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Introduction

BASIC INFORMATION

Regional Economic Development Council: Western New York

Municipality: Town of Amherst

Downtown Name: Village East

County: Erie

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DOWNTOWN VISION

The Town of Amherst has the fourth largest population in upstate New York. It is the largest town in Upstate New York and has one of the biggest economic anchors for Erie County. The Town of Amherst envisions growing our already vibrant downtown corridor located in the Village of Williamsville to enrich the quality of life, create wonderful spaces for our residents and visitors to enjoy, and to ensure our built environment is not only maintained but improved. Through supporting catalytic projects and increasing connectivity and accessibility from the eastern end of the Town of Amherst to the Village we envision a more vibrant, mixed-use downtown corridor just east of the Village to build off of a community college campus and extending a walkable, welcoming feel throughout Amherst.

The expanded downtown corridor, “Village East”, will be a focal point for residents and visitors. It will become a unique place for people to live and work, small businesses to thrive, and will offer a variety of experiences for all to enjoy such as expanded dining, shopping, art, entertainment, trails, and more. With its easy access the region via Main Street, established and active business community, and desirability and availability of sites for redevelopment, the Town of Amherst is ready to strengthen its connection to the Village and to Erie Community College North Campus while also creating its own identity as a sustainable, inviting, and livable community.
Located just northeast of the City of Buffalo and south of Niagara Falls, the Town of Amherst is both a local and regional destination in the Western New York Region. Amherst is the fourth largest municipality in New York State with a population of over 129,000 residents and a daytime population that swells to over 180,000 people who commute to work in the Town. It is the largest town in Upstate New York and has one of the biggest economic anchors for Erie County. Over the past 50 years, Amherst has become a desirable place to live with its abundance of housing, its highly ranked school districts, and its bustling economy and job offerings.

Amherst is home to the SUNY Erie Community College (ECC) North Campus, located east of the Village of Williamsville and within this DRI area. ECC is a public community college with three campuses serving Erie County enrolling approximately 15,000 students and offering more than 80 associate degree, certificate, joint, and online programs in Business, Engineering, Advanced Manufacturing, Health Sciences, STEM, Hospitality and more.

Because the DRI program this year can award up to $20 million, Amherst is applying for $20 million but in two separate applications of $10 million each. Both proposed DRI areas, Village West and Village East, enhances the Main Street corridor in the Town. We feel revitalization is vital in both areas; however, each proposal also can stand alone as they both contain separate catalytic projects and a vision for revitalization.

The Village East corridor, including the east portion of Main Street connecting to the Village, is a highly traveled area that attracts residents and visitors due to its ideal location inclusive of ECC North Campus and for its variety of development including retail, restaurants, grocery, office, medical, and mixed-use buildings. Although the area contains a variety of assets, it also encompasses vacant parcels which hold a great deal of potential and it lacks the cohesive connections necessary to revitalize the area to a full potential.
Recent and upcoming impactful projects are bringing a positive momentum to the proposed DRI area. Continuing to revitalize the Village East corridor utilizing a multi-faceted approach is intended to improve both the experience of students and visitors to the community, and to the quality of life of residents and workers. These techniques focus on improving the built environment within the area, creating events and beautification programs that stimulate the local economy by emphasizing the elements of community that promote walkability thereby improving the quality of life of residents and visitors. A thoughtful and strategic transformation of the area is necessary to accelerate the Village East plan and align with the Town's initiative to increase quality of life, safety and accessibility while creating jobs and focusing on economic development.

By expanding east on the Village's Main Street corridor, the Town is refining its vision to spark smart economic development and will enhance transportation connectivity, improve walkability and increase safety and access for all users including pedestrians and cyclists in the heart of Amherst. With SUNY Erie Community College (ECC) North Campus within the DRI area, key visions to spark revitalization through access include Complete Street initiatives on the major roadways, which will provide increased connectivity between the school and local retail, restaurants, businesses and medical / personal services. Continued revitalization is envisioned through redeveloping vacant properties, creating mixed-use building opportunities and expanding space for growing businesses.

Development is fueling growth along Youngs Road between Main Street and Wehrle Drive. With a focus on regional connectivity, Village East opportunities that have been identified include connectivity enhancements will help define this area and make new assets more accessible, integrated, and sustainable components of the community. Neighboring residents, students, employees, and visitors to Village East would benefit from new and improved multi-modal links at Youngs Road, Main Street, and Tech Drive.

Additional connectivity is envisioned through:
• Creating better links to assets in Village East by defining additional nodes along Main Street with similar amenities to those in the Village of Williamsville
• Increased safety measures and streetscape elements
• Creating pedestrian scale links across vehicular thoroughfares to keep the community fabric intact as new development builds and reduce vehicular congestion by offering viable and inviting opportunities to walk and bike throughout the area
Downtown Identification

PROPOSED DRI BOUNDARY
The Village East area is a portion of the Town of Amherst that is easily identifiable by many different establishments and roadways, but mostly due to its direct adjacency to the eastern border of the Village of Williamsville and its inclusion of the Erie Community College (ECC) North Campus. The DRI boundary of Village East in Amherst starts at approximately Youngs Road and moves south to encompass the College Park Office Park on both sides of Wehrle Drive. It then encompasses various other office buildings and the Mathewson McCarthy baseball diamonds on the south side of Wehrle Drive. Its eastern border aligns with a large developable vacant property and then up Limestone Drive. On the north, it essentially follows Main Street, including a few parcels, and ends back at Youngs Road (see boundary map).

The major roadways within the boundary include historic Main Street and Wehrle Drive, running west and east throughout the entire area, and Youngs Road running north and south. Tech Drive, a campus road, along with Spindrift Drive and College Parkway are also present. These act as the major access roads to this area and beyond for visitors, students and employees at the College Park Office Park and at ECC. Main Street and Wehrle Drive contain the majority of commercial and office development along them, while Youngs Road and Tech Drive mainly serve ECC and the large YMCA Buffalo-Niagara branch. At its north and south ends, Spindrift Drive does contain commercial uses, but it also serves as access for a large multi-family residential development, Windsong Place Apartments.

Although just east of the Village of Williamsville, Village East no longer contains the dense, historic feel. It totally transforms into a suburban area with parcels containing large commercial and office buildings and hardly any residential. There are no pedestrian connections between the Village and the ECC campus nor for any of the residents living between these two entirely different areas. Despite a different feel, it does include a number of economic and community development assets that are sufficient to support a vibrant downtown. Distinguishable establishments, especially to local residents, include Ingram Micro, Northrop Grumman, Tops’ Corporate Office, Randstad, National Fuel, EduKids, the YMCA, Mathewson McCarthy baseball fields, and various medical offices. All of these establishments employ a multitude of people from the region who travel to work every day through this DRI area. Of course, the ECC North Campus is the largest and most prominent land user in this area. There are also various vacant and underutilized properties that are ripe with future redevelopment potential to bolster this area’s economy and walkability.
PAST INVESTMENT & FUTURE INVESTMENT POTENTIAL

Past Public and Private Investment

A key site in the Village East area is the College Park Office Complex, which constructed its first building in 1998 and has spurred continued investment in over 350,000 square-feet of development and maintains potential for more future investment. The College Park Office Complex represents a business campus, providing its occupants a master planned, intensively landscaped, well thought out and controlled environment that can comfortably accommodate growth and expansion requirements. The development of this property included deeding a portion of the land to the Town of Amherst for the creation of a public park.

