



5. General Recommendations

This section makes recommendations for improving the entire Snyder Business District. Each recommendation also includes ways to begin implementing the desired course of action. This provides a blueprint for the business owners and community in general to take the next step.

Please note that the recommendations for enhancement and improvement to the Snyder Business District are found in Sections 5, 6 and 7 of this report. Under the “Economic Development Strategy, Section 7,” some of the recommended actions for improvement are also listed (*in duplicate*) under the previous sections, adding to the importance of these action items.

5.1 Planning Process

The Snyder Action Plan was developed through an expedited, comprehensive process, including :

- *Review of previous studies and background materials*
- *Review of area history*
- *Coordination with Eggertsville Action Plan and Harlem/Kensington Report*
- *Numerous site visits and on-site “charettes” with the Project Team*
- *Review of the Town Bicentennial Comprehensive Plan*
- *Coversations with key community stakeholders*
- *Meetings with the Friends of Snyder and Project Steering Committee*

What follows are the actions and improvements of the plan accompanied by, where appropriate, illustrative images.

5.2 Guiding Design Principles

General design recommendations for individual properties were based on a few guiding Design Principles that, taken together, are intended to promote a lively, bustling and pedestrian friendly Main Street anchored by a reinvigorated Village Center at the Main-Harlem intersection. The plan is to reinforce the Snyder Business District as a strong neighborhood “village center” to visit rather than as a thoroughfare to pass by enroute to outlying suburbs. Most of these general design principles are reiterated over and over throughout this document.

It is also important to point out that these Design Principles were also “tested” on a few key area properties, which is described under Section 4.11, Architectural Enhancements.

Design Principles

- *Promote the Snyder Business District as a strong neighborhood-based Village Center - - reinforce the desirable traditional architectural styles and massing.*

- *Modify the Town of Amherst Zoning guidelines by reducing building setback requirements along Main Street, to promote new street-frontage development along Main Street reminiscent of earlier years.*
- *Put emphasis on architectural character and “quality” developments close to the Main Street ROW, and avoid large parking lots in highly visible locations along prime Main Street frontages*
- *Relax parking requirements to promote new concentrations of street friendly urban development. People are attracted to vibrant, beautiful places with great character, not to large, “efficient” parking lots. (In other words, most places where people are most likely to go “hang out” have difficult parking situations).*
- *Encourage inter-business sharing of parking, access (curb-cuts), and driveways as part of overall strategy which reinforces the collective rather than individual benefit- both for Main Street businesses and their customers*
- *Promote higher density near the “village” core at the Main/ Harlem intersection, and promote a mixture of traditional business district uses, including some new residential opportunities at this “Village Center”*
- *Promote physical linkages between business related properties in order to reinforce concept of a community based neighborhood.*
- *Promote “traffic calming” measures along the Main Street corridor. Improve the Harlem/ Main intersection as a neighborhood-based, pedestrian- friendly Village Center.*



Existing Aerial View of the Snyder Business District



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OVERALL MASTER PLAN (11"X17" FOLD OUT)



5.3 Business Development

As a part of a business development/redevelopment strategy, a concerted effort needs to be made on the part of the Town of Amherst to improve the “actual” and “perceived” difficulties in doing business in the older parts of town. This is especially true for small businesses and older areas of the town like Snyder. The “Friends of Snyder” will remain an informal organization at this point as revitalization initiatives move forward, however they will remain a supportive and unified voice dedicated to the future well-being of the Snyder Business District and surrounding community.

Given the small size of the Snyder Business District and the make-up of numerous smaller shops and businesses, it is recommended that Snyder consider joining forces with the adjacent business initiatives at Harlem-Kensington and in Eggertsville. This would give the potential for much more clout and unified “buying power” when it came to issues facing the older neighborhoods in town. The combined business groups could possibly be formalized to include key representation from all 3 areas, and a potential paid staff position which acts as a liaison to the Town Board and Amherst IDA, political “lobbyist” for funding, grant writer, small business advocate, representation to the Chamber of Commerce, etc.

