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NWOA MASTER PLAN
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NWOA Master Plan

The Niagara Waterfront Opportunity Area Master Plan includes five Strategic Redevelopment Areas in a larger 1,881 acre area in the southern section of the City of Niagara Falls along approximately three miles of Niagara River waterfront. The plan is based on the following strategies:

- Induce redevelopment of underutilized and vacant properties in the Buffalo Avenue Corridor
- Improve access to the Niagara River
- Focus on infrastructure improvements to drive economic development projects
- Provide opportunities for recreation and culture
- Connect the strategic sites to each other, the Niagara River, and residential neighborhoods with improved multi-modal connections
- Infill vacant and underutilized sites to create pedestrian oriented areas
- Recognize and build upon existing businesses and investment in the corridor
- Celebrate gateways
Public Support for the NWOA Master Plan . . .

The City, steering committee, consultant team, and community partnered to develop a Master Plan that provides both economic and community development benefits. Two public open houses were held for the project and participants were in favor of the plan. A 10 member steering committee provided guidance throughout the project. The worthwhile, long term process included the following steps:

**Reviewing the Step 1 Master Plan with the Community and Stakeholders**

**Design Workshop on the Master Plan**

**Additional Public Input on Draft Master Plan**
10 Year Market Support for the NWOA Master Plan . . .

Based on an Economic and Market Analysis prepared for the Plan, and included in the Appendices, there is demand for more than 1,780,000 sq. ft. of office, institutional, commercial and residential development in Niagara County over the next decade. If the NWOA could conservatively capture one third of that demand then it would be a great start to revitalization of the Buffalo Avenue Corridor. The demand for space also suggests the sites and buildings in the NWOA may need to be repurposed from industrial to commercial, residential and mixed use properties.

**OFFICE**
- 300,000 sq. ft.

**INSTITUTIONAL**
- 350,000 sq. ft.

**COMMERCIAL**
- 380,000 sq. ft.

**INDUSTRIAL**
- -250,000 sq. ft.

**RESIDENTIAL (600 UNITS)**
- 750,000 sq. ft.
The Niagara Waterfront Opportunity Area project incorporates and builds upon past planning efforts and current strategies to redevelop the City’s historic industrial core along Buffalo Avenue. Both the City Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Ordinance, adopted in 2009, reinforce the need to focus on brownfield redevelopment in the City as part of an overall economic development strategy. Similarly, the City and its development partners have started to redevelop sections of the Buffalo Avenue Industrial Corridor with a mix of uses.

It is the City’s policy to encourage the reuse and revitalization of vacant and/or underutilized industrial properties through the re-establishment of industrial uses, or the conversion of such properties to new uses that further the City’s land use and development vision.

2009 Comprehensive Plan
Key Findings – Inventory & Analysis

Based on the inventory and analysis of existing conditions, the following key findings were considered prior to developing the NWOA Master Plan:

1. **HISTORY MATTERS** – Although there are only two sites in the entire NWOA listed on the State and National Registers of Historic Places, one of them is very significant! The Edward Dean Adams Power Plant transformer house was designed by renowned architects McKim Mead and White and is associated with the development and successful distribution of alternating current (AC) electrical technology for the first time in history.

2. **INFRASTRUCTURE STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES** – The NWOA is blessed with huge water and sewer lines along the primary street corridors which will support future development. However, there are limited infrastructure distribution lines due to the nature of historic, large site developments which had limited locations for connections. Internal roadways are also limited. That will be an issue and expense for any interior site development in the NWOA. In addition, most of the sewer lines are combined sewer lines for sanitary and storm which is also an issue in this age of major storm events.

3. **INDUSTRIAL, PUBLIC AND VACANT USES DOMINATE THE NWOA** – 32 percent of the land is used for public infrastructure (rail, roads, Parkway), 29 percent is used for industrial purposes, and 18 percent is vacant. Less than one percent of land is used for parks.

4. **38% OF NON-RESIDENTIAL LAND IS UNDERUTILIZED OR VACANT**

5. **THE NWOA IS WELL SERVED BY MAJOR TRANSPORATION ROUTES AND PUBLIC TRANSIT** – Four state routes (384, 62, 61 and 957A) traverse the NWOA and public transit is available on most of those routes as well as other local roadways.

