



SOUTH CAMPUS AREA STREETSCAPES PLAN

A Vision for a Mixed-Use Transit-Oriented Community



Town of Amherst & City of Buffalo, NY March 2023





South Campus Area Streetscapes Plan A Vision for a Mixed-Use Transit-Oriented Community						

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Figure 10: By eliminating the left hand only turn lane, space is created within the street cross-section to accommodate an in-street boarding island bus stop. This will enable transit users to cross the right hand only turn lane and bike lane when it is safe to do so, and wait for the bus at the in-street boarding island.

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I. Project Description

The South Campus Area Streetscapes Plan brings together and builds upon ideas for future collaboration identified in previous planning documents. The Plan spatially examines and illustrates the potential for streetscape improvements; mixed-use development opportunities; and better organization of building masses, pedestrian spaces, vehicular circulation and public transportation infrastructure.

The project area includes neighborhoods within the Town of Amherst and the City of Buffalo. This planning and landscape architecture effort focusses on the following areas:

- Main Street from Bailey Avenue to the west side of South Campus
- Kenmore Avenue from Main Street to Niagara Falls Boulevard
- Bailey Avenue from Winspear Avenue to Main Street



Figure 1: Project area

The planning process was led by the Town of Amherst and Molly Vendura Landscape Architect, PLLC (MVLA), and included numerous stakeholders with interest in the project area. These stakeholders including the Town of Amherst, City of Buffalo, Niagara Frontier Transit Authority (NFTA), Greater Buffalo Niagara Regional Transportation Council (GBNRTC), State University of New York at Buffalo (UB), Eric County Department of Environment & Planning, NYS Senator Kennedy and NYS Assemblymember Peoples-Stokes, neighborhood groups and potential developers. The stakeholders helped to identify opportunities and constraints, test the feasibility of proposed improvements, and ensure that project recommendations fit in with other plans and projects proposed for the multi-jurisdictional project area.

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II. Project Goals

The following Goals establish the framework for a shared vision for the project area and have guided the development of the South Campus Area Plan.

- 1. Develop a vision for the South Campus district to activate conversations with the community, stakeholders and leaders at the neighborhood, municipal and corridor scale.
- 2. Further the planning for transit-oriented development (TOD) and mixed-use development goals identified in previous planning documents including:
 - Potential for Collaboration (2020, UBRI, IDEA)
 - Amherst Comprehensive Plan (Eggertsville Focal Planning Area (2020)
 - Town of Amherst Mixed Use Zoning (2019)
 - GBNRTC TOD Plan (2018, 2021)
 - City of Buffalo Green Code (2017)
 - South Campus Revitalization Plan (2017)
 - Building UB: The Comprehensive Physical Plan (2009)
 - Eggertsville Action Plan (2000)
- Identify potential streetscape improvements; mixed-use opportunities; and better organization
 of building masses, pedestrian spaces, multi-modal circulation and public transportation
 infrastructure.
 - Activate the streetscape along Main Street and Bailey Avenue with transit-oriented mixeduse development and generous pedestrian spaces with opportunities for outdoor gathering/dining
 - Promote appropriate infill development to enhance the urban, transit-oriented character of the district and repurpose underutilized parking areas
 - Strengthen connections and improve pedestrian safety between the UB South Campus and retail/housing across Main Street to the north
 - Fill in the visual and physical gap of activity and walkability along Bailey Avenue between the commercial corridor along Bailey Avenue south of Winspear Avenue and the Main-Bailey commercial area
 - Strengthen connections from the UB South Campus and VA Hospital to Bailey Avenue by activating the streetscape for pedestrian comfort and safety
 - Provide opportunities for additional graduate student housing and retail/dining opportunities for students and for visitors to the VA Hospital
 - Prioritize pedestrians, transit users and cyclists in the hierarchy of streetscape design
 - Establish a comprehensive pedestrian network that includes campus walkways, public sidewalks, safe and convenient street crossings, mid-block connections, and access to parking areas/garages, retail, housing and public spaces.
 - Ensure that residents and visitors to the South Campus district can easily navigate between parking, transit stops, the University, businesses and housing.
 - Provide a high quality experience for transit users with larger bus stop areas, shelters and other amenities, safer street crossings, improved connectivity, and transportation hubs

