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## Community Overview

DRAFT

## A. Regional Setting/Location

The Town of Amherst is located northeast of the City of Buffalo, in the northern portion of Erie County, New York. The Town is approximately 54 square miles in size and shares borders with eight (8) municipalities. (See Map 1) The adjoining municipalities in Erie County are Town of Tonawanda to the west; the City of Buffalo and Town of Cheektowaga to the south; the Town of Clarence and a small area of the Town of Lancaster to the east. Niagara County lies to the north, and the adjoining communities are the Towns of Pendleton and Wheatfield, and the City of North Tonawanda. The Village of Williamsville is located in the Town's southeastern quadrant.

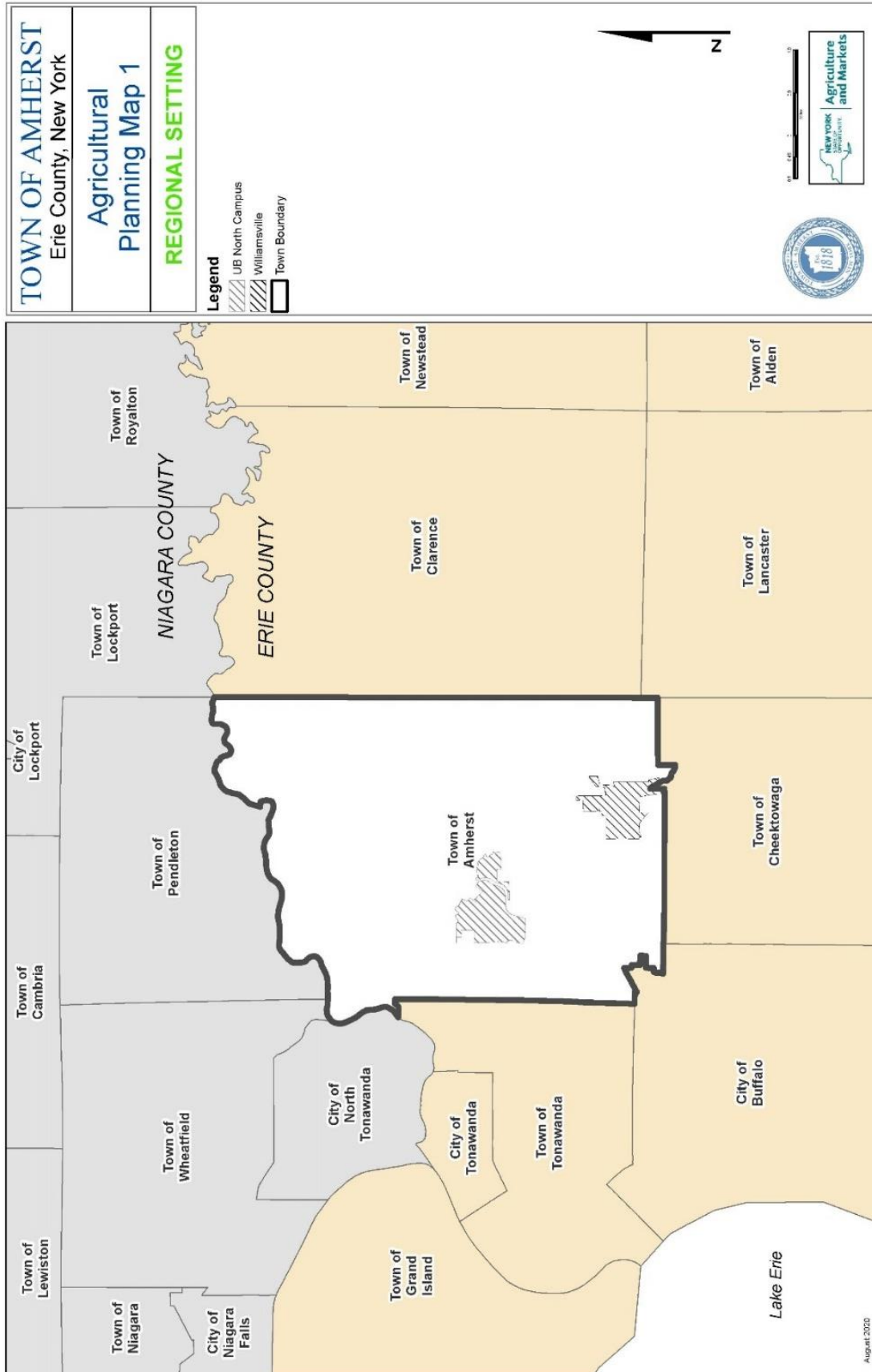
Amherst is an inner ring suburb. The Town's Bicentennial Comprehensive Plan (adopted 2007, amended 2019) noted that residential development was the predominant land use. According to the Bicentennial Plan, residential uses accounted for 36.4% of the Town's land use. Vacant land represented the second most predominant land use with 18.9%. Commercial, office and industrial uses make up 7.4% of the land, while the remaining land uses include a mix of public, semi-public (i.e., parks, schools, etc.) and institutional users, including the State University of New York at Buffalo. Land uses underwent significant changes between 1974 and 2000, when the Comprehensive Plan was first prepared: it is estimated that over that time frame, 55% of vacant and agricultural land in Amherst was converted to different uses.<sup>1</sup> A major factor in that transition is the fact that Amherst is the home of the University at Buffalo's north campus, which houses administrative offices, athletic facilities, and most of its academic programs. The University at Buffalo is the largest State University of New York campus, with an enrollment of over 31,000 students at its three campuses.

Conversions of agricultural and vacant land have continued since 2000. Despite these changes, Northern Amherst remains largely rural in character, with areas of agricultural land, open space and sensitive environmental resources. The Town features numerous parks, recreational facilities, and natural features including Amherst State Park, Ellicott Creek, Tonawanda Creek, Ransom Creek, and a portion of the Onondaga Escarpment.

While the agriculture footprint of the Town has grown smaller, farming remains an important part of Amherst today. Farming pursuits in the Town are diverse, feature commodity crops, alongside more specialized agriculture activities including vineyards, greenhouses, and apiaries.

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<sup>1</sup> Town of Amherst Bicentennial Comprehensive Plan (Adopted 2007, Amended 2019), Wallace Roberts and Todd, LLC with URS Corporation, and Economics Research Associates, Page 39.