6. **THE ECONOMY IS STABILIZING** – While there continues to be population loss, it has slowed. And the economy, after decades of job losses and stagnation has started to rebound.

7. **THERE IS DEMAND FOR OFFICE, INSTITUTIONAL, RETAIL, AND HOUSING** – In total there is demand for 1.78 million square feet of space over the next 10 years within Niagara County.

8. **WHILE INDUSTRIAL DEMAND IS DECLINING OVERALL, THERE IS DEMAND FOR SPACE TO SUPPORT WAREHOUSE AND WHOLESALE TRADE INDUSTRIES**
Vision, Goals and Strategies

VISION

The Niagara Waterfront Opportunity Area will provide residents, businesses and visitors with access to a repurposed, revitalized and sustainable Upper Niagara River waterfront neighborhood that provides jobs, unique living options, and recreational opportunities that will benefit all.

GOALS AND STRATEGIES

RESTORE: Provide economic and community development opportunities

Induce redevelopment of underutilized and vacant properties
The Strategic Areas were selected and plans were developed to advance the intent of the State’s Brownfield Opportunity Areas Program to re-purpose underutilized and vacant properties with a focused, strategic approach based on the market.

Focus on Infrastructure to drive economic development projects
Public investments show confidence in the area that will leverage private investments.

Recognize and build upon existing businesses and investment in the corridor
The NWOA is home to many existing international, national, regional and local businesses that should be part of the NWOA revitalization journey and implementation of the plan.

RECONNECT: Create synergies among areas by providing new connections

Connect the Strategic Areas to each other, the Niagara River, and residential neighborhoods with improved multi-modal connections
Multi-modal transportation opportunities are no longer a “trend” and employers are looking for communities that provide them as a benefit to attract employees and improve the environment.

Improve access to the Niagara River
The Master Plan’s “DNA” is based on reclaiming three miles of Niagara River for residents and businesses that currently cannot access it because it is obstructed by a limited access highway.

RE-IMAGINE: Create a sense of place to attract new residents and businesses through placemaking

Celebrate gateways
All of the Strategic Areas are located at key gateways into the NWOA that, if revitalized, will have a catalytic impact on potential redevelopment and the pride of the community.

Provide opportunities for recreation and culture
Recreational opportunities provide benefits to residents and businesses. Recreation is a key component of any tourist based economy as well as a major contributor to higher quality office parks.

Infill vacant and underutilized sites to create pedestrian oriented areas
While the basis of the plan is to create economic development opportunities, placemaking is also a primary means towards the goal to attract people to work and live in new mixed use, pedestrian oriented communities.
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Portage/Innovation Park Strategic Area

The Portage/Innovation Park Strategic Area is strategically located at the gateway to the NWOA from the west and is adjacent to the tourist and Downtown neighborhoods in the City of Niagara Falls. Of all the Strategic Areas, this area has the greatest potential for both development and impact on the NWOA and the City overall. The area, near the intersection of Buffalo Avenue and Portage Road and extending to Gill Creek, provides an opportunity to repurpose the current underutilized industrial area into a vibrant neighborhood anchored by a Tesla Museum at the Adam’s Power Plant, a Hotel and Conference Center and a new Innovation Business Park.

Based on the concept plans developed, the area could attract more than $250 million and 1.5 million square feet of private investment, as well as 3,000 jobs, in the next 20 years. Redevelopment of the Adam’s Power Plant into a Tesla Museum, and the former Carborundum Office building into a Hotel and Conference Center will not only provide iconic anchors to the Strategic Area, but they will also provide a leading example of how to repurpose buildings throughout the NWOA.
Portage/Innovation Park Strategic Area

VISUALIZATION OF POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENT AND PLACEMAKING OPPORTUNITIES

STRATEGIES

1. **Tesla Museum and Park**: Redevelopment of the historic Adam’s Power Plant Transformer House into a museum and outdoor park that celebrates the innovations and inventions of Nikola Tesla. Tesla pioneered alternating current (AC) technology for Westinghouse which allowed electricity to be transmitted at long distances. The first AC test was conducted at this site in 1895.

