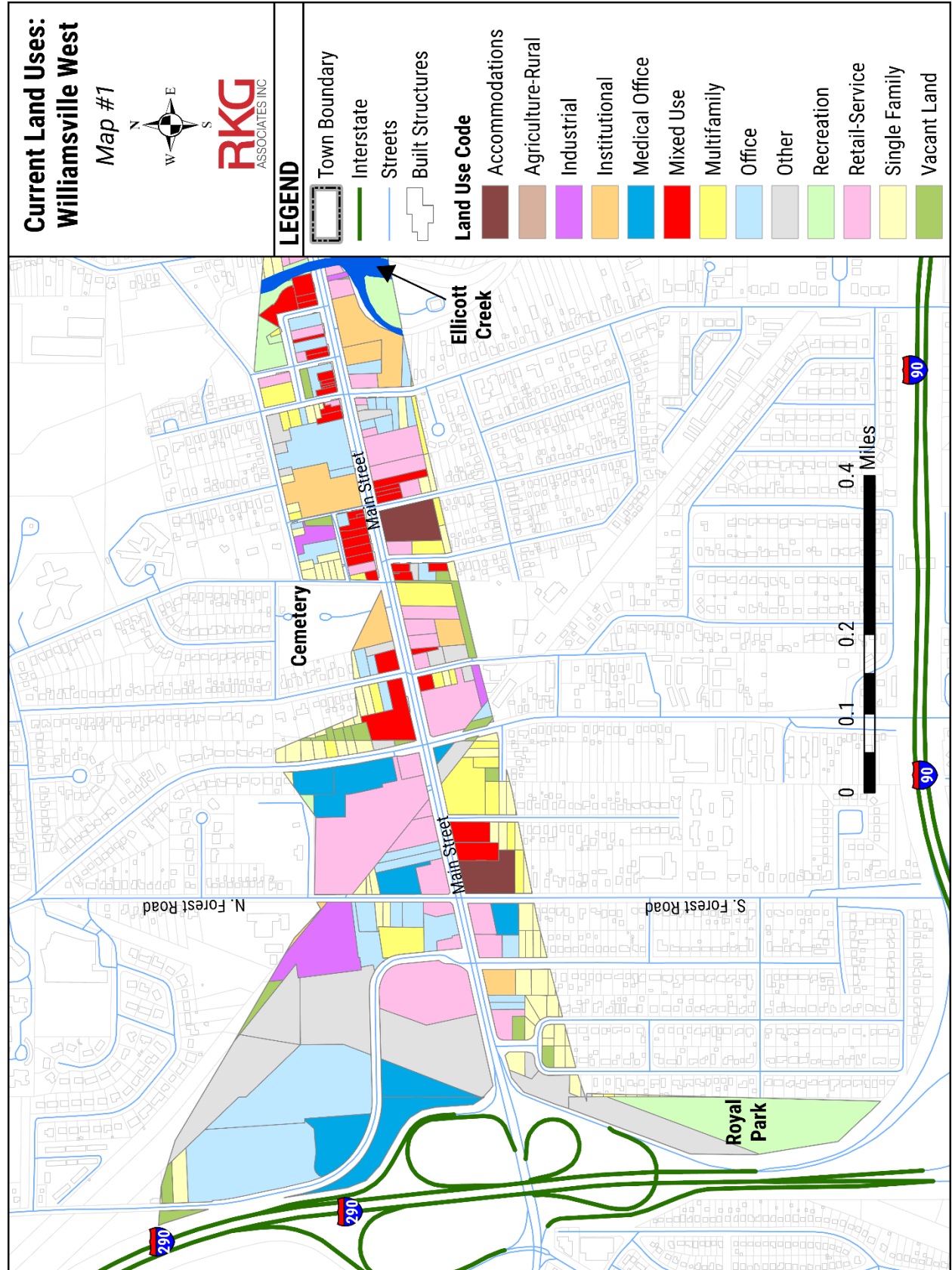
Re-investments into existing properties with declining economic values can re-strengthen marketability—incompatible shopping centers, outmoded office parks etc. The intended vision is to extend walkability patterns towards I-290 and expand the pedestrian-scale of Williamsville.

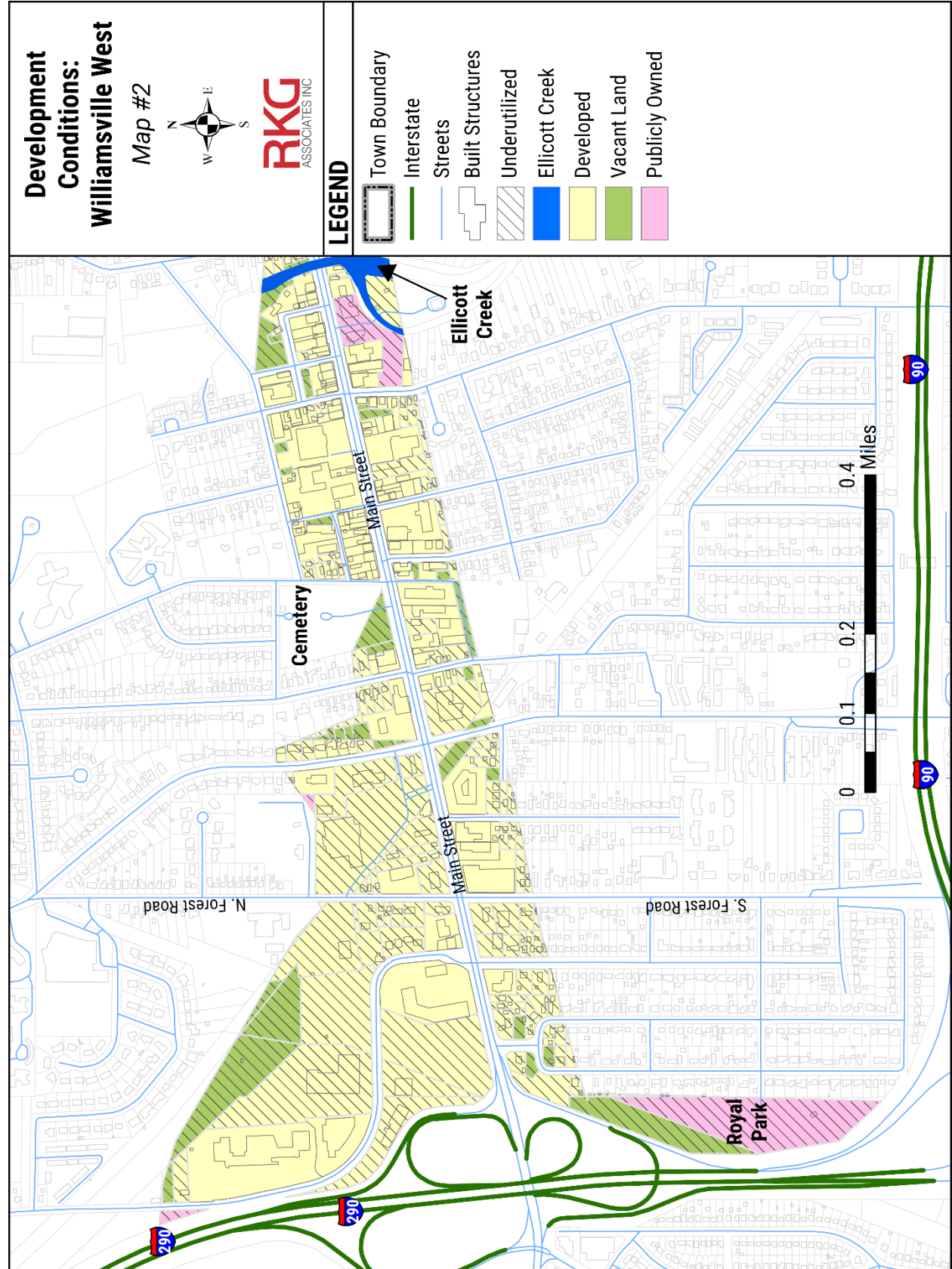
Mid-Term Strategies (See Williamsville West Map #3)

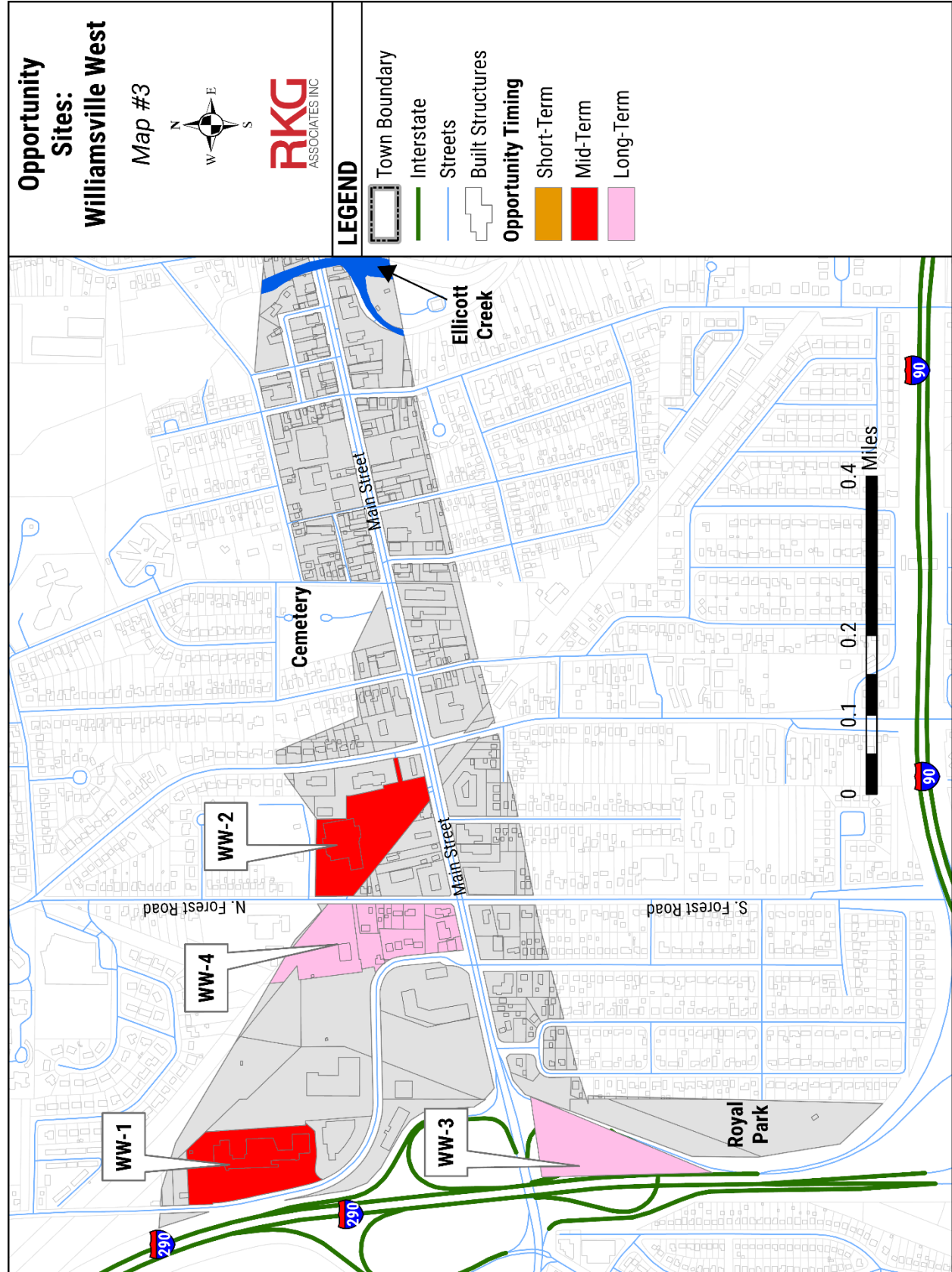
- WW-1, Redevelopment: Like for many white-collar businesses, hybrid-work models are encouraging Univera Healthcare to reevaluate its spatial needs. Limited levels of staff members are working in the office full-time. This can be redeveloped into a property that accommodates prevailing market preferences such as a vertical mixed-use project. Projects that are primarily multi-family residential with retail components can catalyze larger market returns than single-use office developments.
- WW-2, Redevelopment: Tops Grocery is located on the site and should be considered for redevelopment. While operational, the retail chain and property development scale are not compatible with the area's long-term vision that emphasizes walkability. There is also potential for trail connections through the site (See DRI Village West)

Long-Term Strategies (See Williamsville West Map #3)

- WW-3, Infill Development: The site is projected to include athletic facilities in partnership Daemen University. A Public-Private Partnership that localizes a sports medicine component can enhance the university's athletic training programs and workforce development outcomes. This strategy is long-term. It will be a few years before portions of I-290 ramps are removed which yields development opportunities on the site.
- WW-4, Assemblage/Redevelopment: Roughly 10 acres of outdated condos, warehouses, and single-family homes conflict with the area's long-term vision. The assemblage and redevelopment of these properties is considered a long-term strategy, given the depth of needed financial capacity and diversity of owners. However, eventual redevelopment of these parcels can create substantial long-term financial returns.









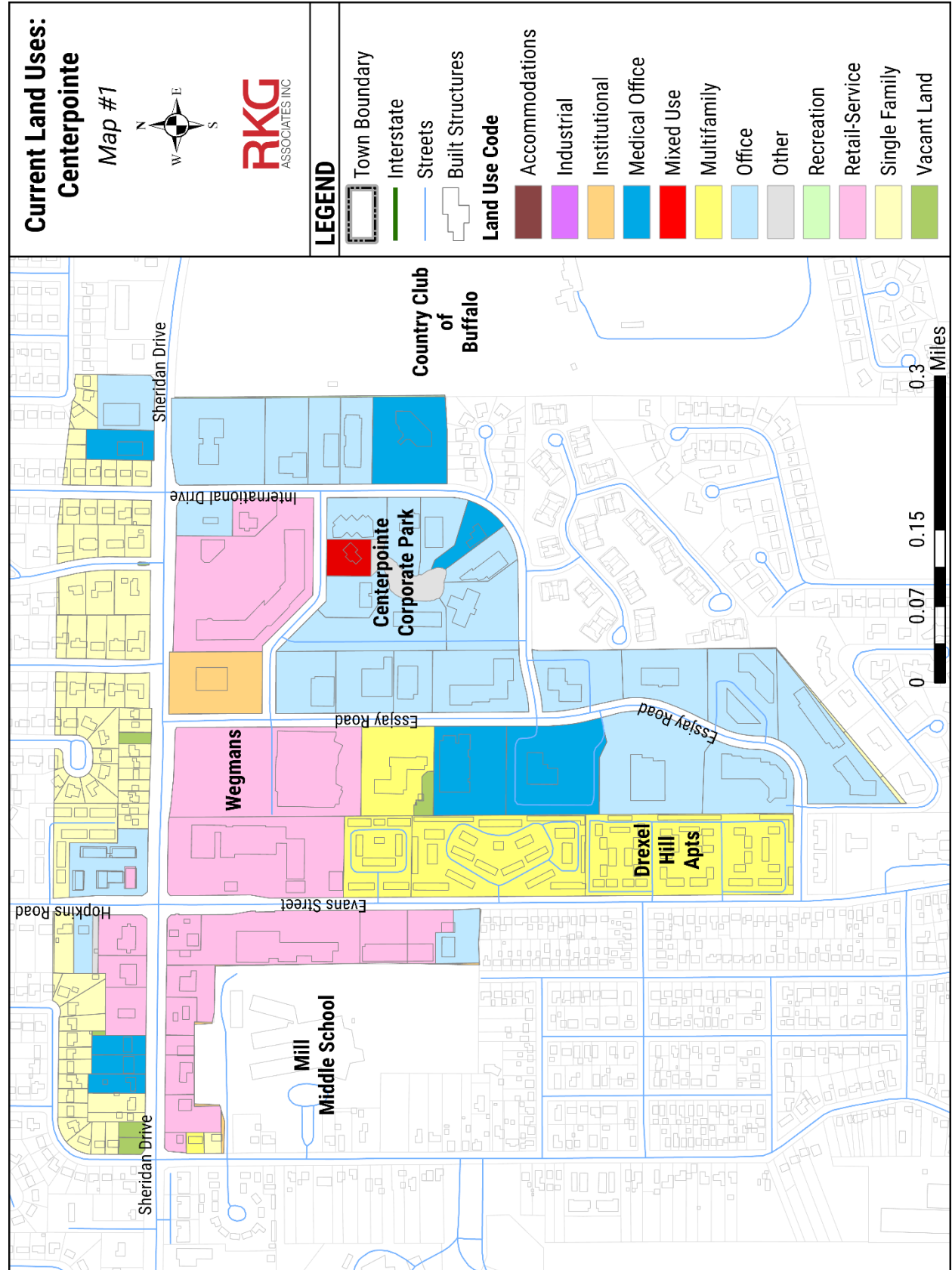
4. Centerpointe

Overview

Centerpointe consists of the Centerpointe Corporate Park, a cluster of office properties that are reporting high vacancy rates. High vacancies reflect shifts in workplace demand, as employers increasingly prefer to locate their operations in highly-amenitized areas. Shifts in demand are stimulating investment activities in urban areas such as Downtown Buffalo, which offer walkability and connectivity. Even if buildings don't report high vacancies, they are likely underutilized due to remote-working models—an employer could be tied to a lease, but minimal staff members actually work within the buildings on a daily basis. These properties are not living up to their full marketable potential, which can impact the Town's long-term economic sustainability.

Vision

Several properties are underutilized, a strong stimulus is needed for in-fill development or redevelopment projects to revitalize declining commercial activities. These opportunities can capitalize on the proximity to Wegmans, an anchor grocery institution that attracts consistent consumer activities. The intended vision is to revitalize commercial activities through projects that accommodate prevailing market preferences. In particular, work-live-play destinations that can stimulate business investment and attract young professionals, desperately needed in Amherst as the population continues to age.





Short-Term Strategies (See Centerpointe Map #3)

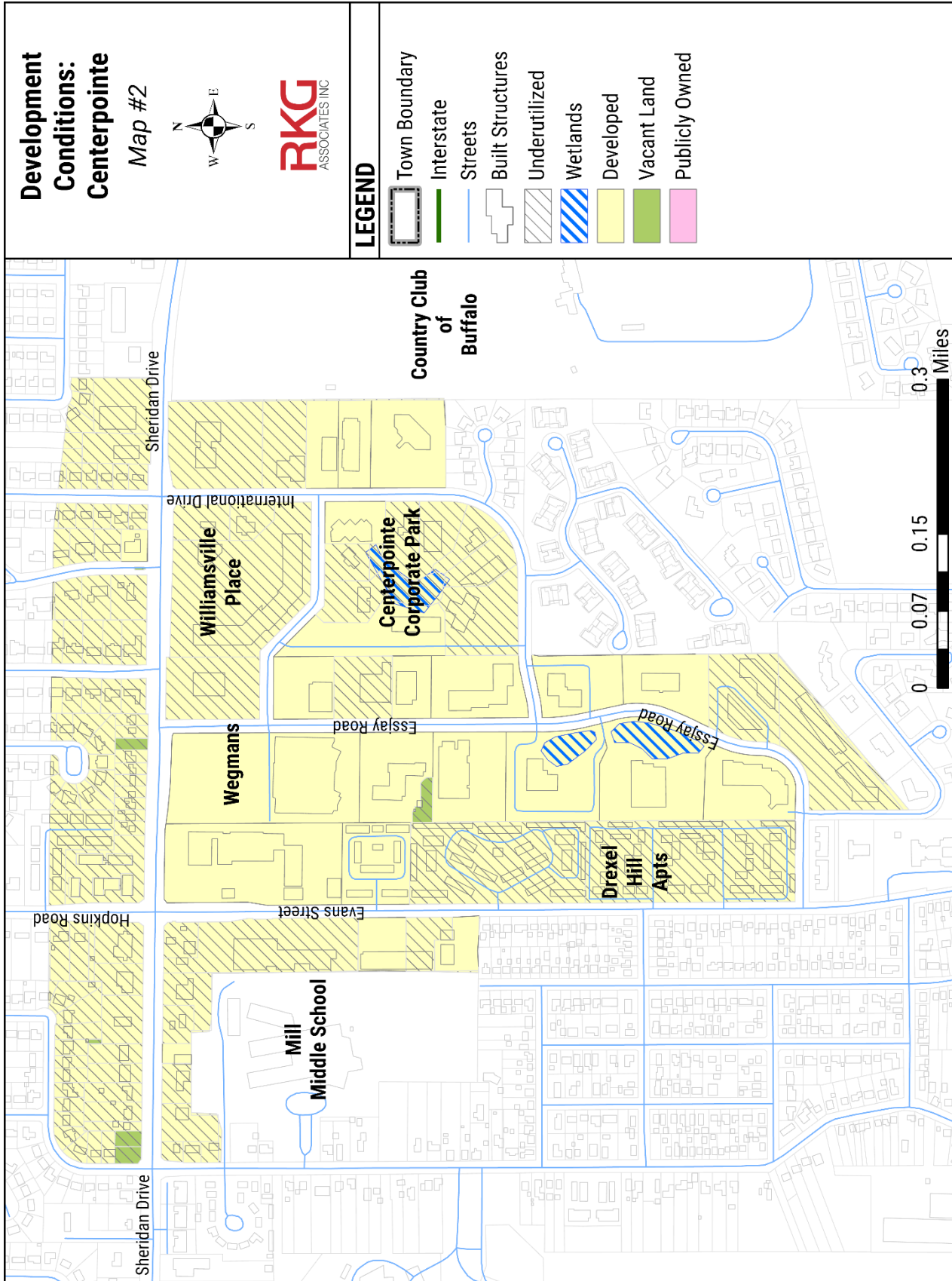
- CP-1, Redevelopment: Like suburban-scale office developments, suburban-scale retail centers face challenges related to vacancies and underutilization. That includes the Georgetown Plaza, which can be redeveloped into a vertical mixed-use development with substantial multifamily units that supports the Town’s underserved rental market.