While already occupying 70,000 square-feet at Curtwright Drive off of Wehrle Drive near the DRI area, the company Ashton Potter recently completed a 55,000 square-foot expansion creating an expanded 125,000 square-foot campus. This private investment sparked additional growth and investments throughout the area and ensured a nationally significant company continued operations in Western New York. In 2019, Evans Bank Corporate Headquarters announced their move into Amherst to a property adjacent to the DRI area. Though a $7,650,000 project, Evans Bank consolidated functions from three other locations and successfully moved into their new headquarters in 2020. This private investment created a strategic opportunity for Evans Bank to grow as an institution and to continue job growth for their company and for the community. Village East is also home to the National Fuel Headquarters, Ingram Micro and Windsong Radiology, which highlights a strong presence of continued private investment and job growth in the area.

As the community continues to desire a ‘live, work, play’ environment, private investment into the Lymestone mixed-use development has proven to be a successful catalyst for additional private and public investment near the DRI area. The 56,000 square-foot building includes 16,000 square-feet of occupied retail and office space. The project boasted collaboration between the Town, the Amherst Industrial Development Agency and the developers which showcased the Town’s ability to leverage private / public relationships.

The center of Village East is where SUNY Erie Community College (ECC) North Campus is located. Recent Investment into the ECC North Campus includes the construction of a new 57,000 square-foot STEM building featuring facility space for labs, prep rooms and support spaces for the College’s Biology, Chemistry, Physics and Engineering Science programs, as well as shared instructional spaces, collaborative study spaces, a tutoring center and faculty offices.
A large residential development was completed several years ago just north of Village East which is called Greythorne. This included a multitude of various housing options including patio homes, single-family homes, and apartment units. This is evidence that the Village East area is in high demand for housing. At the Main Street exit of the development, an EduKids Daycare facility was constructed and is at capacity with a wait list, showing it is warranted and a convenient location for the various employees in the area.

**Future Public and Private Investment**

Future investments can also be linked to SUNY Erie Community College (ECC) North Campus through envisioned Sport Complex improvements, creating an area defining park to be utilized by the college community as well as residents and visitors to the area. Goals of this project include providing more options in a central location for the ECC student athletes along with promoting recreational activities for the larger student body and enhancing the overall campus resources. The Town of Amherst is supporting this catalytic project and exploring options for shared facilities between the Town and College. Investing in this community asset will enhance the vision for creating an active and sustainable downtown area.

Premium PPE expanded their operations in 2020 when the company moved into a 43,700-square-foot building at 120 Earhart Drive, added 25 jobs, and invested in equipment, including machines to make surgical and face masks. Tragically, the Premium PPE facility was lost in a 2021 fire. Despite this loss, owners intend to reinvest at the same location once proper clean-up and insurance claim processes are complete. E-commerce is a growing industry and Amherst has been preparing sites throughout the Town through strategic planning and rezoning to create development-ready sites. Key sites include one located near the DRI area which is prepared for future investment in the creation of an e-commerce facility.

Slated for 2022, public investment at Mathewson McCarthy Baseball Park will include upgraded lighting, featuring the replacement of existing poles / lights and adding new poles / lights to a field that is not currently lit. In addition to the recently expanded parking lot at Mathewson McCarthy Baseball Park, this future public investment is a testament to the Town’s commitment to its parks and public amenities, especially within Village East.

A proposed Youngs Road Interchange appears in *Moving Forward 2050*, the GBNRTC’s 2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan, as an illustrative project that is currently unfunded but warrants further analysis. This would be an interchange on the I-90 thruway just south of the Village West area that would help provide a more direct access to the thruway for residents, employees, and distributors and may even help to alleviate traffic along Main Street and Youngs Road should it be seen to fruition.
RECENT OR IMPENDING JOB GROWTH

The Greater Buffalo Niagara Regional Transportation Council (GBNRTC) maintains estimates and forecasts of population, housing, and employment change for all Census Block Groups in Erie and Niagara counties. The current set of forecasts are for 2050, based on 2015 estimates. From 2021 to 2050 the Town of Amherst is expected to solidify its position as a major regional employment center, with a forecasted increase of 13,033 jobs. By 2050 the Town is anticipated to be the location of more than 135,000 jobs.

The DRI area mostly incubates the 14221 zip code, which attracts 45,035 employees from outside the zip code each day. 5,348 residents live and work in the 14221 zip code, making the total employed in this area 50,383 per the 2018 United States Census Bureau Inflow / Outflow Analysis. It is vital to capitalize on these workforce numbers through continued public and private investment and DRI funding will accelerate this initiative.

Sustained private investment in the Village East has contributed to attracting a diverse workforce. When Evans Bank Corporate Headquarters completed their move to Amherst in 2020, they were able to retain 173 Full-Time Jobs while creating 20 new Full-Time jobs and approximately 27 construction jobs were created during the project. Coupled with the National Fuel Headquarters, also located in the DRI area, these companies continued investments are contributing to the successful workforce growth in Village East.

Through expansions over the years, the College Park Office Complex is currently the home for 11 companies and approximately 2,000 jobs yet still has more space to expand. Village East contains a variety of successful businesses, it also features multiple sites that are empty yet ready for development. A strategic approach to smart development of these sites will accelerate attracting a diverse workforce to the DRI area.

Significant opportunities exist throughout Village East to build upon job growth initiatives. As more professionals desire a live-work-play environment, the Town of Amherst continues to focus on enhancing its assets to promote a vibrant downtown area. Leveraging the student population at ECC North Campus also provides amplify opportunities to enhance the workforce in Village East. Through recent and proposed mixed-use developments, the Town is working with developers to ensure the impending job growth from proposed projects is met with the ability to attract the diverse workforce to an active and sustainable downtown.
QUALITY OF LIFE

Village East has all the qualities necessary to be an attractive and livable downtown for diverse populations of all ages and socioeconomic status. It does, however, need support to enhance these tools and accelerate its revitalization to reach its full potential. This is a prime location to implement smart growth policies to create a more densely developed, walkable community that will be a destination for students, businesses, employment, living and public enjoyment. The goal is to extend the Village of Williamsville character into Amherst to enhance the quality of life and offer a wider array of land uses, services, amenities, housing options and job opportunities.

The Village of Williamsville, directly adjacent to the west, prides itself as being both walkable and bikeable. Main Street in the Village (the main thoroughfare) has many Complete Street elements such as continuous sidewalks, on-street parking, vehicular lanes, pedestrian amenities (benches, trash cans, landscaping) and a crosswalk infrastructure which makes it safer for pedestrians and bicyclists to travel. Despite a solid foundation of walkability in the Village of Williamsville, the continuation of these Complete Street elements on Main Street west through the Town only continues in the form of sidewalks and vehicular lanes - the walkable feel diminishes. As can be noted in the picture below, Main Street, the major thoroughfare through this DRI area, is a wide automobile-oriented roadway. This auto-oriented feel continues along Youngs Road and Wehrle Drive, the other two major roadways in the Village East area. ECC North is also a major commuter campus, with the majority of students driving to classes, and therefore contributes to the overall traffic in the area.

There are a lot of opportunities to further improve upon Village East’s walkability and accessibility, and attract both students and residents into this area by enhancing the major corridors with similar walkability elements as the Village has; adding connections to the ECC campus; and providing an attractive mixed-use environment. The vision is to transform the Village East area’s livability and attractiveness to students, creating an inviting and aesthetically pleasing center of dynamic activity and economic vitality. The goals for improved quality of life include:

- Extend the aesthetic qualities from the Village of Williamsville into the Town
- Extend walkability to improve health and well being
- Develop enhanced pedestrian connections to the ECC North Campus
- Encourage mixed-use development to enable a live, work, play environment
- Increase safety for all modes of transportation
- Enhance campus recreational facilities to be utilized by residents of Amherst
A major component to the development of the Village East area, and a tremendous asset to the community, is the inventory of vacant or underutilized properties that could have a great contribution to the future of Amherst if their full potential is reached. The majority of these properties are large enough to accommodate commercial or mixed-use development projects that are in close proximity to the ECC North campus and its student base. If realized to their full potential, they can provide a variety of amenities that young professionals are searching for when selecting where to live or go to school including retail and restaurant options. As there is a large office presence in the area, expanding and providing improved office spaces would also bring additional jobs to the area.

