



# 1. Introduction

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



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

Drive (See *Context Map*, page 4).



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

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

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



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



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

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

*Current Images of the Community*

