

Together  
with  
**LSC**

**EAST SIDE**

Launch Report | Quality of Life | 2022

# With Gratitude & Solidarity

The LISC WNY team is immensely grateful to the organizations, residents, and practitioners of the East Side communities who have shared, taught, and trusted us with their thoughts. Their experiences, especially within the context of the Covid-19 era, inspired us, and shaped the creation of this framework. We are constantly humbled by the leadership, strength and resiliency that we encounter daily from the people who call these places home.

We write these words as practitioners, working in partnership with community, centering the needs, lived experiences, wisdom and leadership of our Indigenous, Black and brown neighbors. We honor the sovereign Haudenosaunee (hoe-dee-no-SHOW-nee or hoe-den-oh-saw-nee) Six Nations, original stewards of this land we live on—the Mohawk, Cayuga, Onondaga, Oneida, Seneca and Tuscarora—and the places where the following work took place. May all that we do strive toward partnership with a spirit of reconciliation and collaboration. And from this reconciliation, let us begin to heal.

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 Buffalo Olmsted Parks Conservancy  
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 Northland Workforce  
 Training Center  
 Oishei Foundation  
 Olmsted Park Conservancy  
 Open Buffalo  
 Otis & Woodlawn  
 Neighborhood Association  
 Pappy Martin  
 Legacy Jazz Collective  
 Partnership for the Public Good  
 Polish Community  
 Center of Buffalo, Inc.  
 Population Health Collaborative  
 Preservation Buffalo Niagara  
 Pride in Place Buffalo Planning  
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 PUSH Buffalo  
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 Restore Our Community Coalition  
 Sattler Theater  
 Shared Mobility Inc.  
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 The Galactic Tribe  
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 Trust for Public Land  
 Ujima Theater  
 Univera Healthcare  
 University at Buffalo  
 Center for Urban Studies  
 University at Buffalo Food  
 Systems Planning and  
 Community Health Lab  
 University at Buffalo  
 Regional Institute  
 University at Buffalo School  
 of Architecture & Planning  
 University District Community  
 Development Association  
 Urban Fruits and Veggies  
 Urban Land Institute  
 Urban Vantage  
 vonetta t. rhodes, Poet  
 Westminster Economic  
 Development Initiative  
 White Bicycle Design Studios  
 Wise Young Builders  
 WNY Foundation  
 WNY Minority Media  
 Professionals, Inc.  
 WNY Urban Arts Collective  
 WNY Women's Foundation  
 Workforce Development Institute  
 WSP

# LISC Commitment

At its core, WITHIN makes space for community members to be the architects of their own neighborhoods. As an open, inclusive, community-driven initiative, we bring together neighborhood voices, trusted partners, and supportive funders in an effort to better the wellbeing of all who call Buffalo's East Side home. Together, we collaboratively identify projects that sustain positive momentum, and together, we get things done.

LISC WNY facilitated planning for three focus areas in the East Side, under the WITHIN WNY program. In alignment with the mission of LISC, to “forge resilient and inclusive communities of opportunity”, WITHIN supports community-activated progress. Centering the concept that to invest in a community, one must know the community, LISC WNY designed the WITHIN East Side process as a two-pronged approach—integrating economic development and quality-of-life planning.

Why an integrated methodology? The two types of planning efforts are largely intertwined. Both economic development and quality-of-life planning require understanding community history and dynamics, collaboratively identifying projects, building relationships with diverse stakeholders, and turning community priorities into progress. In this particular case, we also are planning to drive resources to effectively combat the underlying issues that have created inequities in the East Side.

# LISC Commitment continued...

These neighborhoods were selected because of the existing dichotomy. People of color make up 78% of the East Side's total population<sup>1</sup>, and this section of our city has not received the same level of investment as others. Showing immense resiliency, these communities still find ways to flourish even without resources; but without additional support and investment, these communities are at risk of displacement and erasure of culture and existing rich narratives. Intentionality is necessary to strengthen the connective tissue between residents and the surrounding developments.

In 2022, the neighborhoods are at a critical juncture. The nexus of adversity and previously unattainable support offers a unique opportunity to enhance these neighborhoods. The framework for WITHIN began with intention to ensure that community members were able to capitalize on imminent large-scale programs like the ESD East Side Corridor Economic Development Fund and lift community goals that still need attention and investment, powering the ideas and vision of the people. With the onset of COVID-19, this work became even more critical. The added trauma following the racist massacre on May 14, 2022, at the Tops Markets on Jefferson Avenue intensified the calls for action and assurance that the surge of funds and recovery efforts truly result in positive transformative change.

Throughout this process, we listened to hundreds of community members around their priorities for health, housing, jobs, small business, mobility, safety, development priorities, and culture. We analyzed demographics,

<sup>1</sup> [Buffalo Billion East Side Corridor Fund Report, 2019](#)

# LISC Commitment continued...

economics, employment and housing trends, reviewed existing plans, examined neighborhood conditions, and interviewed stakeholders.

Embedded WITHIN is the intention to connect a diverse network of community builders who share a common purpose—to invest resources and exponentially broaden impacts. This document creates a shared understanding of this local multi-sector context with both on-the-ground organizations and regional funders.

The WITHIN East Side report includes:

- A clear statement of the community’s guiding principles, goals and objectives;
- A focused list of prioritized investments and action for 2022–23 to kick start the effort;
- A series of initial performance metrics; and
- A list of additional opportunities for community implementation as resources allow.

Rather than asking one entity to adopt this plan, the project website will indicate which organizations have endorsed the plan and are committed to its implementation.

# LISC Commitment continued...

This work is supported by an extensive, data rich analysis, outlining existing conditions, and a series of tools to allow community members to lead implementation: interactive online mapping tools, a development project tracker, a rubric for new development, and scenario planning tools.

The WITHIN East Side strategies are inspired and shaped by ideas and lessons from the neighborhoods. When applicable, WITHIN strategies are aligned with investment initiatives to connect the plan to plausible resources. The strategies call on community members to spark a movement, help neighbors thrive, and choose to stay. They call for community partners to forge new partnerships, drive progress, set the pace, and tap into the power of their neighborhoods. And they call for funders to power the ideas of the people, invest in inclusive and sustainable initiatives, and turn community priorities into progress.

LISC is committed to supporting the community's implementation of this vision through ongoing facilitation and communications support, training, technical assistance, grant writing and funding assistance. We are grateful for every community member that brought us to this important launch point. We are committed to supporting your collective implementation of this shared vision.

**We look forward to celebrating your success.**

INTERSECTION TREATMENTS  
PHOTO: GOBIKE BUFFALO





# Quality of Life

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## Urban Nature

Ed Roberson

Neither New Hampshire nor Midwestern farm,  
Nor the summer home in some Hamptons garden  
Thing, not that Nature, not a satori  
-al leisure come to terms peel by peel, not that core  
Whiff of beauty as the spirit. Just a street  
Pocket park, clean of any smells, simple quiet—  
Simple quiet not the same as no birds sing,  
Definitely not the dead of no birds sing:  
The bus stop posture in the interval  
Of nothing coming, a not quite here running  
Sound underground, sidewalk's grate vibrationless  
In open voice, sweet berries ripen in the street  
Hawk's kiosks. The orange is being flown in  
This very moment picked of its origin.

**TRANSPORTATION & MOBILITY**

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**What is here now?**

This map considers mobility from multiple perspectives—as a pedestrian, bicyclist, public transit User, carpool, or driver of any age for mobility to work, health services, school, and recreation. More residents living in these planning areas utilize mobility options outside of a car than in other areas, as 1 in 3 households own a car. In addition, about three-quarters of the residents live more than a five-minute walk from open space, which is a critical relieve, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Source:** Esri 2020; City of Buffalo 2021; Open Street Map 2018; NYDOT 2013; LISC WNY 2021, GBNRTC 2020; Erie County Department of Environment and Planning 2021; University at Buffalo 2021; Nfta 2021; Walk Score 2021



- Neighborhood Plan Areas
- Anchor in the near East Side
- Park / Open Space
- Cemetery
- Water
- Scajaquada Creek (Buried)
- NYS Highway
- Major Road
- Local Road
- Railroad
- Existing Bicycle Route
- Existing Off-Road Greenway Trail
- Other Proposed Bicycle Routes
- Proposed Greenway Trail Connector
- Metro Rail
- M Metro Rail Station
- Bus Stop
- High Use Bus Stop
- Planned Bus Shelter
- Existing Bus Shelter

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Kids Painting Bump Outs. Photo: GOBike Buffalo

Transportation and mobility are not only important social determinants of health in and of themselves, but they also impact almost all other health determinants as either a facilitator or barrier to accessing services and places. Current issues facing planning areas A, B, and C include pollution, traffic violence (crashes into people walking or biking, and property), unaffordable and inconvenient bike hubs, bus, and train routes, and inequitable traffic enforcement that contributes to violent or unnecessary interactions with the police, fines, fees, over-surveillance and incarceration of people of color, among others. In Buffalo, 31,343 households

(28%) do not have access to a personal automobile; 54% of these are Black households (ACS 2017, 2014–18 IPUMS). In the predominantly Black communities on Buffalo's east side, about 1 in 3 households don't own a vehicle. Adults 65+ are slightly less likely to own a car (33 vs. 31%) and a third of workers don't use a car to get to work (Mobile Safety Net Team, Numbers in Need, 2019). The 2019 Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan Equity Map (GBNRTC) indicates a large concentration of the highest needs on the east side of Buffalo when factoring 5 equity indicators: race, age 65+, income, limited English, and no vehicle access. There is

GOBike Buffalo and Buffalo Common Council teams up on an effort to create safer streets.