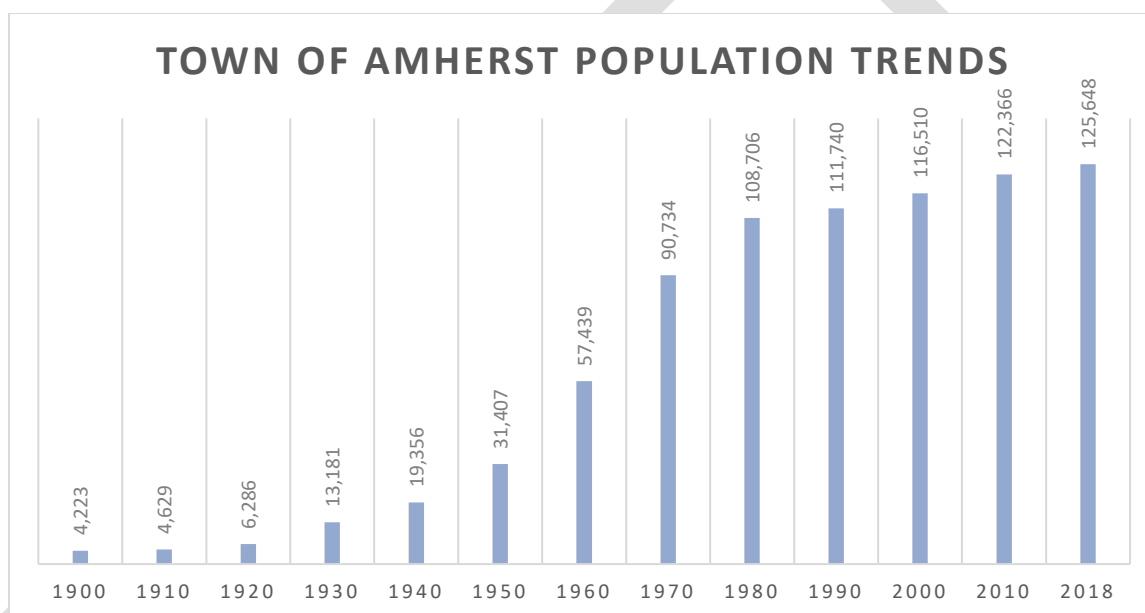


## B. Demographic Trends<sup>2</sup>

### Population

In terms of population, Amherst is the largest of the Buffalo suburbs. The 2010 Decennial Census counted the Town of Amherst's population at 122,366 residents. The most recent estimate is the U.S. Census' 2018 American Community Survey (ACS), which estimates that the Town's 2018 population was 125,648 residents, an increase of approximately 2.7% since 2010.

Amherst experienced strong population growth in the post war era. In 1950, the Town had 31,407 residents. By 2010, this number had nearly quadrupled to 122,366 residents.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau and ACS

Thanks in part to the State's decision to build the State University of New York at Buffalo's campus in Amherst, population trends in Amherst have been stable. Most of the Buffalo Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA)<sup>3</sup> has experienced population losses. From 1970 to 2018, the Buffalo MSA lost over 16% of its population, decreasing from 1,349,211 in 1970 to 1,130,152 in 2018). The Town of Amherst experienced a 35% increase in population over the same time frame. The Town of Amherst anticipates continued population growth. The 2016 *Town of Amherst Economic Study* projected that the Town's population would increase to approximately 141,400 by 2040.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Census data from the American Community Surveys (ACS), 2018 <http://data.census.gov>.

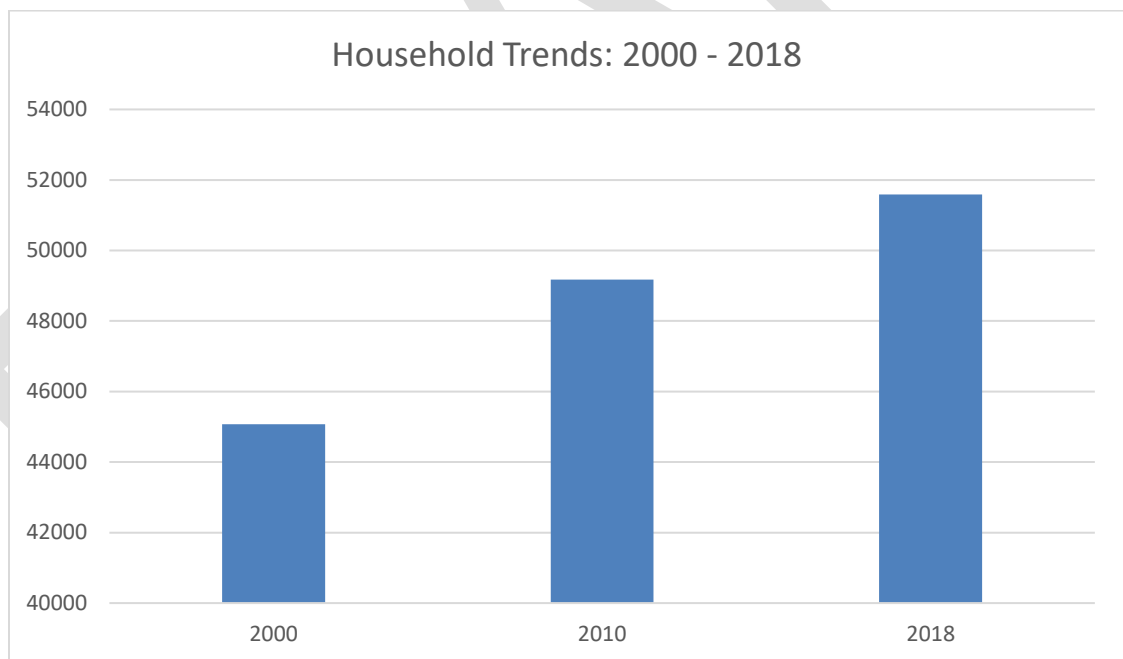
<sup>3</sup> Buffalo MSA consists of Erie and Niagara Counties

<sup>4</sup> *Town of Amherst Economic Study* (2016), Delta Associates, Appendix Table 5.

Population Trends: 2011 to 2017			
Year	Amherst	Erie County	Niagara County
2011	121,466	919,714	216,036
2012	122,232	919,542	215,869
2013	122,814	919,230	215,465
2014	123,542	920,694	214,973
2015	124,044	921,584	214,150
2016	124,647	922,129	213,374
2017	125,024	923,995	212,675
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS			

### Households

While population growth has been modest, the Town has experienced stronger growth in the number of households. Between 2010 and 2018, Amherst grew from 49,176 households to 51,588 households, representing a 5% increase in households. Growth was even stronger between 2000 and 2010, when the Town saw a 9% increase in the number of households.

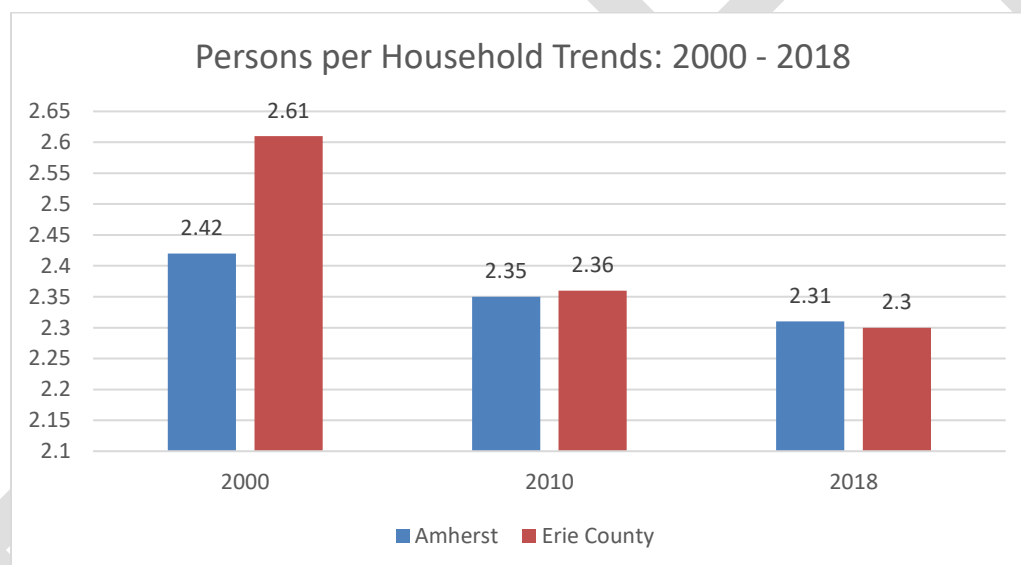


Source: US Census Bureau, ACS

Household growth has outpaced population growth because, consistent with regional and national trends, the size of households in the Town has been decreasing, although the trend is moderating. In 2000, there were 2.42 persons per household in the Town of Amherst.