In general, the principal of “Smart Growth,” which include redeveloping older neighborhoods, concentrating growth near existing infrastructure, preserving greenspace, and the area’s heritage, etc., should be at the top of the list for restructuring the Town’s zoning regulation and development policies. Focus also needs to be given on maintaining the “value” and tax base of the older neighborhoods, which includes the stability of the business Districts of Snyder Eggertsville and Harlem-Kensington.

Actions

- *The Friends of Snyder, assisted by the Amherst IDA, initiates a meeting of business district property owners to determine any interest in forming an “official” Business Association. **(The Friends of Snyder plans to remain an informal organization)**. Initially, the association would serve as the advocate/spokesperson for the business district to the Town. The role of the association would grow as district property owners and tenants deem necessary.*

- *The Friends of Snyder meets with representatives from both the Harlem-Kensington and Eggertsville business groups, about the possibilities of joining forces for future business development, area services, joint staffing, etc. As they say, there’s “power in numbers.”*

- *Town Planning Department and Amherst IDA define, in a Memorandum of Understanding, respective neighborhood roles and responsibilities (e.g., marketing, ombudsman, financing) in assisting neighborhood business districts in Snyder and Town-wide, subject to the review of the Town Attorney.*



Actions *(Business Development - Continued)*

- *Town Board and Amherst IDA approach major lending institutions to potentially create a revolving loan fund for the Snyder business district. The loan fund would be available for property improvements and business start-ups. The Amherst Industrial Development Agency would administer the loan fund. The Amherst IDA currently has Community Development Block Grant Funds available for potential seed money for such a revolving loan program for eligible businesses.*
- *Town or Amherst IDA explores the potential for grants, low-interest loans, or property tax abatements to property owners undertaking specific actions to better define the street edge along Main Street between Washington Highway and Burroughs Drive, consistent with the recommendations of this plan. The Town should pursue additional federal and state funds to support these programs.*

5.4 Zoning

As stated earlier, the current town zoning is a significant obstacle to the efforts of revitalization in the Snyder Business District. The current zoning is overly broad (i.e. the “one size fits all” problem) while at the same time being too inflexible. It actually is encouraging developers to treat Snyder’s Main Street corridor the same way they treat Transit Road, Sheridan or Niagara Falls Boulevard.

Actions

- *Following the lead established under the earlier Eggertsville Action Plan, and by working closely with the Town Comprehensive Plan team, the Town Planning Department and Town Law Department prepares a new “Traditional Neighborhood Business” zoning classification for application in older, traditional neighborhood business districts. General elements of this proposed zoning classification are described in **Appendix C**. Proposed additions to and modifications of the Town’s Zoning ordinance should be addressed on a larger scale as part of the Town’s comprehensive plan process. Proposed changes to area zoning must fully consider the impact of such changes on the tax base of the Town and school district. As more housing and businesses are appropriately zoned around this commercial node, new investment in the business district will follow.*



5.5 Traffic Calming

During earlier project planning discussions and interviews, most all people felt that traffic on Main Street was much too fast for the Snyder Business District setting. Although exposure to higher traffic volumes are good for the Main Street businesses, the fast speeds negate many of the positives. In order to retain some integrity to the traditional, “village-like” character, the Town of Amherst should explore options with NYSDOT to slow down or “calm” traffic on Main Street in Snyder. This initiative potentially includes:

- *Establishing appropriate transition zones to signify you are entering someplace different and “special.” This would likely occur at Darwin on the east and at Getzville Road on the west.*
- *Narrowing the travel lanes from 12 to 11 feet. The additional four or five feet of width could be allocated to a decorative “buffer” area between the on-street parking and the travel lanes, or added to the pedestrian spaces (sidewalks) on each side of the street..*
- *Re-introducing on-street parking where there currently is none. Parked cars act as a buffer between traffic and the pedestrian zone of the sidewalk. It also tends to slow down traffic.*
- *initiating short term improvements to include restriping the pavement. Longer term options include physically narrowing the pavement with curb relocation and special pavements.*
- *Reducing current speed limits from 40 mph to a more appropriate 30 mph.*
- *Providing much more bold and noticeable pedestrian crossings at key locations. These enhanced crosswalks would give more visibility to passing traffic, as well as aid in the “calming” of the business district traffic. (See also 4.6 - Pedestrian Crossings)*