There is also a significant demand for residential units in the Village and in the Town, as evidenced by the current housing market. This is especially true with the presence of the ECC campus and the lack of off-campus student housing within walking distance of the campus. With underachieving and vacant properties that make intriguing prospects for residential units, and a demonstrated demand for new units for this area, Amherst is in a position to greatly enhance the vibrancy of the community by bringing new apartments online that are geared towards those searching for market-rate, affordable, and even luxury residential units. The Town has the demand and the potential to increase the stock - all that is needed now is to help spur the investment necessary to create new units so they are available for individuals searching for a place to live.

Another aspect that makes Amherst attractive is the commercial and retail businesses located here. People working or living in this DRI area can easily walk to a variety of amenities and businesses. A newer mixed-use building on the eastern border of the Village of Williamsville, across from Williamsville South High School, proves the desire to provide mixed-use spaces and the market demand for such developments inching closer to the Village East area. The Village of Williamsville has many planned events including Old Home Days, Music on Main Street, and a farmer's market at Village Hall in the summer. Increased connectivity along Main Street from ECC would only enhance access and walkability to these existing assets and events, and create connections to projected enhancements to be made on the campus along Main Street. A pedestrian-friendly focus as part of the overall vision will create improved mobility and gathering places, allowing more time for shopping, eating, socializing and enjoyment in the Village East area, which is something millennials and generation Z (current ECC students) wants as an aside to school work. Increased opportunity for walking and biking can help improve resident health and well-being as well.

Revitalization of the Village East area will induce redevelopment with a greater variety of uses, public greenspace and amenities, opportunities for improved mobility (walking and biking) and healthy living that will satisfy and enhance the current and future needs of residents on the site and in the nearby community. The availability of a wider range of jobs and goods and services, as well as a more enticing public realm, will contribute to the overall attractiveness, sense of place and vibrancy of this area. It is intended to become a new and more vital downtown center for Amherst.
SUPPORTIVE LOCAL POLICIES

Town of Amherst Comprehensive Plan

The Town of Amherst Comprehensive Plan provides guidance and defines the desired vision for the future of the Town. The vision statement is derived from three fundamental attributes:

- Livability
- Community Character
- Shared Direction

These three attributes speak to the Village East area which aims to create a pedestrian-friendly, interconnected, mixed-use area, balancing economic growth and revitalization with connections to the anchor ECC North Campus. The Plan established goals to support this vision and policies for land use and development and economic development.

These land use goals and policies in the Plan envision a Town with a strong tax based and ample economic opportunities for a diverse base of employers and employees in attractive commercial developments in convenient and accessible locations. Promoting the redevelopment of walkable, high density, mixed-use centers, targeting capital improvements to leverage private investment, coordinating with public transportation and the location of community facilities, and enhancing community appearance are key land use objectives in the Plan that fully support the objectives and projects listed for the Village West area. A primary objective is to advance the redevelopment and revitalization of underutilized, obsolete and vacant properties for economically viable uses. The Plan recommends reinvestment and redevelopment where market conditions, site location and other factors warrant it.

Regarding ECC North Campus, the Plan recognizes that its large student enrollment makes a variety of educational, vocational, and recreational activities available to residents. It also recognizes that the campus provides numerous opportunities for knowledge-based activities and collaboration with surrounding businesses. ECC is considering consolidating its facilities and relocate programs to the North Campus and the Plan outlines that the Town desires community recreation facilities and athletic fields available for residents and mixed-use development along Main Street with office, neighborhood commercial, science technology, and educational uses. Redevelopment of the surrounding lands should also be consistent with Policy 3-9 to advance the redevelopment and revitalization of underutilized, obsolete, and vacant properties for economically viable uses. The Plan also outlines the Town's desire to retain students and knowledge. With such a depth of educational institutions, the infrastructure is already in place to achieve the goal of training, attracting, and retaining skilled workers. Providing a walkable, vibrant downtown in Village East can help to achieve this goal.

There is also a Williamsville Focal Planning Area in Chapter 10 of the Plan. It identifies that there is a transitional mix of uses and forms from some of the tallest buildings in the Village to suburban development approaching Village East, but also that ECC provides a student population to support retail services on Main Street given a better walking environment and mix of uses closer to campus. The Area Plan includes the following initiatives and strategies:

- Improve the streetscape on Main Street and create guidelines
- Encourage traditional forms of development
- Create a cohesive village center focus
- Develop enhanced pedestrian connections
- Encourage mixed-use
• Initiate physical improvements to the intersection of the I-290 and Main Street
• Reinforce neighborhood connections to local amenities
• Consolidate and redevelop underutilized or vacant properties

The revitalization of Village East will enable some of these goals and policies to come to move forward.

Amherst Mixed-Use Zoning Districts

The land use objectives in the Comprehensive Plan recommended improvements to the Town’s Zoning Code to encourage mixed-use development and improved site and building design in a more context-sensitive manner. This resulted in a Comprehensive Plan Amendment in 2017 which included revisions to the existing goals, objectives and policies, specifically focused in Chapter 3: Land Use and Development, to support future updates to the zoning regulations.

A majority of the Town’s commercial centers are zoned as General Business (GB) or Shopping Center (SC). These districts were originally crafted to promote suburban growth and development located along large, commercial corridors. The Town has come to realize GB and SC are not appropriate for use in areas embedded in existing neighborhoods or located along traditional, historic streets such as in Village West. Over time it became clear that the “one-size fits all” approach was ineffective and new zoning tools were needed to manage new development and keep pace with current and future development trends. Subsequently, in 2019, the Town amended its Zoning Code and created new Mixed-Use Zoning Districts.

The new mixed-use district involve a more form-based approach with a focus on building form and design rather than use. These provisions address building materials and transparency, height transitions to neighborhoods, and landscaping requirements, and also establish smaller street grids within larger developments. New streets are intended to improve vehicular connections, access, and traffic flow both within properties and on adjacent roadways. Various street types are proposed, with a Core Street requirement for the Center Districts which incorporate Complete Street principles such as pedestrian amenities, bike lanes, landscaping, and on-street parking. The Town approved the new Mixed-Use Zoning Districts in Fall of 2019 and has successfully applied the mixed-use districts to approximately 200 commercial parcels in its Boulevard Central District, and most recently applied them to 35 parcels within Snyder.

It is the Town’s intention to continue these rezonings to encourage a mix of land uses that combine to make working, shopping, recreation, and living more convenient. Village East is a top priority and is slated be rezoned with mixed-use districts in order to correspond to and complement its historic context with the Village of Williamsville to the east. This will also help to create a desirable downtown district for Amherst and ECC North. Through the implementation of the new zoning, redevelopment will induce a traditional, human-scale “Main Street” environment, activate street life, provide for walkability, and generate increased interest from developers to reimagine and redevelop their properties. Initial phases of redevelopment on a few key sites can begin to introduce new, walkable, mixed-use areas for students and resident alike.
Village of Williamsville Goals and Policies

The historic Village of Williamsville occupies a unique niche within the Buffalo-Niagara area. Within easy commuting distance to Buffalo, regional shopping destinations, and transportation infrastructure including the Buffalo-Niagara International Airport, the Village is both an attractive place to live and in which to do business. The demands of the automobile, however, have had the biggest impact on Village fabric and the very character and qualities that make Williamsville special. As traffic on Main Street increased, improvements such as road widening and turning lanes were made to avoid gridlock. Unfortunately, these changes came at a cost to pedestrians and Village character. Surrounded today by suburban malls and big box retail developments, the Village desires to continue its heritage and history into Amherst to transform this area of the Town.