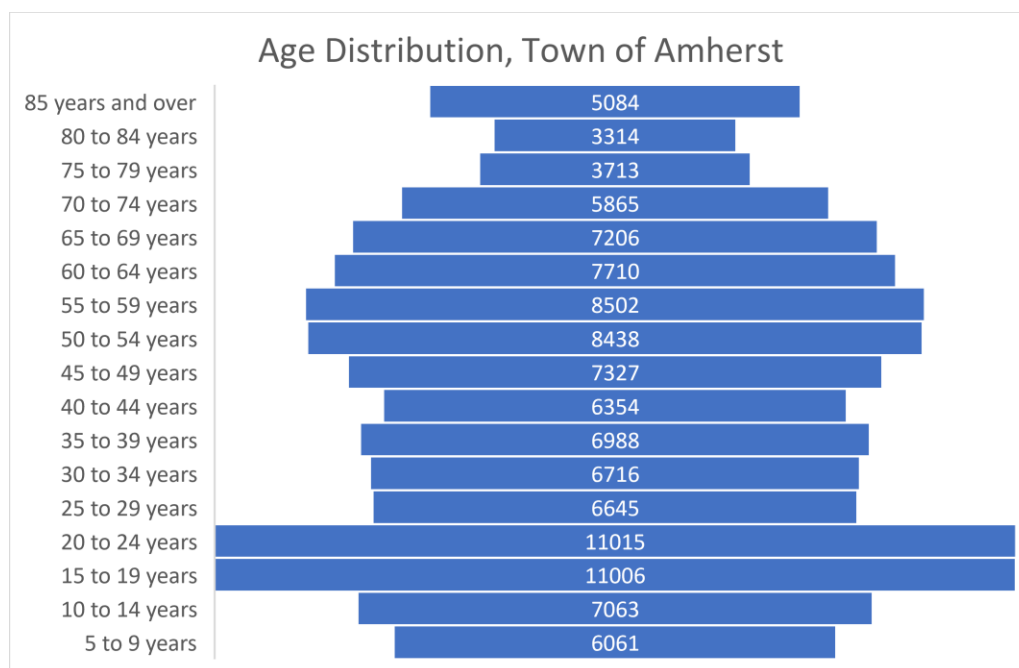
This decreased to 2.35 persons in 2010. Estimates for 2018 indicate there are currently 2.31 persons per household in the Town. Erie County has experienced a similar trend. In 2010, Erie County's average household size was 2.32 persons, which has decreased to 2.3 persons in 2018. This is due both to families having fewer children, and an increase in one-person households.

Persons per Household Trends: 2000 - 2018			
	2000	2010	2018
Amherst	2.42	2.35	2.31
Erie County	2.61	2.36	2.30
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS			



### Age

The median age of the Town's population is 41.1 years old, which is slightly older than Erie County, where the median age is 40.4 years. The percentage of persons over 65 years old has increased from 17.7% in 2000 to 20.2% in 2018. The age distribution is fairly even among the age cohorts. The slightly larger concentration in the 15 to 24 year age cohort is probably a reflection of the college population base in the Town.



Source: ACS

### Housing

The number of housing units in the Town of Amherst is also increasing. Currently, Amherst has approximately 55,429 housing units. From 2010 to 2018, Amherst gained approximately 2,852 housing units, a 9.3% increase (from 50,725 to 55,429).

The majority of homes in the Town are single-unit structures. In 2018, it was estimated that 63.4% of the Town's housing units were detached single unit structures, and another 4.4% were attached single-unit structures. Another 8.6% of residential units in the Town are in large apartments buildings (20 or more units).

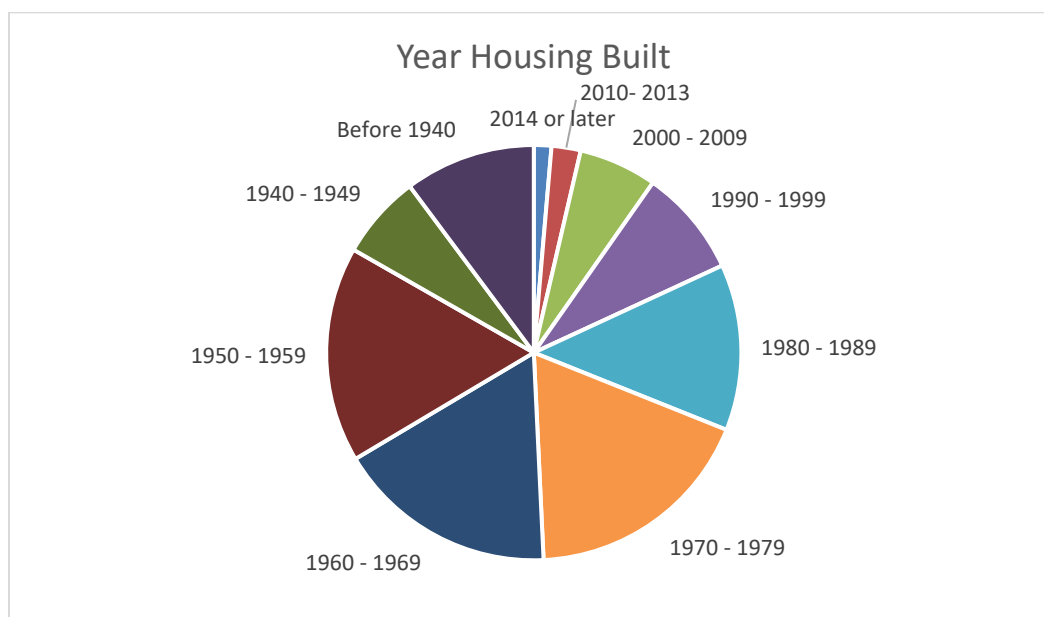
Residential Units in Structure, 2018		
1-unit, detached	33,948	63.4%
1-unit, attached	2,335	4.4%
2 units	3,250	6.0%
3 or 4 units	4,292	8.0%
5 to 9 units	3,830	7.1%
10 to 19 units	1,226	2.3%
20 or more units	4,587	8.6%
Mobile homes	119	0.2%

Source: ACS

Amherst is a community of homeowners. Approximately 70% of housing units are owner-occupied. In comparison, the homeownership rate for Erie County is 64.8%. The ages of the housing units in the Town are mixed, but most units in the Town were constructed between



1960 and 1999 (56.8%) and 1940 and 1959 (23.3%). Amherst does have a significant proportion of new units. Housing units constructed since 2000 account for approximately 9.8% of the Town's stock.