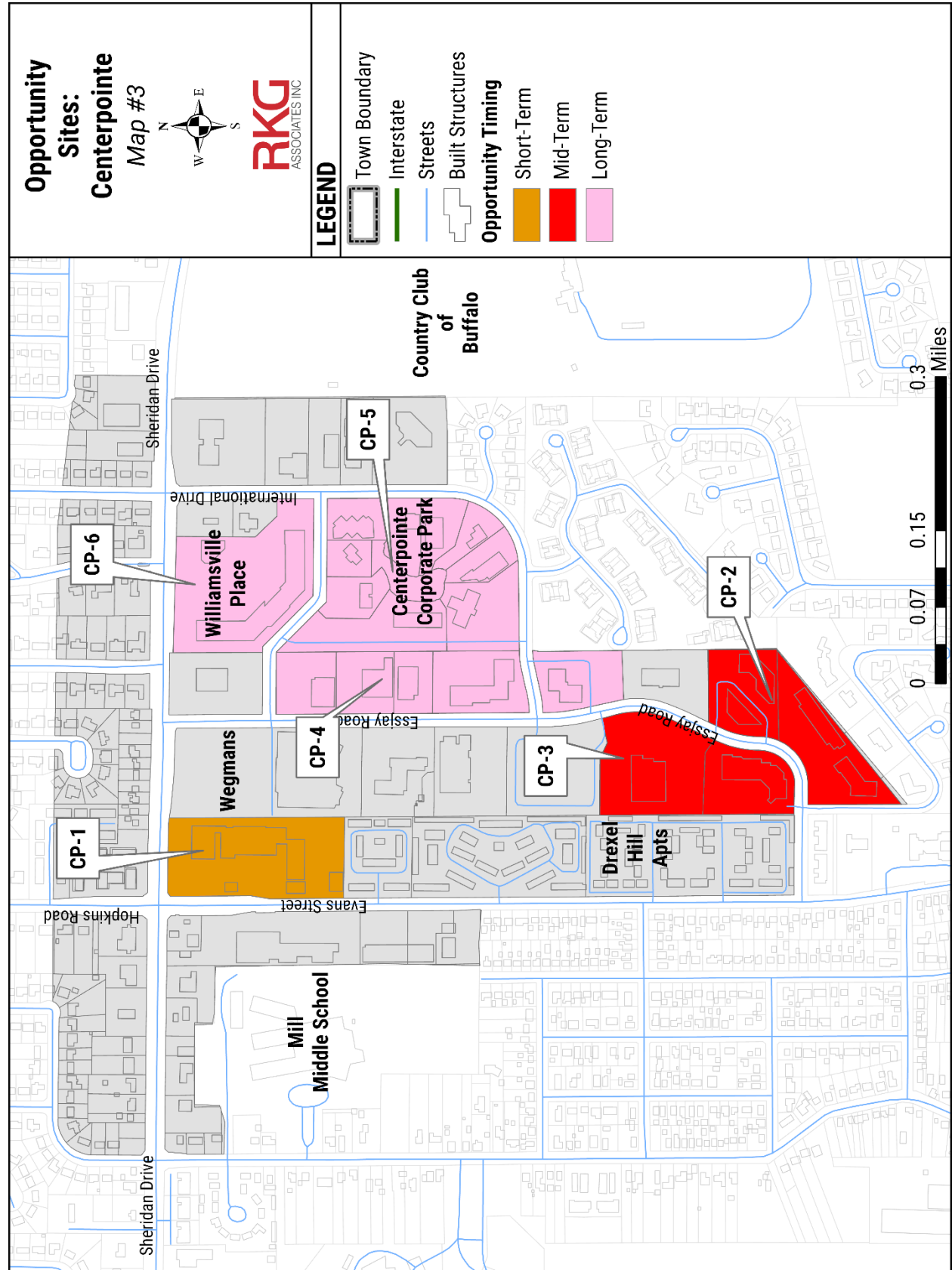
Mid-Term Strategies (See Centerpointe Map #3)

- CP-2 & CP-3, Assemblage/Redevelopment: These parcels consist of single-story and outdated office buildings. These sites should be considered for a signature redevelopment strategy that repivots Centerpointe Corporate Park’s declining economic vitality. A partnership should be coordinated between the different property owners to “sell-them” on the vision.

Long-Term Strategies (See Centerpointe Map #3)

- CP-4 & CP-5, Assemblage/Redevelopment: These properties report fewer vacancies than CP-2 & CP-3 but are vulnerable to higher vacancies in the long-term due to evolving shifts in workplace preferences. Conversion opportunities appear to be limited, and therefore should be redeveloped into a town-center style development that can build off the momentum of CP-2 & CP-3. A few employers are expected to remain in place (Buffalo Medical Group). A town-center style development could strengthen the workforce retention efforts of these employers through additional amenities. The assemblage and redevelopment of these properties is considered a long-term strategy, given the depth of needed financial capacity and diversity of owners.
- CP-6, Infill Development: Williamsville Place, a neighborhood shopping center, is nearly occupied. If vacancies begin to rise due to shifts in retail demand (ecommerce), infill development with multifamily units can reposition lost economic activities and support existing retailers. To increase the financial feasibility and land use efficiencies, structured parking can create substantial long-term financial returns.







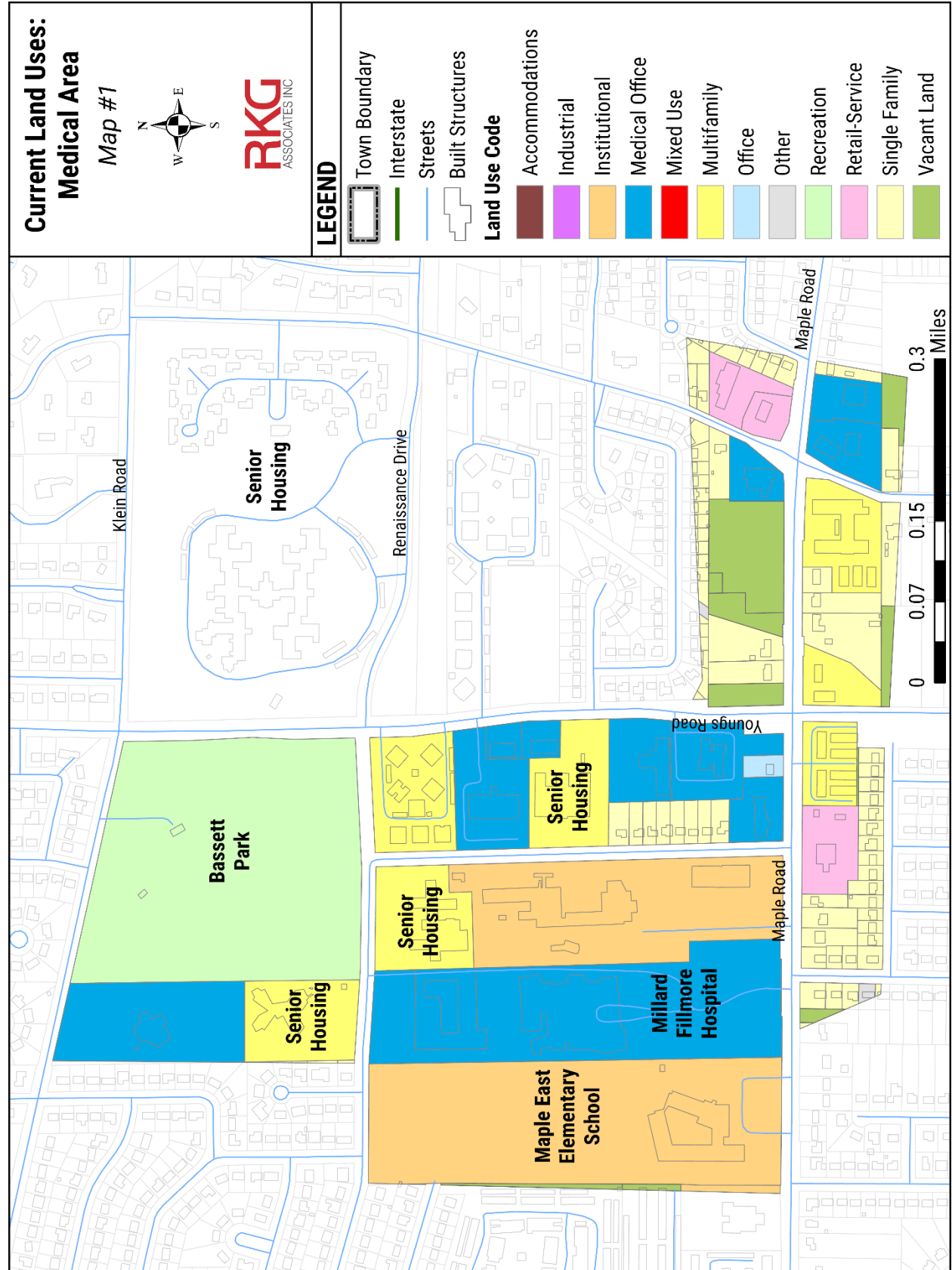
5. Medical Area

Overview

The Town's largest concentration of healthcare professionals is located within the Medical Area. The area is home to Millard Fillmore Hospital, private physician's offices, and assisted living facilities. The development patterns are largely suburban in nature which can be reconfigured into a more connected and walkable built environment to sustain needed job growth. As demand for medical services increases due to an aging population, several healthcare support workers will be needed to stabilize services.

Vision

Insufficient healthcare workers are available to support projected healthcare demand. The challenge of recruiting and retaining medical professionals has escalated, particularly for hospitals. Relative to other medical practices, hospitals are a demanding environment vulnerable to inducing occupational stress and workforce burnout. Developmental and design interventions can counteract work-related stressors, while improving the area as a place to live, work, and play. For instance, a greater concentration of food outlets could substitute driving to lunch with walking. Consequently, alleviating associated time and financial costs can exacerbate occupational stress. Moreover, as the Town's costs-of-living continue to rise and investments in healthcare services target other areas of Erie County, the competition for healthcare support workers will tighten. Parcels can be used to develop price-diverse housing options that provide living opportunities for nurses and medical assistants. that are in closer proximity to their workplace.



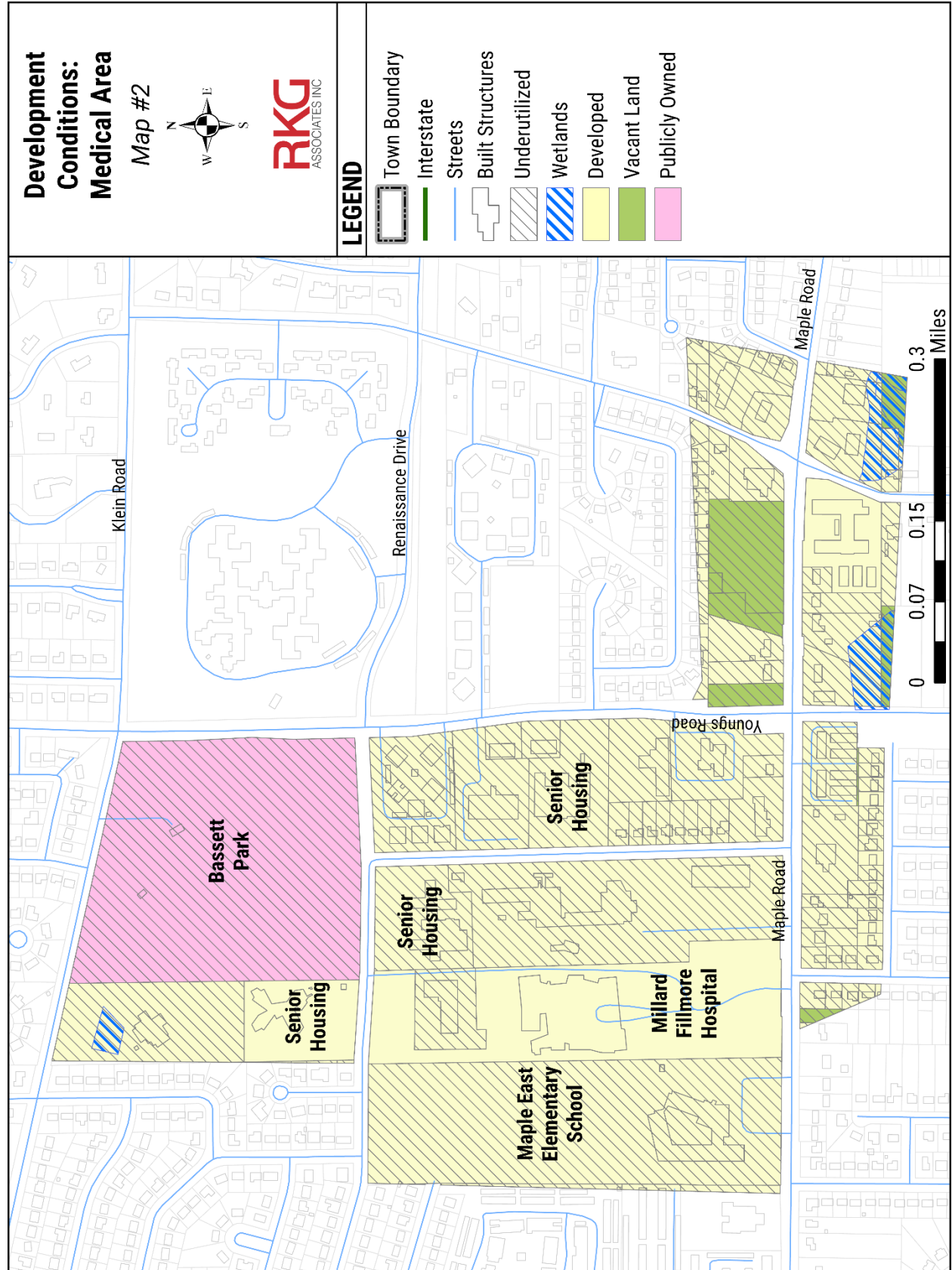


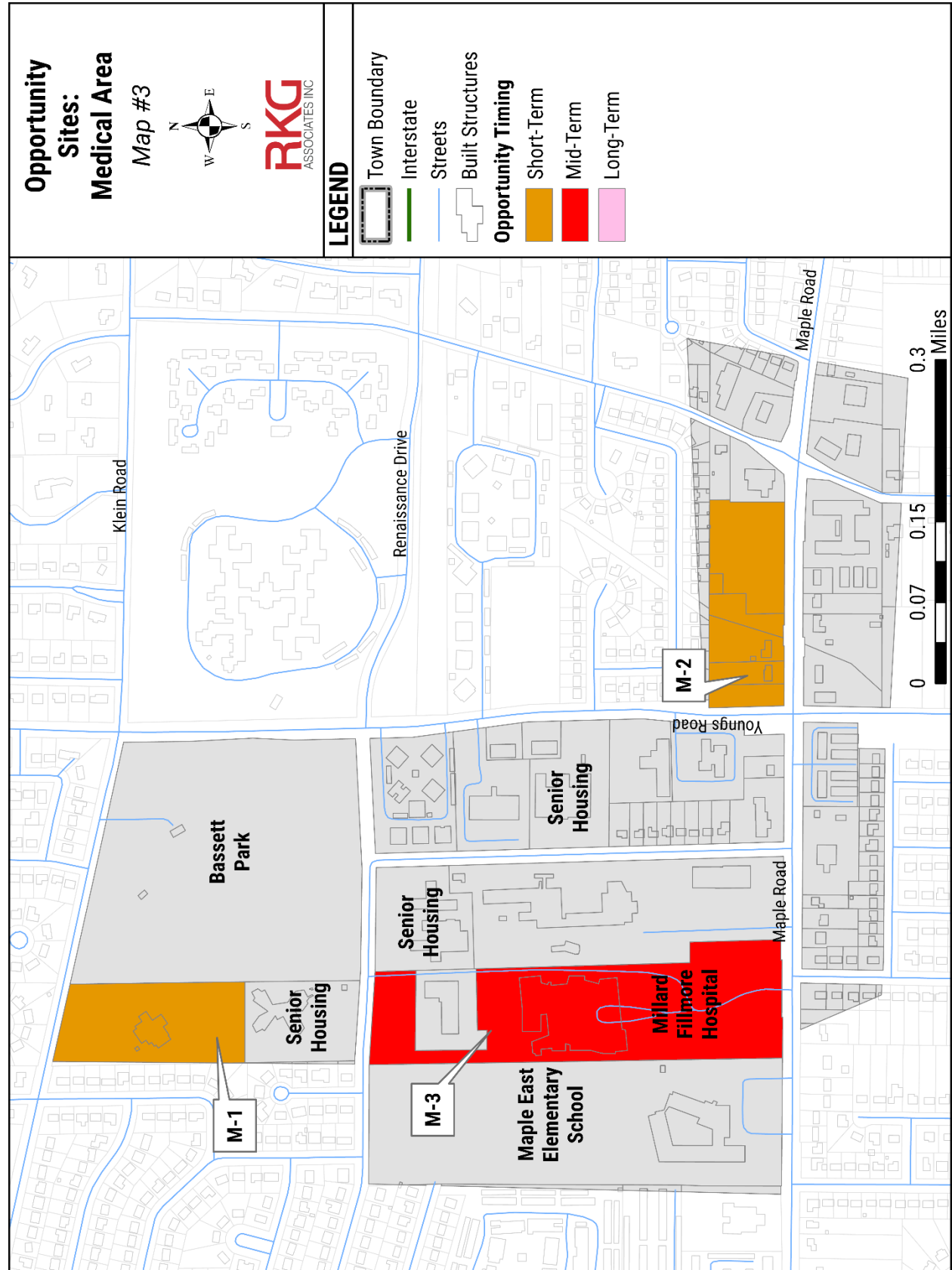
Short-Term Strategies (See Medical Area Map #3)

- M-1, Infill Development: Underutilized land surrounds the Millard Fillmore Surgery Center. This parcel can be a prime location for infill development of workforce housing for healthcare workers employed throughout the study area. Workforce housing integrated with experiential/neighborhood retail options can enhance industry recruitment efforts.
- M-2, Redevelopment: Most of this site is being converted into a mixed use project with upscale units. A sizeable rental market can support fast absorption rates of these units. It appears that the project isn't taking full advantage of the land availability. If plans are not completely approved, engage with the developer about integrating experiential retail options to strengthen long-term financial returns.

Long-Term Strategies (See Medical Area Map #3)

- M-3, Infill Development: Sustain parking needs and increase land use efficiencies with structured parking. If planned properly, substantial land is available around the hospital for in-fill development opportunities to expand hospital services.







6. CrossPoint

Overview

CrossPoint is located in the northeastern portion of the Town of Amherst, primarily filled with suburban-scale office developments, and is credited for employing roughly 6,000 workers. The CrossPoint Business Park hosts office spaces for major corporations, including Geico, M&T Bank, Fidelis Care, and Columbus McKinnon. Despite a prevalence of physical office spaces, remote-working models have contributed to being underutilized as the daytime population has dropped significantly.