The Village’s Community Plan, last updated in 2015, provides a series of strategies that can be implemented to mitigate traffic impacts, focus on future land use and small businesses, and leverage the potential of the Village’s pedestrian environment to its fullest. Early on in the public process, it became clear that Village residents valued the historic character of Main Street and the mix of uses that are the hallmarks of a vibrant village center. The plan recommends the following qualities of a walkable, mixed-use environment:

- A mix of uses at a higher density and in closer proximity to one another than what is typically found in surrounding, lower density areas
- Urban design amenities such as sidewalks, landscaping and other elements to create pedestrian-friendly environments
- A concentration of public and community facilities, including schools
- Vehicular and pedestrian/bicycle connections to surrounding neighborhoods
- Transit service

Regional Plans and Goals

In February 2020, the GBNRTC conducted a traffic impact analysis for the proposed Youngs Road Interchange on the I-90 thruway just south of the Village East area using their regional travel demand model. The proposed Youngs Road Interchange appears in Moving Forward 2050, the GBNRTC’s 2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan, as an illustrative project that is currently unfunded but warrants further analysis. The intent of the analysis was to assess the traffic impacts to the surrounding highway network due to the proposed interchange. The various alternatives analyzed, the results indicated that the most notable impact to traffic is a shift in demand from Main Street in Williamsville to the I-90 between Exit 50 and the new interchange at Youngs Road. Level of Service (LOS) improves on Main Street and portions of Youngs Road.

In addition, the GBNRTC recently completed a Regional Bike Master Plan entitled “Bike Buffalo Niagara.” The Plan includes priority corridors to close gaps in the network and design guidelines that support bicycling as a safe, comfortable, and healthy form of transportation, recreation and physical activity. It identifies Youngs Road as a future Tier 3 on-road bike route through Village East and adjacent to the ECC campus.
PUBLIC SUPPORT

Amherst’s neighborhoods form the foundation of our community and the building blocks to the Town’s continued success. It is important to reach out to neighborhoods and residents to understand the valued characteristics, current issues, and future opportunities in various areas of Town; this is essential for effective community planning. Amherst has always been diligent in collecting community input with each project or initiative it carries out.

Recently, the Town conducted a series of Neighborhood Visioning Forums in 10 neighborhoods throughout the Town; this effort won a New York Upstate American Planning Association (NY Upstate APA) award for Community Outreach. These forums provided an opportunity for Town representatives and staff to meet with residents and property owners to discuss existing conditions, examine local concerns, and recognize opportunities for improvement and future desires in each of the 10 neighborhoods. This provided the Town with extensive neighborhood level data to help shape Town planning for the future.

The forum held in the Main-Transit area had five breakout tables, each of which participated in an exercise which listed the historic and current assets, and opportunities within the neighborhood. Residents were also asked the question "If you could change, improve, implement or create one thing moving forward, what would it be?" The following depicts the assets and common themes from each of those breakout groups within the Main-Transit neighborhood. Residents and property owners understand the important benefits of a revitalized Village East in terms of the goods and services, quality of life, jobs and economic prosperity it could offer for years to come. This information was instrumental for shaping a vision for Village East and identification of projects in this application.

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**Main-Transit Forum Summary**

**COMMON THEMES:**
- Desire for more parks and trails
- Desire for bicycle amenities
- Traffic calming and improved pedestrian safety measures on major roadways
- Better and safer connections to businesses on Main Street
- Maintain community character
- New development that is consistent with existing context / scale
- Neighborhoods connections to ECC North
- Access to the thruway at Youngs

**HISTORIC ASSETS:**
- Large and well maintained residential lots
- Many trees
- Lots of open space
- Close to the Village of Williamsville
- Easy access to businesses and offices
- Williamsville South High School

**CURRENT ASSETS:**
- Good schools
- Adequate fire and police services
- A balance of residential and commercial uses
- Erie Community College North Campus
Another piece to the public forums included a Visual Preference Survey. Residents were shown a series of images of different types of development and asked to rate them on a scale of 1 to 10 depending on whether or not they represent the character and scale that should be in their neighborhood (two different examples are shown below). As expected, the images depicting a denser, mixed-use development garnered a higher ratings than those of more rural or suburban development, indicating that this neighborhood is more comfortable with commercial character located along Main Street in the Village of Williamsville and may desire that to continue into Amherst in the future as well.

As evidenced by the letters of support attached to this application, reinvestment and renewal of Village East is viewed as significant for the Town, the Village of Williamsville, and region, and is supported by local leaders and other stakeholders for a number of reasons including job creation, business opportunities, additional housing, connections and walkability, enhancement of amenities, and overall improved quality of life. Although the Town is submitting this DRI application, ECC has been working diligently over the past several years to come up with different improvements and visions for their campus and students and fully supports the projects listed that would fall under their jurisdiction. Local leaders, small business owners, property owners, and local developers familiar with this area of Town are ready to start the planning process with the Town to ensure that the vision for their properties comes to life.
Transformative Opportunities & Readiness

The Town of Amherst has taken a comprehensive approach to the revitalization of Village East by developing and showcasing a diverse mix of projects in the following categories.

1. Continuation of the Village of Williamsville's walkability and small business success, and enhancing pedestrian safety and connections. The following projects (see full list on the Projects Map page) in this category are:

   5 Main Street Streetscape
   6 Youngs Road Streetscape
   7 Tech Drive Pedestrian Improvements
   8 Wehrle Drive Streetscape

2. Support for private investment consistent with the scale of the Town's vision. The following projects in this category are:

   1 Main/Youngs Development
   2 College Park Development
   3 Wehrle/Youngs Development
   4 Wehrle Drive Development

3. Expansion of and enhancements to the ECC North Campus for students and the residents of Amherst. The following projects in this category are:

   9 ECC North Campus Expansion
1. Main/Youngs Development
   Private Development, Uniland Development Company

2. College Park Development
   Private Development, Zaepfel Development Company

3. Wehrle/Youngs Development
   Private Development, Uniland Development Company

4. Wehrle Drive Development
   Private Development, Acquest Development

5. Main Street Streetscape
   Town of Amherst, Village of Williamsville and NYSDOT

6. Youngs Road Streetscape
   Town of Amherst and Erie County Department of Public Works

7. Tech Drive Pedestrian Improvements
   Public, Town of Amherst and Erie Community College

8. Wehrle Drive Streetscape
   Town of Amherst and Erie County Department of Public Works

9. ECC North Campus Expansion
   Town of Amherst and Erie Community College
Project 1
Main/Youngs Development

Private Development
Estimated Project Cost: $18,000,000

Project Goals

• Provide additional jobs with immediate access to the I-290 Highway, I-90 NYS Thruway, and Route 33 Kensington Expressway

• Allow for direct access to the surrounding region via the major transportation linkages

• Foster and enhance the vision for medical corridor growth in the Town

• Increase investment on Main Street

• Access to the public NFTA bus route for employees

Existing Conditions view
6120 Main Street, located on the northwest corner of Main Street and Youngs Road right outside the Village of Williamsville is a large 6.2 acre site. It is currently an assemblage of underutilized vacant lots and several single-family homes. Uniland Development is proposing a development project at would be the ideal spot for a medical office building/medical office complex. The proposed three story office complex will be designed to accommodate approximately 70,000 square feet for office, professional and medical uses and 6,000 square feet of ground floor retail. The development also includes over 330 parking spaces for employees and patrons. It is envisioned that the retail component of this site will have synergy with the complex’s medical tenants.