[View the Website & Data](#)

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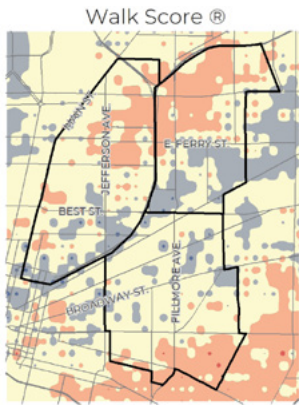
**PARKS & OPEN SPACE**

**INTERGENERATIONAL**

**CHILDCARE**

**DIGITAL ACCESS**

limited connectivity between high density transit hot spots, other parts of the city, and even within the neighborhoods to various parks or open spaces. In fact, only 27% of the population in planning areas live within 5-min walk of open space (73% outside) similar trend in each area. On Bailey Avenue, from 2014–2019, 120 pedestrians and 41 bicyclists have been hit by motor vehicles with three of these crashes resulting in fatality. The presence of separate and protected bike lanes are the most reliable indicator of lower fatality and injury rates for all users. In cities where safe bicycle facilities are most abundant, fatal crash rates dropped by 44% compared to the average city, and injury rates halved. Evidence also suggests safe complete streets decrease traffic safety risks for drivers, too.



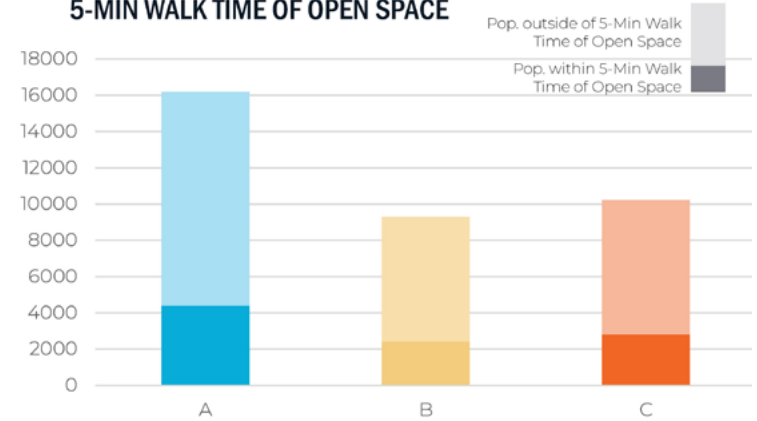
- **14–24:** Car-Dependent  
Almost all errands require a Car.
- **25–49:** Car-Dependent  
Most errands require a car
- **50–69:** Somewhat Walkable  
Some errands can be accomplished on foot.
- **70–89:** Very Walkable  
Most errands can be accomplished on foot.
- **90–95:** Walker's Paradise  
Daily errands do not require a Car.

A commitment to anti-displacement is critical to toward improved mobility infrastructure in these neighborhoods. This type of community development has led to increases in property values that ultimately drive current residents out of their neighborhoods. This reality has also built an appropriate and reasonable mistrust of outside partners looking to “improve” neighborhoods. An approach to improving mobility infrastructure must be coupled with, and held accountable to, wealth building and employment, pathways to home ownership, access to affordable housing, educational opportunities, and neighborhood-based civic leadership.

Given that transportation is one of the most significant barriers to jobs and services, there is also a need to work with employers to both invest in transportation on behalf of their employees, and to locate more jobs closer to where the residents live.

Access to safe, efficient, affordable, quality transportation is critical to accomplishing most other life tasks. The need for high quality transportation and mobility infrastructure transcends geographic, socioeconomic, and other

**2020 POPULATION WITHIN OR OUTSIDE OF 5-MIN WALK TIME OF OPEN SPACE**



In each planning area, more residents live in areas that are outside of a 5-min walk to open green space, than within. Residents have communicated a desire for more quality open spaces and improved maintenance and quality of current spaces.

discriminating factors. We all need choice, flexibility, and efficiency when it comes to mobility. Improving health equity outcomes across Buffalo neighborhoods will require collaborative, multi-sector solutions that invest in mobility infrastructure, programs, and policy. It’s not solely up to the transportation and mobility sectors; rather, public and private entities in other sectors can come together to advocate for, invest in, and implement successful mobility solutions in the community.

Specifically, public transportation investment can result in improved health and health equity by reducing traffic crashes and air pollution, increasing physical activity, and improving access to medical care, healthy food, vital services, employment, and social connection. Lack of access or poor public transit and mobility conditions, disproportionately and negatively impacts people who rely on it, including older adults, individuals with disabilities, and commuters—namely

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### The Push to Redesign Buffalo's Kensington Expressway is Set to Become Reality

“ The Restoring Our Community Coalition (ROCC) announced the city is set to receive \$1 billion in state funds to improve Route 33.

A part of the expressway near the Museum of Science is expected to get an upper deck that will create greenspace. The goal is to reconnect the community and improve the environment.

Restore Our Community Coalition envisions a beautiful, green parkway that will serve as a gateway connecting the historic Humboldt Parkway community to downtown and the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus. At the same time, a green parkway and promenade will serve as a vibrant community gathering place that is an attraction within a neighborhood that includes anchor institutions the Buffalo Museum of Science, Olmsted-designed Delaware and MLK Park and Canisius College. We seek to restore the Humboldt Parkway Community that has suffered from decades of decay and economic decline due to the construction of the Kensington Expressway. ”

[Spectrum News Article](#)

women, younger adults, Black workers, and workers earning low wages<sup>35</sup>.

The metrics that are historically used in transportation policy, planning, and investment typically center roads and cars over people and mobility, which has resulted in an aggregated negative impact on community health and segregation. We see this trend in Buffalo with the building of Route 198 and the 33 highways that dissect historic parkways and neighborhoods, and segregate our communities. The highway was built to move people from outside of the city through the city, rather than to positively benefit the community in which it separates from the city center.

This highway dissection, compounded by industry and manufacturing facilities built, run, and then abandoned in these neighborhoods, have resulted in increased carbon emissions, air, water, and soil pollution. When planners and engineers design the mobility landscape for moving cars, rather than people, the results are higher risks from vehicle crashes, increased pollution, and decreased options for people without access to cars (Blatt, 2021). The long-term disinvestment in public transportation, active mobility, and pedestrian environments in the planning areas have resulted in health disparities, barriers to accessing jobs and essential services, and isolation of these vibrant communities from connection with the rest of the city. A shift in the goals and metrics of policy, planning, and development toward healthier mobility choices for people, like better access to public transportation, safe bicycling and pedestrian infrastructure, and shared transportation models will promote better air quality, increase levels of physical activity, decrease risks from car crashes, and improve mental health (Blatt, 2021).

Often transportation planning rushes to pursue the latest technology solutions to deploy in communities, often with large-scale, long-term implementation in mind. This approach

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leaves behind neighborhoods that have experienced historic disinvestment and do not have the baseline infrastructure to support these solutions, nor do they have transportation and mobility options that meet their most basic needs in the present.

This approach is evidence that traditional transportation planning does not meet communities where they are, or prioritize investment in their current needs. With the substantial impacts of climate change bearing down on our communities, it is critical, however, to consider how our current transportation systems and planning must change to reduce these negative impacts for Buffalo residents. We must work across sectors, with policy makers, engineers, planners, social services, and community residents to BOTH effectively address the immediate, current mobility needs of residents AND plan to implement proactive, climate smart solutions that ensure a healthier future.

The COVID-19 pandemic only emphasized the critical need for public transportation for frontline workers, childcare needs, testing and vaccination access, among other essential services. In addition, there was a significant increase in active mobility choices like biking and walking during the pandemic. With this increase, residents underscored the need for better bicycle infrastructure, improved snow maintenance on streets and sidewalks, repairs for cracked sidewalks, more green spaces and outdoor gathering spaces that are welcoming and safe, and more places for children and older adults alike to be outside and to play. Community input over the last year also points toward a need for better connectivity from the neighborhoods to the Main St. metro line and improved train station design and amenities.

While the data shows that residents across the planning area neighborhoods are already higher frequency users of NFTA public transportation services and other active

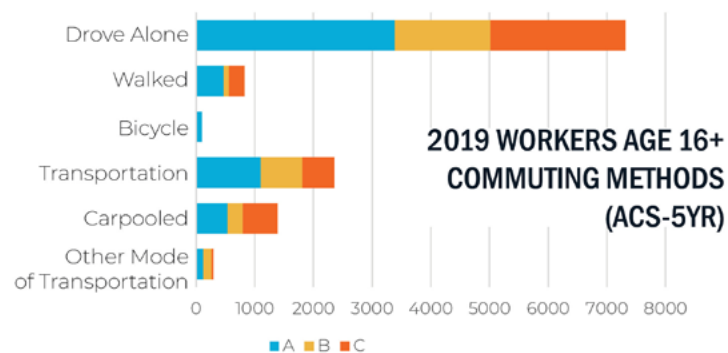


East Side Bike Club. Photo: East Side Bike Club

mobility options, whether by choice, or necessity, the mobility environment does not reflect this high usage. Residents' mobility behaviors produce less vehicle miles traveled, are more active, and cause less carbon emissions than in neighboring areas where residents choose to drive.

Often residents are making active mobility choices out of necessity, rather than choice, and since the mobility and transit landscapes are inadequate, their travel times are often much longer and more dangerous. Active, green mobility is not positively reinforced by high quality environments and systems that are safe, feel comfortable, and are highly efficient. It is understandable, then, why many residents pursue savings for car ownership before other saving priorities, like home ownership. This dissonance between environmental design to support green mobility and efficient mobility in Buffalo must be reconciled if we are to expect a widespread adoption of more active mobility by all for a safer,

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cleaner future. Residents in these east side neighborhoods in these behaviors and the facilities they use to travel within and through their neighborhoods should respect them as such.