Vision

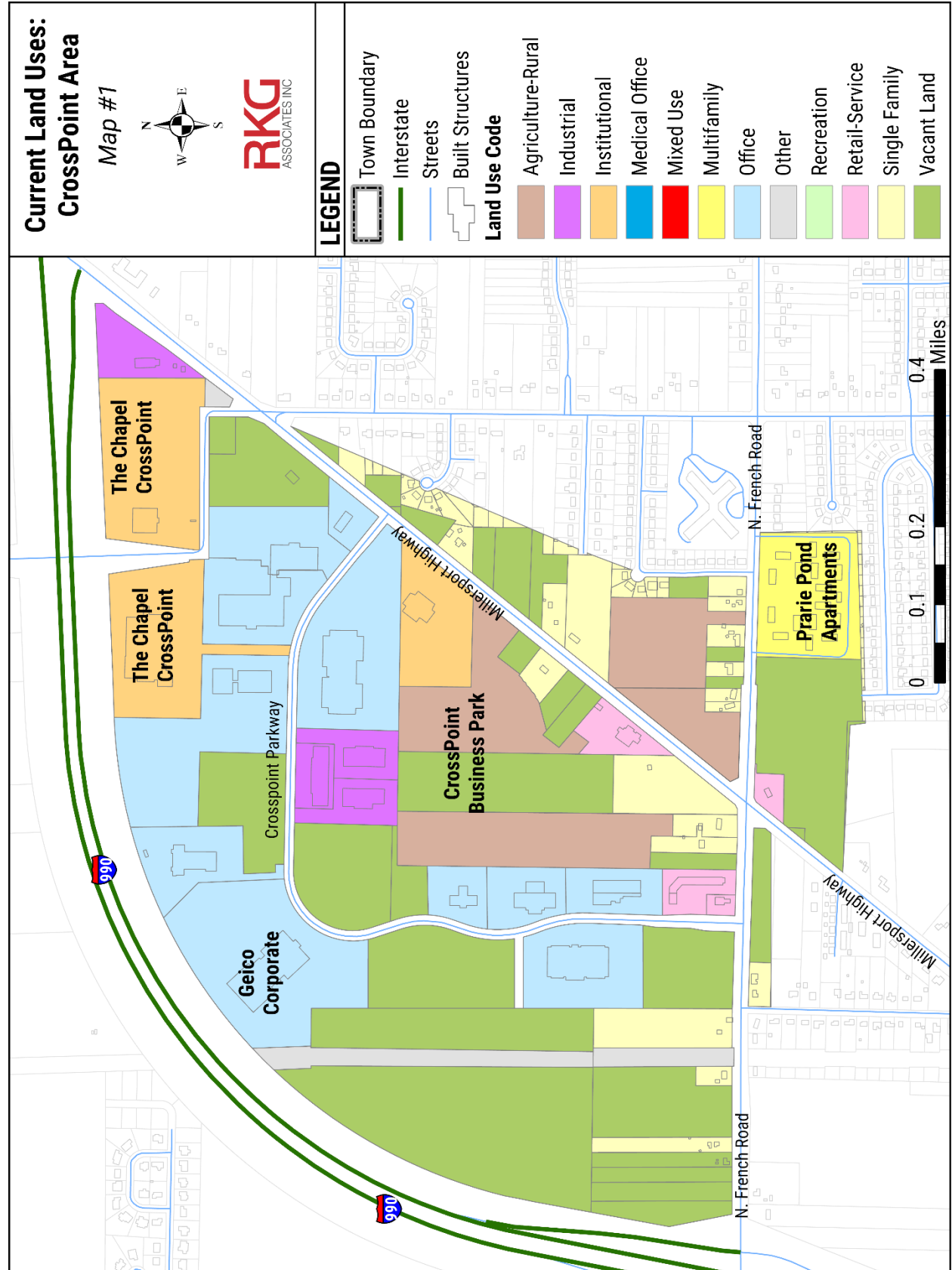
Like many suburban office parks, the intended vision is to preserve and revitalize underutilized economic activities. While the ‘flight to quality’ is a common trend among businesses moving into office spaces, CrossPoint’s inaccessibility to amenities will reduce the long-term demand for its Class A office buildings. While post-pandemic work models become more popular, businesses will continue to seek out areas that offer connectivity and walkability to services. RKG strongly recommends that CrossPoint embrace a diversity of commercial activities and capitalize on market demand shifts to reposition the park’s economic trajectory. Several opportunities exist to transform this area into an active mixed-use activity center. This may include redeveloping many of the office buildings that are underutilized.

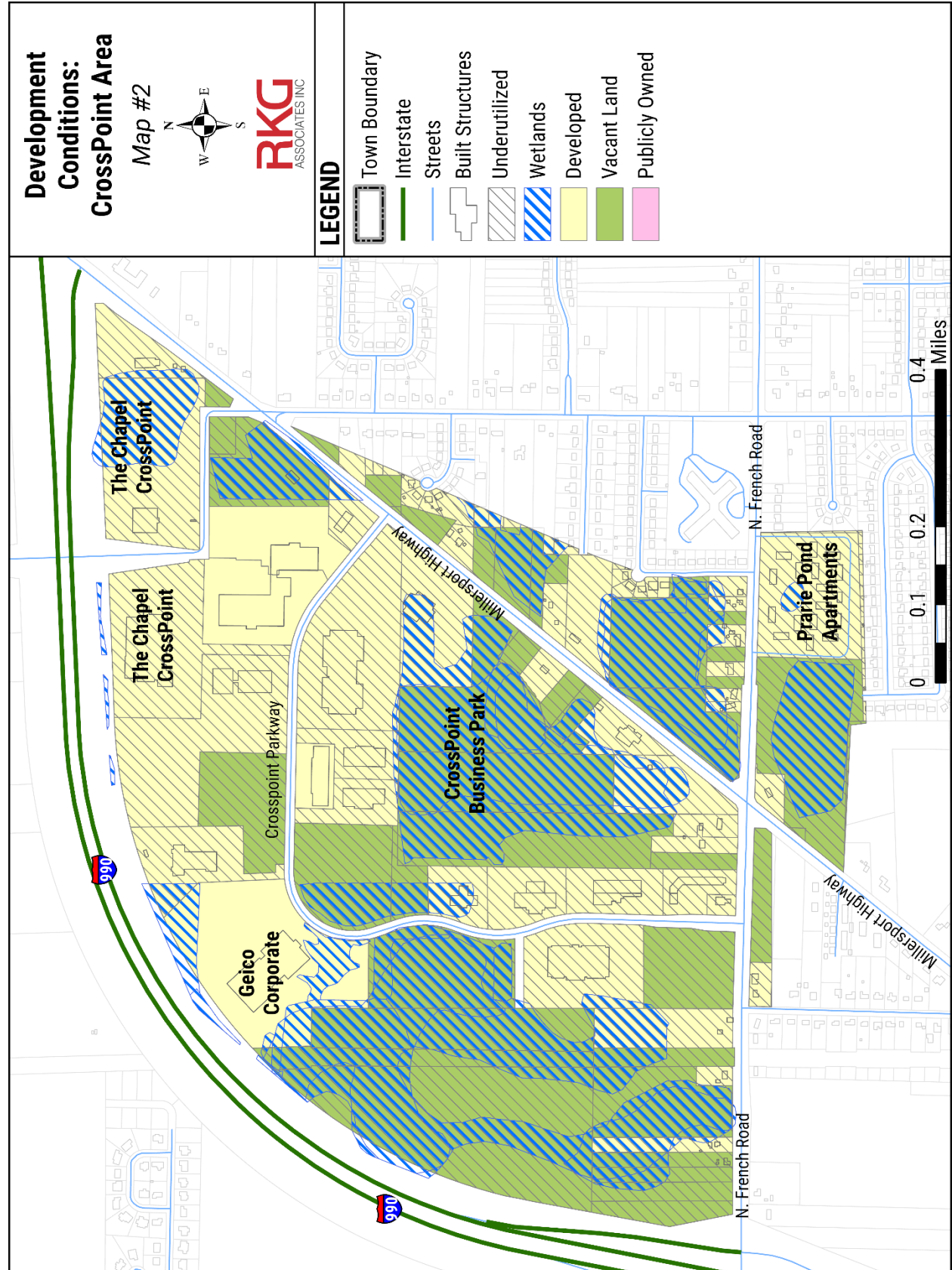
Short-Term Strategies (See CrossPoint Area Map #3)

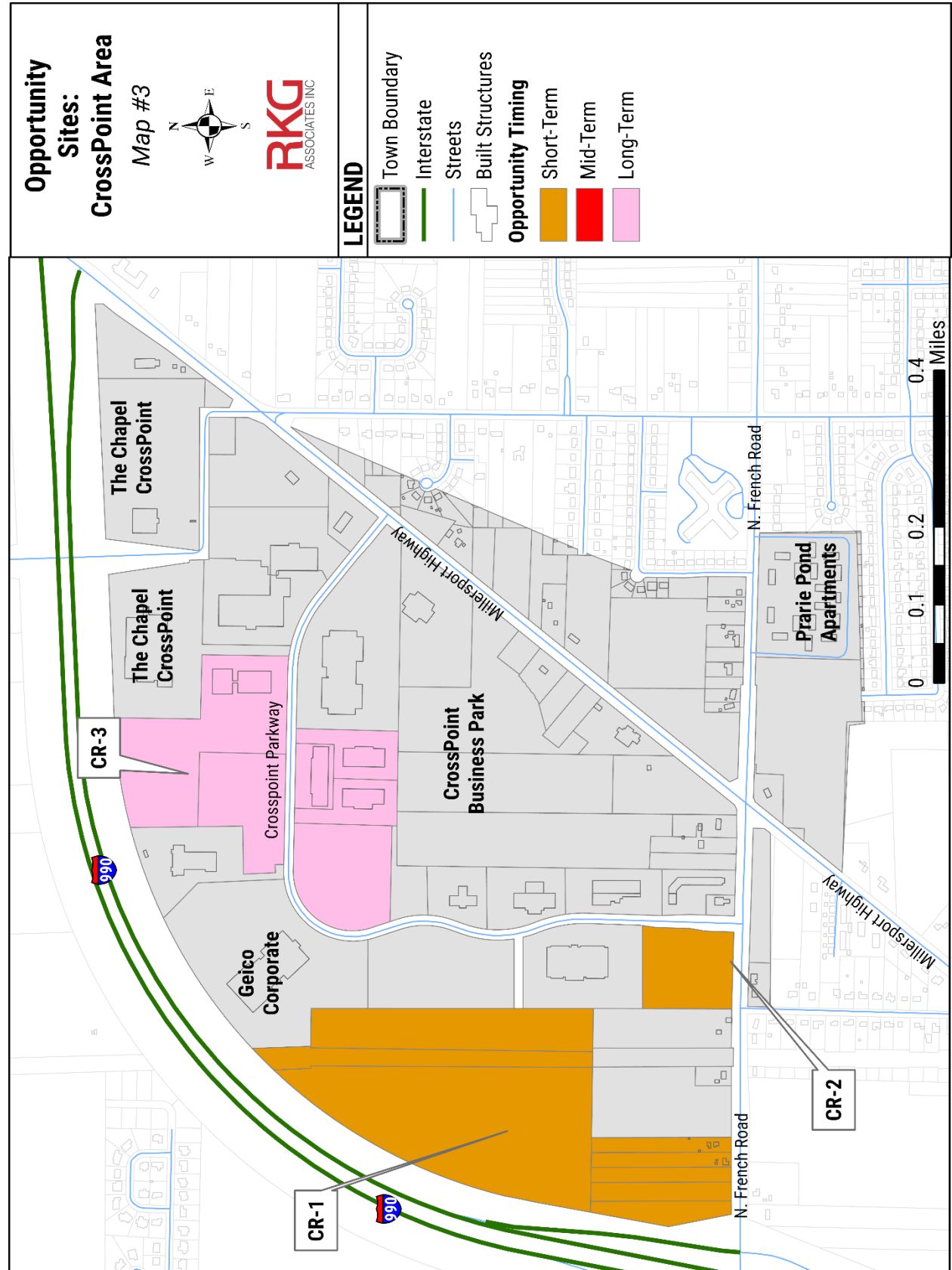
- CR-1, Assemblage/Development: High volume ecommerce spending patterns and improved supply chain efficiencies have pent-up regional demand for warehouse spaces. Across the Buffalo- Niagara MSA, vacancies are low while absorption rates are rapid. The site’s frontage to I-990 offers a viable development and market opportunity for warehouse/distribution facilities. Given that existing economic activities are virtually non-existent, assemblage processes will likely face minimal barriers.
- CR-2, Infill Development: An expressed public interest for multifamily development has occurred. While rental units are in-demand, integrating the development with retail uses can offer a stronger economic development opportunity.

Long-Term Strategies (See CrossPoint Area Map #3)

- CR-3, Assemblage/Redevelopment: The site consists of vacant land and outdated industrial buildings. Assemblage and redevelopment into a town-center style development concept can generate long-term financial returns for CrossPoint.









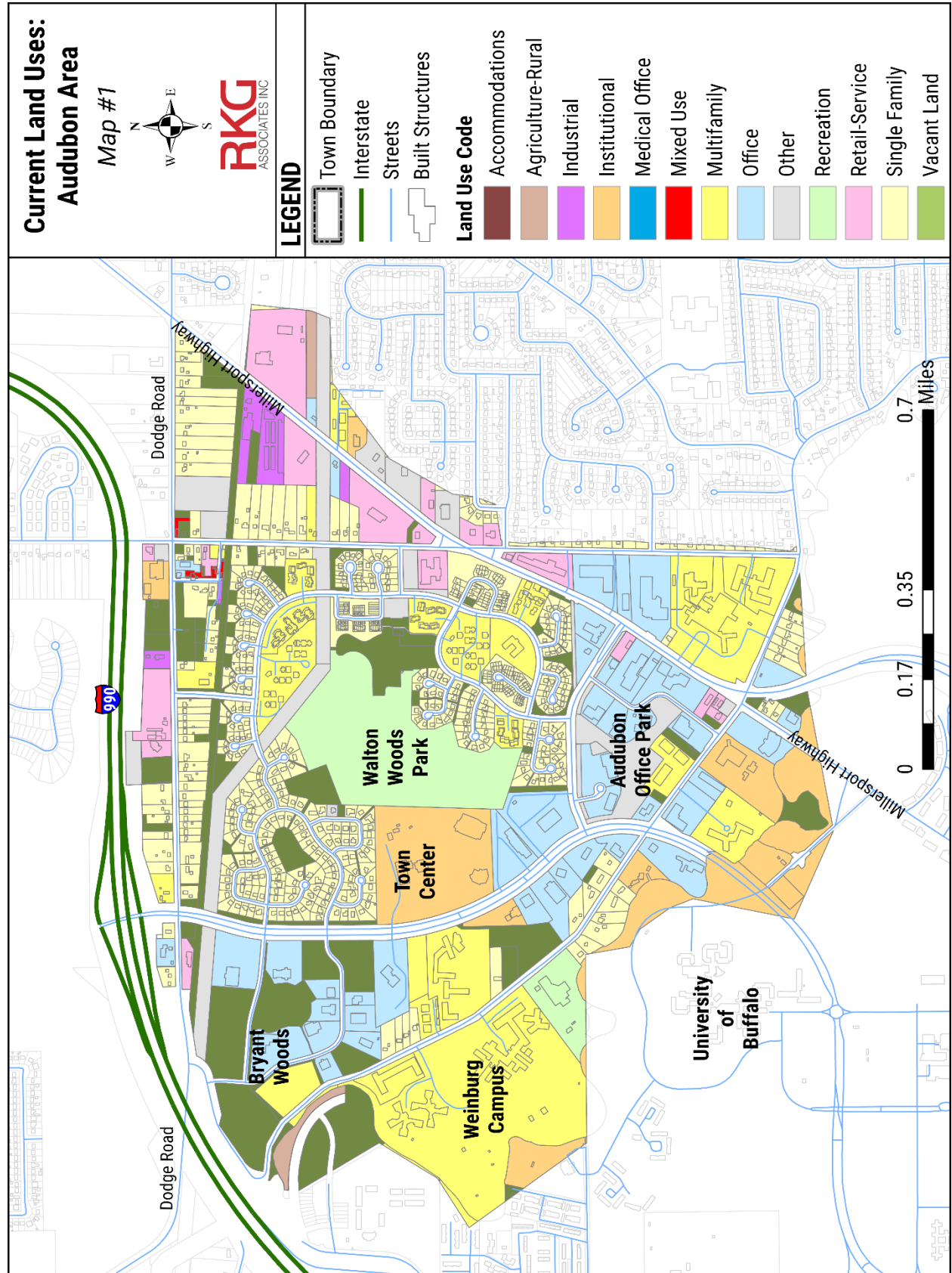
7. Audubon Area

Overview

The Audubon Area consists of a variety of land uses on a per-parcel basis, however, most of the area's commercial land is developed for suburban-scale office developments. Many of these developments are functionally obsolete to knowledge-based businesses in the New Age Economy. Audubon's proximity to the University at Buffalo offers catalytic potential while fueling innovative entrepreneurial opportunities and improving workforce development outcomes among impending graduates.

Vision

The intended vision for the area is to capitalize on the proximity to University at Buffalo's North Campus, which is concentrated with STEM-degree seeking students. Concentration can encourage the development of a built environment that facilitates multiple modes of circulation and collaboration among students, researchers, professors, and existing employers. Mixed-use, town-center style developments are credited for catalyzing knowledge-sharing activities, the foundations for innovative entrepreneurial opportunities. RKG envisions Audubon's built environment to be enhanced through an integration of community-based attractions—multifamily housing, open spaces, parks, retailers, coffee shops/cafes, bars/restaurants etc.; overall, a walkable environment that spurs social connection and innovation.



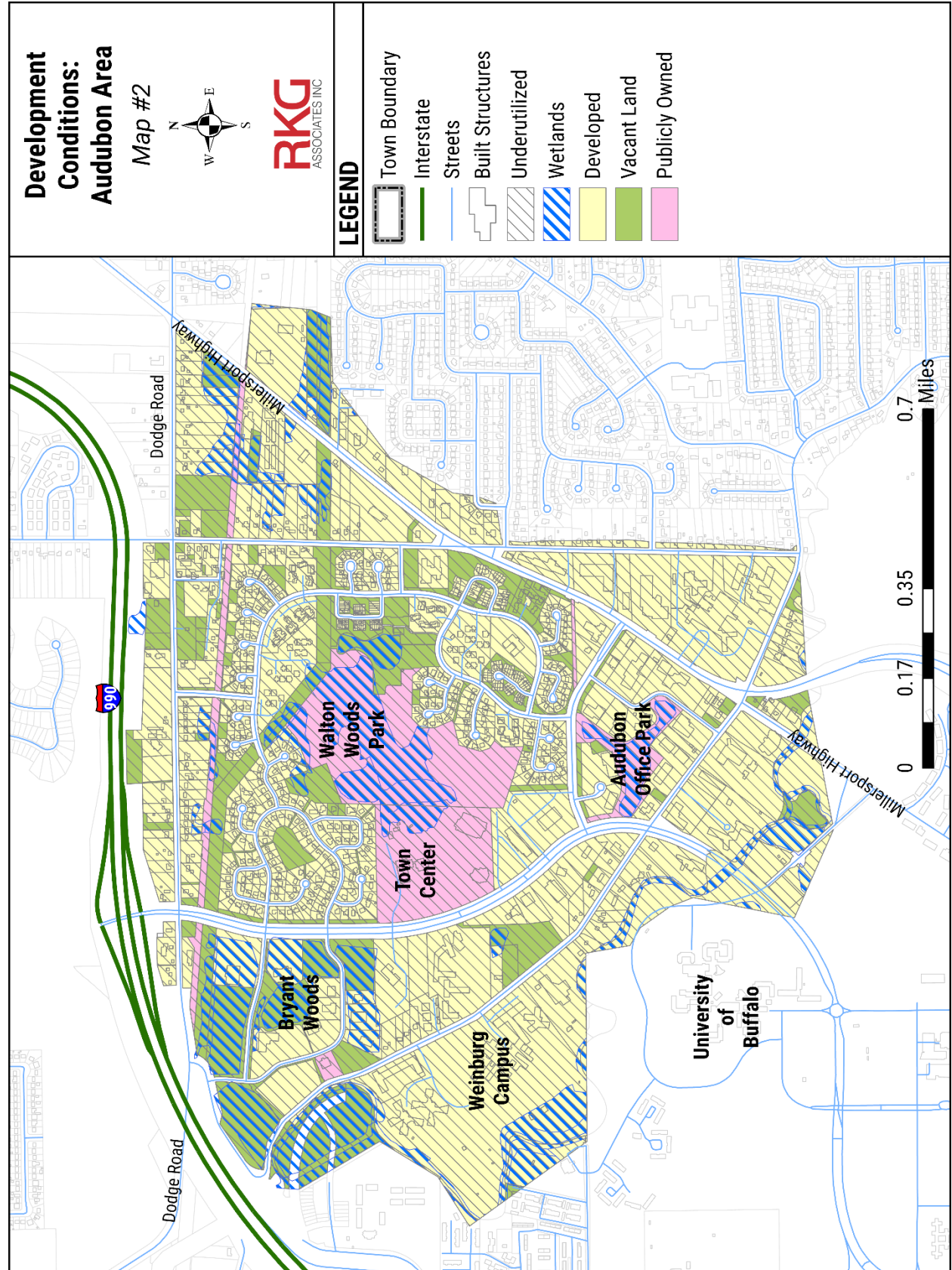


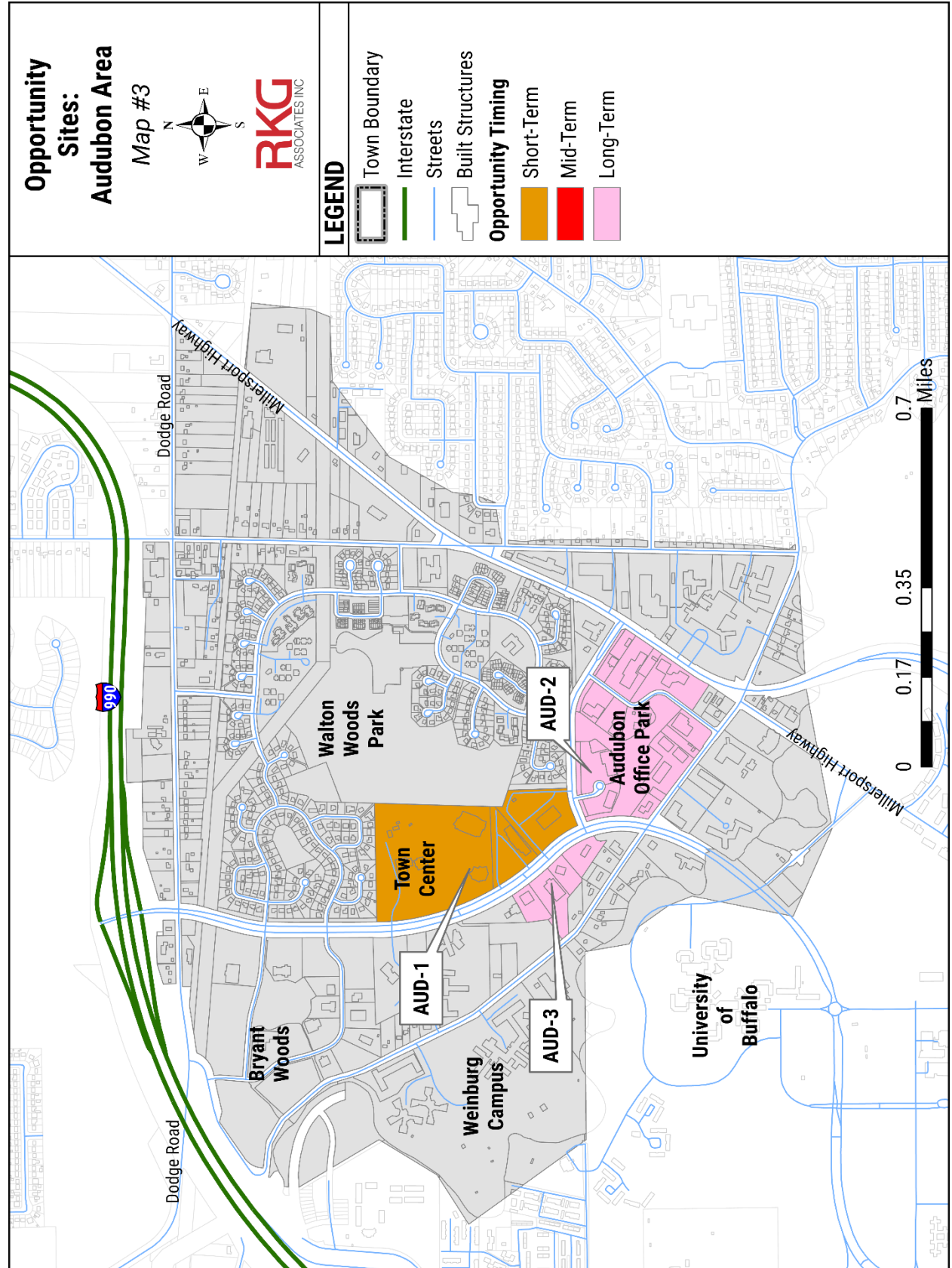
Short-Term Strategies (See Audubon Area Map #3)

- AUD-1, Assemblage/Infill Development: These properties are underutilized given the availability of land resources. The site consists of multiple community services buildings, including the police station, the Town senior center and library. Installing work-live-create destinations through infill projects can enable knowledge-sharing and networking opportunities while retaining town facilities (e.g., police station). The presence of the police station can sustain the safety of the neighborhood.