Actions

- *The Friends of Snyder collaborates with the Town of Amherst to contact the NYSDOT about Traffic Calming initiatives along Main Street. Focus on short-term initiatives that can be done on an immediate, temporary “trial” basis.*
- *The Friends of Snyder and Town Engineering / Planning Departments work with the NYSDOT to undertake pedestrian safety and traffic calming improvements in the Main Street right-of-way.*
- *Based on the recommendations of this plan, the Town Planning and Engineering Departments should recommend a “Preferred Plan” for the redesign of Main Street and suitable right-of-way (Streetscape enhancements) improvements to the Town Board for its adoption as a guide for future improvements to Main Street. A traffic calming consultant, or local engineering/lands architectural firm, should be hired to design specific enhancements and initiatives.*



5.6 Pedestrian Crossings

Better defined crosswalks serve to re-assure pedestrians of their safety when crossing the street, as well as to “calm” traffic by reinforcing to drivers that pedestrians are present. This initiative includes:

- *Creating definitive, well marked pedestrian crossings throughout the Snyder Business District. These crosswalks should be of an alternate paving material, such as concrete or brick pavers, to make them distinctive as well as tangible to drivers. Brick or similar crosswalks act as a sort of “rumble strip” when a car drives across them, helping to slow down traffic.*
- *Short term improvements such as restriping the pavement. Longer term options include actually constructing (“cutting in” or “overlaying”) new crosswalks of special pavement.*
- *Crosswalks can help to establish a noticeable “gateway” to the business district, including at Getzville Road and Daemen College at the west end and Burbank/Darwin at the east end. It will also help to let people know that they are entering someplace different and special.*

Actions

- *The Friends of Snyder, local leaders, and Town Engineering and Planning Departments to encourage the NYSDOT to undertake pedestrian safety and traffic calming improvements in the Main Street right-of-way.*
- *Explore the option of a “Business Improvement District” to help organize/fund these types of improvements.*



Example of alternatively paved crosswalk. Local examples exist along Main Street in the University Heights district of Buffalo and in the Village of Lewiston.



5.7 Improved Sidewalks

Sidewalk paving in many areas, especially the “snow storage” areas, is in poor condition. This initiative includes:

- *Replacing the pavement in the area between the street and sidewalk with attractive, decorative concrete paving stones*

Actions

- ➔ *The Friends of Snyder work with the town engineering and planning departments to encourage the NYSDOT to undertake physical improvements in the Main Street right-of-way.*
- ➔ *Explore the option of a business improvement district to help organize/fund these types of improvements.*

5.8 Street Trees

Street trees (trees within the public right-of-way) are a vital component to vibrant, pedestrian friendly neighborhoods and business districts. Snyder has a number of street trees along Main Street, but these should be enhanced and added to. This initiative includes:

- *Assessing the health of existing street trees, and establishing a maintenance and monitoring system (i.e. fertilizing, pruning, and watering when needed).*
- *Planting new street trees where needed to fill in “holes” along Main Street*
- *All trees within the sidewalks should receive attractive new tree grates that harmonize with other street furniture. A second option is to place loose cobblestone or decorative pavers around the base of the urban trees.*

Actions

- *The Town Planning Department should assist the Division of Forestry in preparing a tree management plan by selecting a qualified, certified arborist to prepare the plan.*
- *Explore the option of a business improvement district to help organize/fund these improvements.*
- *Explore the use of volunteer labor to plant and maintain trees. This can build community spirit and can be a good opportunity to draw in Daemen students.*

5.9 Increasing Residential Density

Increasing residential density and housing “choices” is important for the continued success of Snyder. The existing, relatively low, largely single-family, residential density is an obstacle to achieving the kind of retail revitalization that many community leaders and residents would like to see. Retail works best when it has a large “captive” market, close at hand, to draw from, particularly when it is a fairly affluent residential area having lots of “spending power.” For a pedestrian-oriented, walkable community, this means having a “village” center with a slightly higher density than only single-family homes on large lots. In addition, a key aspect of traditional communities is the ability to “age-in-place.” That means providing a range of housing choices, so that when a person decides that a single family home no longer suits their needs (*i.e. children are grown, maintenance and upkeep is too much work, etc.*) they can move to other types of neighborhood housing, such as condominiums and apartments, not far away within their home community.