Source: ACS

In 2018, there were an estimated 3,841 vacant housing units within Amherst, which represented approximately 6.9% of the total number of housing units located within the Town. This vacancy is primarily in rental units. The rental vacancy rate is 7.4%, compared to 0.6% for owner-occupied units. The rental vacancy rate is slightly higher than the 5% vacancy rate that would be considered normal to account for mobility in the marketplace. The homeowner vacancy rate is very low, indicating a competitive housing market, with strong demand for available single-family units.

## C. Land Use, Zoning and Other Policies and Regulations

### Land Use

The Town of Amherst is 53.6 square miles in size (34,304 acres). There are over 44,360 individual tax parcels in the Town, of which 36,495 tax parcels are residential. The most predominant land use, by a significant margin, is residential; parcels with residential structures account for 89.6% of land uses in the Town. The Town's Bicentennial Comprehensive Plan (amended 2019) indicates that on a percentage basis, residential development (predominantly single-family dwelling units) remains the most widespread land use, with 36.4% land coverage; vacant land represents the second largest land use category in the Town (18.4% of total land area). Commercial, office and industrial lands together comprise about 9.3% of the total land area. Other land uses within the Town include agricultural, community services, public services, public parks and conservation, and recreation and entertainment.

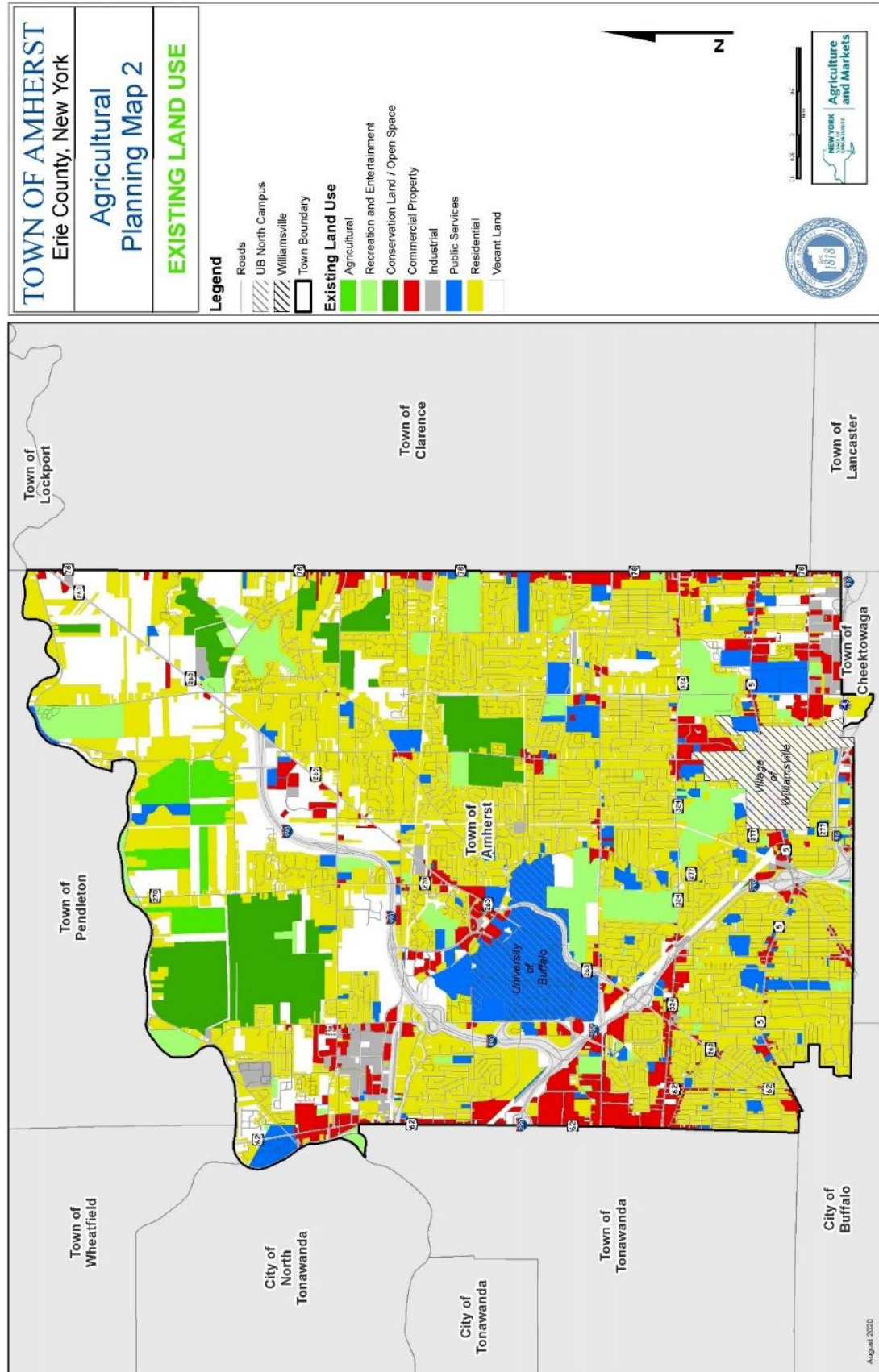
Between 1975 and 2000, approximately 55% of vacant and agricultural land in the Town was converted to other uses. Northern Amherst remains largely rural in character, with large areas of restricted agricultural land, public open space, sensitive environmental resources, rural highways, and (mostly in the northeast) a large proportion of the vacant land remaining in the Town. A general breakdown of the various land use types is as follows and shown on Map 2.

Residential uses in the Town include a wide variety of housing types and styles, with about 84.7% of land occupied by single-family dwellings. Other housing types include rural or larger lot frontage homes, multi-family apartment buildings, condominiums, and duplex structures. Development in the Town is concentrated primarily in densely developed subdivisions and unincorporated hamlets, including Eggertsville, Snyder, Getzville, and Swormville. These hamlets are linked to the Town's agricultural past, serving as early commercial and trade centers.

Residential uses in the Town shoulder a significant portion of the tax levy. The total value of residential uses in the Town is \$13,020,754,751, based on the 2018-2020 tax rolls. Most of the residential subdivisions are serviced by public sanitary sewer and have lots that measure less than one-half acre in size. This reflects a denser suburban development pattern that is consistent with the Town's emergence as a major inner-ring suburb during the latter half of the 20th century.

At 18.9%, vacant land accounts for a significant portion of the land area in the Town. Vacant land includes parcels that lack infrastructure or any type of permanent improvements (i.e. no dwellings or structures). It also includes undeveloped open space that was once used for agriculture. In some cases, these lands are being converted to preservation areas through land stewardship by organizations such as the Western New York Land Conservancy. In other instances, vacant lands may be wooded areas used for timber harvesting or croplands that are not being actively farmed at present (i.e. fallow lands).

