



Towns of Amherst & Tonawanda
Willow Ridge/Parkview Action Plan
Project Charter

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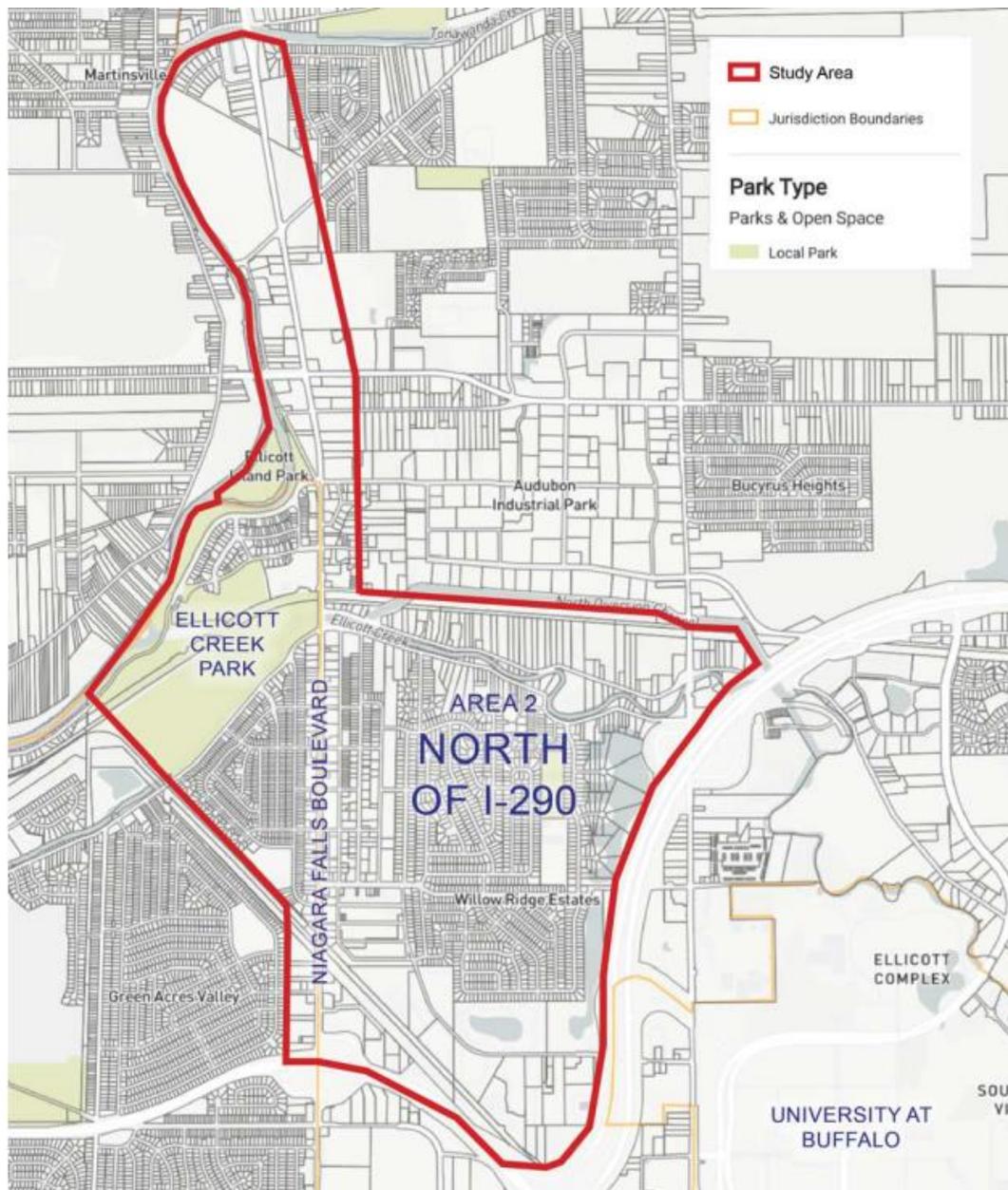
1. Project Sponsor

The Town of Amherst Town Board

Project Managers

Town of Amherst and Town of Tonawanda municipal staff

The Towns of Amherst and Tonawanda desire to create an Action Plan for the Willow Ridge and Parkview neighborhoods to inform and update their Comprehensive Plans and address community concerns and opportunities. This will be achieved by formulating goals and objectives, policies, implementation strategies and creation of a specific Focal Area Plan for this area, all of which will result from the Action Plan.