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- Incorporate the goals of Bailey Avenue Corridor Improvements Study and potential bus rapid transit service
- o Provide opportunities for safe, efficient bicycle transportation
- Incorporate intermobility hubs for public transportation, pedestrians, cyclists, bike rentals, etc.
- Provide a flexible public space for events, markets and community gatherings
- Reinforce the Comprehensive Physical Plan for South Campus, including re-establishment of the historic EB Greene framework and formal entries from Bailey Avenue and Kenmore Avenue
- Create a strong, cohesive sense of place for the South Campus area utilizing hardscape, landscape and architectural treatments; consistent site furnishings and lighting; street trees; and roundabouts/gateways

III. Background

Partnership

The South Campus Area Streetscapes Plan is a project among two partners with jurisdiction, the Town of Amherst and the City of Buffalo, with the Town of Amherst being the Project Proponent and Sponsor. The project area focusses on the Main Street and Bailey Avenue corridors adjacent to the UB South Campus and the University Plaza, with a spur along Kenmore Avenue that extends to Niagara Falls Boulevard at the border between the Town of Amherst and Town of Tonawanda. The project area south of Main Street lies within the City of Buffalo and includes the UB South Campus; Main Street and Bailey Avenue themselves are also within the City limits and both are NYS DOT state routes. The project area north of Main Street lies within the Town of Amherst and includes University Plaza, a significant retail hub for the area. The Town of Amherst, the Erie County-owned Grover Cleveland Golf Course and the US Veterans Affairs Hospital are adjacent to the east side of the project area.

Main Street and Bailey Avenue are significant public transportation corridors, and the NFTA and GBNRTC are important project stakeholders. Transit services are provided by the NFTA. The NFTA operates 11 bus routes along Main Street, Bailey Avenue and Kenmore Avenue in the project area. The NFTA Metro Rail, which runs between Downtown Buffalo and the UB South Campus terminates at University Station within the project area. All 11 bus routes also service University Station. The project area includes 29 bus stops. The NFTA and GBNRTC have collaborated on numerous projects and planning studies affecting the project area, most notable the potential expansion of the Metro Rail system north of University Station and bus rapid transit service for Bailey Avenue.

Planners from GBNRTC met with the project team and analyzed proposed changes to the major intersections in the project area. These intersections include Main Street and Bailey Avenue, Main Street and Kenmore Avenue, Bailey Avenue and Winspear Avenue, Kenmore Avenue and Niagara Falls Boulevard. Their input was valuable in determining the preferred alternatives for the overall conceptual plan, and is summarized in Section IV The Vision.

With the UB South Campus anchoring the southwest corner of the project area, the University at Buffalo is also an important project stakeholder. UB Campus Planning, the UB Regional Institute and UB IDEA Center participated in the *South Campus Area Streetscapes Plan* planning process. The South Campus is the University's original campus location; a master plan by renowned architect E.B. Green was

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completed in 1930. That plan guided the growth of the campus for more than 20 years, by which time the collection of campus buildings was ringed by a continuous loop road with a primary entrance from Main Street and secondary entries from Bailey Avenue and Winspear Avenue. Later campus growth disregarded the E.B. Green plan and compromised the character of the campus, but the potential remains and the University recognizes the value in reinforcing the original vision for the campus. The University at Buffalo Physical Plan and South Campus Revitalization Plan address physical and organization improvements for the South Campus. These plans were referenced when preparing the South Campus Area Plan, including identifying locations for retained and proposed buildings, and proposed roads, service access and parking garages. Some of the major components from the two UB planning documents reflected in the South Campus Area Streetscapes Plan include:

- Honor EB Greene's cruciform quad plan
- Extend Main Street lawn to the east side of University Station to reflect the historic plan
- New campus entrance at Main Street and Kenmore Avenue
- Additional primary entrance on Bailey across from VA Hospital

Existing Conditions

A Site Analysis & Needs Assessment was conducted as part of the planning process. The task included an inventory and analysis of the project area, review prior planning efforts and meetings with stakeholders to identify opportunities and constraints.

Identified opportunities and strengths include:

- Site control capacity of stakeholders
- Diverse neighborhoods (income, socio economic, land use, businesses)
- Historic neighborhoods
- Public transportation (strong ridership, community support)
- Existing mixed-uses
- Student body/student life
- VA Hospital building and staff
- University Plaza
- Existing green space
- Ample right-of-way
- South Campus's historic buildings and front lawn
- UB plan to concentrate graduate programs at South Campus
- Potential to provide graduate student housing
- UB parking lots represent underutilized space that could be repurposed
- A raised/separated cycle track is planned for Main Street in the City adjacent to the project area; there is the opportunity to continue this along Main Street through the project area and along Bailey Avenue (south to Winspear Avenue and north towards the UB North Campus).