Long-Term Strategies (See Audubon Area Map #3)

- AUD-2, Assemblage/Redevelopment: Given that most of the office stock is functionally obsolete to knowledge-based companies, redevelopment into a mixed-use project can revitalize lost economic activities. The proximity to STEM-degree seeking students at University at Buffalo's North Campus can intensify the effects of innovation and entrepreneurial development.
- AUD-3, Assemblage/Redevelopment: Assemblage and eventual redevelopment opportunities can expand upon the potential momentum in AUD-1 and AUD-2. Expansions to the work-live-create destination concept can help catalyze entrepreneurial outcomes. Retaining some existing spaces could benefit young entrepreneurs, however, more prone to face cost constraints. This area is already being converted to housing, maybe student or senior based on proximity to Weinberg.







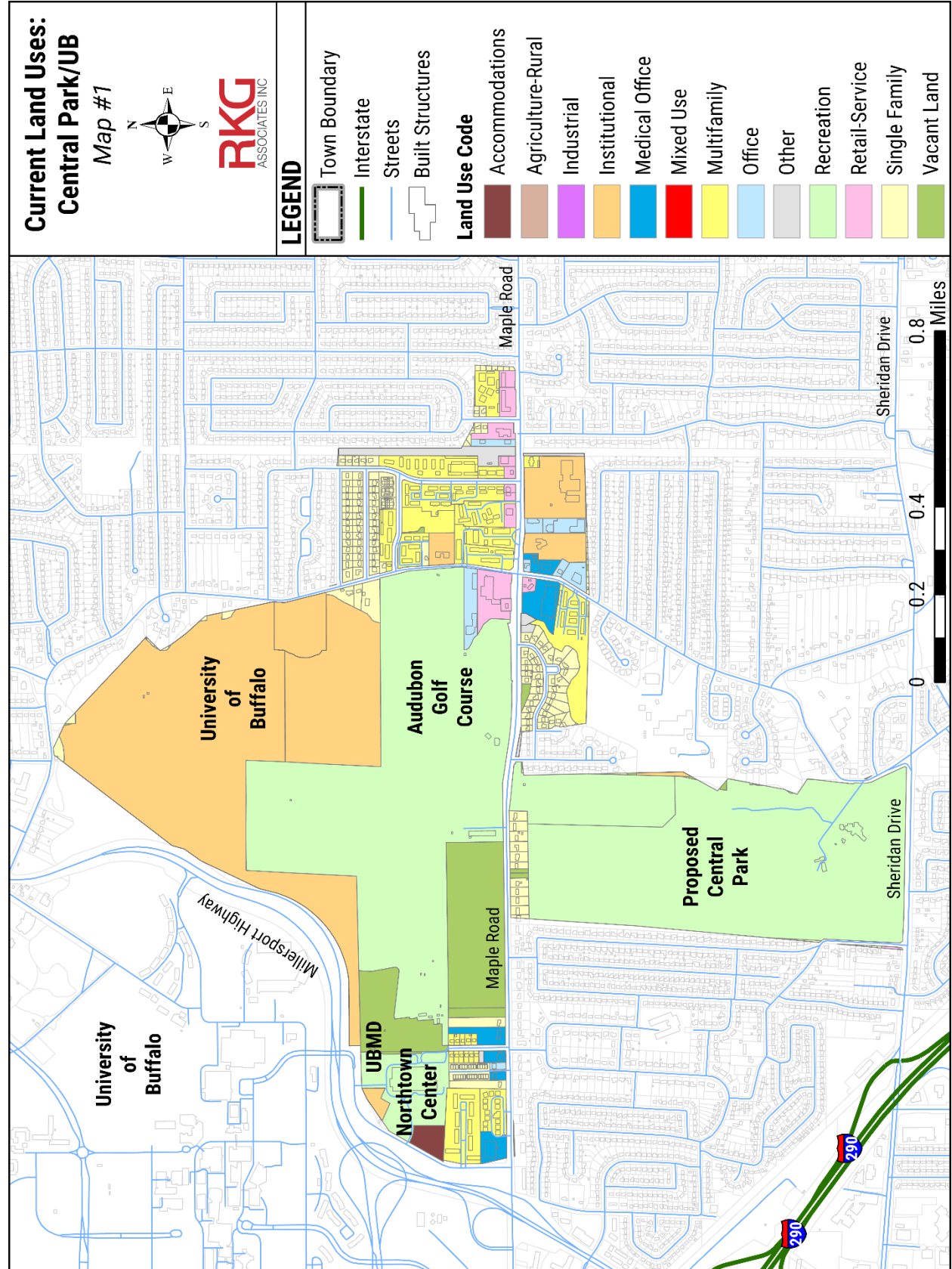
8. Central Park/UB

Overview

The Central Park/UB area consists of large portions of the University of Buffalo, the Audubon Golf Course, the proposed Amherst Central Park, and the recently constructed North Town Center which includes various athletic facilities (e.g., ice rink, softball fields). Central Park is expected to recreate the defunct Westwood Country Club into a community-centric destination that will include a cultural & arts theater, recreational facilities, and walking trails. To complement Amherst Central Park and the overall area, the Audubon Golf Course is slated to retain operations but be rebranded as a golf entertainment center. Other key investments include the future offices for UBMD Orthopedics and Sports Medicine, which will be located next to the Northtown Center.

Vision

Sports tourism and sports medicine have been discussed as a potential economic development industry growth cluster within the Town of Amherst. This area is envisioned to be a hub for advancing the local sports medicine industry. UBMD Orthopedics and Sports Medicine is moving their offices next to the Northtown Center at Amherst, which could be instrumental to industry growth. Mobilized through a series of public-private partnerships, youth athletes at Northtown can be exposed to state-of-the-art medical procedures, athletic medicine, and performance training via UBMD practices. Localizing athletic competitions near UBMD's new offices, in coordination with Amherst's Youth and Recreation programming can enhance sports medicine research and marketing for regional indoor sports tournaments (especially hockey). This symbiotic partnership can be a cost-effective strategy to exponentially grow jobs and local spending capacities.



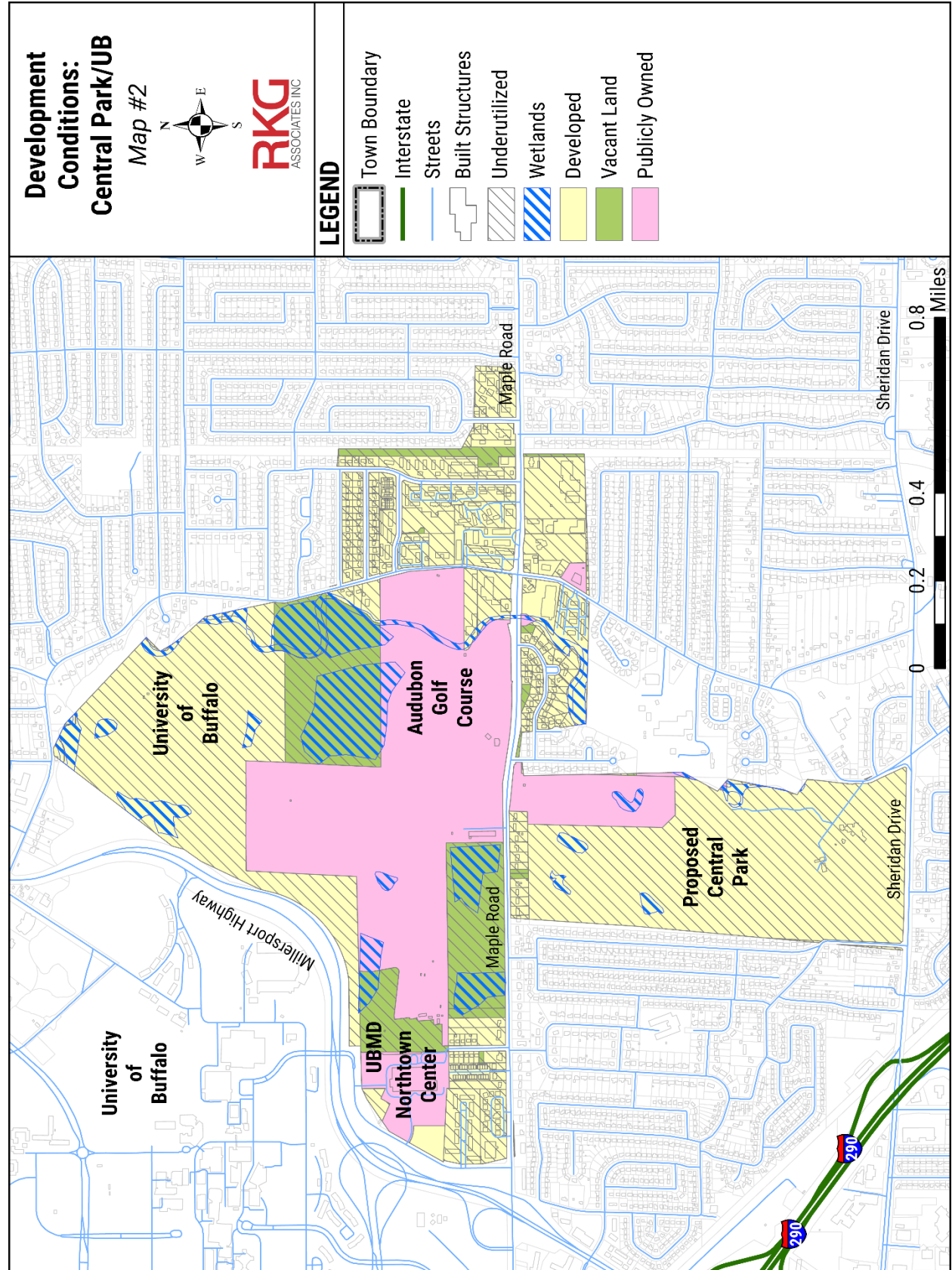


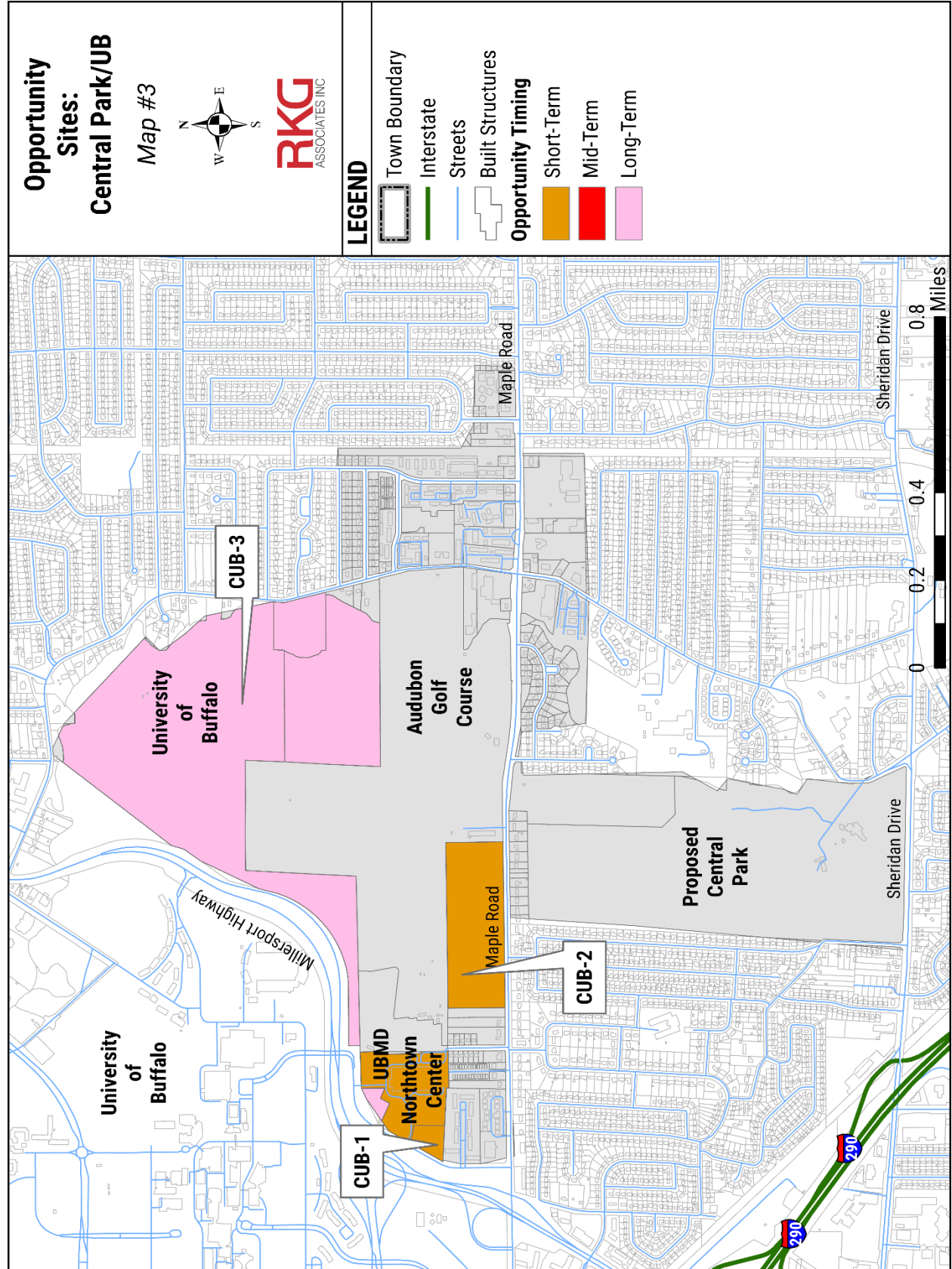
Short-Term Strategies (See Central Park/UB Map #3)

- CUB-1, Infill Development: Expand hockey facility with additional 1-2 rinks to facilitate sports medicine and tourism industry expansion efforts. The development should include concentrations of lifestyle amenities to supplement industry expansion efforts. Moreover, workforce housing will be critical to support the employment base.
- CUB-2, Infill Development: A collection of vacant and developed parcels are tucked between the Audubon Golf Course and Maple Road that totals 31 acres. Assemblage and redevelopment into a pedestrian-scale commercial center can complement Central Park as well as the future sports medicine tourism concept.

Long-Term Strategies (See Central Park/UB Map #3)

- CUB-3, Land Swap at UB Campus – East of Amherst Manor Drive on University of Buffalo’s north campus is over 200 acres of undeveloped vacant land. The land is east of the campus’ academic spine, residential and athletic complexes that host a large concentration of students and professors among engineering and sciences fields. It extends towards the future offices of UBMD Orthopedics and Sports Medicine and is situated north of the planned “Central Park” area. The site is prime to support a town-center style type of development that connects students, professors, and medical professionals at UBMD Orthopedics and Sports Medicine for collaboration and networking opportunities. Such opportunities can facilitate the creation of strategic partnerships and expand the area’s sports medicine operations. To develop the site, cooperation with the University of Buffalo will be required, either through a land swap for Town ownership or a public-private partnership.







9. Boulevard Mall Area

Overview

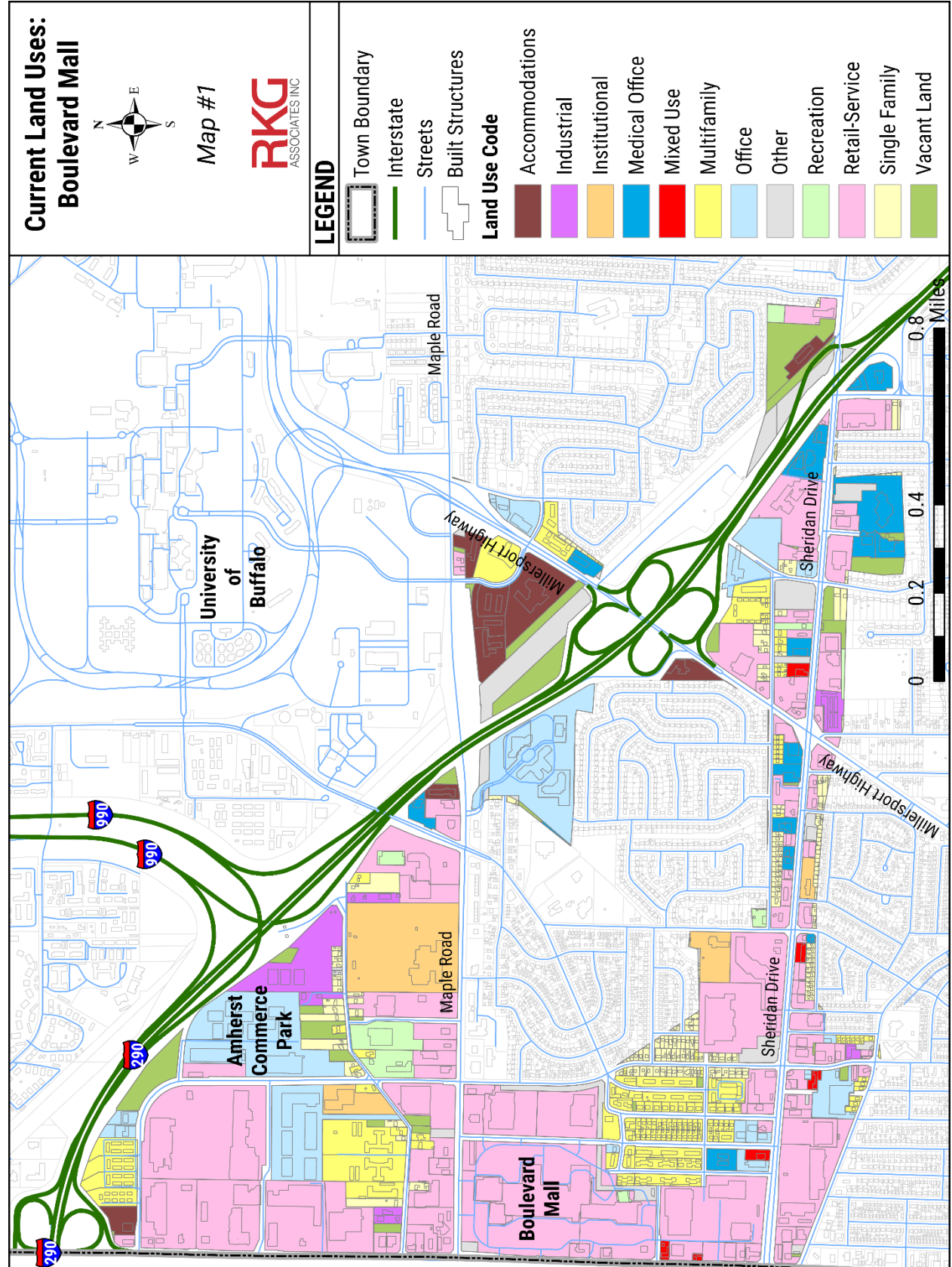
The Boulevard Mall area is located between Niagara Falls Boulevard, Sheridan Drive, and Interstate-290. The area is among the most retail-service intensive corridors in the Town, concentrated with a collection of big-box retailers and the Boulevard Mall. Like most shopping malls nationwide, the Boulevard Mall struggles to retain economic competitiveness as market preferences for ecommerce and town-center style developments continue to escalate. These escalating trends have influenced redevelopment proposals for the mall, revisioning the area into an integrated livable community driven by vibrant retail amenities; A boon to the Town's economic development objectives while attracting the prevailing generation's cohort of 'eds' and 'meds.'