Dedicated forested lands, parks and conservation lands comprise 1,403 acres or 8.5% land total land cover, which are anchored by Amherst State Park and the proposed Amherst Central Park property, which is proposed on the former Westwood Country Club and Audubon Golf Course lands. Additional properties in this category include private country club properties, the Great Baehre Swamp Wildlife Management Area, and other Town-owned parks and conservation lands located in the center of the Town. In addition, there are Town parklands and conservation areas in the northern portion of the Town. In some cases, open space is permanently protected by conservation organizations such as the Western New York Land Conservancy. Agricultural uses in the Town are found in North Amherst, which generally remains rural and undeveloped (see Map 2).



*Commercial, Industrial, and Public Services* make up the remaining bulk of the land use categories in the Town, totaling approximately 7.4% of the total land area combined. These uses are noticeably clustered along the Niagara Falls Boulevard, Sheridan Drive and Transit Road corridors, and scattered throughout the central and southern portions of the Town. These uses represent the commercial core for consumer buying in addition to employment opportunities provided in numerous office, manufacturing, institutional and other non-commercial structures.

## Zoning

Zoning in the Town of Amherst is Euclidean-based and made up of 22 different districts, including three overlay districts. Similar to the land use breakdown, these zoning districts mainly consist of a variety of residential districts, non-residential districts, and special purpose and overlay districts. The districts are broken down as the following and illustrated on the Town Zoning Map in Appendix C:

- **Residential Districts**

*Rural Residential (R-R), Suburban Agricultural District (S-A), Residential District One (R-1), Residential District Two (R-2), Residential District Three (R-3), Cluster Residential District Three-A (CR-3A), Traditional Single-Family Residential District (TR-3), Residential District Four (R-4), Multi-Family Residential District Four-A (MFR 4-A), Multi-Family Residential District Five (MFR -5), Multi-Family Residential District Six (MFR - 6), Multi-Family Residential District Seven (MFR -7), and Manufactured Home Residential District Eight (MHR-8)*

In general, these districts allow for a variety of residential uses, including single-family detached housing, single-family attached housing, various forms of multi-family development and manufactured home parks. Development density varies and generally increases with each progressive district. Rural Residential, which requires a 3-acre lot, has the greatest minimum lot, followed by Suburban Residential with a one-acre minimum, whereas MFR-4, for example, requires a minimum of 8,450 square feet for detached and 5,850 square feet for attached dwelling units. The R-4 through MFR-6 districts allow both attached and detached units. The MFR-7 district provides for high-density senior care facilities and the MFR-8 for manufactured homes on individual sites. Projects in the MFR-4A, MFR-5, MFR-6, MFR-7, and MFR-8 districts that exceed 30 acres in size must comply with planned unit development standards outlined in Section 6-9 of the Zoning Ordinance. North Amherst, where farming occurs, is primarily zoned S-A (see Map 3). It should also be noted that there are no properties currently zoned R-R.

- **Mixed Use Districts**

*Infill Districts, Infill Frontages, Retrofit Districts, Retrofit Frontages, Retrofit Transitions, Retrofit Streets*

The Town of Amherst adopted new mixed-use zoning classifications, a hybrid of form-based and Euclidean zoning, in September 2019 that were crafted for the commercial and mixed-use centers identified in the update to the Bicentennial Comprehensive Plan. The intent of the new zoning is to encourage a mix of land uses that combine to make working, shopping, recreation, and everyday living more convenient. These new districts shape building form and the relationship of buildings to the street and other building to create denser, more interactive mix of commercial and residential use areas in the primary commercial areas of the town (particularly in the Niagara Falls Boulevard and Sheridan Drive areas in the western part of the Town).

- **Non-Residential Districts**

*Office Building District (OB), Neighborhood Business District (NB), General Business District (GB), Commercial Service District (CS), Motor Service District (MS), Shopping Center District (SC), Research and Development District (RD), Science Technology District (ST) and General Industrial (GI)*

The non-residential districts provide for a variety of office, commercial, retail, community service, and manufacturing/industrial uses throughout the Town. Each respective district specifies allowable uses, uses permitted by special uses permit, and accessory uses and structures, as well as general development standards and supplemental design regulations for site development. As shown on the Zoning Map in Appendix C, non-residential districts are found along the east and west boundary of the Town and in areas south of North Amherst.

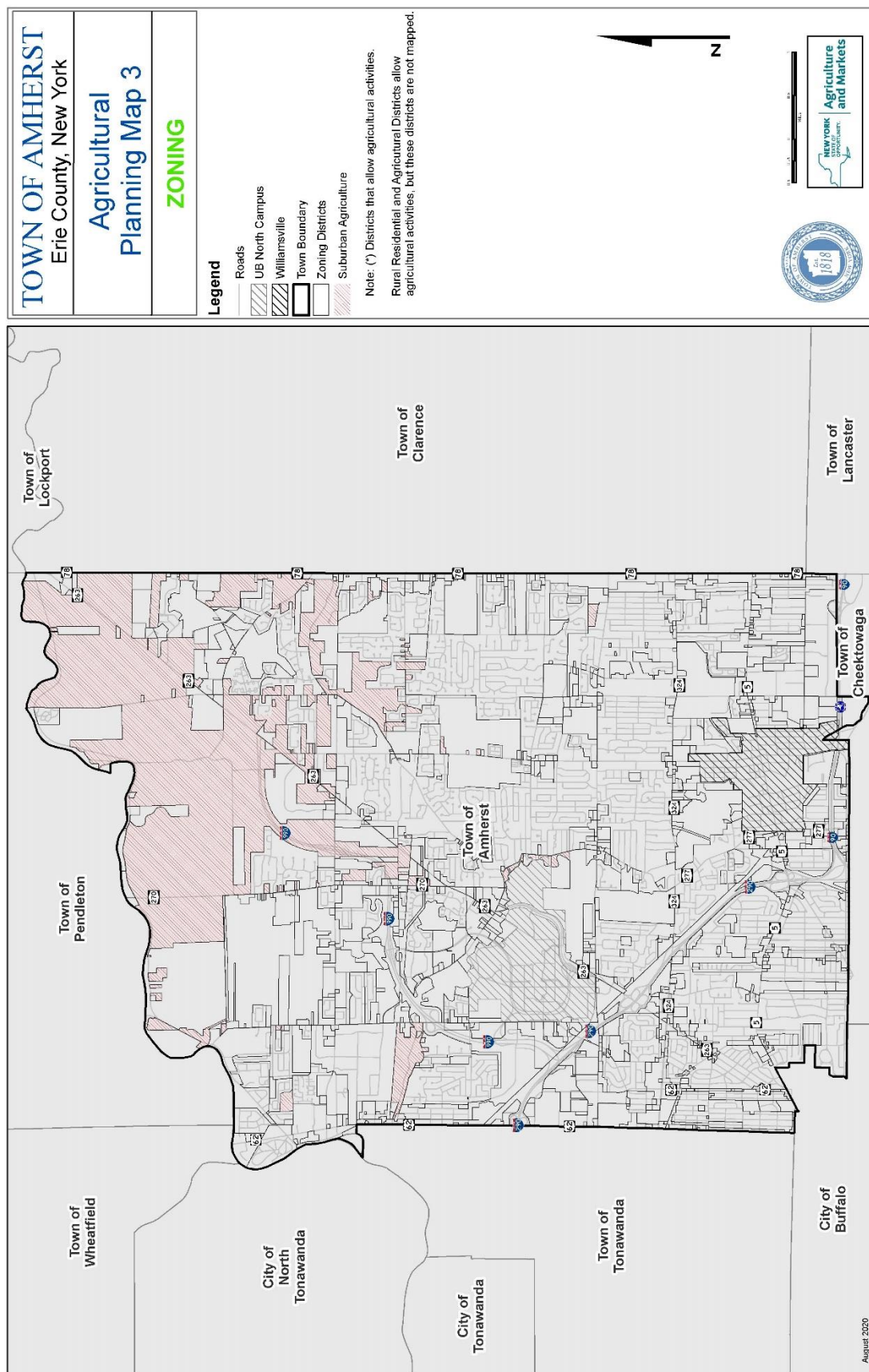
- **Special Purpose, Overlay Districts and Floating Zones**