2. **Hotel and Conference Center**: Conversion and renovation of the former Carborundum Office building on Buffalo Avenue into a Hotel connected to a new conference center.

3. **Innovation Business Park**: Development of mostly vacant land into a new Class A office and research business park. The business park would provide space for local businesses in the NWOA now located in industrial buildings as well as other regional and national businesses.

4. **Lofts and Apartments**: Revitalization of multi-story vacant buildings and development of new structures for residential loft style apartments north of Buffalo Avenue. Some of which is NYS Department of Transportation property.

5. **Chimney Park**: Formalize the emerging park with additional landscaping, trails and park furniture to provide an appropriate setting to celebrate Fort du Portage and the Upper Niagara neighborhood.

MARKET BASED POTENTIAL USES

- Office
- Restaurants
- Residential
- Institutional
- Warehousing
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Hyde Park Strategic Area

The Hyde Park Strategic Area is centered near the intersection of Hyde Park Boulevard (State Route 61) and Buffalo Avenue (State Route 384) and extends south to the Niagara Scenic Parkway (formerly the Robert Moses Parkway). Consequently the area is a strategic transportation link in the NWOA that provides access north to the City’s vibrant Pine Avenue neighborhood and west to the Core City neighborhood.

To take advantage of the area’s strategic location, the Hyde Park Strategic Area includes a new roundabout at the intersection of Buffalo Avenue and Hyde Park Boulevard. It also includes an extension of Hyde Park Boulevard south to a new roundabout intersection at the Niagara Scenic Parkway requiring a bridge over the active railroad track parallel to the Parkway. A new neighborhood will emerge at the Hyde Park Boulevard/Buffalo Avenue intersection with multi-story mixed use buildings enclosing the roundabout in a compact, pedestrian scaled development.
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Hyde Park Strategic Area

VISUALIZATION OF POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENT AND PLACEMAKING OPPORTUNITIES

STRATEGIES

1. Live/Work Units: The New York State Department of Transportation owns a right of way north of Buffalo Avenue from Hyde Park Boulevard to Portage Road that was once envisioned as an extension of the LaSalle Expressway. The NWOA plan promotes development on the abandoned right of way including the live-work units where residents can have living space and all types of commercial or industrial “maker” space that provides an ideal transition between heavy industrial uses to the south and the historic Echota residential neighborhood to the north.

2. Mixed Use District: Develop a new compact, pedestrian oriented mixed use district with multi-story buildings that will enclose the new roundabout at Hyde Park Boulevard and Buffalo Avenue.

3. Energy Intake Discovery Park: Celebrate the confluence of a strategic location on the Niagara River with the iconic New York Power Authority (NYPA) water intake structures by developing a park at the site. The park would include an amphitheater, seating, and act as a trailhead with parking for the waterfront trail system. A landscape plan would articulate the flow of water through the intakes.

4. Community Solar: Installation of community solar arrays on landfills within the NWOA and along land above the NYPA intake tunnels would provide affordable alternative energy to large institutional users and residents in the Falls.

5. Gill Creek Trail: The Hyde Park Strategic Area will incorporate and build upon the plans for improvements to Gill Creek including continued habitat restoration and construction of a pedestrian/bike trail.

MARKET BASED POTENTIAL USES

• Office
• Commercial
• Residential
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LaSalle Gateway Strategic Area

The LaSalle Gateway Strategic Area is located near the interchange of Interstate 190 (Grand Island Bridges) and Buffalo Avenue. This very visible and accessible Strategic Area is the gateway to both the NWOA and the LaSalle residential neighborhood. Redesign of the Niagara Scenic Parkway’s connections to Buffalo Avenue will provide opportunities for new development along Buffalo Avenue and improve the gateway’s image. New uses with higher quality design, as well as enhanced streetscape treatments along Buffalo Avenue, will also complement the healthy residential neighborhoods north of Buffalo Avenue.
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LaSalle Gateway Strategic Area

VISUALIZATION OF POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENT AND PLACEMAKING OPPORTUNITIES

STRATEGIES

1. Townhomes: The market study revealed a healthy demand for market rate residential units in the Niagara region. The new townhouses would extend the LaSalle residential neighborhood south across Buffalo Avenue to the Niagara River. The townhomes would provide empty nesters with a low maintenance housing option with incredible transportation access to the Buffalo-Niagara and southern Ontario region.