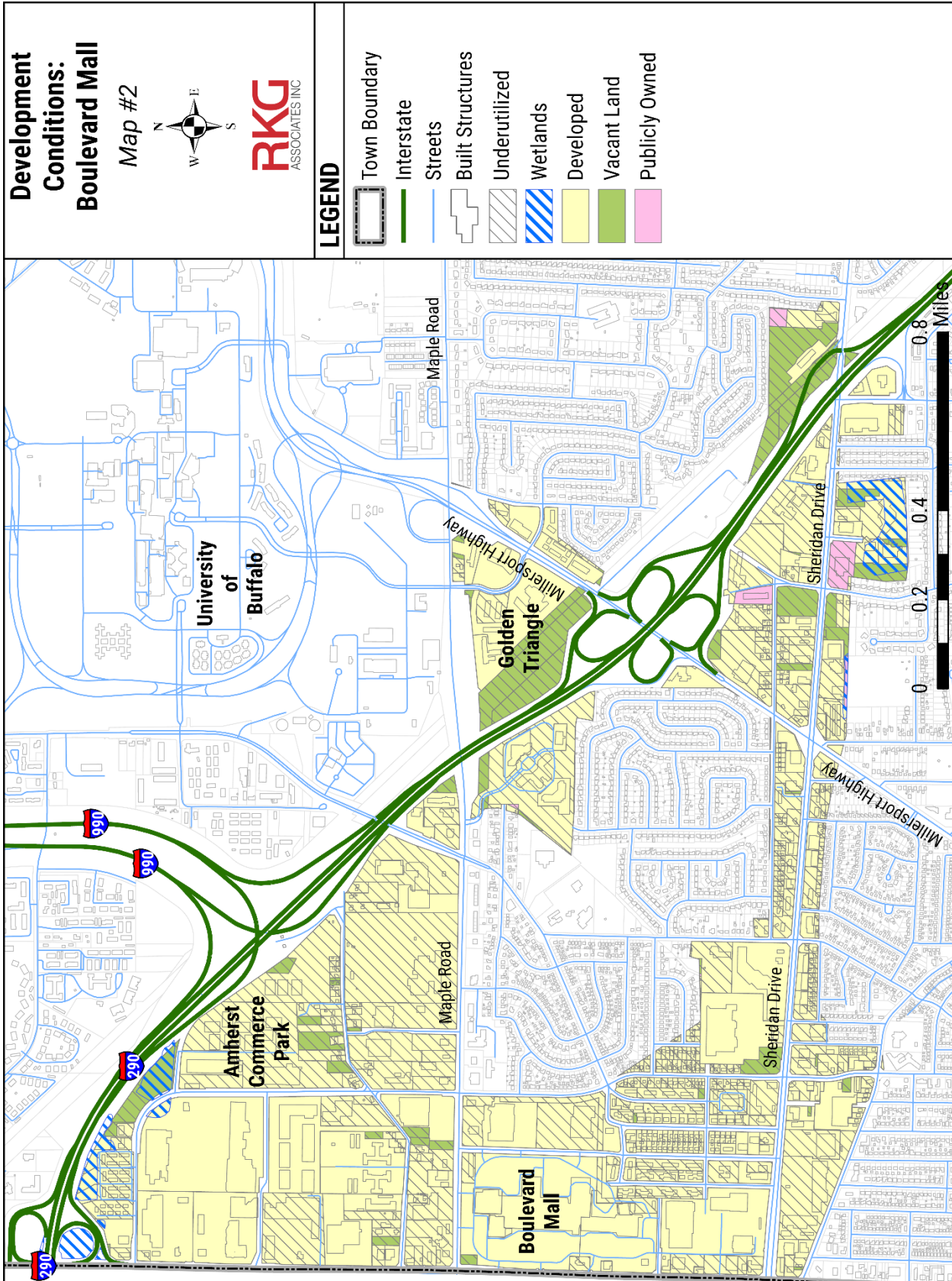
Vision

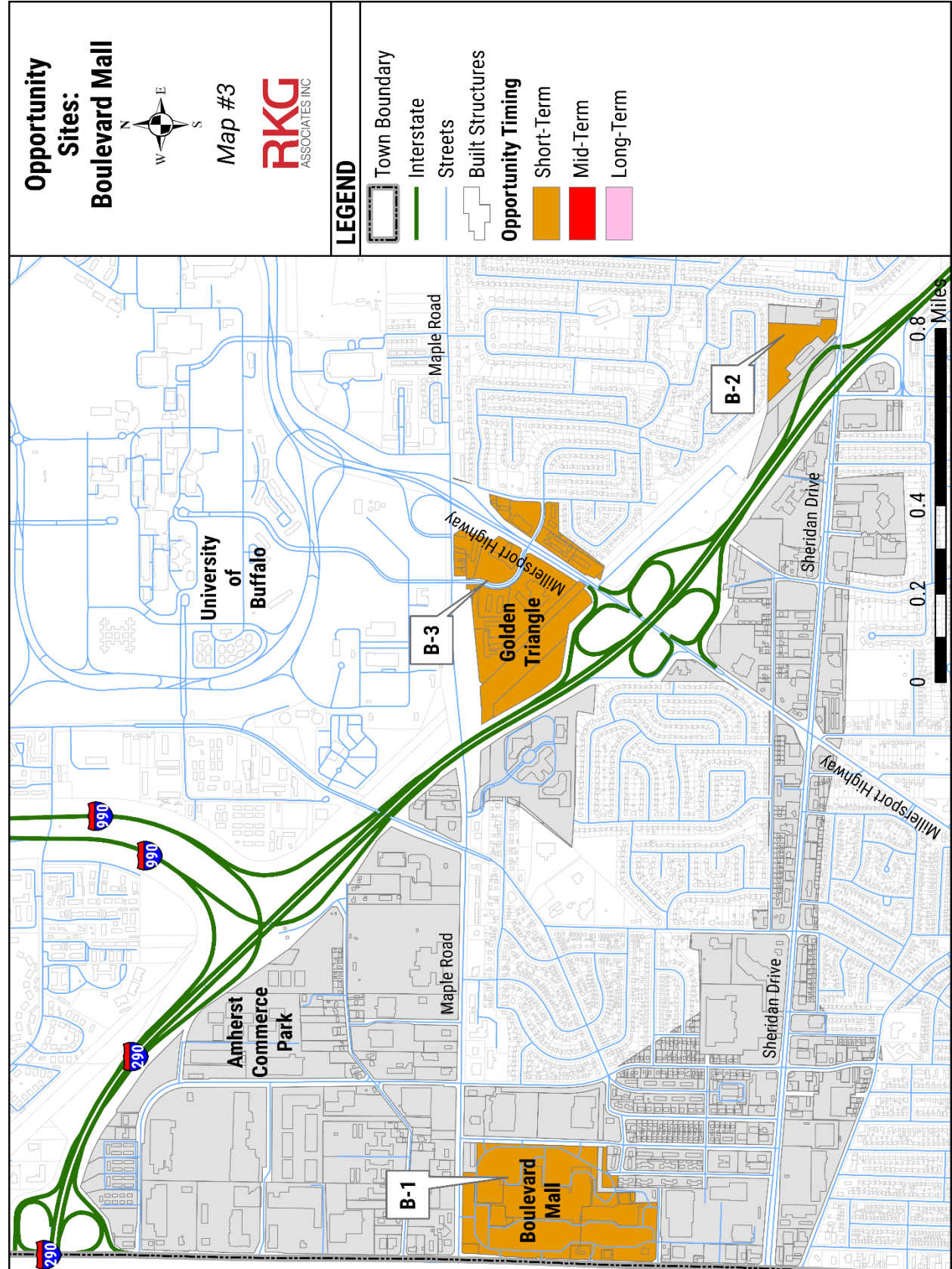
Economic competitiveness in the 21st century is fueled by workers with high levels of education, employed in the fields of science, medicine, and technology. Existing and projected market trends demonstrate that these workers prefer to live and work in a pedestrian-friendly built environment, abundant with vibrant retail amenities. The area lends itself to supporting this environment, especially given the available redevelopment opportunities and abundance of underutilized parking lots. RKG recommends the removal of prohibitive parking requirements, replacing underutilized parking lots with pedestrian-friendly amenities.

Short-Term Strategies (See Boulevard Mall Area Map #3)

- B-1, Redevelopment: Redevelopment of the Boulevard Mall is set to be completed over multiple phases, transforming the failing mall into an area to live, work, and play. The project can catalyze the community acceptance of mixed-use developments for increasing the Town of Amherst's economic competitiveness. As the project takes shape, surrounding parcels with big-box retailers should be considered for similar redevelopment opportunities.
- B-2, Infill Development: One of the few vacant areas in the study area, the property provides convenient access to I-290. Several opportunities can be considered for this site (e.g., live-work-play, medical uses). The Town should work with the property owners to define the vision. Need to consider adjacent residential area.
- B-3, Infill Development: This collection of parcels is considered the "Golden Triangle." Accommodation/lodging facilities consume most of this area. Infill projects that incorporate experiential retailers (taverns/breweries) can boost retail/hospitality jobs and attract hotel tenants. In addition to experiential retailers, consider adding structured parking to increase land use efficiencies and attract drivers along I-290.





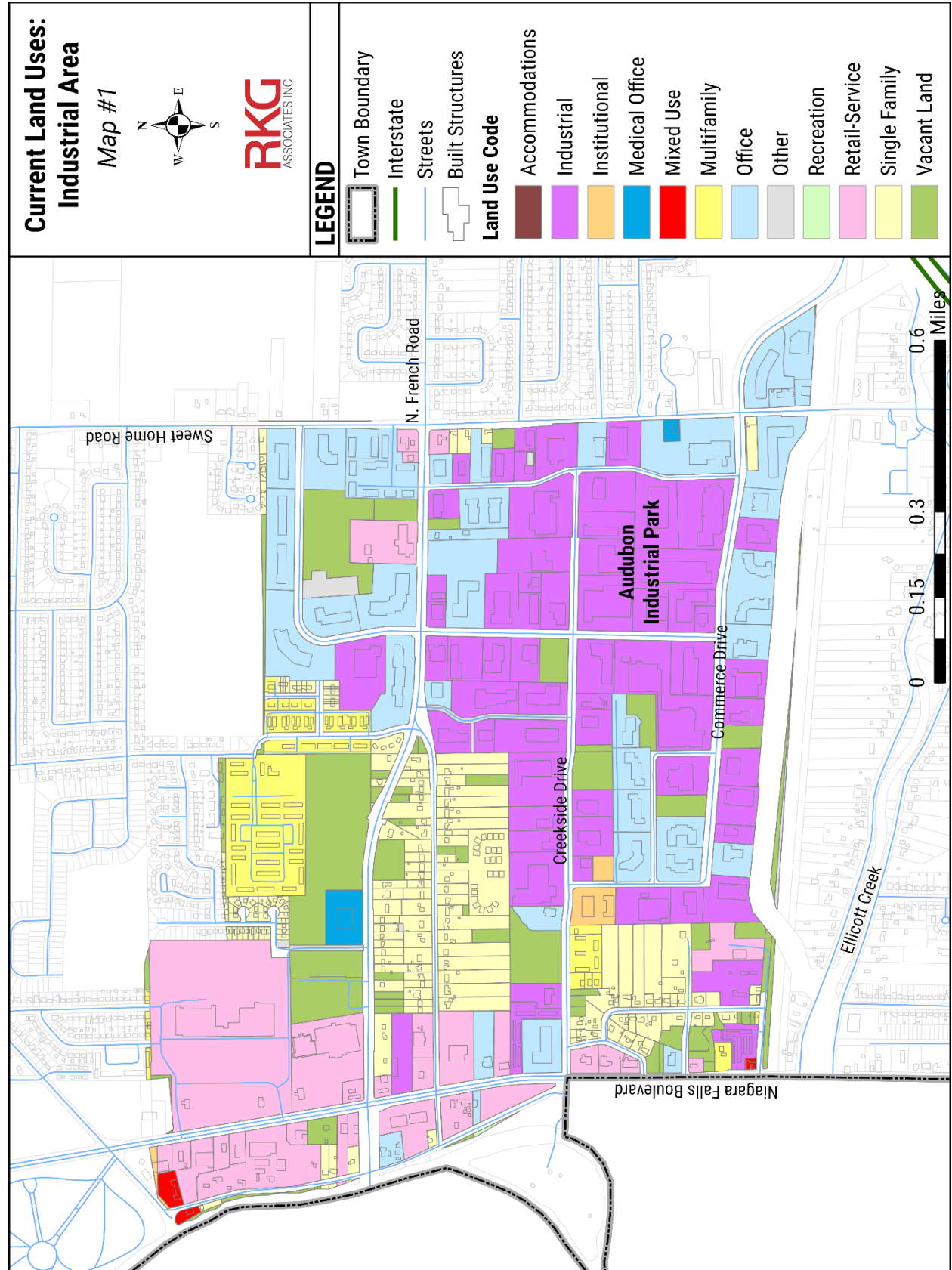


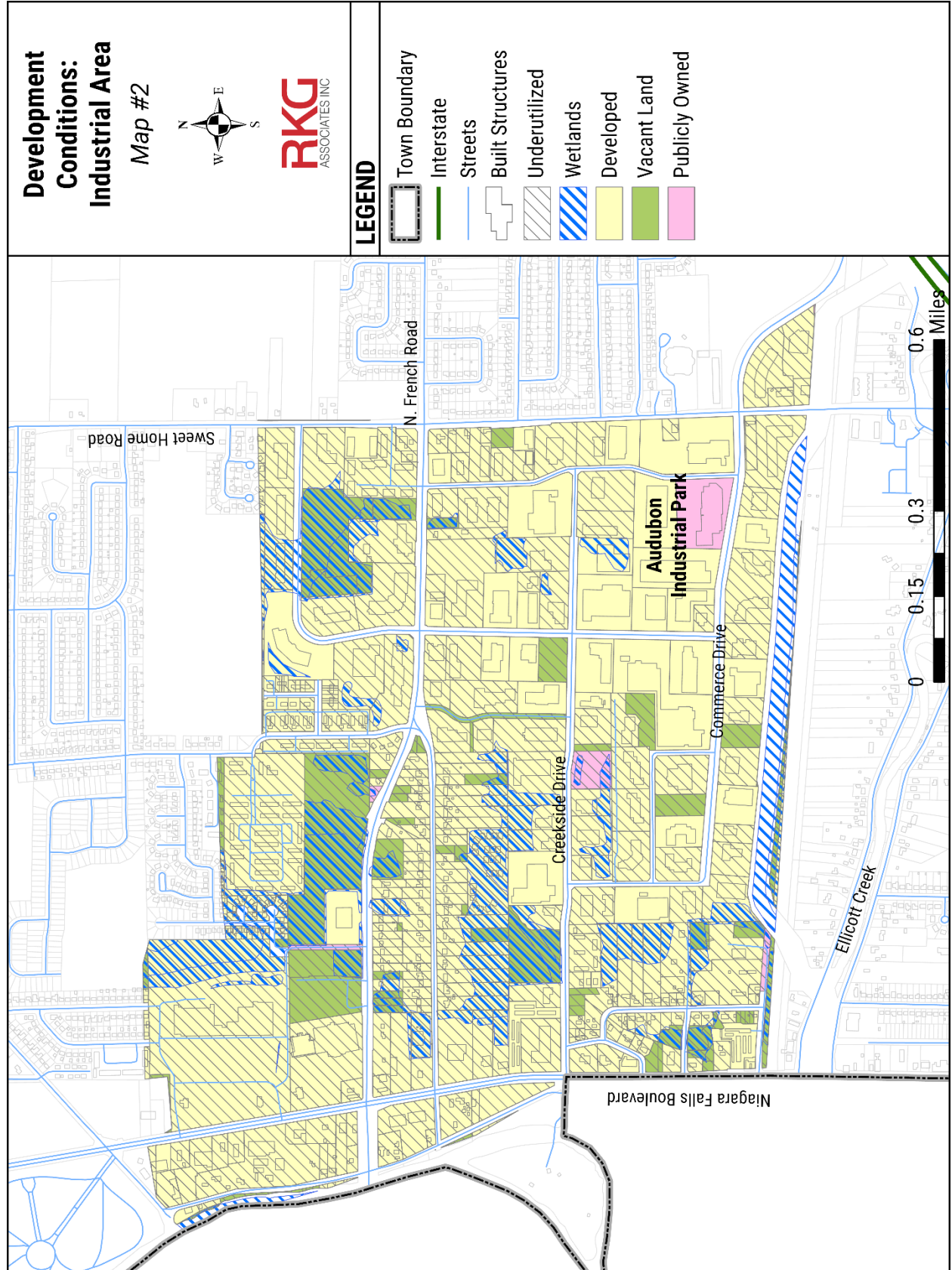


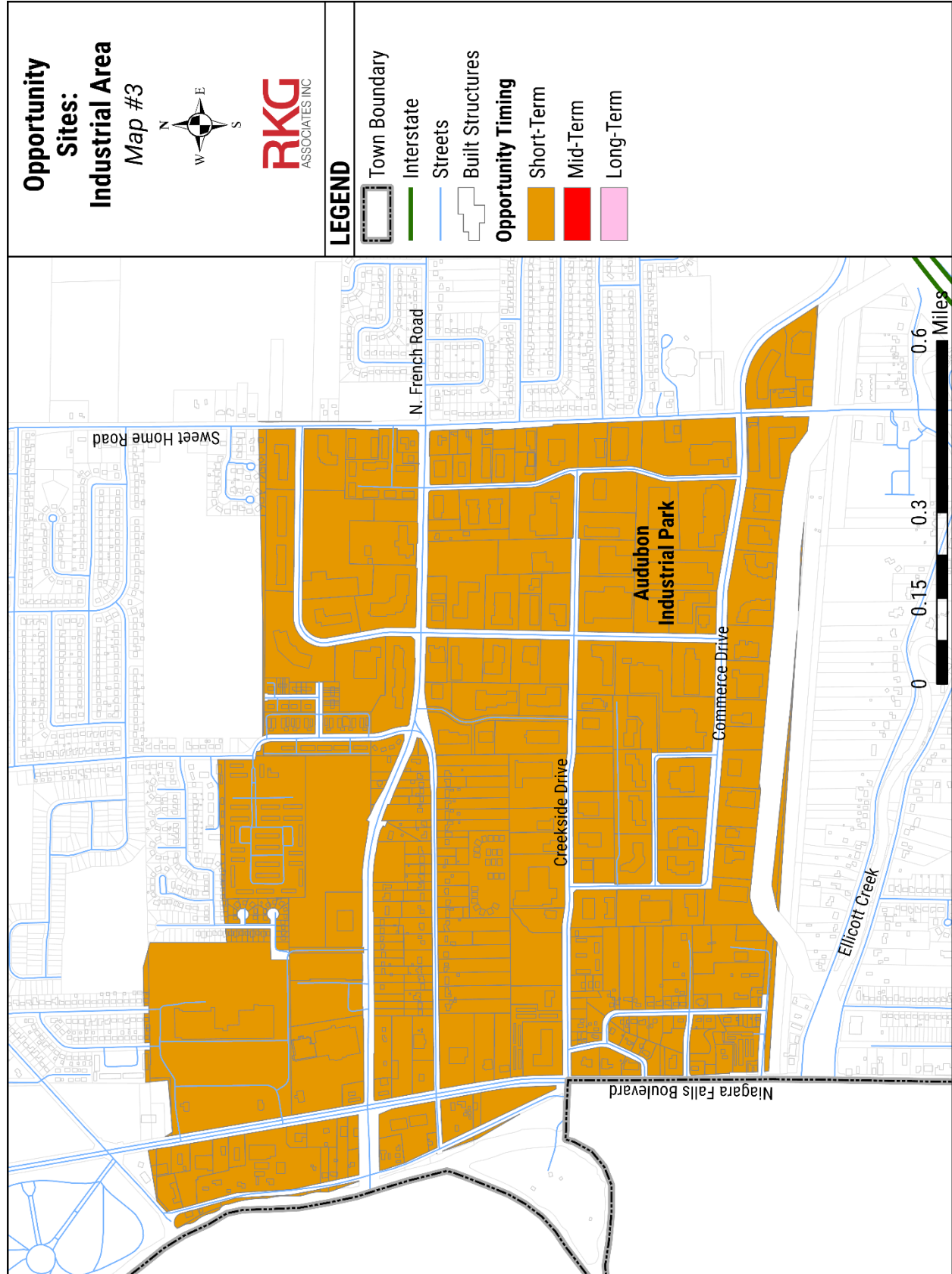
10. Industrial Area

Overview & Vision

The Industrial Area is in Northwest Amherst off Niagara Falls Boulevard, and hence the name, the area contains the most industrial uses in the Town. Many buildings are set aside for light manufacturing, flex spaces, and/or warehousing/distribution uses. The area's convenient access to I-990 and I-290 justifies the focus on industrial uses. While supply chain operations expand on a regional level, preserving the existing industrial base can supplement the Town's economic competitiveness. While specific opportunity sites are not identified, in the short-term, RKG encourages the Town to proactively engage with property owners to identify whether modifications or improvements are needed to sustain building functions.