The building is proposed closer to the street with the parking behind, in line with both the Village of Williamsville’s zoning code and the Town’s new mixed-use zoning districts. This is in line with the vision for a more walkable area on this portion of Main Street, as the current gas station, car wash, and recreational fields at this same corner currently do not provide. The proposed usage is also in line with Amherst’s Recovery Plan initiative to encourage and attract medical growth in the Town.

Direct access to Main Street and Youngs Road provides a close link to the surrounding region via the NYS Thruway, Kensington Expressway, Sheridan Drive, and Wehrle Drive for perspective tenants, creating a regional medical destination for those needing specific services and care. The property is steps from the SUNY Erie North Campus and is close to the retail districts on Transit Road and Main Street, the Williamsville Public Library, and Amherst Town Hall. It is also close to many area business located in the Village of Williamsville which will allow employees of perspective tenets easy access to restaurants, shopping and personal services.
Project 2
College Park Development

Private Development
Estimated Project Cost: $30,000,000

Project Goals

- Increase access to medical facilities for residents in Amherst and the region as a whole
- Expand medical tourism opportunities in the Town
- Provide educational opportunities for ECC North Campus students in medical fields
- Support the Town's desires to attract and retain state-of-the-art medical facilities

Existing Conditions view
Zaepfel Development Company is proposing to develop a medical campus as part of the College Park Office Park on Wehrle Drive and Youngs Road that would contain a multi-stage medical center containing a medical office building, a surgical center and a rehab facility. It would also include an adjoining hotel for patients and their families to stay at while they need to remain in the area for their medical care.

The entire facility will be located at 125 College Parkway, off of the west side of Youngs Road north of Wehrle Drive, across from the SUNY Erie Community College North Campus. The proposed development is located across from the Randstad complex, a staffing and recruiting agency.

Additional space will be available for possible occupancy of other complimentary uses that would help support the medical center such as places to eat or other ancillary medical uses that support the proposed services. The College Park facility will be comprised of an approximately 20,000 square feet surgical center, a 20,000 square foot medical office building, an 18,000 square foot rehab facility, and a 69 room hotel.

This supports the Town's desires to attract and retain medical uses to Amherst, building off of the existing medical facilities and complexes throughout portions of the Town, one of which is located in the Village West area along Park Club Lane and includes Roswell Park and Univera Healthcare.

The location across from SUNY Erie Community College North Campus adds various opportunities for both educational training and facility staffing utilizing the college as a resource within walking distance of the student and faculty population. It may help to retain the knowledge-based student population after they graduate, especially if the various other projects proposed for Village East also come to fruition.
Project 3
Wehrle/Youngs Development

Project Goals

- Provide off-campus student housing currently lacking in this area
- Provide safe connections to the campus via an improved Youngs Road and Wehrle Drive streetscapes
- Provide space for new businesses and restaurants and related jobs for students and residents
- Increase overall walkability for this area

Private Development
Estimated Project Cost: $15,000,000

Existing Conditions view
1790 Wehrle Drive, located at the northeast corner of Wehrle Drive and Youngs Road, is a 3.35 acre site that is currently an underutilized vacant lot. This is adjacent to the large College Park Office Park to the north and west. Uniland Development is proposing a three story, 71,000 square foot mixed-use facility. This infill project would consist of approximately 24,000 square feet of ground floor retail and 47,000 square feet of housing (about 32 apartment units) on the above two floors. This include parking for 193 cars and has direct access to Youngs Road and the existing development to the west.

Since the site is in close proximity (directly adjacent to the west across Youngs Road) to the SUNY Erie North Campus, it is envisioned that the housing component would be focused on students. Currently there is a lack of off-campus housing in this area. Although many students do commute to the campus, those who cannot or have long distances to drive would find this housing option a welcome addition and within a short walking distance from the campus. The retail component will likely contain uses that would be attractive to students and campus life such as restaurants and small retail stores. Again, retail in this area and around the campus is currently non-existent as the majority of uses surrounding the campus are medical and office.

This redevelopment also fosters the idea of a Youngs Road pedestrian enhancements. If built, a safe connection along and across Youngs will be key for those students living in the development to access the campus. Connections further along an improved Wehrle Drive streetscape, specifically to the Village of Williamsville businesses and amenities, would also be supported by these students looking for things to do outside of school hours.
**Project 4**

Wehrle Drive Development

**Private Development**

Estimated Project Cost: $45,000,000

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**Project Goals**

- Provide more property tax revenues by returning vacant land to a useful state
- Provide infill development to enhance and strengthen the area around ECC
- Bolster other economic activity on other nearby parcels
- Provide additional jobs for the region
- Provide additional Class A office space located by ECC and other existing offices

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Existing Conditions view
The Acquest Development Companies proposed development site is an approximately 25 acre property on the north side of Wehrle Drive at the eastern border of the Village East area. The proposal consists of two parcels; 2190 Wehrle Drive (5.7 acres) and 2220 Wehrle Drive (19.2 acres) which are in the process of being merged into a single lot to accommodate this development. Acquest purchased 2190 Wehrle Drive in 2005 and has owned the adjacent parcel at 2220 Wehrle Drive since 1997. 2190 Wehrle Drive was recently rezoned from Residential District Three (R-3) to Office Building District (OB) in June of 2021.

Acquest is in the process of finalizing fully engineered site drawings for the initial phases of the project to include in its site plan application to the Town. The initial plans are to complete a new public right-of-way and install associated infrastructure to accommodate the office and associated buildings on the north portion of the property as shown on the site plan (Buildings A, B, C, & D). These buildings will consist of a three-story 85,000 square foot office building, a 25,000 square foot support/maintenance building, a two-story parking structure with approximately 200 parking spaces, and a small security/visitor outbuilding.

Future phases of the project as shown on the site plan as Buildings E & F consist of a three-story 103,500 square foot medical office building and a single-story 17,250 square foot office building. The civil plans being developed for the initial phase of the project will take these planned buildings into account to ensure the infrastructure is adequately sized. The proposed project would add to the overall office space within Village East, attracting job growth and contributing to the overall local economy and Town’s tax base. New employees within this development would benefit from a walkable, mixed-use area surrounding their office to enjoy retail and restaurant uses on their breaks.
**Project 5**

Main Street Streetscape

**Project Goals**

- Extend walkability west along Main Street from the Village to the Town and ultimately to Transit Road
- Provide bike lanes and safe crossings for bicyclists and pedestrians
- Continuation of the Picture Main Street improved streetscape elements such as bump outs, landscaping and amenities
- Encourage various redevelopment opportunities & connectivity between them

**Estimated Project Cost:** $600,000

**Town of Amherst**

**Village of Williamsville**
Main Street is the primary east-west traffic corridor for the Town as well as a main commuter route for people living both east and west of the Village and in neighboring communities. The volume of traffic traversing Main Street through the Village of Williamsville and the Town is among the highest of any similar highway in New York State and higher traffic volumes are typically constant throughout the day. During the morning and afternoon peak hours, many of the intersections approach capacity or go over. During peak commuter times the traffic on Main Street backs up and is congested creating difficulty for both drivers and pedestrians in the corridor. This congestion, in turn, impacts pedestrian circulation and parking throughout the Village and in the Town, adversely affecting the quality of life for residents and vitality for businesses.

Main Street is wide (approximately 72 ft), and the long crossing combined with high traffic volumes and vehicle speeds makes crossing Main Street difficult for pedestrians. A reduction in the number of lanes at the intersections without reducing the existing traffic volumes would result in over-capacity conditions and significantly greater congestion throughout the corridor. Pending changes to regional traffic patterns or reduction of traffic volumes along Main Street, it would be challenging to undertake significant changes to roadway width and lane configurations to better accommodate pedestrian traffic. Instead, the Complete Street approach focuses on consideration of improvements to both the roadway and the roadside as a means of improving conditions for pedestrians, businesses and motorists.