Many institutions, local entities, and non-profit organizations are working on transportation and mobility projects that will impact the planning areas. There is a significant need to coordinate, organize, and maximize the resources allocated across efforts, while also identifying how neighborhoods leaders and residents are participating in the current work and will lead future work that impacts their communities. Discussions about mobility and transportation have historically been led by Citizens for Regional Transit (CRT), the NFTA's Citizen Advisory Council, Buffalo Transit Riders United (BTRU), and the Center for Self Advocacy, among others. Local mobility advocacy has primarily been led by Buffalo Transit Riders United (BTRU) and bicycling organizations like GOBike Buffalo and Slow Roll Buffalo, and more recently joined by, BIPOC-led bicycling organizations like Colored Girls Bike Too (CGBT) and the East Side Bike Club (ESBC). There continues to be a need to expand leadership opportunities for people of color in local and regional transportation planning. In addition to increased participation by people of color, community members have suggested that a more transit-diverse advocacy community also be engaged, beyond regular bicyclists. Mobility

and transportation are reported as important issues by people of all ages who use various modes across the planning areas.

### Current Mobility Planning Overview Related to the Planning Areas or Residents

The Greater Buffalo Niagara Regional Transportation Council (GBNRTC), our region's metropolitan planning organization, manages several regional planning efforts that impact the future of mobility in the planning areas.

1. [Region Central](#) is an effort to re-imagine mobility options within and surrounding the Scajaquada Corridor, which runs directly through the planning area and has historic segregating implications and impacts within our community.
2. [One Region Forward](#) is a collaborative effort to promote sustainable forms of development throughout the region. The plan is called, [A New Way to Plan for Buffalo Niagara](#).
3. Several partners have also been engaged in developing the [Bike Buffalo Niagara Regional Bicycle Master Plan](#) that will create more bike-able communities throughout the region. Two specific major greenway projects in the planning areas have received initial funding to begin planning and construction work include the Northeast Greenway Initiative and the Scajaquada Creek extension, seen on [this interactive map](#).
4. GBNRTC also manages the [Transportation Improvement Program](#) (TIP), which is a priority listing of all federally funded transportation projects during a 5-year period. The specific projects that impact the neighborhood may be found on [this interactive map](#) and include:
  - The City of Buffalo's [Main Street Complete Street Treatment](#)
  - [Jefferson Ave Complete Street](#) Phase 2
  - Phase I Buffalo Bicycle
  - Master Plan for Jefferson
  - Phase I Buffalo Bicycle Master Plan for E. Utica St.



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- the BNMC's Phase 4 Complete Street features
  - paving on Fillmore Ave; the NFTA's pilot program for
  - [Equitable Transit Oriented Development](#) along Main St.
  - additional intersection improvements at Bailey and E. Delavan & [Main St/Humboldt/Kensington](#) among others.
5. The current planning efforts of the [Unified Planning Work Program](#) include: a new Mobility as a Service (MaaS) model, a transit ridership study to support NFTA initiatives and Title VI requirements, Phase 2 of the Transit Oriented Development Study, and continued participation in the next phases of the NFTA's [Metro Transit Expansion Project](#).
  6. A newer priority of the NFTA includes looking at the feasibility for [Bailey Avenue Bus Rapid Transit](#) and they continue to process [Bus Shelter Requests](#).
  7. [GO Buffalo Niagara](#), managed by GOBike Buffalo, and a partnership between 511 Rideshare, NYS DOT, GBNRTC, BNMC, and the NFTA, is an effort to coordinate transportation services and options throughout the region. This includes employer incentive programs, among other services like, [Go Buffalo Mom](#).

The City of Buffalo continues to manage the [Slow Streets Program](#), which aims to reduce speeding on residential streets in the City of Buffalo by installing permanent traffic calming measures like speed humps. Current applications for treatments may be found on [this interactive map](#). At the County level, there are several Erie County initiatives that address mobility and transportation including [Live Well Erie](#), which houses an Older Adults Transportation Group and Working Families Mobility Group with similar goals. In addition, the County has a [Climate Transportation Group](#) as part of their climate action work, and they participate in the Walkability Action Institute Team (WAI). The Department of Senior Services, specifically, runs [transportation services](#) for older adults. The Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus (BNMC) is working on a specific program in the Fruit Belt Neighborhood funded by the US Department of

Transportation called the [Complete-trip ITS4US Deployment Program](#) in partnership with the NFTA and UB. The project seeks to create integrated trip planning and a community AV shuttle pilot program.

Shared Mobility Inc (SMI) has partnered with the East Side Bike Club, a group of community members who meet regularly for rides in the east side, and launched an electric bicycle pilot program in Buffalo. SMI also led a regional application for the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority's (NYSERDA) [Electric Mobility Challenge](#). LISC WNY led an additional application for NYSERDA's [Clean Neighborhoods Challenge](#) in collaboration with several additional partners, addressing the need to build a sustainable, equitable future of mobility in the planning area neighborhoods. This application was awarded a planning grant to continue developing the application ideas and an opportunity to win one of three \$10 million grand prizes in the challenge. LISC also participates with GBNRTC and PUSH Buffalo in the [Regional](#)

## NYSERDA Clean Neighborhoods Challenge

The [NYSERDA Clean Neighborhoods Challenge](#) addresses the need to build a sustainable, equitable future of mobility in the planning area neighborhoods. A collaborative application was submitted for an opportunity to win one of three \$10 million grand prizes in the challenge.

[View the Master Plan](#) and interactive park maps, or learn more about the City of Buffalo parks system.

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[Planning Exchange](#)'s equitable transportation outreach & learning group.

LISC worked with the Buffalo Urban Development Corporation (BUDC), Albright Knox Northland, and GOBike, on an intersectional application for the National Endowment for the Arts Our Town grant. The grant proposes enhancing placekeeping arts and culture efforts with local artists at important crosswalks and intersections, connecting the Northland campus to the broader neighborhood around it.

[Citizens for Regional Transit](#) (the Citizens' Regional Transit Corporation) is committed to creating a broad base of support for the improvement and expansion of bus and rail transit for all citizens of the Niagara Frontier. The purpose of the organization is to build an understanding of the benefits of transit by facilitating public participation through educational events, information sharing and other outreach efforts. Citizens for Regional Transit operates on a grass-roots level, working through concerned citizens writing letters and being involved which then reaches upwards to the commercial and governmental levels. This is essential to CRT's mission of providing transit access for everyone.

[Colored Girls Bike Too](#) (CGBT) is a local, radical cycling organization founded in 2017, focused on Black women (cisgender and transgender) and gender nonconforming people (GNC) to provide safe space for health and mental health through group bicycle rides and advocacy for mobility justice, primarily through participation in the Fair Fines and Fees Coalition (FFFC). [Buffalo Transit Riders United](#) (BTRU) is a collective of transit riders, and faction of the Coalition for Economic Justice, who are working for a more efficient, equitable, and responsive public transit system in the greater Buffalo area. FFFC and BTRU have been pivotal leaders in advocating for and creating more equitable mobility and transit policy in our region.

## A few excellent transportation resources:

[How Can Policymakers Ensure the Push for Electric Vehicles Doesn't Harm Low-Income Communities and Communities of Color?](#)

[Healthy, equitable transportation policy: recommendations and research](#)

TRB Webinar: [Addressing Justice in Transportation](#)

Health Policy brief: [Public Transportation In The US: A Driver Of Health And Equity](#)

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**PARKS & OPEN SPACE**

**INTERGENERATIONAL**

**CHILD CARE**

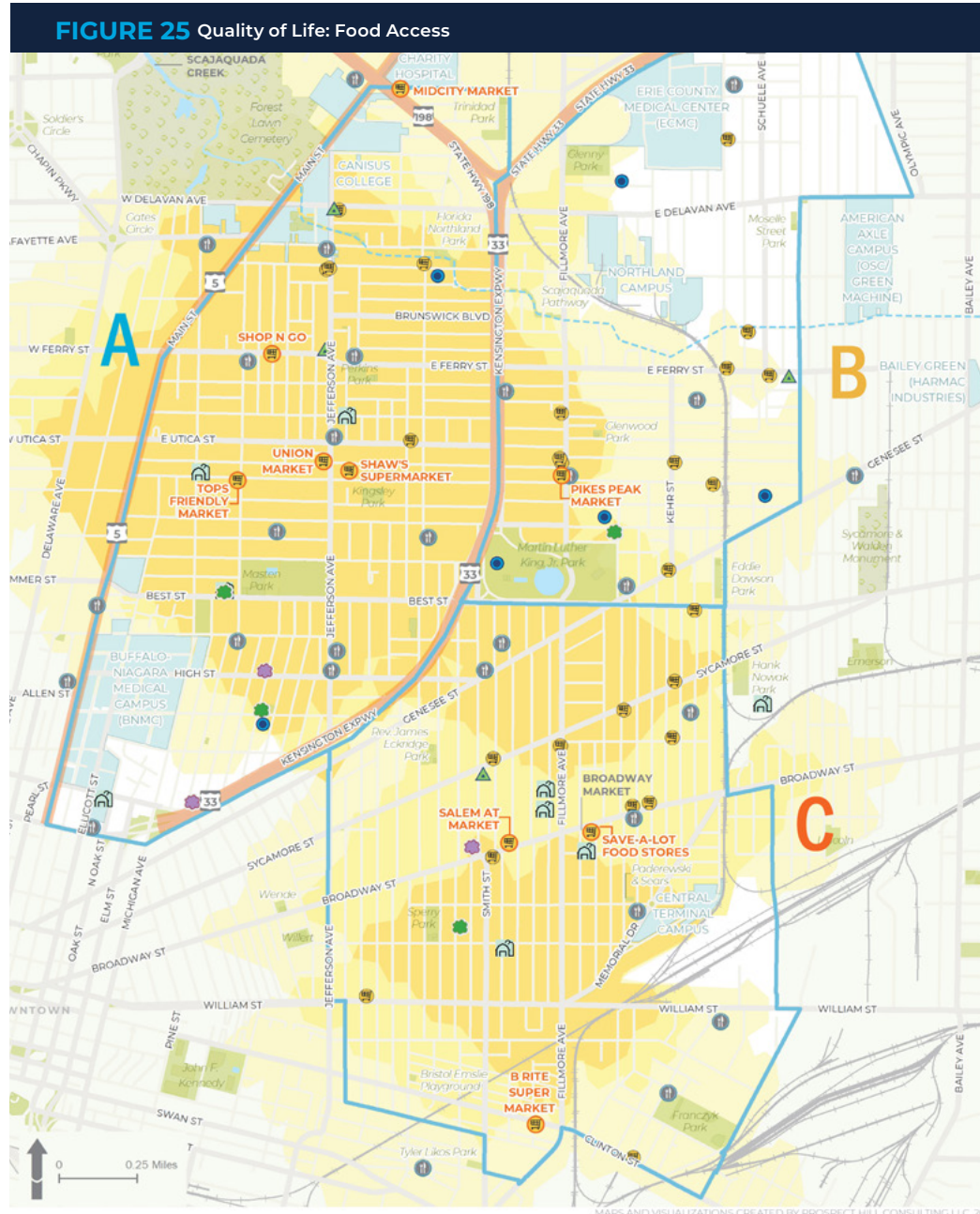
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Areas within a 1 mile walk of:

- 1 supermarket
- 2 supermarkets
- 3 to 6 supermarkets

Walk Time Model based supermarkets within the planning areas only

**FIGURE 25** Quality of Life: Food Access



- Neighborhood Plan Areas
- Anchor in the near East Side
- Park / Open Space
- Cemetery
- Water
- Scajaquada Creek (Buried)
- NYS Highway
- Major Road
- Local Road
- Beltline
- Railroad
- Healthy Corner Stores (\$)
- Comm. Schools Food (Free)
- Food Bank or Pantry (Free)
- GGWNY School Gardens
- GGWNY Community Gardens
- Urban farms (\$)
- Food Retail Stores (with annual sales <\$500K)
- Food Retail Store (supermarket) with annual sales of \$500K or more

**Source:** ESRI 2020 and GfK MRI; City of Buffalo 2021, Open Street Map 2018; NYDOT 2013; LISC WNY 2021, GBRTC 2020; Erie County Department of Environment and Planning 2021, University at Buffalo 2021, Buffalo Art Commission 2020; Data Axle Verified Business Data -Erie County Library 2021, Google Maps 2021

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*Amana Halal Food* by Julia Wald Art

The map on the previous page indicates locations of grocery stores, free food banks and pantries, corner stores, and urban farms and gardens. The light and medium yellow colors on the map indicate the number of supermarkets available to residents within one mile of homes. The map suggests that planning area B has an opportunity to increase food options, as there are mostly white spaces, meaning no supermarket within a mile, or light yellow, indicating one supermarket within a mile. Area B also presents the opportunity to increase connectivity between anchor employer institutions and adjacent neighborhoods. There are several local food producers throughout the planning areas who could contract with neighborhood anchors to increase access to locally sourced healthy foods.

Planning area C, which is anchored with the Broadway Market, is another opportunity to use food as a social and economic connector throughout these neighborhoods. In particular, planning area C is home to a higher percentage of New Americans than the other planning areas. The Broadway Market has historically been a food retail hub, attracting many from outside the neighborhood, and is receiving state funding for renovations. Through our engagements, we heard that food could lead in this neighborhood as a cultural connector and economic driver. Small scale restaurant owners and pop-up food retailers may also see opportunity in larger scale shared kitchen and retail models for entrepreneurship.

In addition, throughout the planning areas there are several smaller scale food retail stores or corner stores. While some are already participants in the Healthy Corner Stores Initiative, a more robust effort to equip these business owners with resources to make residential year-round, affordable access to healthy food possible is necessary. Planning Area A has the most residences within one mile of a grocery store and several supermarkets in close proximity. Although it

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is home to a Tops Grocery Store, based on feedback in our engagement process, community members don't feel Tops meets their grocery needs when it comes to fresh produce and healthy food options.

**NOTE:** Community engagement was done prior to the recent terrorist attack that occurred in the Tops grocery store, and the walkshed in the map above does NOT account for Tops being closed. The walkshed area would be significantly impacted by this closure for many residents and an updated analysis will be completed.

A more comprehensive regional mapping effort led by the University at Buffalo's Food Systems Planning and Healthy Communities Lab was recently completed as part of the [Food Future Western New York](#), The Regional Food System Assessment and Planning project which is part of the [Moving Forward Together](#) Initiative. Moving Forward Together was one action by the Western New York COVID-19 Community Response Fund, a collaborative philanthropic effort launched in March 2020 to address the COVID-19 crisis in our community.

Food access and food security have long been neighborhood priorities across the planning areas, especially as there is an increased focus on health and wellness among residents. Sometimes neighborhoods across the east side of Buffalo are referred to as 'food deserts', however, local advocates and scholars have suggested the inaccuracy of the food desert terminology for several reasons. While many residents experience economic and social conditions that make accessing healthy foods more difficult, it's more accurate to cite government and tax policies that have contributed to this lived experience. Supermarkets and grocery stores use neighborhood environment metrics and are highly influenced by tax incentive policies when they choose locations. Since the neighborhoods across the planning areas have been deeply impacted by decades of disinvestment and racist economic



East Side Food Pantry. Photo: Buffalo Commons Photobank

and environmental policies, the metrics don't always add up and large-scale food access investments have been scarce.

The Mobile Safety Net Team's Community Assessment with both residents<sup>36</sup> and providers<sup>37</sup> in 2019, highlight some of



Community Roots Farm, Peckham & Colt.

## Building stronger connections among farm and food stakeholders within the region helps to build a stronger, more resilient food system in Western New York.

Leadership on developing a regional strategy for food equity and sovereignty is being led by Food Future Western New York. The SCALE team of consultants guiding the initiative are leading a highly participatory process that meaningfully engages the full spectrum of WNY food system stakeholders, both rural and urban, across the nine counties of the project's focus. The engagement of farmers, businesses, food justice activists, non-profits, consumers, and others will enable the development of a plan that recognizes the many complex challenges within the region yet focuses on opportunities for real change. There is a Regional Advisory Council (RAC) composed of food system stakeholders and advocates who hold expertise of some element of the region's food system. The RAC is the primary partner to the SCALE team, providing both guidance to the food system assessment and critical feedback to the consultants throughout the project.

There are also workgroups focusing on particular key areas and issues of the region's food system including work groups on Access, Equity & Sovereignty; Farmers & Producers; Finance; Infrastructure; and Markets & Buyers. Leadership, recommendations, and tools generated from this effort can be found at <https://www.foodfuturewny.org/>.

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2019 HOUSEHOLDS WITH FOOD STAMPS/SNAP (ACS 5-YR)

	A	B	C
2019 (%)	43%	45%	52%
2019 (count)	2911	1748	2499

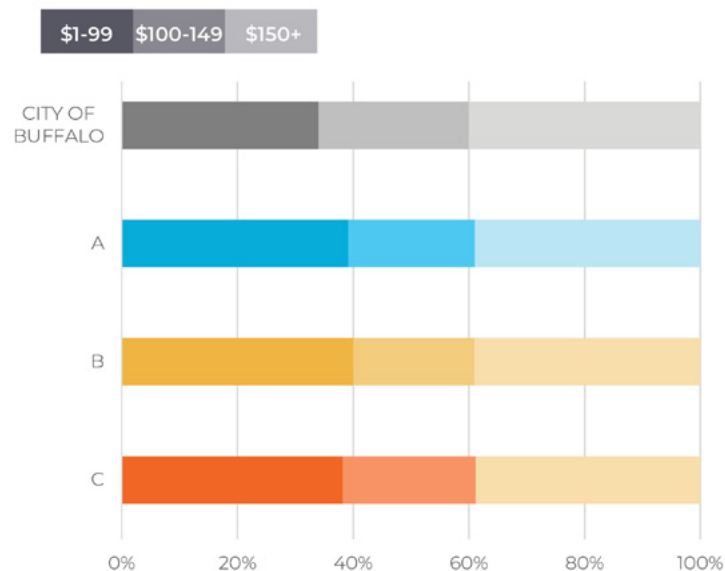
In 2019, prior to the onset of the pandemic, almost half of the households across neighborhood planning areas were participating in food assistance programs. The effects of the pandemic likely resulted in an increase in these numbers.

the challenges and strengths of neighborhoods on the east side of Buffalo related to food access. Residents reported that “no money for food” was one of their most urgent concerns among others such as having the utilities shut off, outstanding debt, legal problems, cost/availability of child care, foreclosure/eviction, or being hurt or threatened at home. Three fourths of the respondents of the 2019 survey

reported receiving public assistance, with SNAP being most frequent (78% of households receive one or more services – 60% Food Stamps/SNAP, 22% Food pantry/Meal Service, 10% WIC). Residents did report that food services, however, are among one of the strongest in the neighborhoods. Among providers surveyed, 1 in 3 offered food as part of their programs. The food insecurity and hunger experienced by residents are the results of poverty conditions, and while many strong programs are available to address food challenges caused by poverty, large-scale coordinated efforts must be made to resolve poverty conditions.