C. OTHER ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

It is important to note this analysis focuses on properties that have the greatest short-term potential for accommodating new economic development investment. However, this chapter should not be interpreted as limiting economic development investment to only these properties in only these activity centers. The Working Group and RKG Associates recognize that investment interest and market opportunities may surface additional sites within these activity centers and/or create opportunity elsewhere in the town.

For example, the Transit Road corridor was not identified as a priority activity center despite its scale and importance as a thriving commercial corridor on the eastern edge of Amherst. There is a large, undeveloped parcel north of Dockside Village along Transit Road that is one of the few parcels in Amherst that has potential to accommodate a substantial economic development investment if utilities are made available on the site. To this point, investment opportunities could arise on the periphery of the noted activity centers, in other areas of the town outside these centers, or even in areas previously not thought of as economic development locations. The Working Group and RKG Associates encourage the Amherst leadership to view each new opportunity through the lens of how it balances the town's long-term land use vision with its economic benefit to the town's employment, fiscal, and market sustainability.



6 IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

A. INTRODUCTION

This section details the economic development goals identified through this process, and the strategies recommended by RKG Associates and the SEDP Working Group for the Town of Amherst to achieve those goals. The implementation strategy is a culmination of the outreach efforts, the consultant’s empirical research, feedback from local and regional implementation partners, the direction of the Working Group, and input from Amherst staff and the Industrial Development Agency (IDA) leadership. The initial portion of this section details the principles and goals identified and defined by the Working Group in partnership with Amherst’s economic development and planning staff and the IDA. This section is followed by discrete recommendations and implementation steps to assist the Town in refocusing its economic development effort to improve efficiency and effectiveness.

B. STRUCTURE OF THE PLAN

The implementation strategy is organized into six general topic areas: [1] Business Retention and Expansion; [2] Business Recruitment; [3] Existing Asset Development; [4] Toolbox Development; [5] Outreach, Communication, and Marketing; and [6] Organization and Coordination. These topic areas reflect the basic tenets of effective business retention, expansion, and recruitment activities.



Each topic area relies on the effectiveness of the others to maximize success. For example, the Town’s business retention strategy relies heavily on having a comprehensive and proactive marketing, outreach, and communication strategy with existing businesses within Amherst. Without direct communication, the Town will be limited in its effectiveness when trying to engage individual businesses regarding growth needs and challenges.

That said, the organization and coordination efforts truly are the foundation that will solidify the Town’s efforts. Enhancing and strengthening how the Town organizes its economic development efforts through staffing and investment decisions creates a strong platform from which all other efforts can be built. Working with local stakeholders can be an effective way to increase resources



towards economic development efforts, while building and enhancing coordination efforts with local and regional implementation partners (e.g., Chambers of Commerce) will increase the Town's capacity for implementation where in-house resources are limited.

C. PROPOSED ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOALS

The assembled Working Group (listed in the Introduction Chapter) represents the various public and private perspectives that influence—and are influenced by—the Town's economic development efforts. This Working Group provided guidance and feedback throughout the development of this plan. As part of that effort, a comprehensive outreach strategy was held to identify, refine, and prioritize the Town's economic development goals that were initiated through previous efforts. These goals were presented and reviewed with the Working Group, who provided feedback on refining and prioritizing these goals. The following list represents the culmination of this input and selection process and is presented in order of the Working Group's recommended priority.

1. Business Retention and Expansion

- **Expand the Town's business retention efforts to reach all existing businesses.** The Town recently began the effort to expand its outreach to local businesses. While Amherst historically focused on larger employers and has engaged businesses that have approached the Town directly, the current economic development staff recognizes that proactive engagement will help formulate economic development efforts that will benefit more businesses. At a base level, large-scale engagement will help identify trends and common needs. Understanding how to assist the most businesses will increase the impact of Town efforts. More strategically, proactive engagement will spur better communication and interaction between the Town and its business community, creating new opportunities to collaborate on solutions rather than have them solely led by the Town.
- **Create a regulatory environment that promotes business growth within context of the Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Ordinance.** Creating a 'business-friendly' reputation is driven, in part, by understanding challenges the business community is experiencing to adhere to the community's regulatory environment. These challenges can stem from unclear policy language, overly complex implementation processes, and/or inconsistent messaging along the approval/review process. Having more predictable and consistent policies—and more proactive staff assistance—can assist local businesses in meeting their business needs while upholding the Town's growth and development vision. It is important to note that business friendly does not mean unregulated, it means having a clear and easy-to-follow path to meeting the Town's business development expectations. Providing consistent and predictable processes will benefit the Town's already desirable marketplace.



2. Business Recruitment and Attraction

- **Continue to attract professional services businesses to Amherst.** Amherst already has an industry cluster in professional service businesses (see Target Industry Chapter). The Town’s business parks have attracted numerous companies since the 1980s. As noted in the analysis, retaining these businesses and attracting new companies should be a priority for Amherst. Creating the regulatory environment for the Town’s existing employment centers to evolve to meet emerging corporate preferences (e.g., integrated live-work-recreate environments) and investing resources to proactively market Amherst—and Western New York—as a viable place to operate should be a priority for the Town. Partnering with regional and state agencies to increase the Town’s reach will be important to best leverage the Town’s limited resources.
- **Strengthen and expand the Town’s/region’s medical tourism/medical service base.** As noted in the real estate and target industry sections, Amherst already has a high concentration of medical services. This analysis, and the companion Medical Spine effort, identified opportunities for the Town to continue to leverage and market these reports to attract new medical investment. Most notably, the Town’s strong sports tourism market creates an opportunity to strengthen the medical tourism opportunities particularly as it relates to performance training in youth sports. While the Medical Spine companion piece details the types of businesses, the Opportunity Sites chapter details specific locations most appropriate for these uses.
- **Grow the Town’s existing sports tourism infrastructure.** Existing assets in Amherst already draw sports tourism to the Town (e.g., NorthTown Center at Amherst). Building upon these assets through expanded, state-of-the-art facilities will create the opportunity to increase this business base, strengthening the economic impact these venues already have for Amherst. As noted in the last goal, there is the potential to combine medical and sports tourism in Amherst through rehabilitation (e.g., orthopedic care) and performance training (e.g., youth development) in partnership with existing businesses.
- **Expand the Town’s entrepreneurial ecosystem through proactive engagement and additional resources.** The economic climate and demographic characteristics of Amherst indicate there is substantial opportunity to encourage and grow new entrepreneurial investment. The Town’s expanding affluent senior population has the potential for new business development and creating investor/mentorship opportunities to attract younger entrepreneurs to the Town. Similarly, Amherst’s growing minority and foreign-born population provides a larger population of individuals statistically more predisposed to starting a business. Providing a location in Amherst where entrepreneurs and investors can virtually participate in local and regional resources could increase new business development and expansion by making access more convenient to regional partners not located in Amherst.



3. Asset Development

- **Create dynamic employment centers through place-based strategies that meet evolving demand from employers and workers.** As noted throughout this report, business preferences are evolving away from the isolated, suburban office park to highly amenitized, walkable live-work-recreate activity centers. The Opportunity Sites chapter provides detailed recommendations to increase the market desirability of the Town’s most prolific economic activity centers. Whether the Town executes those specific concepts is secondary to creating specific short-term and long-term visions for these areas and creating the regulatory environment to make those visions attainable.
- **Encourage development that complements the scale and character of the adjacent community while protecting and expanding the Town’s existing public amenities.** The Working Group and the economic development leadership want to maximize the Town’s potential to attract and retain the business activity necessary to sustain the Town’s quality of life, fiscal health, and economic vitality. That said, they also have stressed the importance of meeting these goals within context of the Town’s Comprehensive Plan that prioritizes retaining the Town’s character. Most notably, this strategy encourages economic development investment in areas suitable for increased investment and development activity while preserving and protecting the Town’s existing residential areas and public amenities. Creating more efficient development levels in strategic areas will increase the Town’s potential to capture new growth while mitigating the expansion of the overall growth footprint of this development.
- **Enhance the Town’s housing supply to attract workers, offer options for existing residents, and strengthen business retention and expansion.** Assets are not just buildings and land. The most important economic development asset the Town has is its residents. The socioeconomic section details how the region’s labor force has steadily declined, impacting both existing businesses and making attracting new businesses more challenging. Creating new housing opportunities in Amherst—and the greater Buffalo region—will be a critical component of having the necessary labor supply to sustain existing businesses and attract new ones. Given the growing preferences for young workers and retirees in having walkable, amenitized activity centers, the Town can strengthen its existing market through diversifying the type (single family, condo, townhouse, and multi-family) and price point (market rate, workforce, and affordable) of housing as part of its reinvestment in existing job centers.

4. Toolbox Development

- **Create formulaic incentives that create nexus between desired economic development outcomes and local partnership.** The Town already has incentive programs available to businesses and property owners. The Working Group recommends the Town consider expanding its partnership opportunities in a strategic manner. Most notably, the Town



should create specific investment/development thresholds to gain access to public resources. Clearly defining the 'if-then' relationship will eliminate uncertainty about access to an incentive while ensuring the Town receives its expected value for granting those incentives. This is particularly important for small business and entrepreneurial incentives, as there are substantially fewer state and federal programs for these small businesses than there are for larger ones.

DeKalb County, Georgia has implemented scaled economic development incentives based on the type of business (whether it is a target industry), size of business, and amount of investment.

<http://web.dekalbcountyga.gov/planning/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/edIncentivesPolicy.pdf>

- **Strengthen the connection between business and training providers to reach residents, existing businesses, and prospective businesses.** Workforce development in the Western New York region already has substantial investment. There are several local, regional, and state entities investing in workforce programs. Unfortunately, many of those investments are located within the City of Buffalo. While Amherst is close to Buffalo, it was reported that there are logistical challenges for Amherst businesses and residents to access those resources. Creating a physical location where local businesses and residents can virtually access these existing programs could increase use and strengthen the Amherst labor market. Further, many of the state and regional programs are not customized to the needs of Amherst businesses, particularly small companies. To this point, the Town should proactively engage workforce development partners (e.g., Amherst schools and ECC) to customize training programs specific to the needs of local businesses (identified through the business survey effort). Creating these locally derived programs will have greater impacts for Amherst businesses than the 'top-down' approach from state entities.

5. *Outreach, Communication, and Marketing*

- **Engage existing and potential businesses in creating a coordinated outreach campaign.** The Town of Amherst recently has invested in business outreach by hiring a business retention position. This strategy provides specific recommendations on how to maximize the efficiency and effectiveness of that position through proactive efforts. Most notably, the Town should use the annual business survey concept to prioritize short-term communication with businesses that indicate a need to grow or have challenges with their business.
- **Increase awareness and support for economic development within the Town.** Most decisions related to implementing economic development initiatives require elected leadership participation, particularly those focused on real estate and land use investments. Decisions on supporting (or opposing) a specific project oftentimes are reliant upon public support. Most individuals are unaware of the connection between



economic development, community development, fiscal sustainability, and the local business climate. To this point, RKG Associates and the Working Group recommend a series of community outreach initiatives aimed at engaging elected officials, business leaders, and Amherst residents so that future decisions that impact economic development are balanced and well informed.

- **Provide the information necessary for local decision makers to make informed choices.** Providing information that clearly explains the benefits and costs of an economic development decision is critical to garnering support from elected officials. Currently, data dissemination is more reactive than proactive. The Working Group and RKG Associates recommend the Town’s economic development staff develop a series of regular data sharing approaches to educate decision makers on the potential impact of implementation decisions and detail the impact of previous decisions.
- **Continue to modernize and expand the Town’s marketing outreach efforts.** The evolution of virtual engagement is both continuous and inevitable. It is estimated that more than 90% of site selection is done virtually before a community is ever contacted. Having data available online and through social media platforms will help increase awareness and the competitiveness of the Town. Embracing these technologies is also important to reach the ‘next generation’ of business leaders. Implementing a broader—and frequent—virtual and social media presence will help Amherst better engage business leaders, Town residents, and future business prospects.

6. Organization and Communication

- **Scale economic development outcomes to investment.** These economic development goals are comprehensive. Implementing the full depth and breadth of this strategy will require a more substantial investment in staffing and capital than the Town has already committed. While this strategy identifies partners within Amherst and the greater Buffalo region that can help assist with implementation, not all tasks can be ‘outsourced’ to partner organizations. To this point, the Strategic Plan offers the Working Group’s recommendations on how to prioritize efforts based on current staffing and resource capacity until additional resources are made available.
- **Strengthen the technical capability and capacity within the Town’s economic development department.** The Town already has staff resources committed to the economic development effort. However, the roles of specific Town staff currently are loosely defined. The implementation strategy recommends specific roles for current economic development staff. Technical resources and additional training opportunities should be made available to assist current staff in maximizing the potential of their respective role in economic development.



- **Maximize the capacity, resources, and expertise of local, regional, and state implementation partners.** The Town has limited staff and financial resources to achieve all the goals laid out in this document. However, Amherst already has working relationships with several local and regional economic development partners focused on business recruitment including Empire State Development, Buffalo Niagara Partnership, Invest Buffalo Niagara, the Amherst Industrial Development Agency, and local chambers of commerce. The Town should continue to engage these partners to leverage their expertise and resources to assist the community in obtaining its goals. In other words, there is no reason to ‘reinvent the wheel.’ This is particularly true with business recruitment, as there already are several well-funded and resourced entities that can represent Amherst’s interests to large companies through simple coordination.

D. BUILDING FOR SUCCESS

Amherst already has built positive momentum with their existing economic development staff and actions. This Strategic Plan is not intended to supplant those efforts, but rather build upon them and provide the Town the strategies to refocus efforts to align with current and emerging opportunities, strengthen community awareness and support of economic development, and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the Town’s economic development investments.

- **Be creative and flexible when implementing.** The SEDP is not intended to be a literal guide for the Town to follow. The concepts and strategies provided by the consultant are best practices for achieving the vision defined by the Working Group. Given the long-term timeframe of several of these recommendations, several factors relevant to Amherst may (and most likely will) change over time. Market conditions and access to resources will adjust over time, requiring the Town to find an alternative approach to reach the stated vision. To this point, this document should be viewed as guidelines and not prescriptive edicts.
- **Being proactive can provide greater opportunities.** Many communities implement economic development efforts by reacting to demands from the marketplace and not the vision established by processes such as these. Getting ahead of the investment market provides several benefits. Most notably, engaging with property owners before there is an established plan can lead to more creative solutions that meet the needs of both the public and private partners. At the very least, the investment community will have a greater understanding of the Town’s vision and can create investment strategies to engage that vision prior to finalizing any investment plans.
- **Think regionally, act locally.** The past economic development success of Amherst has come—in part—at the expense of the City of Buffalo and other partner communities within the greater Buffalo/Niagara region. It is understandable that a community offered an opportunity to land a new business would embrace that chance. However, historic socioeconomic and market trends indicate that this internal redistribution of activity has



had a collective negative impact on the region (e.g., population decline, employment decline...). To this point, RKG recommends that Amherst be less financially generous with incentives when approached by investors and companies simply seeking to relocate within the region. Rather, the Town's focus should be on growing businesses that already operate in Amherst and creating new opportunities for companies that are locating/expanding into the region.

E. PRIORITY ACTIONS

The Implementation Matrix presented later in this section provides an easy-to-follow guide of the economic development recommendations for Amherst. The recommendations are parsed into the six general topic areas as identified earlier. The specific recommendations in this strategy were shaped through combining the vision of the Working Group, input from community stakeholders, business leaders, and elected officials, current and projected market conditions, and current/projected market opportunities.

The following action items are "priorities" for the Working Group in context of the Town's short-term implementation of an economic development business plan. They are considered critical, and in some cases catalytic, in their importance to reach the stated goals. The narrative provides context for these recommendations to help frame Amherst's efforts in a manner that will maximize the effectiveness of Town resources in expanding economic sustainability, support new and existing businesses, expand the diversity of local housing choices, and attract further investment to Amherst. While the other actions identified and detailed in the Implementation Matrix are necessary to meet the defined economic development goals, their implementation is considered to be more supportive and ancillary to these efforts.

1. Business Retention and Expansion

Develop a comprehensive list of all businesses within the Town. The Town of Amherst must develop and proactively update a list of all businesses within its municipal boundaries. This is essential for facilitating consistent communication with all businesses, updating them on available economic development programs, opportunities, and incentives that can enable them to expand within Amherst. An efficient and effective approach is for the Town to develop a comprehensive business license tracking and reporting system, utilizing a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) tool to track engagement efforts with local businesses. Implementation partners and community members that have relationships with existing businesses can help with these efforts (e.g., chambers of commerce, Industrial Development Agency, Erie County, fire departments).

Moreover, the Town of Amherst should consider developing a business registration program, requiring all operating businesses within the Town to register their business. A business registration program can be a cost-effective approach for creating a definitive list of existing businesses.



Implement an annual business survey to identify emerging trends/needs. An annual business survey can be an effective approach towards engaging with local businesses to understand and respond to prevailing market conditions and trends, shifting regulations, workforce needs, and physical workspace requirements. Survey responses can facilitate the creation of programs and policies that address common challenges and needs among businesses and can be used to identify specific businesses vulnerable to downsizing or closing, catalyzing the Town to prioritize in-person visits to those specific businesses. Assessing and reporting the results of the survey will be critical to evaluate shifting market conditions.

Proactively outreach to existing businesses through 1-on-1 meetings. In-person meetings can nurture trust and transparency between the Town of Amherst and the local business community; Particularly, small businesses that may be underrepresented at networking events. The Town of Amherst must meet and engage with all businesses throughout its municipal boundaries, establishing quantifiable metrics to track engagement progress and maintain accountability. For instance, a quantifiable metric could be a time-based objective, holding Amherst accountable to meet with all business within a specific time frame (e.g., meet with all businesses within a two-year time frame). Existing staff levels, however, can limit the pace of engagement with local businesses. RKG recommends having a dedicated staff member to help with these efforts and working with local implementation partners that have relationships with existing businesses, including the chambers of commerce and other local/regional partners.

Create additional industry roundtables to meet quarterly on market/economic issues. Industry roundtables convene representatives from specific industries to meet on a quarterly basis. These meetings enable discussions on business-related challenges and opportunities in Amherst. The Town's participation at meetings is critical, drawing insights that can be used to modify existing programs and policies targeted for sustaining and growing specific industries. Moreover, participation can facilitate networking for potential business recruitment opportunities. While all industries are encouraged to form roundtables, RKG recommends the following industries be prioritized for forming roundtables:

- **Retailers**
- **Small Businesses/Entrepreneurs**
- **Professional Services**
- **Real Estate/Commercial Property Owners**
- **Healthcare**
- **Minority-owned businesses**

Roundtables are integral for facilitating the creation of programs and policies that focus on workforce development, entrepreneurship asset development. This is particularly beneficial for market segments historically underrepresented in economic development discussions (e.g., small businesses, minority-owned businesses).



Actively engage Amherst's home-based businesses. Home-based operations constitute a substantial share of Amherst's business community and are likely to expand in quantity due to the rising popularity of virtual-working models. Their existing representation and potential expansions demonstrate a need for targeted interventions, executing similar actions recommended for other market segments. This includes the creation of distinct databases, business surveys, and networking groups limited to home-based businesses. RKG recommends the Town of Amherst develop a list of home-based businesses through coordinated outreach efforts with local chambers of commerce and through the proposed business registration program.

Why a Business Registry?

Connecting with all the businesses within Amherst is logistically challenging. According to the U.S. Census, there are several thousand businesses in the Town. Collecting contact information from these businesses without a central collection location will be impossible, reducing the Town's efficacy of identifying emerging business trends and needs. The challenging is acute for home-based businesses that do not have a physical location to identify. The business registry provides a direct path for connecting to these businesses.