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There are various problems and concerns in the project area, not only raised by residents and stakeholders, but also from the standpoint of both Towns. These include but are not limited to:

- Niagara Falls Boulevard acts as a border between the two municipalities, however there is little to no land use planning or coordination between Amherst and Tonawanda
- Niagara Falls Boulevard experiences high traffic volumes and higher operating speeds during many times of the day due to 1) large commercial activities and various regional destinations; 2) serving as a connector between Niagara Falls and the City of Buffalo; 3) access to I-290; and 4) current physical right-of-way design of a four to six lane high speed roadway
- Noise disturbance for adjacent residents due to high traffic volumes
- Lack of adequate and safe pedestrian circulation and amenities along Niagara Falls Boulevard and limited connections from Niagara Falls Boulevard to adjacent neighborhoods
- An aged and somewhat poorly maintained commercial building stock
- Many small and shallow commercial parcels making them more difficult to redevelop due to modern parking requirements, right-of-way conditions, and direct adjacency to established residential areas
- Student housing occupying single-family homes in established neighborhoods with absentee landlords and property maintenance issues
- Drainage, storm water, and sanitary sewer management issues due to aging infrastructure, a lack of parcel redevelopment, inadequate landscaping, and large areas of impervious surfaces
- Presence of several recreational and park facilities but lack of coordinated connectivity and access for residents and other stakeholders

3. Goals and Opportunities

Engaging residents and stakeholders in a community planning project that encourages active participation and constructs an enduring civic infrastructure to guide and sustain community redevelopment for years to come is key. Based on this premise and the problems and concerns regarding the planning area as listed above, the goals of an Action Plan will address several key topics. Major opportunities are also identified based on these goals.

Action Plan Goals

- *Land Use and Zoning Goals* – improve collaboration between Amherst and Tonawanda to create a joint land use vision and complementary zoning and design provisions to provide guidance for future land use. Determine the future vision for scales and designs of buildings.
- *Economic Revitalization and Redevelopment Goals* – exploration of different forms of redevelopment for vacant commercial building stock to enable the area to become a more inviting and interesting destination and to reduce building maintenance issues.

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- Identification of key opportunity sites to be upgraded or redeveloped. Consider and apply local and national economic trends to determine land use obstacles and the depth of market for housing, retail/ commercial space, employment, etc. that affect different types of development.
- *Traffic and Transportation Goals* – formation a vision for this segment of the Niagara Falls Boulevard corridor through creation of a unified street identity with enhanced streetscape and improved pedestrian safety such as connected sidewalk networks, pedestrian amenities (benches, trash cans, bus shelters, etc.), bike lanes, bulb-outs, green infrastructure and additional street landscaping, and improved street lighting. Employing the use of new transportation technologies (customizable and on-demand mobility services, smartly enhanced multi-modal arterials (SEMAs), and traffic monitoring and management software) along with inclusion of alternative modes of public transportation to produces less emissions and traffic congestion. Formulation of a land-use and access management plan for the corridor through techniques such as curb-cut consolidation and parking lot connections to help with interior flow of vehicles between businesses and less vehicular and pedestrian conflicts.
 - *Community Amenities and Services Goals* – creating and enhancing safe and convenient connections for residents to commercial and recreational activities and amenities. Improve existing park and recreational facilities.

Major Opportunities

- Create a plan for the Willow Ridge & Parkview neighborhoods to shape and convey a future vision
- Make related Comprehensive Plan amendments to inform Town officials and developers of the area’s vision
- Update the LWRP as necessary
- Reconfiguration of Niagara Falls Boulevard through streetscape improvements to increase walkability and safety
- Encourage redevelopment by implementing new mixed-use zoning
- Attract new, desired businesses by improving building maintenance and upkeep
- Implement Various park and facility improvements at Willow Ridge Park
- Extend the bike path within Ellicott Creek Park into Amherst along Ellicott Creek
- Install a kayak launch in Ellicott Creek in Amherst
- Extend the bike path along Skinnersville Rd to the University at Buffalo
- Make streetscape improvements along Old Niagara Falls Boulevard to extend a green space from the White Chapel Memorial Park Cemetery south to Ellicott Island Park

4. Mission Statement

The Towns of Amherst and Tonawanda, along with other stakeholders, aim to create an Action Plan for the Willow Ridge and Parkview neighborhoods to address various problems and opportunities to improve connectivity, recreation, building maintenance and pedestrian safety. The Plan will serve as a guiding document to portray residents’ future vision of the

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area. The Towns will employ the Action Plan to update Comprehensive Plan policies, create new goals and objectives, and utilize implementation strategies to create a more vibrant, connected and safe inter-municipal community.