Although this initiative should be explored more comprehensively throughout the entire business district, a couple key areas were identified for offering this higher density housing model. This initiative includes:

- *identifying sites within Snyder, such as the current Campus Manor Apartments (Main Street frontage area) and the surface parking lots at Snyder Square II, that can be utilized for new housing types including townhouses, condominiums and/or apartments.*

Actions

- *The Town of Amherst to work with the development community to publicize the need for higher densities and to achieve community “buy in” to the idea. At the same time, a careful and deliberate education will be needed for the surrounding public. (An “out-of-the-area” developer / investor may interject new ideas and creativity into the Snyder Business District).*
- *The Town and Amherst IDA to explore potential sites, or a number of sites, for the development of mixed-use structures offering housing on upper floors, including future transition of upper level Snyder Square uses to residential.*



Potential infill housing on Campus Manor site to provide new housing option in area and potentially increase density.



Potential infill housing on Snyder Square II site behind and above the existing shops and offices



5.10 Visual Improvements/Sense of Place

The concept is to unify the Snyder Business District and to create a recognizable and memorable ‘sense of place.’ This comprehensive initiative includes:

- *Installing unified and historically appropriate light poles that include both high level (automobile) lighting and lower level (pedestrian) lighting.*
- *Installing coordinated and “themed” street furniture (benches, planters, bus shelters, trash cans, banners, etc.) These should be placed thoughtfully along the Main Street corridors, at bus stops and other places where people might gather such as a new “village square” area at Main and Harlem.*
- *Installing attractive street signage that serves to unify the community and draw attention to its unique sense of place. Draw upon the existing historic stone gateways and historic wrought iron signs along Main Street. These features are unique to the Snyder area.*
- *Installing attractive and coordinated directional (“wayfinding”) signage for rear parking areas.*
- *Maintaining the highest standards possible in terms of street cleaning, litter removal, snow removal etc.*
- *Drawing on the best of historical Snyder resources, i.e Underground Railroad site at the Park School, historic neighborhood homes, Curtiss and Rosary Halls on the Daeman College Campus, Amherst Central High School, stone gateways and historic street signs, etc.*

Actions

- *The Friends of Snyder / local leaders to work with NYSDOT, and the Town Engineering and Planning Departments, to undertake physical improvements in the Main Street right-of-way*
- *Explore the option of a business improvement district to help organize/fund these types of improvements.*
- *The Friends of Snyder convenes a committee of district property owners, Town Historian, Town Historic Preservation Commission, et al. This committee is responsible for developing an interpretive program for the business district. This could include an educational “heritage” program of interpretive plaques and markers highlighting area history through events, people, places, or architecture.*

5.11 Architectural Enhancements

From an architectural standpoint, the Snyder Business District is a eclectic collection of building styles and character, yet taken all together form a certain “critical mass” that follows a traditional neighborhood center pattern. It is this traditional form which makes Snyder unique and different within the Western New York region. There is a mix of older structures (first half of the 1900s) which sit closer to the street, along with some newer buildings (1960s through 1980s) which sit back from the street, some with parking in the front of the buildings. Fortunately, there is enough of the earlier architectural forms to give Snyder that unique “Village-like” character which has been deemed so desirable by the surrounding community.