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Identified constraints and weaknesses include:

- Campus edge and streetscape is a barrier that is unfriendly to pedestrians and disconnects neighborhoods and business areas
- Lack of:
 - o Bike infrastructure
 - o Pedestrian infrastructure
 - Bus shelters
 - Crosswalks
 - Landscaping/ beautification
 - Community space / public amenities
 - Market fulfillment of graduate housing
- Large parking lots take up street frontage
- Complex intersections
 - Not pedestrian friendly
 - o Outdated design
- Uncertainty of Metro Rail extension
- University Plaza is poorly designed and underutilized

Existing Conditions that characterize the area include:

- Varying land uses such as educational, community services, commercial retail establishments, and residential areas contribute to its unique character.
- Land ownership includes private entities as well as major public land owners including the City of Buffalo, UB, Erie County, and the U.S. Veterans Affairs Hospital.
- Bailey Avenue contains two vehicle travel lanes in each direction with occasional center turn lanes and a general curb to curb width of approximately 50 - 54 feet.
- Main Street contains two vehicle travel lanes in each direction with either a center turn lane or raised planted median and a general curb to curb width of approximately 60 feet.
- Only Kenmore Avenue has dedicated bicycle lanes.
- The study area contains four major intersections: Main Street and Bailey Avenue, Main Street and Kenmore Avenue, Bailey Avenue and Winspear Avenue, Kenmore Avenue and Niagara Falls Bouleyard.







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- In some areas, faded striping of travel lanes and crosswalks creates safety concerns for drivers, pedestrians, and bicyclists.
- The study area includes 11 bus routes and 29 bus stops, but lacks bus shelters and benches at a number of highly utilized bus stops, including at May Jen and CVS near the intersection of Main Street and Kenmore Avenue.
- The Campus edge and streetscape along Bailey Avenue is barren, windswept and unfriendly to pedestrians; the gap in the streetscape presents a barrier that disconnects neighborhoods and business areas.
- The Campus edge and streetscape along Main Street is characterized by large, underutilized parking lots; the jug handle and bus layover area at Main Street and Bailey Avenue presents a barrier that disrupts the streetscape and is unfriendly to pedestrians.
- The University plaza includes large, underutilized parking areas fronting Main Street with no safe or defined pedestrian routes through the parking lots from Main Street to the commercial and retail establishments on the site's interior perimeters.







IV. The Vision

The South Campus Area Streetscapes Plan establishes a vision for potential streetscape improvements; mixed-use opportunities; and better organization of building masses, pedestrian spaces, multi-modal circulation and public transportation infrastructure, with the ultimate goal of creating a vibrant, mixed-use, transit-oriented community. Recommendations from previous plans and studies as well as input from stakeholders has been combined with planning and design best practices to develop a conceptual design plan and 3D massing model for the project area that demonstrates recommended improvements to achieve the vision. Plan, section and bird's-eye graphics have been developed as appropriate to communicate elements of the conceptual design

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Figure 2: Overall conceptual design plan for the South Campus Area

The conceptual design plan addresses the opportunities and constrains identified in the Site Assessment & Needs Analysis and incorporates recommendations supported by key stakeholders including:

- Extension of protected cycle track into the project area, continuing the cycle track proposed along Main Street approaching the study area in the City of Buffalo
 - Provide cycle track along the north and south sides of Main Street in the project area, connecting to the existing bike lanes on Kenmore Avenue.
 - o Provide a two-way cycle track along the west side of Bailey Avenue between Winspear Avenue and Main Street and continuing north towards the UB North Campus.



Figure 3: Birds-eye view of the intersection of Main Street and Bailey Avenue showing the proposed protected cycle tracks



Figure 4: The proposed improvements along Bailey Avenue between Sherman Road and Main Street include infill graduate student housing, improved pedestrian connections into the campus, sidewalks with street trees and site furniture, and a separated two-way cycle track.



Figure 5: The proposed improvements along Bailey Avenue between Winspear Avenue and Sherman Road include infill mixed-use buildings with parking in the rear, improved pedestrian connections into the campus, sidewalks with street trees and site furniture, a separated two-way cycle track, and bus rapid transit lanes.