*Agriculture (AG), New Community District (NCD), Planned Residential District (PRD), Planned Development District (PDD), Community Facilities District (CF), Traditional Neighborhood Development District (TND), Traditional Neighborhood Business Overlay District (TNB), Live-Work District 1 (LW-1) and Recreation Conservation District (RC)*

Special purpose and overlay districts include several mapped and overlay districts that provide for a mix of uses, with many offering more flexibility in design, as follows:

- Agricultural is an floating zone that provides for continued use of land for agricultural purposes to promote an environment for the long-term stability of farming and





agriculture. It requires a minimum lot size of five acres and allows a greater range of uses than what is currently permitted under the R-R and S-A zoning classifications. However, there are currently no lands in the Town with this zoning designation.

- New Community District offers flexible regulations to encourage the development of small to large-scale mixed-use neighborhoods. This district allows a variety of residential and non-residential uses. A large area that extends east of Sweet Home Road, west of Campbell Boulevard, north of Maple Road and south of the Nature View conservation area is currently zoned NCD.
- Planned Residential District allows for developments that offer a variety of housing types and styles. This is an overlay district, with some areas currently mapped and in existence.
- Planned Development District is an overlay district that allows for coordinated mixed-use developments with residential, public, and civic, office and commercial uses.
- Community Facilities District is used for public and semi-public uses and facilities, such as education, government and religious.
- Traditional Neighborhood Development District allows for fully integrated, mixed-use, pedestrian oriented neighborhoods.
- Traditional Neighborhood Business Overlay District is similar to the TND with more specific design regulations.
- Live-Work District applies to areas along arterials and major collector roadways and allows uses that combine residential dwellings and working/commercial space in one setting.
- Recreation Conservation District is designed for public, private, civic, recreation and conservation uses.

Agricultural uses are allowed in S-A and R-R districts, and the Agriculture Overlay district, although as noted above, there are no lands mapped with the R-R or Agriculture Overlay zoning designations in the Town at this time. Map 3 shows parcels in the Town where agriculture would be allowed under the current zoning designations. A full zoning map depicting all districts is included in Appendix C.

- ***Use Regulations***

Section 6-10 of the Town of Amherst Zoning Ordinance regulates Solar Energy use in the Town. These regulations apply to roof and building-mounted systems, which are permitted in all zoning districts. Ground mounted solar energy systems are limited to a maximum of 20 feet in height, can only be located in side or rear yards, and are regulated under three size categories. This height limit (20 feet) limits the ability to develop agrivoltaics, which are the co-location of solar panels and agricultural operations on the same field. Tier I systems, which have a total facility footprint of less than 2,000 square feet, are permitted in all zoning districts. Tier II systems, which have a total facility footprint of between 2,000 and 7,000 square feet are permitted as a principal or accessory use in the Suburban-Agriculture, General Industrial, Community Service, Research and Development, and

Science Technology zoning districts. They are permitted accessory uses only in the Rural-Residential, Community Facilities, Recreation Conservation, General Business, Motor Service, Office Building, Planned Residential District, Planned Development District, Multi-Family Residential-4A, Multi-Family Residential-5 and Multi-Family Residential-8 districts. Tier III systems, which have a total facility footprint equal to or greater than 7,000 square feet and would include solar developments, are allowed by special use permit in the Suburban-Agriculture, Office Building, Community Service, Research and Development, and Science Technology zoning districts. It should be noted that the Agricultural Overlay District does not permit solar energy facilities by right or with a special use permit. Aside from a few small solar energy facilities that are located on the State University of New York at Buffalo North campus, there are no solar developments in the Town. There are open lands in the northern portion of the Town that could accommodate these systems.

### ***Land Subdivision Regulations***

Chapter 204 of the Town Code authorizes the Town Planning Board to review properties for land subdivision approval. The Planning Board review applications for both minor and major subdivision of land. Lands shall be subdivided in such a manner that provides for the future growth and development of the Town and provision of adequate services for the housing, transportation, distribution, comfort, convenience, safety, health, and welfare of Town residents. Provisions are to be made for drainage, water supply, septic/sewerage, roadways, and other required land improvements. All lots are to be laid out and sized to conform to Town zoning requirements in harmony with existing and desired development patterns.

### **Town Land Use Planning Documents**

- ***Town of Amherst Bicentennial Comprehensive Plan***

The Town originally prepared the Bicentennial Comprehensive Plan in 2007 and prepared the most recent update in 2019 that emphasized greater investment and planning for commercial centers and hamlets in the community. Although agriculture, as a land use, is no longer as significant in the Town, the Comprehensive Plan lends focus to agricultural preservation and sets forth guidance for maintaining and enhancing agricultural use in the community.

The 2007 plan set forth a vision for the Town in 2018 as a place with exceptional quality of life that was based on three fundamental attributes – livability that is comprised of healthy neighborhoods, outstanding public services and active community life; community character through the management of growth and preservation of natural and cultural resources; and shared direction with other entities in the prosperity of the Buffalo-Niagara region. This vision statement established the mandate for the policies and action programs contained in the Plan. The 2019 update builds upon this vision and offers four initiatives, with major changes of direction from some current policies, to provide a focus for action



and the Town moves towards the position of excellence articulated in the vision. The initiatives include:

- Aesthetic/Community Character – to be renowned for the beauty, character, and environmental quality of the community.
- Education – to capitalize on the presence of the State University of Buffalo, other institutions of higher learning, and outstanding public school districts to become one of the nation's leading knowledge-based communities.
- Revitalization -to become a model for effective reinvestment and revitalization of older neighborhoods.
- Governance – to exercise leadership by providing excellent services and facilities, ensuring fiscal balance, and managing development to promote predictability, fairness, and quality.

The Bicentennial Comprehensive Plan includes six Focal Planning Area elements, which are smaller geographic areas within the Town that present specific planning challenges. One of these areas is North Amherst, where the focus is on the preservation of rural character. This is the area where viable agricultural use still exists, and where the primary focus of the Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan is being placed.