The locally owned and run food economy has also been working to close food security gaps through smaller, more direct models of providing healthy foods to community residents. The strengths of these entities and goals of residents must be coordinated and coupled with government

2020 HOUSEHOLD AVG. SPENT PER WEEK AT FOOD STORES



and institutional investment in food access, nutrition, and neighborhood health. During outreach for this neighborhood planning effort, we also learned that residents highly valued community garden space and want easier access to healthy foods at smaller, neighborhood owned businesses in walkable areas. Residents would like to see neighborhood land preserved and protection for green space and community gardens and markets. Food was also reported as an important cultural and social connector, and residents would like to see more active promotion of local restaurants, gardens, and shared maps to explore the many food options that are available. They also feel like this would help change the narrative about food in their community and support business owners in the food industry. There was also much discussion about how healthy food access is promoted through the design and feel of neighborhood food institutions and outdoor spaces. Many residents reported needing to travel outside of

[The Safe Routes to Healthy Food Report & Agenda](#) outlines strategies to connect active transportation and healthy food access efforts.

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*William Mini Market* by Julia Wald Art

the neighborhood to go to grocery stores or markets that feel nicer or have more quality produce and meats.

Food access and security are largely intertwined with other social determinants of health like housing stability, transportation quality, education, and neighborhood walkability. A comprehensive neighborhood planning model addresses these complexities together, rather than in isolated policy area silos. For example, access to quality, efficient public transportation is critical to equitable access to healthy foods, particularly in communities of color, who rely more heavily on transit services and experience food insecurity in higher numbers. Equitable transit-oriented development (eTOD), strategic planning should include co-locating healthy food access at transit hubs, and public transit options could include

environmental supports, like front-mounted cooler bins as an example, to making shopping easier.

Transit routes could be adjusted to include community food access points, and special services could connect residents to farmers markets or food events on the weekend.

The COVID-19 pandemic emphasized both food system strengths and challenges. The food access and affordability systemic injustices were immediate and catastrophic for many families, and continue today through the pandemic. Food industry and employees were among the most hard hit for unemployment and economic impacts of the pandemic. Our local food service programs, places of worship, and other mutual aid entities were the critical fabric that embraced and fed residents and showed that neighbors showed up for neighbors. The Seeding Resilience Initiative also promoted the sharing of an aggregated food-related resources map for Buffalo. Investment in these shared services models is an important lesson learned from the pandemic. We also saw many food behaviors change similar to national trends, such as an increase in cooking at home, thinking about healthy food more, and an increase in online shopping and delivery. In addition to the online ordering trends that groceries and restaurants needed to accommodate public health and safety, there was also an increase in social media and virtual cooking classes that diversified cooking methods and curiosities. The racial justice movement, re-ignited in 2020, also scaled an interest in Black-owned restaurants, traditionally Black and African cuisine, and locally owned entities.

For residents across the neighborhood planning areas, food is more than nutrition. Food is healing, food is social, food is fun, food is unity, food is liberation, and food is family. Several community entities are working toward scaling solutions that celebrate food, protect land, and promote healing.



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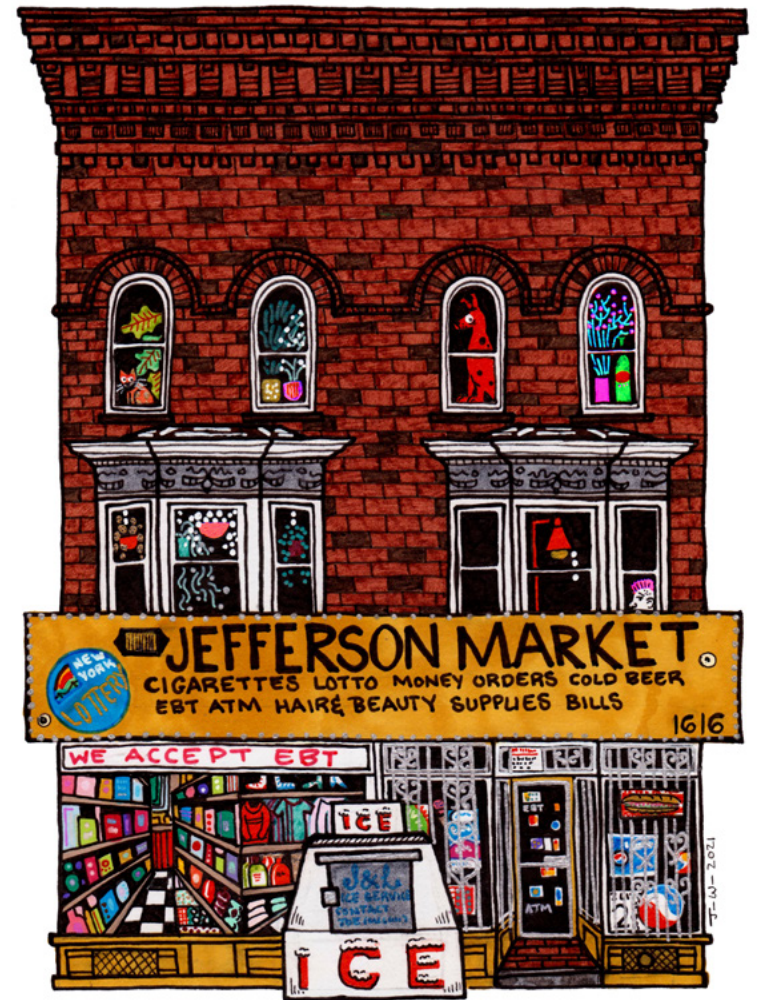


## Ending Food Apartheid

Organizations who have been long focused on ending food apartheid in the East Side include these among others:

1. [Heritage Food Co-op](#)
2. [Buffalo Freedom Gardens](#)
3. [Buffalo Go Green / Urban Fruits & Veggies](#)
4. [Feed Buffalo](#)
5. [First Fruits Food Pantry at Lincoln Memorial](#)
6. [Food for the Spirit & the Buffalo Food Equity Network](#)

Several leaders and elders across these organizations have been involved in food planning and community support for decades, recognizing long ago, the nature of food apartheid and the health consequences on the Black community. When the massacre occurred at the Tops grocery store, it was also these organizations and many of their allies were pivotal in providing emergency supports, food distribution, and healing efforts within the East Side. It will be their long term visions, deep understanding of community, and healing nature that will guide the path toward food sovereignty for East Side residents.



Jefferson Market by Julia Wald Art

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Photo: GOBike

Early in our outreach, it became clear that increased curb appeal, green space, play space, and restorative spaces are greatly desired in the residential neighborhoods and commercial districts in the planning areas.

The things we heard time and again include:

1. Beautification, particularly related to garbage maintenance: trash receptacle installation, street cleaning, and maintenance plans for keeping the streets clean and attractive
2. More shared green space for all and investment in existing green spaces
3. Invest in MLK Park with more amenities and activities (lighting, benches, and arts/culture)
4. Develop safe spaces, playgrounds and parks for kids
5. Use vacant lots more creatively and constructively
6. Preserve the one-of-a-kind historic building stock that makes our district unique

The Transportation and Mobility Map [Fig 24] shows light green areas all around the planning areas. This indicates residences within a 5-minute walk to a park. The white spaces shown in the map amplify the sentiment that gathering spaces are not in close proximity to many residences in our planning areas.

In 2011, the City of Buffalo's Office of Strategic Planning (OSP) released a [Masten Park Neighborhood Action Plan](#), affecting Planning Area A. The plan outlines physical improvements in the 28-block Masten Neighborhood, include upgraded streets with pedestrian-standard lighting, fixing sidewalks, installing bulb outs and street repaving. The plan outlines the establishment of a civic green in a high-vacancy block for acquisition and park conversion. A 3.5-acre block bordered by Michigan, Masten, Laurel, and Riley was suggested for consideration, where 31 of 40 parcels stood vacant in 2011. This conversion could increase adjacent property values by 20–30 percent, according to OSP. Now, in 2021, and after the pandemic, increasing quality green spaces in Area A is still a priority, given our community conversations and outreach.

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Area B contains MLK Jr. Park, a historic park with historic designation. It was once connected to the overarching Olmsted Park infrastructure through the Humboldt Parkway. Through urban renewal, this parkway was removed and turned into roadways. There are existing groups working to restore this unique historic asset, including the ROCC (Restore Our Community Coalition). The Delavan Grider neighborhood in Area B contains the Beltline Parkway, which is under exploration as a bikeable mobility pathway. An intentional strategy to connect the Northland corridor with the surrounding community can ensure existing residents reap some of the benefits of all the new development. A Greening Strategy was recommended in the 2020 plan conducted by UB Students, complete with green installations and green infrastructure (rain gardens, porous paving, stormwater planters, tree pits, etc). It was also recommended to develop the Northland Trail, between 631 Northland to the William L. Gaiter Cycle Track. Lastly, repurposing the Houdaille chimney as a centerpiece for an outside social venue was a recommendation from the student report<sup>38</sup>.

Though Buffalo is known for the Olmsted Park System, the Broadway Fillmore neighborhood presents a gap in this system. There are an excessive number of city-owned vacant lots in this neighborhood as visible in the Challenges Map [Fig 6].

The Central Terminal Master Plan highlights access to open space as one of its leading action strategies. Recommendations include:

1. addressing vacancy and blight with infill development and open space expansion,
2. establishing quality and safe green spaces for youth, seniors, and everyone in between,
3. building green infrastructure with new development,
4. building green infrastructure with new development,
5. bringing native habitats and species when possible, and engaging with community gardens as a food channel for healthy food options.