Expand existing business networking series to connect more local businesses. Networking opportunities can enable local businesses to develop professional connections, recruit workers, and identify market shifts. Such opportunities can be engineered through interactive events and seminars, especially in casual stress-free environments. These events are different than traditional social and happy-hour type gatherings. Typically, these events bring in outside experts or keynote speakers, engaging the business community to provide emerging market information or provide insights into existing challenges identified in the business survey/business outreach initiatives. The Town of Amherst can partner with local and regional organizations to develop specific subject matter events, applied to various market segments--small/entrepreneurial businesses, women-owned and minority-owned businesses, and young professional/entrepreneur group events. Implementation partners that may be interested in cooperating events for various market segments include:

- **Small/Entrepreneurial Businesses:** Small Business Development Center, U.S. Small Business Administration
- **Women-Owned or Minority-Owned:** WNY Women's Foundation, Minority & Women Business Enterprise Committee (Erie County), Buffalo Niagara Partnership, Women Business Center (Canisius College), Journey's End Refugee Services
- **Young Professional/Entrepreneurs:** UB & related incubators (Baird), ECC, and Daemen University

Create annual lecture series on available local, county, state, and federal assistance programs. Several local, regional, and federal programs are available to help existing businesses sustain and expand their businesses. Many of these programs spearheaded by government entities beyond the local level are actively engaged in economic development, managing larger budgets and can offer substantial incentive programs. Local businesses should be aware of these programs, and



the Town should hold annual lectures to make them aware of existing offerings at each level of government. Consequently, providing them with critical information that can increase their chances of retaining or expanding their operations.

2. Business Recruitment and Attraction

Become more proactive with partners in business recruitment. Statewide, regional, and local economic development partners actively engage in larger-scale business recruitment, including Erie County and Invest Buffalo Niagara . Given the limited availability of existing resources, RKG Associates recommends the Town continue to build these relationships and through these relationships establish quarterly meetings to discuss potential opportunities among key target industry segments (e.g., healthcare).

Work Smarter, not Harder.

The Buffalo Niagara region already is served by organizations designated to attract new businesses (e.g., Invest Buffalo-Niagara). The Town should collaborate with these entities that represent Amherst and focus local efforts on initiatives better suited at the municipal level (e.g., business retention and expansion).

Expand start-up and entrepreneurial development services open to all businesses. Given the Town's limited availability of resources and unfavorable socioeconomic metrics, recruiting a large business to Amherst is unlikely. More practical, is equipping residents with the resources and tools to pursue small business development opportunities. This can be attained through a multistakeholder approach with the help from local quasigovernmental agencies, universities, and business leaders.

- **Form strategic partnerships for staffing and technical assistance:** The closest Small Business Development Center (SBDC) operates out of Buffalo State University, offering educational programs to help small businesses emerge and grow. This includes topics on start-up assistance, financing opportunities, digital marketing, and branding. The Town of Amherst must consider coordinating with SBDC at Buffalo State University, in effort to receive an in-house consultant that can help with small business development training and guidance. The Town will need to identify a physical location in Amherst, for the SBDC consultant and other volunteers (retired mentors) to execute entrepreneurial development services.
- **Develop mentorship program that involves past or current business leaders:** Mentors can help enable aspiring entrepreneurs' business development goals through sharing their experiences and business connections. The Town of Amherst should consider developing a program that connects local business leaders to entrepreneurs either seeking to start a business or grow their business. Strong consideration should be given for retirees acting as mentors, who are able to commit more time for mentorship than current professionals.
- **Develop small business revolving loan fund, in coordination with financial partners to administer loan funds on behalf of the Town:** A major challenge for entrepreneurs is to



secure financing for their business operations. In response, the Town should activate a small business revolving fund for business planning services and capital needs. Loans can be offered at very low interest rates with government guarantees backed by the Town of Amherst and if possible, local, and regional stakeholders (e.g., Erie County). The program would involve partnership with one (or multiple) banks, having these institutions match the Town's investment in exchange for managing the origination and administration of the loans.

3. Asset Development

Create/update small area plans for the Town's primary economic centers. The Town has identified several parcels positioned for economic development opportunities. This includes the Boulevard Central District, where proposals have been made to redevelop the Boulevard Mall. However, without a cohesive investment strategy and defined real estate vision around these parcels, their economic development potential will remain limited. RKG recommends Amherst conduct small area plans for the Town's primary economic centers (e.g., Boulevard Central District, Crosspoint, and Airport Area) defining the developmental scale and vision that balances the interests of community planning and objectives of economic development. A unified vision must be in coordination with property owners, businesses owners, and residents. Through this engagement, the Town should determine the short-term, midterm, and long-term goals for each economic activity area. An integral part to promoting these visions will be modifying incompatible land-use/zoning regulations that limit progress (e.g., areas zoned for low-density residential in economic activity areas envisioned to transition to live-work-play Town-center style development patterns).

Maintain a locally managed database of available land and building space. The IDA has been an integral lead for inventorying and marketing properties to promote capital investment and job growth. Most of the tracked properties are focused on large-scale capital investments. RKG recommends that the Town and/or IDA expand the scope of marketed properties to include available spaces on a smaller-scale—10,000 SF of space or below. This is especially critical as office users are downsizing their space requirements. An online database should be created and maintained weekly, in coordination with local real estate brokers and property owners to offer site/space identification assistance.

Identify 4-6 priority investment/reinvestment properties within the Town. Based on the economic development small area plans, mentioned above, the Town should identify 4-6 priority investment/reinvestment properties to focus their efforts. As the properties are identified, the Town should develop a prospectus book highlighting each site, current use/ownership, Town vision, and the tools available to develop the site. Additionally, the Town will need to engage with property owners on an annual basis to determine any changes to the investment strategy.

Consider an Economic Development Opportunity Fund. Real estate acquisitions, especially property assemblage can involve challenging negotiation processes and costly transactions. Expanding the pool of public resources for real estate acquisitions can be an effective mechanism



for expediting through related processes. A Town-sponsored entity should be empowered to manage a publicly funded economic development opportunity fund focused on real estate acquisitions. This can be critical for acquiring properties located within small area plans, which need to be restructured to meet the area's intended unified vision.

4. Economic Development Toolbox

Match land use and/or zoning regulations to economic development vision. An overemphasis on suburban land-use patterns can discourage catalytic market developments, and in the long-run impose pressures on the Town's long-term economic sustainability. As Amherst seeks to reverse its declining job base, and ultimately strengthen its long-term fiscal sustainability, realigning land use/zoning regulations that support marketplace preferences will be imperative. The proposed redevelopment of the Boulevard Mall, which emphasizes higher density mixed-use opportunities and walkability, is a pivotal step towards capitalizing on marketplace preferences. RKG Associates acknowledges and understands many community members may have concerns of Amherst losing its suburban character and does not recommend a complete transformation into 'a small city.' However, permitting greater flexibility and densities in areas that make sense (underutilized office parks/economic activity centers), can help Amherst develop a stable economic foundation and preserve its high quality-of-life.

The Town should consider rezoning and or offering overlay zones in those areas that do make sense. In particular, allowing for higher-density mixed-use development opportunities that strengthen connectivity, walkability, and accessibility. Developing the regulatory environment to improve consistency and predictability can increase investment activities, while helping Amherst advance towards their economic development objectives.

Create economic development incentives that match the Town's priorities and performance expectations. RKG Associates recommends the Town consider incentives that vary by location (e.g., Main Street, CrossPoint), type of business (e.g., medical tourism, sports tourism), and structural circumstances (e.g., high vacancies). Each of these incentives should continue to include claw back requirements that would make the partner reimburse the Town of Amherst for failure to meet incentive-term conditions. For instance, if a defined proportion of a single-use office structure (e.g., 40% or higher) remains vacant for a fixed-period time, the property owner will be required to restructure the property to support another commercial-generating activity (e.g., integrating apartment units.). Other performance requirements could include the net new number of jobs created and the amount of capital investment.

RKG Associates recommends prioritizing the refinement of its incentive package tools to support entrepreneurial and small business retention, expansion, and recruitment. From a financial incentive perspective, the thresholds to qualify for a small business incentive should be low (e.g., create 1-2 jobs). More generous thresholds should be considered for Town residents seeking to start or expand a business. For instance, creating 1-2 jobs but allotted more time to achieve these thresholds than non-residents. Finally, RKG recommends specific incentives be created for aspiring minority entrepreneurs or existing business owners. Incentives for small businesses



should be restricted to entrepreneurs that are involved in a business planning service (e.g., SBDC), to increase their chances of meeting defined performance metrics.

Create a developmental ombudsman position. The ombudsman position is focused on providing property owners and investors technical and process-oriented assistance when going through the development review and entitlement processes. Whether it is a rezoning or variance request, the ombudsman program is intended to assist applicants in effectively and efficiently navigating the relevant Town rules and regulations. The position has two priorities. First, the ombudsman must be familiar with all procedures and expectations in Amherst and be able to advise applicants on how to ensure a complete application package. Second, the ombudsman must be able to collaborate with industry professionals (i.e., engineers) to provide advisory services when it comes to technical needs. Where the position is placed within the Town’s organization chart is secondary to having an FTE position dedicated to business assistance. The developmental ombudsman position is different from the small business development position, which is more focused on direct outreach and communication with small businesses as well as coordinating and collaborating with local and regional partners on program implementation.

5. Outreach, Marketing, and Communication

Business Outreach

Create marketing collateral necessary for effective and retention efforts. Communication and marketing are critical for retaining and attracting investment activities, and the Town of Amherst will need to create presentable ‘marketing collateral’ that illustrates why investors should choose Amherst as a place to live, work, and develop. Specific materials include:

- ***Quality-of-Life Brochure*** – The quality-of-life brochure should focus on the intangibles of living and working in Amherst, highlighting various workforce, cost of living, and quality-of-life assets of the area. The content should emphasize factors such as school performance, recreational activities, healthcare quality, and access to regional markets. This material is particularly valuable for recruiting white-collar firms and promoting entrepreneurial development.
- ***Target Industry Materials*** – Industry-specific marketing materials for each of the target industries are important for disseminating specific data that is valuable to the Town’s target industries. Each document should be customized based on the cluster (see Section 4). The documents should highlight information including employment and establishment growth data, regional wage rates, current businesses operating in the area, competitive advantages of operating locally, unique incentives available (where applicable) and local business contacts (ambassadors).
- ***Incentive Sheet*** – The Town’s incentive marketing materials will need to be created once local incentive programs are established to reflect local, county, and statewide programs. Each



incentive sheet should focus on those programs relevant to the industry group being targeted. Prospective businesses can use this document to gauge the financial benefits to doing business, and existing businesses may be alerted to incentive programs they were unaware of, therefore helping to ensure their continued presence in the Town.

- *Business Testimonial Book* – Through stakeholder interviews, RKG Associates’ uncovered several “success stories” of existing businesses succeeding in Amherst. However, these experiences are not chronicled or readily available to use in marketing. RKG recommends crafting a business testimonials book with written statements from existing industry leaders on topics ranging from quality of life, business climate, value-add created by the Town, and personal preference to do business locally. Getting input from companies that have chosen Amherst and thrive locally is valuable to industry recruitment. Individual testimonies of leaders from a range of businesses by size should be a priority.
- *Property Assemblage Book* – The Town should create a property assemblage book that highlights those catalytic land assets identified in each of the economic activity centers where the Town and property owner are aligned on the future development program. To this point, the assemblage book should only highlight those assets where the property owners are engaged and supportive of the Town marketing their property. The book should focus on the top (5-10) catalytic projects. Each listing should provide information on all the properties as well as the community’s development vision for that area.

Develop business ambassadors to assist in business engagement and marketing. The ambassador program is a collection of business and industry leaders that provide support to the economic development entity’s staff for industry recruitment and retention. Although these individuals will have no formal authority within the recruitment process, they provide a ‘real life’ vantage point for prospects doing business in Amherst. Their most important function is to provide a business perspective for prospects interested in locating/expanding within the Town. Utilizing business leaders in the recruitment process legitimizes the recruitment effort through testimonials while leveraging the staff’s time and effort. The most effective ambassadors may not be from the largest businesses. Amherst should identify ambassadors from each of the major industry sectors to ensure appropriate coverage regardless of the prospect.

Enact a quarterly newsletter detailing market and economic development activities. A monthly newsletter should advertise networking events, provide opinion editorials, and highlight developments occurring in certain target industries. The newsletter should include a ‘Message from the Director,’ highlighting a relevant piece of how economic development efforts are expanding target industries and why it may be an important to industries that overlap (e.g., connection between health care and retail).



Community Outreach

Community awareness and support are critical components of implementation. Simply put, the amount of financial and political support for economic development is influenced by the willingness of residents to endorse local action. Past actions (that occurred before initiating this effort) indicate there is not always widespread understanding of economic development initiatives in Amherst, why it is important for future sustainability, and what needs to be done to achieve the stated vision. Increased awareness and education about economic development can only benefit implementation in building sustainable and strategic relationships with all local stakeholders.

Host community update meetings. RKG recommends the Town engage with community advocates to meet with citizen and civic groups to provide annual updates on economic development related actions. This effort can dovetail into a staff-led presentation/discussion to be held at different locations throughout the Town, enabling community members to hear about economic development efforts and ask questions/give feedback.

Implement bi-annual survey to residents. A bi-annual survey targeted to residents can gauge local understanding and support of economic development as well as identify any community-based goals and concerns. Their responses can help facilitate the creation of programs and policies that advance community goals and provide content to develop targeted approaches to address common/detailed community concerns.

Develop citizen advocates to assist in community engagement. Given the challenge of reaching all the different community groups in Amherst, RKG Associates recommends a select group of interested citizens assist in engaging local civic organizations (e.g., homeowner associations, social clubs). Ideally, the community advocates would be individuals with strong ties and broad recognition within either a specific area of the Town or with a civic group. Individuals selected to be advocates should be familiar with the Town's economic development efforts, can discuss and explain economic development concepts, and be well spoken. Most importantly, the advocates must be available to assist in outreach to various communities (i.e., neighborhood groups) and civic (i.e., congregations) entities. Outreach meetings should occur on a quarterly basis to keep community residents up to date about local economic development issues.

Create an online portal through economic development website for citizens to engage. To ensure constant and consistent communication with residents and civic organizations, an online tool should be made accessible for community members to provide feedback on economic development programs and to request meetings with staff members. Having a dedicated communication portal online can offer individual citizens the opportunity to ask questions, provide recommendations, or seek clarification on the Town's economic development efforts.



General Outreach

Establish an economic development dashboard to highlight activities and impacts. Traditional economic development metrics include job creation, business attraction, and tax revenue growth. These metrics alone can overlook the performance of all economic development activities in a community. That said, additional metrics are essential to track the effectiveness and efficiency of various implementation programs. For instance, tracking the graduation rate of an entrepreneurship program rather than simply tracking the number of jobs created. A low graduation rate can signal potential issues in the curriculum or deficiencies in the screening process that can be addressed to improve the program which can ultimately lead to increased job prospects.

RKG Associates recommend the Town establish an economic development dashboard that not only tracks traditional economic development metrics but metrics that track the performance of local programs. Recommended metrics categorized under topic areas are listed below:

- **Business Retention and Expansion**
 - Site visits performed
 - Ombudsman assists
 - Jobs retained/expanded
 - Capital Investment
 - Network event attendance
 - Survey participation
 - Programs/strategies created from roundtable discussions

- **Business Recruitment and Attraction**
 - Number of prospective businesses engaged
 - Successful recruitments
 - Total jobs created
 - Average annual wage
 - Total capital investment
 - Debrief highlights from lost opportunities

- **Entrepreneurial Development**
 - Enrollment inquiries
 - Business enrollment
 - State/regional investment
 - Graduation rates
 - Job created per graduate and associated NAICS code
 - Debrief on businesses leaving the program

- **Workforce Development**
 - Local programs offered



- Program applications and enrollment
- Internships, apprenticeships, and employment placements
- Businesses assisted
- Business inquiries

- **Fiscal Sustainability Metrics**
 - Number of incentives
 - Value of incentives
 - Jobs created/preserved from incentives
 - Capital Investment
 - New tax revenues
 - Infrastructure investments

Enhance the Town's virtual media presence. An economic development website will need to be developed that promotes Amherst as a business-friendly location in order to entice investors for business and development opportunities. In addition, Amherst should be posting related economic development content on a weekly basis (3-4 times a week) through various social media platforms—Twitter, Tik Tok, LinkedIn etc.

6. Organization and Coordination

The importance of pursuing economic development through joint-cooperation and strategic partnerships cannot be emphasized enough. To achieve the proposed economic development goals, the Town of Amherst needs financial and technical support from all relevant partners and stakeholders. This includes business chambers at the local and county levels, various Industrial Development Agencies, Buffalo Niagara Partnership, educational institutions, and municipal partners (e.g., City of Buffalo, Village of Williamsville). All in all, any entity involved with advancing economic and social outcomes in Amherst, broader Erie County, and throughout Western New York.

Fund economic development activities commensurate with economic development goals. The current volume of financial investments and staff capacity is insufficient to meet Amherst's proposed economic development activities. The Town of Amherst should scale its economic development focus to the most critical tasks until additional staff and resources are made available. In particular—small business development, marketing, and outreach to economic development stakeholders.

Leverage local and regional partnerships to support economic development activities. The Town of Amherst has limited staff and financial resources to achieve all the proposed economic development goals. To help offset these limitations, the Town needs to continue to build coordination with local mission-based entities focused on enhancing the economic and social climate in the area. Such organizations include, and are not limited to, Erie County, City of Buffalo, University at Buffalo, Amherst Industrial Development Agency, non-profits etc.



Coordination among these organizations is vital for bolstering the Town’s efforts on business recruitment, communication and outreach, and small business development.

F. IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX

The following Implementation Matrix presents the full range of objectives and corresponding action items for the Town’s consideration. As noted, this matrix should serve as a reference document as the economic development staff craft their annual business plan. The timelines, estimated costs, and implementation partners for each action item identified in the matrix reflect RKG Associates professional recommendation guided by input from Town staff and the Working Group. The final timing, focus, and potential costs for each action item should be refined by staff and/or the responsible implementation partner when implementation occurs.



LEGEND

Implementation Leaders

Public

AM	Town of Amherst
ER	Erie County
MU	Other Municipalities
NY	State of New York (Empire State Development)
WI	Village of Williamsville

Partners


AB	Business Advisory Board
BN	Buffalo Niagara Partnership
BS	Buffalo State University (SBDC)
CC	Chambers of Commerce
DU	Daemon University
EC	SUNY Erie (ECC)
IB	Invest Buffalo Niagara
ID	Amherst Industrial Development Agency
UB	University of Buffalo
VB	Visit Buffalo Niagara

Private

C	Consultant
F	Financial Institutions
I	Industry Leaders
N	Neighborhood Residents
O	Property Owners
R	Realtors/Brokers

Cost Estimate Legend:

ST	Staff Time
A	Under \$1,000
B	\$1,000 to \$10,000
C	\$10,000 to \$50,000
D	\$50,000 to \$100,000
E	\$100,000 to \$250,000
F	\$250,000 to \$500,000
G	Over \$500,000

 Action



Town of Amherst, New York Strategic Economic Development Plan Implementation Matrix		Implementation Lead		Implementation Timing (Year)										Estimated Cost	Cost Type																				
		Public/NP	Private	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10																						
BUSINESS RETENTION AND EXPANSION																																			
Objective 1.1	Create a more comprehensive business contact list to ensure retention and expansion efforts reach all Amherst businesses																																		
Action 1.1.1	Create a single database of all Amherst businesses based on lists already available (e.g., secondary data vendors, partner organization membership lists...)											AM, ID, IB, CC	C													C	One Time								
Action 1.1.2	Engage the state to collect list of all businesses registered within the Town of Amherst											AM, NY																ST	Annual						
Action 1.1.3	Work with property owners and landlords to collect business contact information											AM, ID, CC	O, I															ST	Annual						
Action 1.1.4	Provide opportunity for businesses to register/review their information in the business list through the Town's economic development website											AM	O, I, R																Included 5.4.1	Annual					
Action 1.1.5	Implement volunteer walks, having 10-15 volunteers canvas the Town's various activity centers to gather contact information											AM, CC	O, I																	A	Bi-Annual				
Action 1.1.6	Ask industry roundtable members to advertise volunteer walks and engage their relationships to build the database											AM	O, I																	ST	Bi-Annual				
Action 1.1.7	Consider developing a business registration requirement for the Town collecting contact and industry information only											AM, WI																		ST	Annual				
Objective 1.2	Implement annual business survey each year in partnership with local chambers of commerce																																		
Action 1.2.1	Establish a fixed date (e.g., week) that the survey will be released. This should be consistent year over year. Recommend the Fall											AM, ID, CC	O, I																			A	Annual		
Action 1.2.2	Work with the chambers, IDA, and industry roundtables to refine questions and expand awareness of the survey each year											AM, ID, CC, AB	O, I																		ST	Annual			
Action 1.2.3	Invest in multimedia marketing and outreach at least 2 months prior to the release of the survey each year (e.g., print, social media, direct outreach)											AM, ID																						Included 5.4.2	Annual
Action 1.2.4	Share general results of the survey with roundtables, partner organizations, and the community through the monthly newsletter											AM																				ST	Annual		
Action 1.2.5	Use results of survey to prioritize retention/expansion visits for the year											AM																				ST	Annual		
Action 1.2.6	Work with respective roundtables about industry-specific findings from survey to determine annual action items											AM, AB	O, I																					ST	Annual
Action 1.2.7	Retain all survey results to create a longitudinal assessment tool (e.g., Excel database) that can help economic development efforts become more predictive to changing market climates											AM																						ST	Annual
Action 1.2.8	Consider partnership with adjacent municipalities to implement a broader survey effort (increased responses, shared costs)											AB, WI, MU, ER																						ST	Annual