The Picture Main Street project in the Village of Williamsville was completed in 2018 and included a variety of pedestrian improvements. Sidewalks were reconstructed and improved with bump out at key intersections, including benches and landscaping, creating a more inviting and safe pedestrian realm. A HAWK signal was also installed to create a safe crossing near the municipal buildings and public library. Unfortunately, there are still no provisions on Main Street for bicyclists other than to travel with the motor vehicles sharing the travel lanes and bicycle trails exist throughout the Village currently exist but with no connection to Main Street. The Town desires to continue the improvements made to Main Street with the Picture Main Street project along with improving bicycle infrastructure and other pedestrian amenities. These include the following:

- Plant trees along the corridor where they are currently lacking
- Plant appropriate landscaping to beautify the corridor
- Install green medians for pedestrian refuge and additional landscaping
- Use Bulb-Outs to short and make safer crossings where feasible
- Create wayfinding through banners, signs and gateway features
- Provide for separate bicycle lanes or better bicycle signage
- Re-envision street furnishings and lighting for aesthetics
- Lower the speed limit to 30 MPH along the whole corridor
- Install continuous sidewalks where gaps are evident
Project 6
Youngs Road Streetscape

Project Goals
- Installing new sidewalks and connecting gaps in existing sidewalks for better continuity
- Creating safe connections between Town residents and the ECC North Campus
- Installing bicycle lanes on both sides of the roadway to align with regional plans
- Adding landscaping and green infrastructure for beautification and storm water management
Youngs Road is currently the major north/south connection between Main Street and Youngs Road in the Village East area and a major thoroughfare for the Town. On its northern end closer to Main Street, Youngs Road is only a two lane roadway and lacks sidewalks on the west side of the street. As it approaches the STEM building on the ECC North Campus, the roadway widens with a right-turn lane to accommodate the College Park Office Park traffic. Its geometry continues to expand further as it approaches Wehrle Drive, with a middle turn lane and a continuous right-turn lane. Sidewalks do currently exist on the southern portion of the road on both sides, making connections to the College Park Office Park.

There is access to College Park via its own internal roadway system and also access to the ECC North Campus via Arrow Drive and parking areas. There are also a vehicular connection to the adjacent neighborhood to the west via Lyndhurst Road, yet sidewalks into this neighborhood are also lacking.

Because this section of Youngs Road in Village East is the most important connection for ECC North, the Lyndhurst neighborhood, and between the two east/west roadways, Main Street and Wehrle Drive, it is by far the most important roadway to apply Complete Street principles to. Improvements will include two-lanes at 35 MPH to ensure traffic remains slow and safe for the pedestrian improvements that are also proposed. Two bicycle lanes are proposed on either side of the driving lanes, as part of the roadway right-of-way, separated by integrated with the roadway. This is in line with the proposed on-road bicycle lane proposed in the GBNRTC's Regional Bicycle Master Plan.

The project includes installing continuous sidewalks along both sides of the street where they are currently lacking. This also includes a sidewalk connection down Lyndhurst Road into the neighborhood. A safe pedestrian crossing at the Youngs Road and Lyndhurst Road is also anticipated to enable safe travel for residents and students. This would enable the connections to the improvements on the ECC North Campus (as described later in this application). Other streetscape enhancements could include landscaping and green infrastructure for beautification and stormwater management opportunities. This would continue the walkable fee from the Village of Williamsville and create the desired connections between the Town of Amherst and the ECC North Campus.
Project 7
Tech Drive Pedestrian Improvements

Town of Amherst
Erie Community College

Estimated Project Cost: $390,000

Project Goals

• Increase the overall walkability of the roadway
• Create connections and walkability between the ECC North Campus and the YMCA
• Provide pedestrian amenities like sidewalks and crosswalks for safe travel
• Plant additional trees and landscaping for a better aesthetic feel
• Provide additional on-street parking spaces for students, YMCA patrons, and during sporting events

Existing Conditions view
Tech Drive is a campus roadway that runs north/south between Main Street and Wehrle Drive. It acts as the eastern border for the ECC North Campus and main access for students coming to the campus. It is currently only two lanes, one in each direction at approximately 24 feet wide. It is the major roadway that residents use to access the YMCA Buffalo-Niagara branch on its west side across from the campus. Arrow Drive, the main west/east roadway for the campus, intersects with Tech Drive near the YMCA. Other than the YMCA, no other business or establishments utilize this roadway for access to their site. The main frontages along the road include recreational fields at the north end and large parking areas for the ECC campus at the south. Tech Drive tends to be a cut through for local residents looking to avoid traffic on Main Street or Wehrle Drive.

Because this roadway is mostly accessed by students and those utilizing the YMCA services and programs, the Town and ECC envision that pedestrian improvements could be made along Tech Drive for better connections, access and safety. When events are taking place at the ECC sports fields on the northern end of Tech Drive, the roadway is utilized for parking and can become very narrow and heavily trafficked, as you cannot currently park on Youngs Road on the opposite side of the fields. On-street parking in this section or along the entire roadway would not only provide spaces for those attending sporting events but also provides additional spaces for students at ECC. With the planned expansion and beautification of this campus, Tech Drive may become a more utilized and trafficked roadway. Anticipating and providing more spaces now for this future expansion is proactive.

The current ECC parking lot adjacent to Tech Drive does have landscape islands adjacent to the roadway, but only some have trees. Both the Town and ECC desire installation of missing trees and additional landscaping in these islands, along with new landscaping where feasible on the east side of Tech Drive near the YMCA and the two churches which anchor both ends. Currently there are no sidewalk on either side of this roadway. This can be dangerous for anyone walking especially students, those at the YMCA and during sporting events. Addition of continuous sidewalks enables better walkability and connections, and a place for those doing recreational activities at the YMCA to walk outside during good weather days. Sidewalks should be installed on at least one side of the street to enable walkability and connectivity. Main Street is highly trafficked and may not be a good place to encourage pedestrians to cross. Improved and visible crosswalks for pedestrians should be included though at the Arrow Drive and Wehrle Drive intersections, especially for those who may need to cross to access the Mathewson McCarthy baseball diamonds.
**Project 8**

Wehrle Drive Streetscape

**Project Goals**

- Install green medians in the existing turn lane when necessary
- Add landscaping for beautification and green infrastructure opportunities for green infrastructure
- Add a bike lane on one side of the road for safe travel for bicyclists
- Install a flashing beacon or other safe crossing elements at Tech Drive to access the Mathewson McCarthy baseball fields

**Estimated Project Cost:** $560,000
Wehrle Drive is the southern east/west roadway in the Village East area. It cuts through the College Park Office Park, with Ingram Micro, a major employer, to the south. It is also the southern border to the ECC North Campus. Because it is a major roadway in this area, it services high AM and PM peak traffic due to the College Park Business Park and the major commercial anchors located there. Students commuting to the campus from the south will utilize Wehrle Drive to access the campus, adding to the high traffic volumes. The large multi-family residential complex on Spindrift Drive also utilizes Wehrle Drive as its southern access point. It is similar to Main Street in size and geometry, with two lanes in each direction and a center turning lane. It currently contains continuous sidewalks along both sides of the road with grass strips between the sidewalks and the road.

Similar to the proposed Main Street Streetscape improvement project, Wehrle Drive Streetscape improvements would not include major reworking of the roadway itself. Green medians with additional landscaping could be included in the existing turn lane when appropriate. Additional landscaping and green infrastructure could also be included along the current green strips between the roadway and the sidewalk. An off-road bike lane adjacent to the existing sidewalk should be constructed to allow safe travel for bicyclists. This would encourage better connection with the pathways within ECC and to the Village of Williamsville to the west. A flashing beacon or another form of safe crossing should be provided for those utilizing the Mathewson McCarthy baseball diamonds south of Wehrle Drive across from Tech Drive. Those attending baseball games may park at ECC and currently do not have a safe crossing on Wehrle Drive.