## From the City of Buffalo Parks Master Plan

“Parks are an essential part of community life in Buffalo. Neighborhood parks are where we spend time with friends, family, or to let the kids play. They connect people to nature, improve community health, and keep our city cooler in the summer.

Buffalo has some great parks, but they could be even better. [Trust for Public Land](#) partnered with Mayor Byron W. Brown and the City of Buffalo, and Ralph C. Wilson Jr. Foundation to release the Buffalo Parks Master Plan, the city’s first comprehensive parks plan in 40 years. While nearly 89% of residents live within a 10-minute walk of a park, the Master Plan highlights targeted improvements to increase equitable access, add amenities like picnic areas and walking trails, enhance park safety with better lighting, and more, all to improve the Buffalo parks we know and love.

With extensive community input and demographic data analysis, this plan can help strategically update and improve Buffalo parks to better serve all residents—giving Buffalonians more reason to celebrate their park system!”

[View the Master Plan](#) and interactive park maps, or learn more about the City of Buffalo parks system.

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Street amenities bring life to a space. Photo: LISC

These open space opportunities align closely with our outreach work through this process. Several concept photos are available to view on the [Central Terminal Master Plan](#) document.

The health benefits of immersing ourselves in green space is widely accepted. Grass and trees have been linked with lower risk of health conditions. Greenspace is also associated with positive mental health. Beyond the health and wellness reasons, open spaces provide a myriad of economic benefits.

Economically, enhanced curb appeal with street furnishings, trees and shade, and litter-free environments support shopper-friendly traffic. Foot traffic is vital for retailers, and without the amenities needed for walkability in a commercial space, foot traffic minimizes. When speaking with business owners on Jefferson Ave during our summer outreach, two things that consistently rose to the top were more beautified streetscaping in the business districts, and more organized vendor events for community to gather in. Universal design of streetscapes also needs to be considered to develop inclusive



The Historic Broadway Theater. Currently undergoing Renovation. Photo: Google

spaces for all people to enjoy and support the retail and service environment provided in commercial districts.

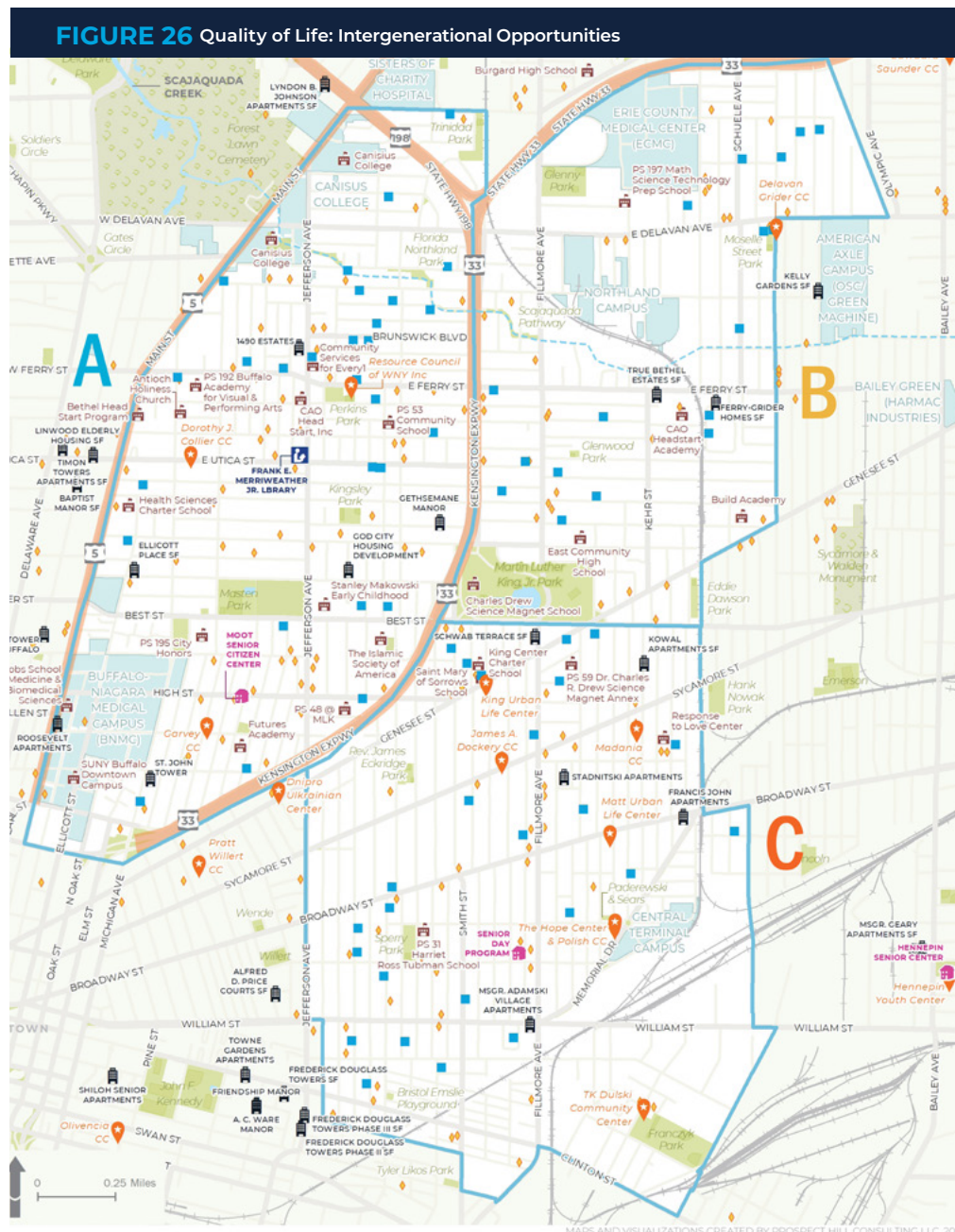
Additionally, we heard over and over again the need to preserve historic buildings in these neighborhoods. Lifting up the history of these buildings and the stories they tell helps develop a sense of place. Investing in historic buildings enhances the physical and visual assets that set a commercial district apart, resulting in more successful businesses recruitment programs, and more consumer foot traffic as a result.

“ People are starting to understand that we need to invest in entrepreneurs. We will be able to keep our young people here. We have to invest in their creativity. I think that’s going to transform Buffalo. ”

## **Mike Quinniey**

East Side Resident & Sattler Theater Executive Director

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- Neighborhood Plan Areas
- Anchor in the near East Side
- Park / Open Space
- Cemetery
- Water
- Scajaquada Creek (Buried)
- NYS Highway
- Major Road
- Local Road
- Railroad
- Senior Center
- Senior Housing
- \*Library
- Community Center
- Child & Youth Service
- Educational Facility
- Place of Worship

\* 1 Library located across all planning areas

Source: ESRI 2020 and GfK MRI; City of Buffalo 2021, Open Street Map 2018; NYDOT 2013; LISC WNY 2021, GBNRTC 2020; Erie County Department of Environment and Planning 2021, University at Buffalo 2021, Buffalo Art Commission 2020; Data Axle Verified Business Data-Erie County Library 2021, Google Maps 2021; Erie County Department of Senior Services 2020; Bureau of Labor Statistics 2020.

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The map on the previous page identifies various older adult residences and services in the context of youth services and educational facilities and places of worship. Community engagement efforts throughout the planning process amplified intergenerational programming, support, and transition planning as high priorities. Community development, business support, and/or social programming efforts may use this information to guide a strategic approach for maximizing shared physical space, resources, and planning.

**Intergenerational Connection.**

Through our listening activities and many engagements, it has become clear that youth within the East Side communities are viewed as a top strength. It has also become evident that there aren't enough safe spaces and constructive activities to assist the youth of these neighborhoods in their adolescent years. We have heard over and over again, the sentiment that "we need to invest in our young people." Finding ways to engage with talented youth is a high priority. Taking a restorative justice approach, to repair harm caused by crime, was also recommended in the youth engagement arena. Jes Breathe Block Club is starting a Youth City Spotters program, that does outreach to youth who are 'still reachable.' City Spotters function as youth park rangers and learn strategies for crime prevention. They essentially act as neighborhood ambassadors. The program is rolling out in September 2021, and may be an avenue to engage youth across the planning areas.

Across many sectors, we heard that more mixed-income housing is desired in these East Side neighborhoods. We have also heard that housing for youth who grew up in the neighborhood is tenuous. Youth can't access homes because other people are purchasing first, and finding safe housing for neighborhood youth is a high priority, particularly in the 18-24 age range. The idea that we will lose our youth to other places

was another theme arising that coincides with the housing and work opportunities available to them.