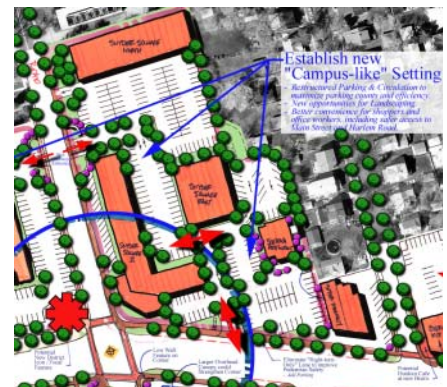
As a part of this study, it was not intended to provide architectural recommendations for each individual building, however, in a more generalized format, a series of guiding design principles (Section 4.2) were put together to begin to address future redevelopment possibilities and architectural form. As mentioned under section 4.2, these important design principles were “tested” on a few key area properties, including the Snyder Square properties at the Main-Harlem intersection, the YMCA property and the properties at Camp Lane and Main Street.

Snyder Square and Snyder Square II

- Create a comprehensive *Campus Site Plan* to improve access, parking and image
- Consolidate vehicular access to improve site access and to increase parking through better and more efficient site usage.
- Emphasize primary vehicular arrival points further away from the Main-Harlem intersection in order to preserve and enhance a pedestrian friendly walking environment. Primary access to individual buildings / properties should be consolidated to newly designed vehicular access driveways further away from the Main-Harlem intersection. Avoid vehicular access at primary corners which should be promoted as being “pedestrian friendly.” *This access management initiative, along with traffic calming improvements to Main Street such as eliminating the “right-turn only” lane at the intersection, will have a dramatic impact on restoring and preserving the traditional neighborhood business district character.*



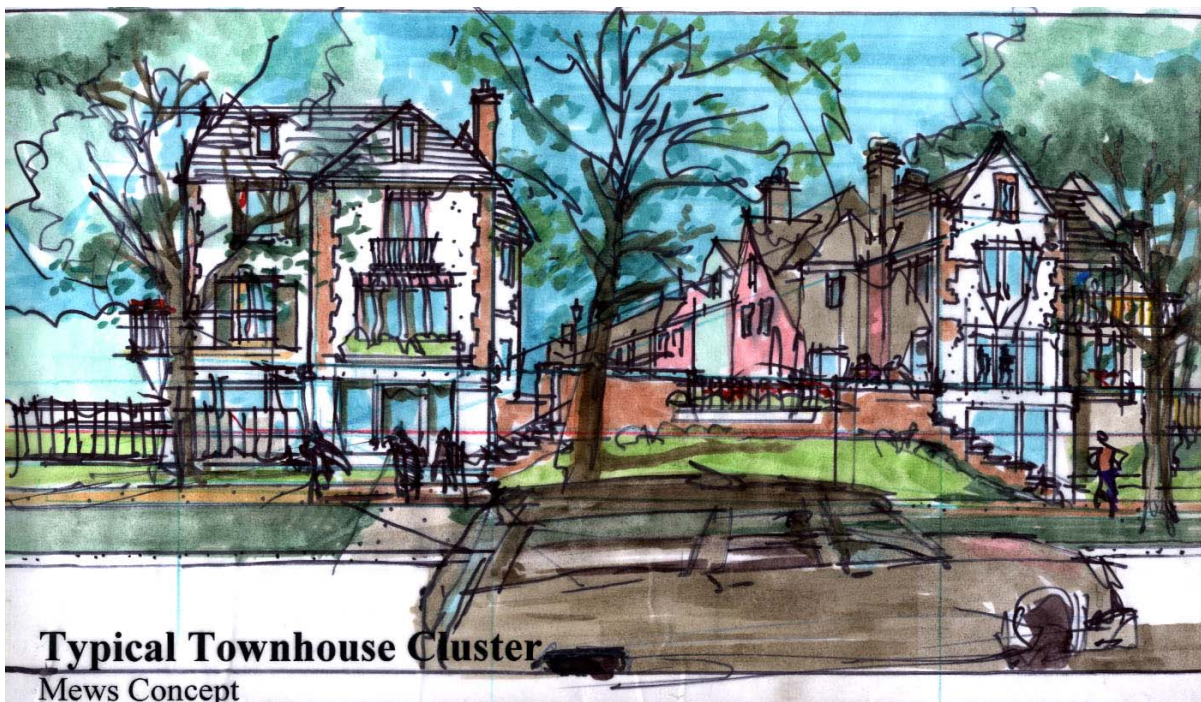
- Promote an overall “campus plan” linkage between Snyder Square and Snyder Square II by aligning and redesigning the major vehicular access drive along Harlem Road.
- Increase both quantity of parking and amount of landscaped area by improving site organization and access.
- Separate primary entry driveways from parking areas with landscaped buffers.