The Erie County is currently in the process of soliciting comments for a Wehrle Drive project for roadway and paving improvements. This would enable that project to move forward with continued support from the Town. All of these improvements would enable better connectivity and walkability between the Town, businesses, ECC North Campus and the Mathewson McCarthy baseball fields.
**Project 9**  
**ECC North Campus Expansion**

**Town of Amherst**  
**Erie Community College**

**Estimated Project Cost:**  
$16,100,000

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**Project Goals**

- Provide a field house to service sporting events for the ECC North Campus and the three school districts in Amherst
- Create a "Great Lawn" for relaxation and event/activity space for students at ECC and residents of the Town
- Improve existing and build new pathways to enhance connectivity from ECC to the Town and surrounding neighborhoods
- Encourage mixed-use development along Main Street

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**Existing Conditions view**
SUNY Erie Community College is in the process of completing a strategic facility master planning process to further improve, expand and relocate their existing athletic facilities from the south campus to the north campus to take advantage of Main Street as the new “front door” to the campus and provide more athletic options in a central location for their student athletes. This move will promote recreational activities for the larger student body and enhance overall campus resources in both athletic and academic areas. This expansion will provide potential for some shared facilities between the Town of Amherst and ECC, as the Town has a growing need to develop an indoor field house for Town and Amherst, Sweet Home and Williamsville School District use.

Although this project is in the preliminary planning stages, it is envisioned that an 110,000 square-foot multisport indoor field house will be developed to serve as a premier sporting facility in addition to the proposed sports fields, including a football stadium with multipurpose turf, softball and baseball diamonds, a multipurpose soccer field and youth soccer fields. The facility could house an indoor track as well as facilities for a wide variety of both turf and court sports, such as and soccer, volleyball and basketball. In addition, the facility could provide space for college offices, training facilities and be available for community use. With the construction of a fieldhouse, not only will there be significant positive enrollment impact for the college, but SUNY Erie Community College and the Town of Amherst will be well positioned to host numerous national tournaments and sporting events generating millions of dollars in economic impact for the Town and County.

ECC is also proposing the beautification of their campus, including more landscaping with improvements to existing pathways and creation of new ones to create a more connected and aesthetically pleasing campus. Included in this is a large "Great Lawn" that is closer to the Main Street and Youngs Road intersection. It is the intent that this could be a gathering space for students to relax but also for the college to have a space for outdoor events and activities for the student body. It would be the intent that this "Great Lawn" be also accessible to residents of the Town and nearby neighborhoods to also enjoy. Major access to this space is anticipated to come from the Main and Youngs intersection with a large walkway. Mixed-use buildings could also line Main Street to create the walkable, vibrant feel that continues from the Village of Williamsville. These would provide space for businesses that would be supported by students at ECC.
DRI Project Allocations

The following table depicts the Town's proposed DRI project allocations for each of the proposed projects listed in the above section. It also lists the total cost for each of the project, which may include other public or private funding sources.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Village East Projects</th>
<th>Total Project Cost</th>
<th>Proposed DRI Award</th>
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<tr>
<td>1 Main Street Streetscape</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 Young's Road Streetscape</td>
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<td>3 Tech Drive Improvement</td>
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ADMINISTRATIVE CAPACITY

Amherst is known for its professionalism and for delivering on its commitments. The Town has demonstrated its ability to hire professional firms and contractors, acquire property, and otherwise advance planning and construction projects. Planning and Engineering staff have successfully managed Federal and State projects and all aspects of planning (scoping, preliminary design, detailed design, construction and inspection). The Town has a working knowledge of New York State’s Procedures for Locally Administered Federal Aid Projects (LAFAP) to assure that projects are developed, designed, and constructed in accordance with specific Federal and State requirements. Amherst has an exemplary record of managing Federal and State grants, having received various DOT, EPA, CFA, HUD and other grants over the years.

The Town's Planning staff includes 15 people: eight planners with various levels of experience, one landscape architect, four community development staff, and two administrative assistants. The robust Engineering staff includes six engineers and two GIS analysts, each with various expertise in different areas such as stormwater management, site plan review, and traffic and transportation. The Town also has extensive Highway and Building Departments, along with a new Economic Development Department that is the main liaison to Federal and State agencies.

The Town has its own Chamber of Commerce that remains dedicated to responding to the needs of the diverse and ever changing needs business community, maintains an open dialogue with its members and offers a variety of services that are market driven and well received. It is the mission of the Amherst Chamber of Commerce to nurture a strong economic environment in Western New York while providing members the tools to ensure their success. The Town also closely works with the Amherst Industrial Development Agency which has four full-time staff members and qualified professionals to assist in carrying out its mission "to promote economic diversity, quality employment opportunities and to broaden the tax base of the Town of Amherst and Village of Williamsville in order to reduce the tax burden on homeowners, while helping to maintain and enhance a high quality living environment." Both of these entities can assist with the proposed DRI projects should the Town be granted it.

Key Town of Amherst staff to be involved with administering a DRI grant include: Angela Rossi, Director of Economic Development, Emily Melski, Federal & State Aid Programs Coordinator, Daniel Howard, Planning Director, Daniel Ulatowski, Assistant Planning Director, Kimberly Amplement, Planner, Jeffery Burroughs, Town Engineer, and Christopher Schregel, Project Manager. In addition, the Town Supervisor, Brian Kulpa and the Chief Finance Officer will provide oversite. As this proposal includes projects described within the ECC Campus, the Town will work with and assist ECC with approved projects as necessary. In addition the Town will provide oversight to project proposed by private developers.
OTHER/CONCLUSION

The Town of Amherst’s two downtown areas, Village West and Village East, each provide unique opportunities for revitalization and can help expand the existing walkability and livability of the Village of Williamsville into two vibrant and desirable areas of Town. Each of the two submitted DRI applications can stand alone in shaping a brighter future for the downtown areas of Town. Village East contains a variety of both public and private future projects that can be catalytic for the transformation of this area including mixed-use and office development, streetscape and pedestrian improvements, and a project to enhance educational facilities. All of these will help to increase pedestrian and bicycle safety, create a more cohesive aesthetic, bring businesses and job growth to the area, contribute to the Town’s tax base, and increase the livability and overall quality of life for residents, students and visitors. This will become even more of a destination for the Western New York region. Enabling these projects to occur will be enhanced with the help of funding from a DRI grant, as neither the Town nor private developers alone can realize this entire vision without assistance. The Town, Erie Community College, and various private developers are ready to work together to revitalize Amherst, continuing its current desirability and moving towards an improved and vibrant future.
September 10, 2021

WNY Regional Economic Development Council
Co-chairs: Dr. Katherine Conway-Turner & Mr. Eric Reich
95 Perry Street
Buffalo, NY 14203

Re: Downtown Revitalization Initiative Grant for Amherst’s Village East Proposal

Dear Dr. Conway-Turner & Mr. Reich,

The redevelopment of Village East, outlined in the Town of Amherst’s Downtown Revitalization Initiative proposal, is an economic development project in the town that is long overdue. As Interim President for SUNY Erie, this is a welcomed proposal that will have significant positive effects on the revitalization of SUNY Erie Community College’s North Campus and has my full support. What I find most compelling about the Village East plan, is the focus on including our campus in the area. By developing this area, we will not only support the needs of the students of SUNY Erie, but also local businesses, small and large, that are in the vicinity or will choose to locate in the area once development takes place.