5. Resources & Stakeholders

The following is a list of various Town departments and boards, local and regional agencies, and other stakeholders that will be consulted and invited to actively participate in this project:

- *Town of Amherst*
 1. Supervisor & Town Councilmembers
 2. Planning Department
 3. Youth & Recreation Department
 4. Highway Department
 5. Building Department
 6. Engineering Department
 7. Economic Development Department
 8. Police Department
 9. Traffic Safety Board
 10. Amherst Chamber of Commerce
 11. Amherst Industrial Development Agency (AIDA)
- *Town of Tonawanda*
 1. Supervisor & Town Councilmembers
 2. Planning & Development Department
 3. Youth, Parks & Recreation Department
 4. Highway Department
 5. Building Department
 6. Engineering Department
 7. Police Department
 8. Town of Tonawanda Complete Streets Committee
 9. Ken-Ton Chamber of Commerce
- *External Stakeholders*
 1. New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT)
 2. Erie County Department of Environment and Planning (ECDEP)
 3. Erie County Department of Public Works (ECDPW)
 4. Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority (NFTA)
 5. Greater Buffalo Niagara Regional Transportation Council (GBNRTC)
 6. Willow Ridge Civic Association
 7. Parkview Triangle Community Club
 8. Sweet Home, and Kenmore-Tonawanda School Districts
 9. Ellicott Creek Volunteer Fire Company & Brighton Volunteer Fire Company
 10. Developers
 11. Key Property Owners
 12. Business Owners

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As part of the Action Plan, a Public Participation Plan will be formed. A significant component of the Plan will be formation of a Technical Review Committee and a Project Review Committee proposed to inform the planning process and review materials. These committees will include representation from various perspectives including Town board members and key staff, community group representatives, business representatives, and other relevant stakeholders from various organizations.

Technical Review Committee

Members on the Technical Review Committee shall include one person designated from each of the following:

- Town of Amherst Planning Department member
- Town of Amherst Youth & Recreation Department member
- Town of Amherst Building Department member
- Town of Tonawanda Planning & Development member
- Town of Tonawanda Youth & Recreation Department member
- Town of Tonawanda Building Department member
- Greater Buffalo Niagara Regional Transportation Council (GBNRTC) member
- Erie County Department of Environment and Planning (ECDEP) member
- New York State Department of Transportation (NYSOT) member

Project Review Committee

Members on the Project Review Committee shall include one or more persons designated from each of the following:

- Town of Amherst Town Board member
- Town of Tonawanda Town Board member
- Town of Amherst Planning Board member
- Town of Tonawanda Planning Board member
- Town of Amherst community organization member
- Town of Tonawanda community organization member
- 2 private developers (from both Amherst & Tonawanda)
- 2 small business owners (from both Amherst & Tonawanda)

7. Public Participation

There will be extensive public outreach and community engagement to inform the Action Plan. It is anticipated that there will be a mix of in-person and virtual events to maximize participation opportunities. The Towns and their consultant will hold a Public Charrette with a series of public meetings, a walking tour, design sessions, interviews, technical/focus group meetings, and presentations to engage the community and form the framework for the Action Plan. It is anticipated that this initiative will have its own separate webpage, linked to both of the Town's websites, for people to access information and materials. It is also anticipated that various social media sites could be utilized to share information and to

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interact with the public. Amherst and Tonawanda will work together on dissemination of information and will have materials readily available within their own Town facilities as necessary. Project Review Committee meetings will be open to the public for interaction between various stakeholders.

8. Project Schedule

The following depicts a general timeline for the project. The project is expected to take roughly 7 months to complete. It is anticipated to be in its final stages in March 2022. Various components include a project kick off in September 2021, inventory and analysis, a six day public charrette with various meetings and design sessions, and various stakeholder meetings throughout the project.

Action/Item	Sept 2021	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan 2022	Feb	Mar
Consultant Site Visit / Inventory & Analysis							
Public Engagement / 6 Day Public Charrette							
Refinement of Information & Designs/Concepts							
Creation of Draft Action Plan							
Public Outreach for Plan							
Revisions & Final Plan Completed							

9. Potential Consultants

- Planning and Zoning – carrying out public engagement activities, creation of concepts and designs/illustrations, writing of overall action plan
- Transportation Planners – study and creation of traffic, mobility and streetscape improvements
- Economic/Financial Analyst– research on current market trends and market feasibility analysis of urban design/redevelopment concepts