#### **D. Natural Resources**

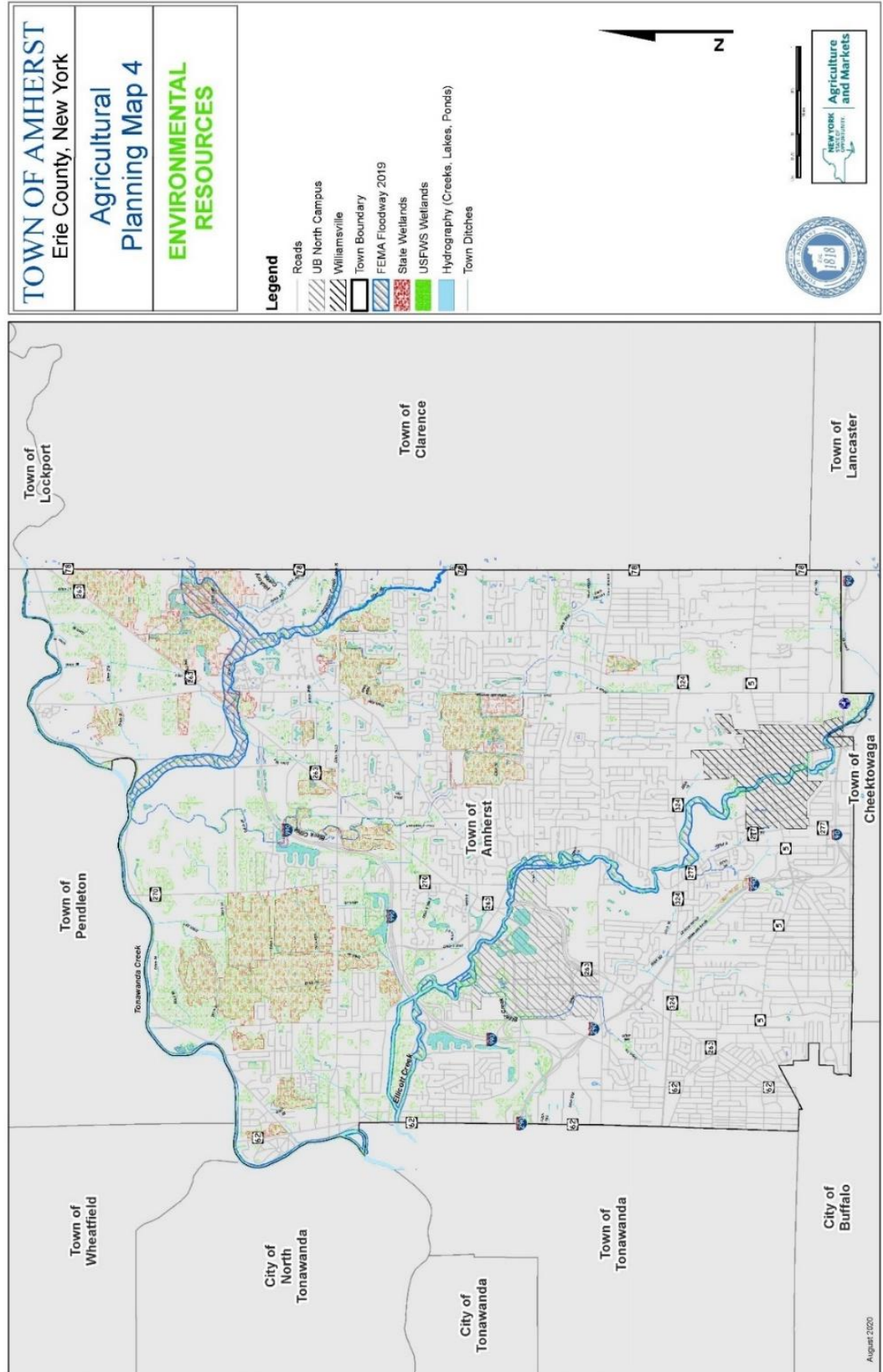
The Town's natural resources feature various assets, including waterbodies (major creeks and streams), forests, wetlands, floodplains, and parklands. These resources have played an important role in the development of the Town, shaping development patterns and the way people interact. These features are shown on Map 4.

##### **Topography and Soils**

Topographic relief in the Town of Amherst is due to pre-glacial erosion of the bedrock and subsequent topographic modification by glaciation. The Town generally slopes north-northwest, which promotes surface and subsurface drainage toward Tonawanda Creek and the Niagara River. Between the major drainageways of Ellicott and Ransom Creeks, the topography is nearly flat, with Tonawanda Creek dropping only three feet per mile across northern Amherst. The Onondaga Escarpment, which parallels Route 5 (Main Street) through the Town, marks the approximate boundary between surface soils that are predominantly lacustrine in origin (to the north) and predominantly glacial till soils (to the south). Soils are more typically shallow to bedrock along and just south of the escarpment. North of the escarpment, soils are generally deeper, with depth to bedrock greater than 10 - 20 feet in most places. A soils map that emphasizes agricultural soils is included in Section 4 (See Map 6).

The Town is generally divided by five soil map units, with 55 individual soil classifications, as indicated in the Soil Survey of Erie County, New York (USDA Soil Conservation Service, 1978). The five soil map units include:

- *Churchville-Ovid-Lima unit*, which is found in two areas in the southeastern portion of the Town. Soils in this unit were formed in glacial till deposits and are relatively flat, with slopes ranging between 0 and 8 percent. These soils are deep, somewhat poorly drained, and moderately well drained, and medium textured. Much of this map unit has been cleared and used for farming in the past.
- *Wassaic-Benson-Farmington unit*, which is found in the southeastern portion of the Town, dividing the Churchville-Ovid-Lima unit in two. These soils include the Onondaga limestone escarpment feature, which faces north and is generally steep. Slopes in this soils unit generally range between 0 to 3 percent, with slopes up to 40 percent found along the escarpment. Formed in glacial till, these soils are moderately deep and moderately well to well drained.
- *Niagara-Canandaigua-Cosad*, which dominate the northern half of the Town and were formed in glacial lake-laid deposits. This soils unit is broad and relatively flat plain, with slopes ranging between 0 and 3 percent, and is traversed by streams and drainageways. Usually areas located farthest from the drainageways are depressed wetlands. Most of the soils are poorly to very poorly drained (many soils groups are hydric or have hydric inclusions). Much of this soils map unit was cleared of forest cover and used for farming. The areas that remained forest covered or idle with brushy cover were mainly the more poorly drained soils. Many areas are still farmed as the soils are easy to cultivate, particularly where drained and well-managed. Seasonal and prolonged wetness is a primary consideration with these soils, and some areas are highly erodible.
- *Odessa-Schoharie-Rhinebeck soils unit*, which is found in the central portion of the Town and was formed in clayey glacial lake-laid deposits. The landscape for this unit is nearly flat plain that is dissected by some stream channels. Slopes generally range from 0 to 8 percent, with a few areas that may reach 15 percent grades. These soils are deep and somewhat poorly to well drained, with the Odessa soils having the poorest drainage capacity. Here again, these soils were originally cleared of forest cover and used for farming. These soils are very sticky when wet and cloddy when dry. Seasonal wetness, slow or very-slow permeability in the subsoil and clayey textures are the primary limitations, with the potential for flooding in certain area.
- *Urban Land*, which dominates the southwestern section of the Town that includes the lands south of the UB north campus and including and west of the Village of Williamsville. This map unit is composed of areas that are highly developed with commercial, industrial, or residential uses. While generally flat, with slopes between 0 and 3 percent, minor



extension of the limestone escarpment can create slopes up to 15 percent in grade. This soils map unit highly disturbed with little of the original soil characteristics remaining. Urban land primarily represents a land use change from rural to urban and suburban.