We have also heard in our listening engagements, the need to bring back the village mentality to support elders in the neighborhood. When an elderly person has housing or maintenance issues, there are not enough programs to assist them through the bureaucratic processes that currently exists in regards to home repair and maintenance. One solution that was posed by an interviewee was to build a network of

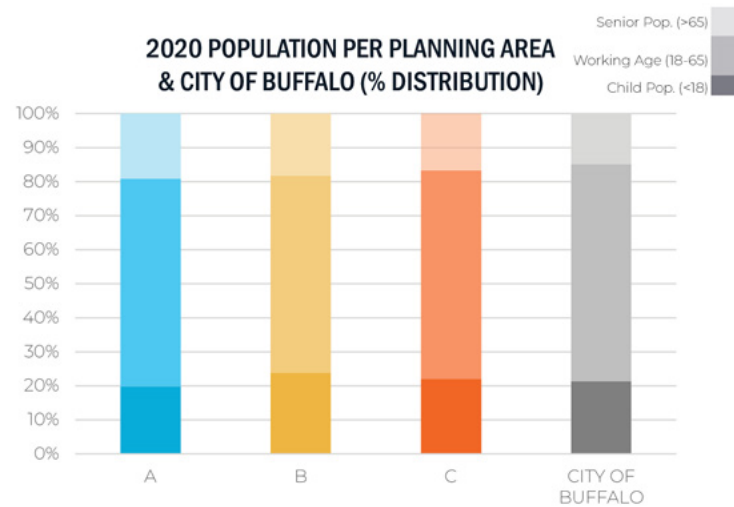
**2020 POPULATION PER PLANNING AREA  
(NUMBER OF PEOPLE)**



**Median Age** of all people across Planning Area Census Tracts (2015-2019 ACS):

- Planning Area A 22-46
  - Planning Area B 35-43
  - Planning Area C 28-53
- Planning Area C skews slightly older than A and B.

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The graphs above show the number of people in different age groups in each planning area (left), and the percent distribution of age groups for each planning area as they compare to the City of Buffalo population (right).

people who can help elders in the neighborhood complete their paperwork and assist them with their projects.

In our discussions, we also heard that bridging the link between youth and elders is of high importance. Elders of the neighborhood hold history and untold stories. There is value placed on sharing this information between generations so history is upheld. Finding avenues to link these stories and history with the youth growing up there, along with skill sharing between older and younger generations is of strong importance in these planning areas.



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As an effect of the COVID-19 pandemic, childcare has been escalated to be considered an essential workforce support and economic driver. As of 2020, the Regional Economic Development Council has adopted childcare as a new goal for the region's economic prosperity.

Efforts for childcare support began years before the pandemic began in our focus area. The Western New York Women's Foundation ('The Foundation') has been working with the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus (BNMC) on a comprehensive child/family developmental resource center. These conversations began back in 2015. The Foundation has been working in the crux of workforce support and childcare since 2014, as an economic mobility strategy, and has been moving this work into workforce certification programs with organizations like BCAT and Harvest House. Their role is mostly in advocacy mostly at the state level, but is now shifting to be advocates in the local and federal levels as well.

In our 2021 engagements and outreach, the Workforce Focus Group mentioned childcare as a real threat to progress in this industry. Through several factions, it has become clear that there needs to be a real focus on home-based, family providers, outside of childcare centers and facilities. In our interviews with the WNY Women's Foundation, we found that Erie County provides a childcare subsidy for parents who are in workforce training and transitioning to work. These family providers are the ones accepting the childcare subsidies, whereas the bigger centers are not. They are also the culturally appropriate choice for many, and provide fewer barriers to access. The business model of accepting subsidies and being a small, independent provider doesn't always add up. As practitioners, we need to find pathways to make this a viable option. Additionally, to participate in, and receive benefits of the subsidy program, families and provider must go through an incredible complicated, cumbersome and demoralizing process. Furthermore, the subsidy program only



Photo: LISC

gives partial funding to centers, but not nearly the cost of care. It is antiquated and not designed around today's needs.

Though this isn't the whole answer to the childcare dilemma, it is one viable pathway to increased wealth building for the childcare providers, and simultaneously address the need on the side of working parents. These centers only support a small number of placements – maybe 6–8 kids per provider, and with a handful of providers, we are only talking about a few spots in the grand scheme of need. The small providers are used to doing their own thing and are not at this time working collectively as a unit.

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There has been an overwhelming demand for their services, and the systems that exist currently do not provide meaningful support to the providers, leaving the providers traumatized and overwhelmed. They have been working hard to survive as essential services during the pandemic, but many are not trained in the art of business, though they excel in the art of being a care provider.

This recognition led to the recent project idea with the UB Social Innovation Fellows. Students won the top prize for their idea to propose a PR and marketing plan and a co-op model for small family providers to participate in. The students will work on the PR pieces, while the WNY Women's Foundation is moving forward with the co-op model. Goals of the co-op model are to reduce admin burdens, connect to the Office of Child and Family Services easier, and bundle overhead costs across providers where possible, to overall reduce overhead cost burden.

Conversations outside of providers have also been taking place in employer incentives. What would it look like for a business to invest in childcare like they do a 401k? Several entities in town, including Harmac, philanthropic groups, government, and The Foundation, have been discussing ways for these entities to collaborate to eliminate costs for a center/provider. Eliminating these costs enable childcare to actually be affordable for the masses.

**High priority projects for the East Side:**

1. The BNMC comprehensive child and family care resource center project, in partnership with The Foundation and LISC, is specifically targeted to families on Buffalo's East Side. This is a pilot program, which can then be replicated in other areas.
2. The family provider co-op project with providers on the East Side is also moving forward, and includes facilitated enrollment and funding.
3. Connecting major employers, workforce training and economic mobility programs with community partners like Harvest House, BCAT, Harmac, and American Axle
4. There is a desperate need for drop-in care models, where you can take your children somewhere for a temporary amount of time, as needed. Regulations allow for this model, but they currently do not exist.

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Digital access has risen to the forefront of critical needs as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. In Buffalo, there is a blatant “digital divide” that reveals significant disparity in access to broadband internet, technological devices or equipment, digital literacy, and affordability of services. Without high quality access to the internet, whole communities are at a disadvantage and are less able to obtain important information, apply for jobs or sustain work, access health services, participate in education opportunities, or participate in the digital economy.

In planning area A between 15.3%–35.4% of households do not have any kind of access to the Internet, and in planning area B and C, the numbers are 29.25%–45.53% and 16.5%–48.6% of households, respectively (ACS census tract data, 2015–2019). This is compared to between 0%–25% of households without Internet in adjacent neighborhoods west of Main Street. This is also compounded by similar disparity in access to any kind of computer in the household.

The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated the critical importance of internet connectivity, access, and literacy with a shift to remote working and learning, telehealth, and online commerce. It exposed, from yet another angle, racial and economic disparity across Buffalo neighborhoods. Communities with higher quality infrastructure, faster connectivity, more provider options, and access to computers were well equipped to support children in digital learning programs, work-from-home, tend to their health needs, and maintain social connections. Emergency safety-net programs were required to support children and families in neighborhoods with less resources.

The Buffalo Bills partnered with the City of Buffalo to fund Internet access for Buffalo Public School students during the pandemic in 2020. Internet access and digital commerce preparedness were also major factors in the success of small

businesses being able to survive during the pandemic. Small businesses had to make sharp pivots to bring their business online, increase capacity to support that shift, and needed Internet access in order to apply for local, state, and federal relief programs.

Community-based, public Wi-Fi solutions have also been deployed in order to address the digital divide, however, the need to travel to a shared space, abide by open hours in community spaces, and the quality and speed of the access in those spaces continue to be barriers for families in east side neighborhoods. Some conversations have shifted toward implementing a municipal broadband system for the whole City, which has the potential to level the playing field, but comes with significant cost and infrastructure barriers.

Several local entities are working toward closing the digital divide. The [WNY COVID-19 Community Response Fund](#), established March 24, 2020, is a collaborative fund of over 70 local foundations and private companies, that has prioritized funding solutions for digital equity and inclusion as part of their collective agenda. They have convened over 55 local stakeholders to work on solutions to bridge the divide in both urban and rural communities.

In May of 2021, the City of Buffalo launched a City-wide Broadband Access and Adoption Survey as part of the Buffalo Urban Renewal Agency’s (BURA) [STAND UP Buffalo Initiative](#) in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The results of this survey are not yet published. Erie County received funding in early 2021 to establish, “Erie Net”, a 360-mile high-fiber line that will be installed throughout Erie County to increase access for communities in rural and under resourced areas. At the State level, as part of NYS 2021 Connectivity Agenda, affordable Internet services will be provided for low-income families, and the ConnectED NY Initiative will offer students in economically-disadvantaged school districts free Internet

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### DIGITAL ACCESS

through June of 2022. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has an Emergency Broadband Benefit Program that will provide subsidy for Internet access and equipment on a federal level. In addition, [Mission: Ignite](#), a local non-profit, in partnership with the University of Buffalo was [awarded \\$300,000](#) to expand Internet access in the Fruit Belt neighborhood as part of Project OVERCOME, a \$2.7 million initiative run by U.S. Ignite, funded by the National Science Foundation (NSF) and Schmidt Futures, a charitable organization, aiming to expand high-speed internet access to under-served communities. They seek to provide Internet at no cost to 150 households.