- Incorporation of the NFTA's plan to bring bus rapid transit service to Bailey Avenue within the project area between Winspear Avenue and Sherman Road
- Incorporation of intersection studies and preliminary recommendations made by GBNTRC for the South Campus Area Streetscapes Plan for the intersections of Main Street and Bailey Avenue, Main Street and Kenmore Avenue, Bailey Avenue and Winspear Avenue, Kenmore Avenue and Niagara Falls
 - o At the Main Street and Bailey Avenue intersection, GBNRTC determined that a roundabout is not feasible due to the significant traffic volume.
 - At the Main Street and Bailey Avenue intersection, GBNRTC determined that it may be possible to eliminate the jug handle and have all traffic flow through the Main and Bailey intersection. To accomplish this the median island on Main Street would need to be removed to introduce a left hand only turn lane. A right hand only turn lane may also be needed for eastbound traffic turning south onto Bailey from Main Street; this would increase the current crossing distance for pedestrians crossing Main Street at this leg of the intersection.

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Two options are proposed for the intersection of Main Street, Kenmore Avenue and the new South Campus entrance: (1) a two lane roundabout and (2) a signalized intersection with enhanced pedestrian/bike crossings and a pedestrian scramble phase. GBNRTC advised that the feasibility of a roundabout would require further study, and that the implementation of a non-motorized/pedestrian scramble at the intersection may be a viable option to accommodate the behavior and needs of students and other pedestrians/cyclists at this intersection. GBNRTC staff emphasized that they will continue to support any subsequent efforts for potential pedestrian enhancements at this location.



Figure 6: Birds-eye view of Option 1 for the intersection of Main Street, Kenmore Avenue and the new South Campus entrance alternative with roundabout (requires further study)



Figure 7: Birds-eye view of Option 2 for the intersection of Main Street, Kenmore Avenue and the new South Campus entrance alternative with enhanced pedestrian/bike crossings and traffic signals with pedestrian scramble phase

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Figure 8: Illustration of the pedestrian scrabble concept at the intersection of Main Street, Kenmore Avenue and the new South Campus entrance, looking towards the campus (illustration by GBNRTC)

 At the intersection of Bailey Avenue, Winspear Avenue and LeBrun Road GBNTRC analysis predicts that the addition of a roundabout would improve performance and improve the level of service compared to the existing optimized intersection.



Figure 9: The roundabout proposed at the intersection of Bailey Avenue, Winspear Avenue and LeBrun Road would improve traffic flow and anchor the terminus of a pedestrian spine with community gathering space connecting the intersection to South Campus. The two-way separated cycle track proposed for the west side of Bailey Avenue and the proposed bus rapid transit lanes on Bailey Avenue are also illustrated.

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 At the Kenmore Avenue and Niagara Falls Boulevard intersection, GBNTRC determined that the left hand only turn lane from westbound Kenmore Avenue onto Niagara Falls Boulevard can safely be removed; this would enable the addition of an in-street boarding island bus stop as illustrated in the figures below.

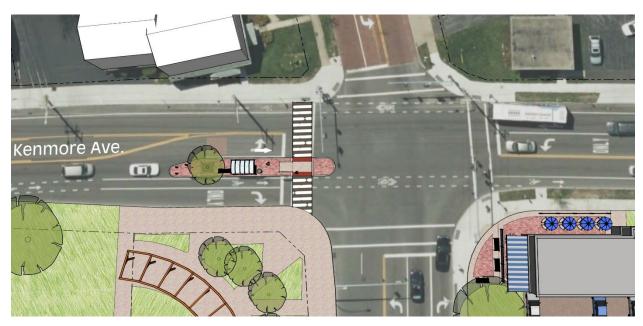


Figure 10: By eliminating the left hand only turn lane, space is created within the street cross-section to accommodate an in-street boarding island bus stop. This will enable transit users to cross the right hand only turn lane and bike lane when it is safe to do so, and wait for the bus at the in-street boarding island.