### **Forest and Vegetation**

Larger forested areas are found in the north and northeastern portions of the Town, with some area of older growth woodlands with less mature understory vegetation and ground cover that is usually left undisturbed. Nature View Park, in north Amherst is a primary area of remaining forest. Large wetland complexes are also found in central and northeastern areas of the Town, including the Great Baehre Swamp Wildlife Management Area. Forested areas and some wetlands also remain along major creek corridors, around the UB North campus, in Amherst State Park, and on private country club and other parks properties. There are also larger areas of mature woodland juxtaposed against the manicured lawns and landscapes of residential subdivisions and older urban areas in the Town. Cleared open spaces, primarily former or fallow agricultural lands, and scrub-shrub vegetative conditions exist in most non-forested locations. These areas are located mainly in the northern portion of the Town.

### **Water Resources**

The Town possesses numerous water resources that include two major creek corridors, several smaller creeks and streams and a few lakes (see Map 4). Ellicott Creek extends from southeast to northwest through the Town, passing through parklands, the UB North campus and residential areas before flowing west to join Tonawanda Creek in the Town of Tonawanda. Tonawanda Creek forms the north boundary of the Town along its full length. Both these creeks provide recreational opportunities, important wildlife habitat, and offer scenic landscapes. These two creeks are fed by smaller tributary creeks, particularly Tonawanda Creek, and drainageways.

There are significant areas of FEMA designated floodplains that border Ransom and Black Creeks in the northeastern portion of the Town (see Map 4), with additional areas of floodplain found along Ellicott Creek. New York State and federally designated wetlands are located throughout the Town, with substantial areas located in the central and northern portions of the community. Wetlands provide valuable habitat for numerous plant and animal species, as well as acting as “natural filters” for pollutants and sediment carried in stormwater. As wetlands are typically characterized by hydric soils that are poorly drained and typically areas of saturated soil, ponding, and, in some cases, higher flooding potential, it is not surprising to find these natural resources predominantly in the northern portion of the Town. Some of the hydric soils are high in nutrients and conducive to a variety of agricultural pursuits, as well as serving as habitat.

## **E. Infrastructure Services (MAP 5)**

### **Transportation Network**

Interstate 290 (Youngman Expressway) extends through the southwestern portion of the Town; Interstate 990 (Lockport Expressway) extends northeast from the I-290 to Millersport Highway. Both these roadways are limited access highways that carry high volumes of commuter and other commercial and local traffic. The New York State Thruway (I-90) also traverses the Town, with exits on Transit Road (exit 49) and at the Williamsville Toll Booths. (exit 50).

Major State highways in the Town include Niagara Falls Boulevard (SR 62), which runs north to south and forms much of the western Town boundary. Bailey Avenue, in the southwest corner of the Town, is also a designated portion of State Route 62. Transit Road (SR 78) also extends north to south, forming the Town's eastern boundary. Other State routes include Main Street (SR 5) and Sheridan Drive (SR 324), which both run generally east to west in the southern part of the Town. Millersport Highway (SR 263) extends on a diagonal, from the southwest corner of the Town to the northeast corner. Additional State roadways include Campbell Boulevard (SR 270), that runs north from Millersport Highway to the Town boundary at Tonawanda Creek, and State Route 277 (Union Road and North Forest Road), which extends from the Town's southern boundary to Sheridan Drive. There are also a number of roads under the jurisdiction of the Erie County, including Maple Road, Sweet Home Road, Youngs Road and North French. The roadways in the Town support a high volume of traffic, particularly in the more urbanized areas of the Town. The northern part of the Town, where agricultural uses are located, is serviced by Tonawanda Creek Road, which runs east to west following the creek corridor between Transit Road and Niagara Falls Boulevard. Campbell Boulevard, Hopkins Road and New Road run north south and intersect with Tonawanda Creek Road. The roadways in the north are more rural, with two travel lanes and narrow shoulders.

### **Local Gas and Electric Utilities**

The Town of Amherst is serviced by public utilities including natural gas and electric. Natural gas is supplied by National Fuel Gas; electric service is provided by National Grid. Cable television and wireless communication services are provided by several private companies. Transmission corridors for these utilities extend across the Town, including a National Grid easement for electrical transmission lines that extends from north to south, bisecting the entire town.

### **Public Water Supply**

All residents and businesses in the Town of Amherst receive potable water from the Erie County Water Authority (ECWA). The ECWA utilizes Lake Erie and the Niagara River as its water supply source for a large portion of Erie County, including the Town of Amherst. The ECWA processes water at the Sturgeon Point Water and Van de





Water Treatment Plants. Most of the Town receives water from the County through a Lease Management agreement, where the ECWA is responsible for customer service, billing, meter reading and maintenance, while the Town is responsible for any and all capital improvements. In the southwestern part of the Town, west of the Village of Williamsville, the ECWA owns and operates the entire system and is responsible for all aspects of water service, including capital improvements.

### **Wastewater Management**

The Town of Amherst owns and operates a Water Pollution Control Facility (WPCF) that is located on Tonawanda Creek Road in the northwestern portion of the Town. The plant treats wastewater that is collected throughout much of the Town, the Village of Williamsville, and parts of the Town of Clarence. Wastewater that enters the plant receives tertiary treatment that includes sand filtering. This facility treats an average of 24.5 million gallons of wastewater per day. During heavy rainfall events, the treatment capacity of the plant can be exceeded due to inflow and infiltration (I&I) problems in the system. Treated effluent is discharged into Tonawanda Creek under the conditions of the State Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (SPDES) permit issued by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC).

Map 5 illustrates the boundaries of the Amherst Sewer district. A large area in the northern portion of the Town is not included within the district boundaries. This area includes most of the properties that are located in County Agricultural District #17. In an effort to protect remaining agricultural lands, and as supported by the Bicentennial Comprehensive Plan, the Town has no plans for expansion of the sewer district beyond its current boundaries.

### **Stormwater Management**

The Town of Amherst stormwater infrastructure includes drainage systems with on-site storage and/or direct discharges to surface water bodies. On-site storage of stormwater is typically achieved by the installation of drywells, stormwater retention ponds and bio-retention areas. In most cases, these facilities include overflow structures that direct stormwater runoff resulting from extreme rainfall events to drainage facilities that ultimately discharge to local creeks and other surface waters. The Town Highway Department also maintains a stormwater system of swales, catch basins, ditches, creeks and streams and all interconnecting pipes within the public roadway system to manage drainage throughout the Town.

The Town of Amherst prepared a Stormwater Management Plan (SWMP) in 2018 in accordance with their SPDES permit requirements for obtaining authorization for stormwater discharges and certain non-stormwater discharges. The SWMP was developed to facilitate the Town's efforts for reducing stormwater pollutants from the Town's municipal separate storm sewer system (MS4) to the greatest extent possible, as required by the SPDES General Permit.

Can Jeff add the sanitary sewer interceptor lines to this map? (from draft hazard mitigation map)