Currently, the Village East area has many developable sites but our focus at SUNY Erie Community College is a strategic facility master planning process to further improve, expand and relocate our existing athletic facilities from the south campus to the north campus to take advantage of Main Street as the “front door” to the campus and provide more athletic options in a central location for student athletes. This move will promote recreational activities for the larger student body and enhance overall campus resources in both athletic and academic areas. This expansion will also support The Town of Amherst’s growing need to develop more fields and a fieldhouse. It is envisioned that the Town of Amherst, Sweet Home and Williamsville School Districts will be able to share in the use of these facilities.

Although our project is in the preliminary planning stages, we are sure that this expansion will fill the void in the large green space fronting Main Street on the SUNY Erie North Campus that is not being used to its full potential, by either the college, our students or by the community at large. The DRI proposal has jump started this planning
process and will allow SUNY Erie to take a more strategic approach towards the opportunity to provide needed facilities for our students and community and will be the catalyst for starting this project.

The Village East proposal would take the area which incorporates the open and underutilized fields at north campus far beyond the concept on the pages. Once these specific projects are in place, this region would have addressed longstanding issues that will open the door for new projects and developments.

To paraphrase SUNY Erie’s Board of Trustee Chairwoman initial reaction to the plan, this project will be a game changer for our students, the College and the region.

Thank you for your leadership with the WNY Regional Economic Development Council and for your consideration for this unique project.

Sincerely,

William D. Reuter
Interim President
September 15, 2021

Dr. Katherine Conway-Turner  
Mr. Eric Reich  
Co-Chairs  
Western New York Regional Economic Development Council  
95 Perry St.  
Buffalo, NY 14203

Re: Support for the Town of Amherst’s DRI submissions

Dear Dr. Conway-Turner and Mr. Reich:

It has been conveyed to me that the Town of Amherst, NY will today submit two proposals under the Downtown Revitalization Initiative program: The Village West proposal and the Village East proposal; I write to convey my support for both submissions.

Each submission would leverage existing community strengths and assets to enhance economic vitality and quality of life by making strategic, targeted investments in things like infill development, walkability enhancements, and other mobility enhancements.

Under the leadership of Supervisor Brian Kulpa and the Town Board, the Town of Amherst, Buffalo’s largest suburb and one of the largest municipalities in the State of New York, is reimagining what a first-ring suburb could be and is demonstrating concrete strategies to reverse the trends of blight and disinvestment seen in first-ring suburbs nation-wide. These submissions continue that important and necessary work, and I am pleased to support them.

Thank you very much for your leadership and your consideration.

Sincerely,

Brian Higgins  
Member of Congress
September 13, 2021

Co-chairs: Dr. Katherine Conway-Turner & Mr. Eric Reich
WNY Regional Economic Development Council
95 Perry Street
Buffalo, NY 14203

Re: Downtown Revitalization Initiative Grant for Amherst’s Village East Proposal

Dear Dr. Conway-Turner & Mr. Reich

The Amherst Industrial Development Agency and Amherst Development Corporation support the Town of Amherst’s Downtown Revitalization Initiative Application to Empire State Development and the Western New York Regional Economic Development Council. For decades, the IDA has partnered with Amherst and Williamsville and private investors to create smart development to ensure long-term success.

The Town of Amherst’s Village East Proposal strengthens the connection to historic Williamsville and meets the tenets of contemporary development by catalyzing projects that improve livability, sustainability and employment opportunities. The projects proposed in the application are deliverable and will have a meaningful impact on the local and regional economy.

The Village East proposal calls for enhancing commercial development, designing a robust recreation space, and coordinating with SUNY Erie on reimagining the college’s North Campus on the eastern edge of the Village of Williamsvile. This entire area, branded as the Main Street-Youngs Road-Wehrle Drive corridor, is currently underutilized with vacant and disconnected land uses. It is home to several significant companies, such as Ingram Micro and Northrup Grumman, which makes the area ripe for development and enhancements if the necessary connections can be improved between the segmented uses. The activity generated by these companies paired with new public investment and available developable space is a winning combination for the corridor.

On behalf of the IDA and its Board of Directors, we are ready to help the Town mobilize the community and implement the program should this application be selected for funding. Thank you advance for your review and attention to this correspondence and the overall application for funds.

Yours truly,

David S. Mingoia
Executive Director, CEO & CFO
September 10, 2021

WNY Regional Economic Development Council
Co-chairs: Dr. Katherine Conway-Turner & Mr. Eric Reich
95 Perry Street
Buffalo, NY 14203

Re: Downtown Revitalization Initiative Grant for Amherst’s Village East Proposal

Dear Dr. Conway-Turner & Mr. Reich,

Acquest Development supports the Town of Amherst’s Village East Downtown Revitalization Initiative application and intends to be part of this comprehensive proposal. The Village East proposal would efficiently use the DRI funding award to its full potential to jumpstart a redesigned, vibrant district.

Included within the boundary is Acquest’s proposed project at Wehrle Drive. This catalyst infill project will create additional office space by Erie Community College North Campus.

Acquest has owned this strategically located site for nearly 25 years and is very excited to begin the initial construction of its planned $45,000,000 project in 2022. The project will consist of multiple class-A office buildings, a medical office building, and support structures including a multilevel parking garage. Upon completion the business park will have approximately 250,000 square feet of new space.

The strong partnership between the town and village governments and private developers is a tremendous benefit to the entire community. With so many stakeholders on the same page, sharing the same vision and goals for success, the DRI award would go far beyond the initial investments. This would significantly launch new investment in the Village East footprint.

Acquest has been a committed partner to the recent revitalization seen in the center of Williamsville, having relocated its national headquarters to the heart of the Village on Main Street.

Should you have any questions, please contact me at your convenience. I can be reached at 716-204-3570 or via email omar@acquestdevelopment.com.

Sincerely,

Omar Abu-Sitta
Acquest Wehrle, LLC
September 14, 2021

WNY Regional Economic Development Council
Dr. Katherine Conway-Turner, Co-Chair
Mr. Eric Reich, Co-Chair
95 Perry Street
Buffalo, NY 14203

RE:  Downtown Revitalization Initiative Grant for Town of Amherst’s Village East Proposal

Dear Dr. Conway-Turner & Mr. Reich,

Uniland Development Company is in support of the Town of Amherst’s Village East Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI) and fully intends to work with the town on its proposal. We are proud to be a part of this comprehensive plan through the proposed redevelopment of our property at 6120 Main Street and 1790 Wehrle Drive.

The 6120 Main Street site, a prominent location at the corner of Main Street and Youngs Road, is an assemblage of underutilized vacant lots and single-family homes. With adjacencies to the SUNY Erie Community College campus, the combined 6.2-acre site proposes a 3-story development totaling 76,000 SF. The program consists of 70,000 SF of office or medical office, 6,000 SF of ground floor retail to complement the medical tenants, and 335 carparks. The project would contribute to the 290-Medical Spine corridor vision consistent with the Town of Amherst’s aspirations.

The 1790 Wehrle Drive site, a highly visible location at the corner of Wehrle Drive and Youngs Road, is currently an underutilized vacant lot. Near the SUNY Erie Community College campus, the 3.35-acre site proposes a 3-story development totaling 71,000 SF. The program consists of 24,000 ground floor retail and 47,000 SF of housing over 32 units. Additionally, the project includes 193 carparks. Synergies with the college campus include student-focused retail and housing.

In summation, we believe both projects contribute to the future overall Youngs Road redevelopment and serve as gateway projects for the Town of Amherst. The Village East DRI would efficiently use the DRI funding award to its full potential to jumpstart a redesigned, vibrant district.
For nearly 50 years, Uniland has been proud to be a partner with the Town of Amherst and Village of Williamsville community. We know the great potential this region has and how vital the projects at 6120 Main Street and 1790 Wehrle Drive would be for the success of Village East. DRI funding would be critical to implementing this redevelopment. Thank you for considering this application and its many benefits.

Sincerely,

Kellena L.W. Kane
Director of Development