Figure 11: Birds-eye view of the proposed in-street boarding island at Kenmore Avenue and Niagara Falls Boulevard

- NFTA Routes 12 and 8 both terminate at the existing jug handle and some buses go there to layover
 when out of room at the University Station loop. If the jug handle is removed, the NFTA requests the
 following provisions, which have been included in the conceptual design plan:
 - Restroom for drivers
 - Space for approximately 3-4 buses to pull up/layover
 - Space for the buses to be able to conveniently turn around to head back west with a transit priority signal at exit from the layover/turnaround area onto Bailey Avenue



Figure 12: The concept includes space for NFTA bases to turnaround and/or layover behind the infill development proposed for the area currently occupied by the jug handle.

- Additions to Physical Plan for the UB South Campus:
 - o Townhomes for grad student housing and mixed-use infill along Bailey (see Figures 4, 5 and 9)
 - Elimination of jug handle and addition of transit-oriented, mixed-use infill (with parking behind) along Main Street near Bailey Avenue (see Figure 12)
- Improvements to University Plaza:
 - Mixed-use infill development along Main Street
 - Pedestrian crossings and connections through the interior of the site to parking, a new TOPS market, new townhouses at the north end of the site
 - o A pedestrian connection between the plaza and the public housing complex to the north



Figure 13: Birds-eye view of the proposed improvements at University Plaza, including mixed-use infill development along Main Street, streetscape improvements, and better organization of building masses, pedestrian spaces, pedestrian connections and vehicular circulation.



Figure 14: Birds-eye view of existing conditions at University Plaza and Main Street.



Figure 15: Pedestrian connections and improved vehicular circulation connect plaza users from Main Street through to the new TOPS market (center right) and townhomes (pictured in the rear).





Figures 16 and 17: Mixed-use infill buildings located along the back of the sidewalk, pedestrian gathering spaces, sidewalks, a cycle track and street trees enliven the streetscape at University Plaza along Main Street.

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V. Implementation

The table on the following page summarizes the recommended actions to implement the *South Campus Area Streetscapes Plan*. This is the strategy for implementing the Project Goals and the opportunities identified in overall conceptual design plan. Each action has been assigned a time frame to signify when it should be addressed and the partners that are responsible for carrying out the actions. Monitoring the implementation of the Plan and measuring the implementation against the goals are important elements of ensuring the success of the Plan. As time goes on, Plan elements and recommendations may need to be altered to suit changing circumstances. The Town of Amherst will continue to lead the project forward and continue to engage stakeholders. The Plan will be more successful if it captures the imaginations of many people who commit to seeing it through, including private landowners and developers, public officials and other stakeholders.

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Table 1: Implementation Matrix

Actions	Timeframe	Partners
Develop a 3D model with virtual reality (VR) viewing opportunities for the University Plaza improvements	In progress	MVLA & Town of Amherst
Install pedestrian scramble signal at Main St and Kenmore Ave	Short Term	City of Buffalo
Install roundabout design at Bailey-Winspear-LeBrun intersection	Medium term	City of Buffalo & GBNRTC
Install proposed in-street boarding island bus stop at Kenmore Ave and Niagara Falls Blvd	Medium term	Niagara Frontier Transit Authority & Town of Amherst
Adopt new University at Buffalo entrance concept at Main St and Kenmore Ave	Medium term	University at Buffalo (Campus Planning), MVLA
Adopt additional primary University at Buffalo entrance concept on Bailey Ave across from VA Hospital	Medium term	University at Buffalo (Campus Planning), MVLA
Eliminate north side parking lots on UB South Campus and extend lawn east of Metro station	Medium term	University at Buffalo (Campus Planning) & Niagara Frontier Transit Authority
Eliminate jug handle and addition of transit-oriented and mixed-use infill at Main St and Bailey Ave	Long term	University at Buffalo (Campus Planning) & Niagara Frontier Transit Authority & MVLA
Adopt Campus plan for new mixed-use infill graduate student townhomes along Bailey Ave	Long term	University at Buffalo (Campus Planning) & MVLA
Install the "Middle Main" multi-modal improvements for Main Street within study area	Long term	City of Buffalo, Town of Amherst, Niagara Frontier Transit Authority
Install proposed Bailey Ave cross-section between Main St and Winspear Ave	Long term	City of Buffalo, & Niagara Frontier Transit Authority
Collaborate with owners of University Plaza and Tops Friendly Markets to adopt new site plan as proposed in project to incorporate new mixed-use infill buildings and brick courtyard concept at Main St and Kenmore Ave intersection	Long term	Phillips Edison & Company, Tops Friendly Markets, Town of Amherst, & MVLA