Town of Amherst, New York Strategic Economic Development Plan Implementation Matrix		Implementation Lead		Implementation Timing (Year)										Estimated Cost	Cost Type	
		Public/NP	Private	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10			
BUSINESS RETENTION AND EXPANSION																
Objective 1.3	Proactively outreach to existing businesses through 1-on-1 meetings															
Action 1.3.1	Use the comprehensive business list to identify new companies to visit and track past visit efforts. Do not concentrate on the same businesses year over year	AM, AB	I												ST	Continuous
Action 1.3.2	Establish quotas for number of monthly visits, starting with ten (10) per month, expanding as more staff is hired and/or volunteers trained	AM													ST	Continuous
Action 1.3.3	Use business survey results to prioritize outreach efforts to companies that indicate growth needs or challenges to maintain operations	AM, AB, ID													ST	Annual
Action 1.3.4	Coordinate with economic development partners for business visits (e.g., chambers to visit members)	AM, ID, CC													ST	Continuous
Action 1.3.5	Maintain database of visited businesses to track frequency and results of the visit through a Consumer Relationship Management (CRM) software	AM, ID													B	Annual
Action 1.3.6	Create a direct "help line" initiative on the Town's economic development website that allows businesses to connect to an economic development staff member for assistance	AM	C												Included 5.4.1	One Time
Action 1.3.7	Activate business ambassadors to assist in outreach, providing them training on questions to ask and how to track the conversation	AM, AB	O, I												Included 5.6.1	Annual
Objective 1.4	Build additional industry roundtables in a number of different market areas															
Action 1.4.1	Have an industry roundtable for every key market sector including [1] Retailers; [2] Small Businesses; [3] Professional Services; [4] Real Estate/Commercial Property Owners; [5] Healthcare; and [6] Minority-Owned Businesses	AM, AB	O, I, R												ST	One Time
Action 1.4.2	Make sure all partner organizations have representation on roundtables that crossover missions	AM, AB, CC, ID, DU, UB, EC	O, I, R												ST	One Time
Action 1.4.3	Meet each roundtable quarterly or semiannually as necessary, with one meeting targeted immediately after the release of the business survey results	AM	O, I, R												A	Quarterly
Action 1.4.4	Use roundtable meeting to discuss: [1] market climate; [2] regulatory issues; [3] growth opportunities; [4] implementation coordination	AM	O, I, R												ST	Annual
Action 1.4.5	Use feedback from roundtables to help set annual action plan	AM, AB													ST	Annual
Objective 1.5	Actively engage Amherst's home-based businesses															
Action 1.5.1	Create and implement a marketing campaign to home-based businesses to provide contact information to the Town	AM, AB, CC	O, I												A	Annual
Action 1.5.2	Use state data to identify home-based businesses (based on a geospatial analysis of business address)	AM, NY													ST	Annual
Action 1.5.3	Consider implementing a separate home-based business survey from the main survey targeted with questions more relevant to these entrepreneurs	AM, ID, CC, AB	O, I												ST	Annual
Action 1.5.4	If enough interest, create a home-based business roundtable to augment the others	AM, AB	O, I												ST	Quarterly



Town of Amherst, New York Strategic Economic Development Plan Implementation Matrix		Implementation Lead		Implementation Timing (Year)										Estimated Cost	Cost Type
		Public/NP	Private	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		
BUSINESS RECRUITMENT															
Objective 2.1	Become more proactive with regional and statewide partners in business recruitment														
Action 2.1.1	Engage industry roundtables and individual businesses to generate potential recruitment leads through vertical and horizontal supply chains	AM, IB, ID, BN, NY												ST	Annual
Action 2.1.2	Engage with regional partners (e.g., Empire State Development, Invest Buffalo Niagara, Buffalo Niagara Partnership...) quarterly or semi-annually on recruitment trends, opportunities, and local priorities	AM, IB, ID, BN, NY												A	Annual
Action 2.1.3	Maintain local property and land database, coordinating with partners on maintaining an accurate and up-to-date list	AM	C											Included 3.2.1	Annual
Action 2.1.4	Collaborate on leads collected through business outreach and marketing efforts	AM, IB, ID, BN, NY												ST	Annual
Action 2.1.5	Work with local partners to build relationships with site selectors in target industry sectors, adding them the Town's economic development newsletter distribution list	AM, IB, ID, BN, NY, CC	O, I											ST	Annual
Action 2.1.6	Create a municipal economic development coalition focused on information sharing, best practice engagement, and collaboration on cross jurisdictional needs/opportunities (e.g., workforce development)	AM, MU, EC, IB												ST	Annual
Objective 2.2	Expand start-up and entrepreneurial development services open to all businesses														
Action 2.2.1	Expand information seminars in partnership with local (e.g., Clarence) and county partners on how to start, operate, and grow a business	AM, MU, BS, ER												B	Annual
Action 2.2.2	Engage local HR, engineering, accounting, and legal professionals to create a database of potential consultants for entrepreneurs to use	AM, MU, BS, ER	O, I											ST	Annual
Action 2.2.3	Provide financial assistance for entrepreneurs and small businesses to access critical services such as human resources assistance, financial planning assistance, and legal assistance	AM, MU, BS, ER												D	Annual
Action 2.2.4	Fund the training of 2-3 new mentors each year, selecting within business sectors that are underrepresented, particularly women and people of color	AM, MU	O, I											B	Annual
Action 2.2.5	Proactively market small business initiatives to existing businesses, focusing on home-based businesses using updated business tracking data	AM, ID												ST	Annual
Action 2.2.6	Modify incentive programs to offer financial support to startups and small businesses to locate and grow in Amherst (e.g., one-time grants for creating jobs above area median income), requiring participation in an entrepreneurial training program	AM, ID, AB												D	Annual
Action 2.2.7	Work with local banks to create a PPP revolving loan fund that offers low/no-interest loans and/or gap financing to start-ups and small businesses seeking to grow. Target an 80% private/20% public resource pool	AM, MU, ER	F											F	One Time
Objective 2.3	Scale proactive marketing and recruitment efforts to best leverage the Town's resources and market reach														
Action 2.3.1	Partner with local and state entities to market through relevant digital and print mediums annually	AM, ID, IB, BN, NY	C											C/D	Annual
Action 2.3.2	Host a searchable online database of available commercial space and land for prospectus businesses to review	AM												A	Annual
Action 2.3.3	Create a 'tip line' for citizens to call/e-mail/text ideas on business recruitment and any leads they may have on businesses that may wish to relocate or expand to Amherst	AM	C											Included 5.4.1	One Time
Action 2.3.4	Develop/refine the Town's business recruitment collateral (see OUTREACH, COMMUNICATION, AND MARKETING section)	AM												Included 5.1.1	Annual



Town of Amherst, New York Strategic Economic Development Plan Implementation Matrix		Implementation Lead		Implementation Timing (Year)										Estimated	Cost
		Public/NP	Private	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Cost	Type
ASSET DEVELOPMENT															
Objective 3.1	Create/update small area plans for the Town's primary economic activity centers														
	Action 3.1.1 Use the Opportunity Sites chapter of the SEDP as an initiation point for engagement and action	AM, WI												ST	Annual
	Action 3.1.2 Develop internally OR engage a consultant team to develop detailed small area plans for each activity center, starting with the Boulevard Mall area	AM, WI, AB	C											B/E	Annual
	Action 3.1.3 Encourage elected leadership to engage in the study and champion the results	AM, AB												ST	Annual
	Action 3.1.4 Create a marketing brochure for each employment center/commercial corridor that encapsulates the vision	AM, WI, ID	C											Included 5.1.7	Bi-Annual
	Action 3.1.5 Enact regulatory changes to allow defined visions to occur (see TOOLBOX DEVELOPMENT section)	AM, WI, ER												ST	One Time
Objective 3.2	Maintain a locally-comprehensive comprehensive property and asset database														
	Action 3.2.1 Inventory all existing vacant commercial and industrial land and buildings in collaboration with local real estate listing entities	AM	I, O, R											ST	Annual
	Action 3.2.2 Connect with all property owners to detail price, availability, and vision for those asset; include in online listings	AM	I, O, R											ST	Annual
	Action 3.2.3 Create a web-accessible database of those assets to connect to the economic development website	AM	C											Included 5.4.1	One Time
	Action 3.2.4 Create an 'open source' database for property owners and brokers to submit new listings and changes to existing listings	AM	C											Included 5.4.1	One Time
	Action 3.2.5 Work with regional and state implementation partners to make sure their asset lists are current and complete	AM, ID, IB, BN, NY												ST	Annual
	Action 3.2.6 Maintain regular communication with property owners to ensure occupied/developed land is removed	AM, ID, CC	O, I											ST	Annual
Objective 3.3	Work with property owners to ensure economic development plans are consistent with short-term and long-term investment strategies														
	Action 3.3.1 Create a comprehensive ownership database of all commercial properties in each of the opportunity sites to begin a dialogue about their property interests and investment priorities	AM, ID, CC	O, I, R											C	Annual
	Action 3.3.2 Engage in dialogue with owners, particularly catalytic parcels, on a regular basis to track changing strategies and create new opportunities	AM	O, I, R											ST	Annual
	Action 3.3.3 Create a catalyst sites prospectus, defining property ownership, implementation concepts, and available incentives to help bring the vision to fruition	AM	C											Included 5.1.6	Bi-Annual
Objective 3.4	Consider creating an Economic Development Opportunity Fund														
	Action 3.4.1 Create a fund dedicated to [1] land acquisition for economic development purposes and [2] gap financing in real estate developments with economic development benefits	AM, ID	F											ST	One Time
	Action 3.4.4 Seed the fund with \$500,000 for initial operations	AM, ID	F											F	One Time
	Action 3.4.2 Create a board of directors comprised of public, staff, and private sector representatives to review applications and negotiate agreements	AM, ID	O, I											ST	One Time
	Action 3.4.3 Develop specific criteria for access to fund resources (e.g., minimum job creation, minimum, capital investment, creation of workforce housing, blight removal...) including performance requirements and claw back provisions	AM, ID												ST	Annual



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		Public/NP	Private	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Cost	Type	
TOOLBOX DEVELOPMENT																
Objective 4.1	Match land use regulations to economic development vision, particularly in economic activity centers															
	Action 4.1.1 Rezone land based on the results of the small area planning process	AM, WI													ST	As Needed
	Action 4.1.2 Consider creating higher density housing zones in/adjacent to activity centers to accommodate housing growth commensurate with job growth	AM, WI													ST	As Needed
	Action 4.1.3 Consider overlay districts in areas where rezoning will be too difficult or time consuming	AM, WI													ST	As Needed
	Action 4.1.4 Consider a full update to the Town's comprehensive plan to reflect recent and emerging changes in the Town's growth and development goals including the newly defined vision for its employment centers	AM, WI	C												E	One Time
Objective 4.2	Create economic development incentives that match the Town's priorities and performance expectations															
	Action 4.2.1 Scale incentives based on size of prospect, particularly targeting startup and small businesses (fewer than 5 jobs)	AM, ID													ST	One Time
	Action 4.2.2 Create a scoring matrix that prioritizes location of the investment, type of business, size of project, quality of jobs, benefits packages offered, and any other characteristic valued by the Town	AM, ID													ST	One Time
	Action 4.2.3 Create specific incentive levels based on the scoring for projects	AM, ID													ST	One Time
	Action 4.2.4 Engage with local (e.g., the IDA) and state partners to implement similar requirements for investments in the Town	AM, ID													ST	One Time
	Action 4.2.5 Require claw back provisions in all incentive packages to ensure compliance with stated agreements	AM, ID													ST	Continuous
	Action 4.2.6 Tie any incentives to businesses with less than five (5) employees to participating in the Town's small business development program/mentorship program	AM, ID													ST	Continuous
Objective 4.3	Build more consistent and predictable review and approval processes															
	Action 4.3.1 Provide access to expedited review processes for any project in an identified opportunity area	AM, WI													ST	One Time
	Action 4.3.2 Integrate greater administrative approvals (department heads) for projects/applications that fall below a certain size (e.g. any sign application less than 2'x2' can be approved administratively)	AM, WI													ST	Continuous
	Action 4.3.3 Incorporate concurrent review for all real estate development applications that require multiple department reviews	AM, WI													ST	Continuous
	Action 4.3.4 Set review time limits for all reviews of projects that involve Town or IDA funds.	AM, WI													ST	Continuous



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		Public/NP	Private	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Cost	Type
OUTREACH, COMMUNICATION, AND MARKETING															
Objective 5.1	Create the marketing collateral consistent with the Town's refocused efforts														
	Action 5.1.1 Create all materials listed below in print and digital format, updating regularly (minimum once a year)	AM	C												
	Action 5.1.2 Create target industry-specific fact and information sheets	AM	C												
	Action 5.1.3 Refine the existing marketing document to reflect recommended changes where applicable (e.g., incentives)	AM	C												
	Action 5.1.4 Create quality of life information sheets on livability and amenities in Amherst	AM	C												
	Action 5.1.5 Create materials to market the new ombudsman program	AM	C												
	Action 5.1.6 Create a property prospectus book detailed in 3.3.3 (digital only)	AM	C												
	Action 5.1.7 Create employment marketing brochure detailed in 3.1.4	AM	C												
Objective 5.2	Create a regular (monthly) newsletter focusing on recent, current, and future economic development activities														
	Action 5.2.1 Highlight recent economic development activity and successes, maintaining a 'running tally' dashboard of accomplishments for the year	AM, AB													
	Action 5.2.2 Publish regular opinion editorials from business owners, partner organizations, or invited guests focused on topics that influence (or are influenced by) economic development in Amherst	AM, AB													
	Action 5.2.3 Include separate topic-themed Town Supervisor/Economic Development Director messages in each newsletter	AM, AB													
	Action 5.2.4 Implement, monitor, and report the results of opinion polls and business surveys through the newsletter	AM, AB													
	Action 5.2.5 Highlight a different Town businesses (preferably from the target industries) in each newsletter that have invested, expanded, or created new jobs	AM, AB													
	Action 5.2.6 Target writing two (2) or three (3) industry/market white papers each year focused on educating local businesses and residents about current or impending market shifts and how they will impact local/regional businesses	AM, AB, ID	O, I, R												
Objective 5.3	Implement a proactive community engagement and education initiative														
	Action 5.3.1 Hold an annual Town hall meeting open to the public (and televised) to discuss accomplishments and ongoing efforts for the previous/upcoming year	AM, ID	N												
	Action 5.3.2 Implement a biannual resident survey to gauge the goals and concerns of Amherst residents about the Town's economic development efforts. Use the results to inform any changes to approach	AM, ID	N												
	Action 5.3.3 Hold a community outreach meeting in each employment center annually to engage business leaders and residents on economic development issues, opportunities, and challenges those areas are facing	AM, ID	N												
	Action 5.3.4 Host up to three (3) expert panelist discussions on topics of economic development each year. These discussions should address specific market/location opportunities and challenges facing local businesses	AM, ID	C												
	Action 5.3.5 Provide an online tool for citizens and groups to submit questions, provide feedback on content, or request meetings on the economic development website	AM, ID													



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OUTREACH, COMMUNICATION, AND MARKETING															
Objective 5.4	Enhance Amherst's electronic and social media presence and activity														
	Action 5.4.1 Update the Town's economic development website based on the functional changes in scope/mission	AM	C											C	One Time
	Action 5.4.2 Ensure weekly use of social media platforms (e.g., SnapChat, Instagram, Twitter, Facebook...)	AM												Included	One Time
	Action 5.4.3 Host the annual business and biannual citizen surveys on the website in its own section, with results of previous efforts posted for public review	AM												Included	One Time
	Action 5.4.4 Use the website to collect information, allow individuals to sign up for the newsletter, and better engage economic development staff	AM												Included	One Time
	Action 5.4.5 Create a citizens section on the website with access to educational information, the annual survey and results information, contact information for the assigned staff liaison, and the newsletter registration	AM												Included	One Time
Objective 5.5	Create an economic development dashboard on the Town's economic development website to provide real-time information about the activity and successes of local economic development efforts														
	Action 5.5.1 Establish a formal economic development dashboard to track performance across each of these topic areas: [1] retention, [2] recruitment, [3] entrepreneurial development, [4] workforce development, [5] fiscal sustainability	AM, ID												ST	One Time
	Action 5.5.2 Retention metrics should include: [1] site visits performed, [2] ombudsman assists, [3] jobs retained/expanded, [4] capital investment, [5] network event attendance, [6] prospect contacts	AM, ID												ST	Semiannual
	Action 5.5.3 Recruitment metrics should include: [1] number of prospects, [2] successful projects, [3] total jobs created, [4] average annual wage, [5] total capital investment, [6] debrief highlights from lost opportunities	AM, ID												ST	Semiannual
	Action 5.5.4 Entrepreneurial metrics should include: [1] enrollment inquiries, [2] business enrollment, [3] graduations, [4] jobs created, [5] debrief on businesses leaving the mentorship program	AM, ID												ST	Semiannual
	Action 5.5.5 Workforce metrics should include: [1] programs offered, [2] program applications and enrollment, [3] internships, apprenticeships, and employment placements, [4] businesses assisted, [5] business inquiries	AM, ID												ST	Semiannual
	Action 5.5.6 Fiscal sustainability metrics should include: [1] number of incentives, [2] dollar value of incentives, [3] jobs created/preserved from incentives, [4] capital investment created, [5] new tax revenues, [6] other benefits (e.g., infrastructure investments)	AM, ID												ST	Semiannual
	Action 5.5.7 Provide regular updates to the Town Supervisor and Town Board (recommended semi-annually)	AM, ID												ST	Semiannual
Objective 5.6	Activate existing business leaders in economic development efforts														
	Action 5.6.1 Develop at least five (5) business ambassadors, individuals who can work with economic development staff to promote Amherst and engage existing/prospective business owners in targeted industries. Train more as necessary	AM, AB	O, I											A	Bi-Annual
	Action 5.6.2 Develop a network of mentors in each of the target industries, focusing on developing women, minority and young business owners to reach the Town's diverse business base	AM, AB	O, I											Included 2.2.4	Annual
	Action 5.6.3 Develop at least four (4) engaged Amherst residents as advocates that can assist in community outreach and resident interaction	AM, AB	N											A	Bi-Annual
	Action 5.6.4 Create a Business-2-Business database that businesses can access to find specific services/networking opportunities	AM, AB												A	Continuous



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ORGANIZATION AND COORDINATION																	
Objective 6.1	Formalize staffing roles and responsibilities within the economic development department, expanding staff capacity to fully achieve the stated economic development goals																
	Action 6.1.1	Retain the director position to oversee daily and strategic economic development efforts	AM													ST	One Time
	Action 6.1.2	Formalize a small business outreach and development position to oversee the business survey, outreach visits, and small business engagement efforts	AM													ST	One Time
	Action 6.1.3	Formalize an ombudsman position to oversee business assistance regards to obtaining Town approvals across the full spectrum of business requirements (e.g., licenses, permits, approvals, rezonings, incentives...)	AM													ST	One Time
	Action 6.1.4	Formalize a market director position to oversee the creation and development of all virtual and physical collateral, manage the Town's economic development website, and oversee all social media and networking events	AM													ST	One Time
	Action 6.1.5	Increase the business retention and expansion efforts by one (1) full-time professional	AM													D	Annual (Salary)
	Action 6.1.6	Hire an economic development deputy director to augment administrative capability and expand the Town's efforts in entrepreneurial development	AM													D	Annual (Salary)
Objective 6.2	Enhance strategic relationships with local and statewide implementation partners																
	Action 6.2.1	Create a quarterly coordination meeting schedule with Invest Buffalo Niagara, Buffalo Niagara Partnership, and the Industrial Development Agency	AM, ID, IB, BN													A	Quarterly
	Action 6.2.2	Establish a semiannual strategic meeting schedule with other regional and statewide partners	AM, CC, NY, UB, DU, EC, VB													A	Semiannual
	Action 6.2.3	Provide quarterly/semiannual reports to regional and statewide partners on activity and successes	AM													ST	Quarterly
	Action 6.2.4	Establish a formal quarterly or semiannual coordination meeting with neighboring municipalities to address regional and cross-boundary market issues	AM, MU, ER													ST	Quarterly
	Action 6.2.5	Consider co-locating the Town's economic development staff with the Amherst Industrial Development Agency to enhance collaboration and make access for businesses more convenient	AM, ID													B	One Time
Objective 6.3	Create a Business Advisory Board to help with strategic planning and implementation of the Town's economic development strategic plan																
	Action 6.3.1	Create an official Town advisory board of 11 to 17 business leaders and implementation partners (e.g., post-secondary education institutions) interested and willing to participate in the Town's economic development effort	AM													ST	One Time
	Action 6.3.2	Host monthly meetings with the advisory board on projects, activity, and strategy to garner advice and assistance in implementation	AM													ST	One Time
	Action 6.3.3	Have the Town Supervisor appoint at least one (1) member of the advisory group, though avoid having elected officials attending the meetings	AM													ST	One Time
	Action 6.3.4	Create a committee structure to focus efforts in coordination with the Town's focus areas; [1] Workforce Development, [2] Business Retention, [3] Marketing and Outreach, [4] Business Recruitment	AM													ST	One Time
	Action 6.3.5	Ensure each committee is chaired (or co-chaired) by voting board members	AM													ST	One Time
	Action 6.3.6	Consider creating a 501(c)(3) to house the advisory board, creating an official memorandum of understanding and bylaws for the group	AM													ST	One Time