- Explore potential new Mixed-Use office/parking structure in NE sector of property to replace existing inefficient office building (north building) and surface parking lot.
- Expand mixed use potential of property by developing a new 4-5 Story residential component behind Snyder Square II
- Explore potential for new construction to extend to Main Street ROW at NE corner of Main/Harlem intersection. New construction would create visible icon to “anchor” village center, would add leasable space and would improve pedestrian access.

Campus Manor Redevelopment

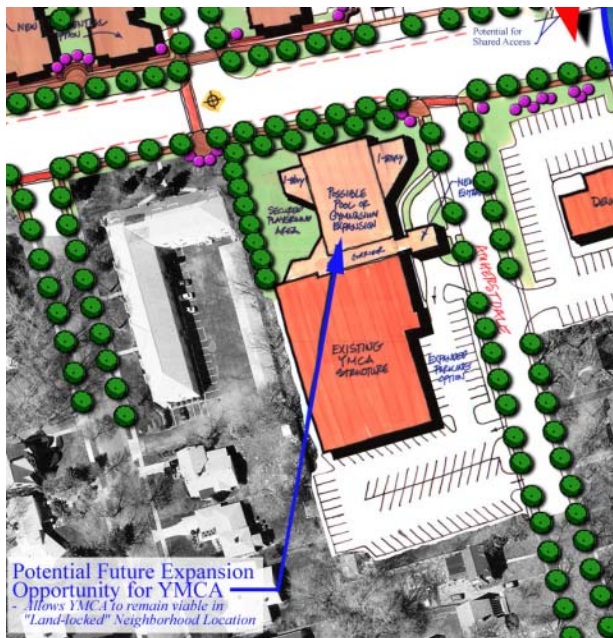
- Develop new 22-24 unit 3 1/2 Story Townhouse complex based on a mews concept to replace the 8 existing 2 story 4 unit 600 SF/Unit buildings nearest to Main Street.
- Individual Townhouses are arranged in modules of either 8 or 12 individual units oriented around a mews style courtyard perpendicular Main Street to preserve Owner privacy
- Size of each unit will range from 3200- 4000 SF with attached 2 car garages. Additional visitor parking will be provided which could be shared with Daemen College



- Development incorporates pedestrian walkway to promote linkages between Daemen College and Snyder Square through interconnected series of semi-private outdoor courtyard/mews
- Design is oriented to project front door appearance on Main Street while hiding garages and screening the visitor parking from Main Street.
- Design reinforces a higher density associated with an urban streetscape concept The proposed density of approximately 4 1/2 dwelling units/Acre would also increase economic rate of return for this strategically located real estate
- Design locates Mews level 1/2 level above Main Street in order to create privacy buffer for Owners

YMCA Expansion

- Take advantage of potential Main Street frontage by building new building addition (Swimming Pool or other function) extending outward toward Main Street from existing building
- Possibly design a new pool with retractable exterior wall to link directly with new outdoor courtyard for summertime use.
- Design new Main Entry and drive up/drop-off along Amherstdale that will be highly visible from Main Street



- Incorporate an atrium Lobby into new entry, also visible from Main Street, that will both act as central orientation space for YMCA users and will improve interior traffic flow
- Fill in existing pool and convert to other uses such as gymnasium expansion and/or multi-purpose space
- Provide additional parking and landscaping to strengthen new entry along Amherstdale frontage and consider sharing parking with existing Denny's Restaurant directly across the street from new primary building entry



Architect's rendering of possible Expansion possibilities