2. Offices/Accommodation: The strategic, visible and city-owned location at the Buffalo Avenue interchange with Interstate 190 is an ideal location for a hotel. Office uses could also be located at the site for regional companies needing “easy on, easy off” access to the Interstate 190.

3. 53rd Street Fishing Pier: Although the NWOA has more than three miles of Niagara River waterfront there are no official access points for fishing. A new Fishing Pier at the 53rd Street underpass would formalize a local fishing spot and provide panoramic views of the Niagara River before the rapids that lead to the Falls begin.

MARKET BASED POTENTIAL USES

- Office
- Commercial
- Residential
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Northern Gateway Strategic Area

The Northern Gateway Strategic Area is located at the interchange of Niagara Falls Boulevard and Interstate 190. Recently the burgeoning Niagara Falls Boulevard and Military Road development has fortunately bled west into this area in the City of Niagara Falls with new retail and hotel development occurring over the last decade. There are multiple vacant and underutilized properties in the area that present great opportunities to upgrade the appearance and cohesiveness of the district through design and industrial performance standards. Zoning amendments should also recognize the need for a hybrid commercial/industrial zone to promote consistency of uses, design, entrance/exit controls, signs, and landscaping on both sides of Niagara Falls Boulevard. High traffic counts (25,000 AADT) in this corridor will also encourage retail development.
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Northern Gateway Strategic Area

VISUALIZATION OF POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENT AND PLACEMAKING OPPORTUNITIES

STRATEGIES

1. Business Park: There are no business parks in the City of Niagara Falls or Town of Niagara despite its strategic location on Interstate 190. There are more than 20 acres of vacant and underutilized property at the intersection of Niagara Falls Boulevard and 56th Street that could accommodate a small business park. The business park could help satisfy the demand for office space as well as light industrial space for those businesses that need good access to the Interstate.

2. Commercial and/or Accommodation: High traffic counts on Niagara Falls Boulevard in excess of 25,000 vehicles daily, and access to the Interstate, make this an ideal location for all types of retail and accommodations which is supported in the market study. As the site is near the Niagara Falls international bridges, and the nearby outlet centers attract Canadian shoppers, this area would be an ideal site for a Taste NY retail location.

MARKET BASED POTENTIAL USES

- Office
- Commercial
- Retail

Examples of a hotel, business park, and retail
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Niagara Scenic Parkway Strategic Area

The Niagara Scenic Parkway (formerly the Robert Moses Parkway) is not a typical Strategic Area. However, improvements to the Parkway are critical to propelling investment in the Niagara Waterfront Opportunity Area and to realizing the NWOA primary goal to improve access to the Niagara River. As such, it will be categorized as a Strategic Area. This plan proposes downgrading the “Upper Niagara” section of the Parkway from the new roundabout at John B. Daly Boulevard to Interstate 190 (Grand Island Bridges). Additional enhancements to the Parkway are proposed as described in the illustrations.

A proposed new/enhanced multi-use trail and the Niagara Scenic Parkway would connect NWOA waterfront destinations to many areas of the city including Niagara Falls State Park and downtown to the west, and to LaSalle Waterfront Park to the east. In addition, the overall redevelopment plan would create new connections to the Buffalo Avenue corridor to the north at multiple points, including a connection to Portage Road, the Hyde Park Boulevard corridor, and along 53rd Street.

The overall landscape along the parkway is proposed to be environmentally sensitive in nature through restoration of native and naturalized plants and removal of invasive species. Bio-retention and pervious pavements are proposed for storm water management throughout all areas to reduce storm water run-off.
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Niagara Scenic Parkway Strategic Area