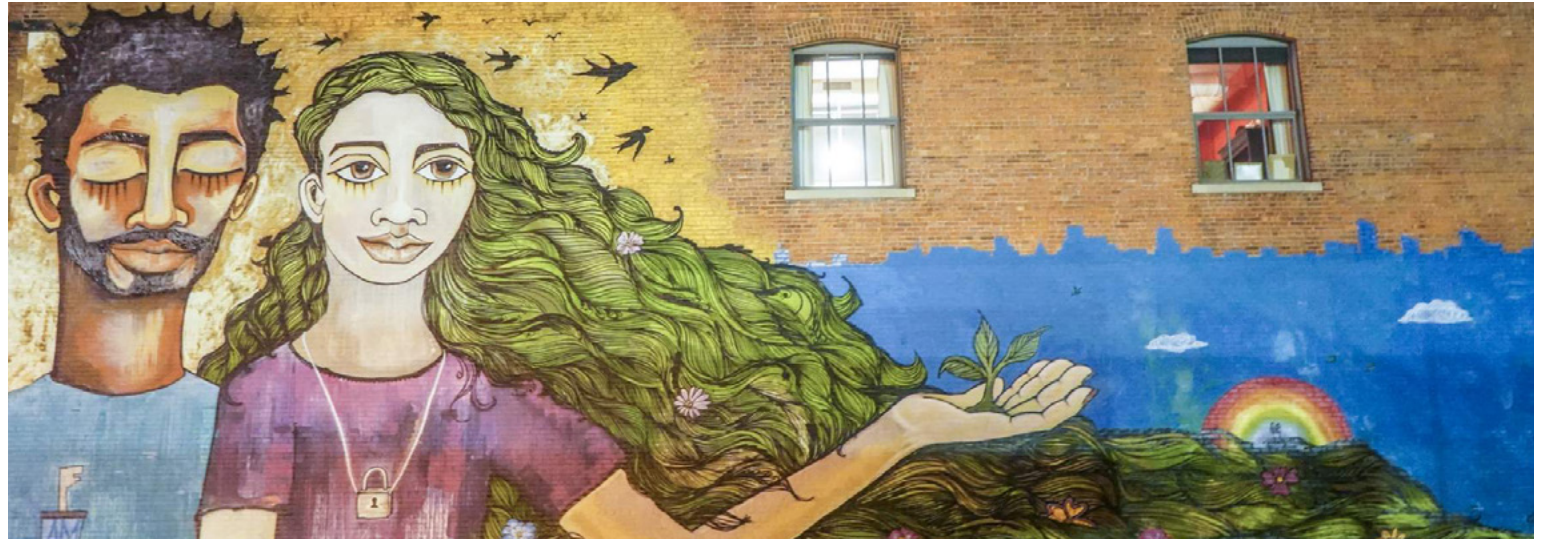
[Greenlight Networks](#) is also prioritizing high need areas of the west and east sides of Buffalo for 2021 construction of new fiber networks. This will increase provider options, speed, and hopefully access to better Internet service for many Buffalo residents.

In order to reach more widespread digital equity, broadband and technology access must be planned for more similarly to public utilities, as they are necessary to fully participate in today's education, health, business, and social economies. Solutions need to be comprehensive, quality, affordable, and sustainable beyond temporary subsidy, service, or loan.

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Voyage by Chuck Tingley. Photo: Google

The WITHIN WNY quality of life planning process, developed with neighborhood partners, uses a comprehensive approach to create a neighborhood action plan that addresses neighborhood priorities across [LISC program areas](#) including Affordable Housing, Community Leadership, Creative Placemaking, Economic Development, Education, Financial Stability, Health, Safety & Justice, and Sports & Recreation. It embodies the LISC model of grounding the pooled public and private resources LISC has access to in local communities by working with place-based neighborhood partners.

The three neighborhood areas located just east of Main Street were selected to launch the new livability planning program based on identified historic disinvestment patterns and the greatest gaps in health and wealth equity compared to the rest of the region. Simultaneously, in late 2019, early 2020, LISC Western New York was building a team to carry out the livability planning program in coordination with the economic inclusion, housing, and capacity building program areas.

### **COVID-19**

Just after hiring the first WITHIN WNY Program Officer, and as we planned for the launch of this process, our community was significantly impacted by the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020. LISC operations quickly moved to a virtual, work-at-home model and the new team strategized pathways to move forward in the context of the pandemic and lived realities of the communities and partners engaged in the process. The pandemic only exacerbated the health and wealth equity issues within Buffalo. We saw initial, large scale spread of the virus in Black and Brown communities, areas already more significantly impacted by underinvestment in the social determinants of health. Deaths rates resulting from the virus were also disproportionately impacting people of color. Concerted and focused efforts by community leaders like the African American Health Equity Task Force, places of worship, community centers like Delavan Grider, food providers, health

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providers like Jericho Road and GBU-AHN, and mutual aid efforts were among the most critical community responders who advocated for an intentional County and City focus on the communities of color. Testing centers, and eventually vaccine distribution hubs, were set up in Black and Brown neighborhoods, including the three planning areas, in the first wave of interventions. This intentionality helped to level out the disproportionate impact of the pandemic in these communities, though health data still shows inequities according to race and zip code.

The socioeconomic impact of the pandemic has also had a tremendous impact on the neighborhoods in all of the planning areas. First, a transition to physical isolation meant people lost their jobs and/or had to choose to continue to work in frontline or service industry jobs in the height of the risks from the virus. Children were sent home from school and/or childcare, which also meant parents made difficult decisions to balance work and childcare/schooling. Small businesses were pressed to make rapid transitions to virtual platforms or socially distant services in order to survive, otherwise many closed their doors. The neighborhood environment was brought to the forefront as families looked for safe outdoor places to go, exercise, and access resources. Walkability, food access, the quality of green space, bicycling, and transportation have been critical factors for navigating the pandemic. Affordable, safe housing, an important issue even prior to the pandemic, rose to one of the most significant concerns of families during this time. Spending more time at home meant the need for stable housing with broadband access and adequate utilities. While the renewed focus on these inequities by multi-sector partners is promising, communities continue to be challenged by circumstances related to under investment in their environments and social and economic systems that support their families.

**Racial Justice**

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the obvious and known race-related health and economic inequities locally and nationally. This was compounded by the renewed racial justice movement that followed the unjust murder of George Floyd by police, also in early 2020. George Floyd’s murder was one among many cases of police brutality and murder in the media in 2020. Black Lives Matter brought communities together, amid the pandemic, to demand justice and equity. Locally, Buffalo experienced both the raised community awareness and action and the effects of police brutality.

Organizations and government entities demonstrated a renewed commitment to racial justice and a new wave of diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice advocacy continues to be a priority. In this moment, organizations also are beginning to understand the need to center race in order to more effectively close wealth and health equity gaps throughout communities.

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**Pre 2020**

**2004**

Masten Park Cold Springs Housing Competition

**2017–2018 LISC**

City of Buffalo hire Urban Design Associates to conduct neighborhood outreach around Masten Park/Cold Spring Housing Goals

**2019**

East Side Avenues Starts

HUD Section 4 funding administered to BUDC for a Northland Planning Grant

LISC Staff Hired for Economic Inclusion Work

**2020**

**March**

COVID-19 Work from Home Begins

**April**

LISC Staff Hired to manage WITHIN WNY Neighborhood Planning Work

Ongoing Economic Development Report Review-Staff collected and compiled past data to inform Economic Inclusion portion of investment plan

Outcomes: Staff gathers community’s previous feedback on Buffalo Billion, REDC Key Industries, Northland Brownfield Opportunity Area, City-released Reports, Neighborhood level reports (like 2017 Fillmore Streetscape Plan, 2004 Masten Neighborhoods Plan, ROCC Studies, etc)

**May**

AARP Funding Received for Pride in Place. In partnership with the Buffalo Center for Health Equity

**August**

6 Livability Meetings Summer 2020 - Goals: Learn about each organization’s top 3 goals and opportunities for collaboration

**September**

Attorney General’s Affordable Housing 101 Training Released. 8 entities receive pre-dev funding and expected to produce 382 units of affordable housing

**October**

First Equitable Neighborhood Development Summit kicks off with 116+ virtual attendees





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**2021**

**January**

Prospect Hill Consulting is hired by LISC team for data mapping and HUB Site development

**February–June**

Outcomes: Staff gathers data relative to Buffalo Green Code, Main Street e-TOD, Buffalo Sewer Green Infrastructure

Intensive Multi-Sector Data Collection

LISC National Resources available for Economic Inclusion. LISC partners with Buffalo Urban League (BUL)

**July**

HUD Section 4 funding to Buffalo Urban League assists in hiring Jacques Consulting for outreach assistance.

Economic Inclusion Steering Team Formed

Eight Economic Inclusion Focus Groups: Commercial Districts, Creative & Cultural Economy, Workforce Development, Real Estate, Main Street Businesses (x2), Childcare Economy, New American Business Owners

Regional Housing Report Released in partnership with Partnership for the Public Good

**August**

Moving Forward Together funding received with several housing partners for East Side modular housing developments

Four public engagement sessions occur at Kuleta Pamoja, Funk Fest, Manna @ Northland, SuperStreet

Individual Interviews ongoing with Economic Inclusion & Livability Partners-Summer 2021

**September**

Virtual Scenario Planning Event - Sept 2021

Interactive Digital HUB Site available to the public

**October**

Presentation of Shifting the Narrative: ROI on Healthy Communities

All data and engagement materials get compiled in WITHIN East Side Report draft



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**2021–2022**

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**November–January 2022**

6-part Commercial District Management 101 Training Released. Administered by LISC in partnership with ESA. Nov 2021–Jan 2022

Weeks of partner interviews on WITHIN Report for public feedback and investment plan endorsement through Q1 2022

**February**

Finalist for NYSERDA Clean Neighborhoods Challenge with HOCN, GOBike, SMI, East Side Bike Club, BNMC, CEJ

**April**

Implementation Council Convenings Kick Off April 2022

**May–December**

Finalized WITHIN Report is launched

Ongoing fundraising for Investment Plan Implementation

Continue Implementation Council convenings as funding allows.



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**AFFORDABLE HOUSING**

means that a household’s housing costs, including energy, does not exceed 30% of its gross monthly (family) income.

**ARPA**

American Rescue Plan Act

**BIPOC**

Black and/or Indigenous People of Color

**CDFI**

Community Development Financial Institution

**CDBG**

Community Development Block Grant

**DIVERSITY**

The terms that most often come to mind are race, ethnicity, and gender - though the term “diversity” is also used in relation to age, national origin, religion, difference of ability, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, education, marital status, language, and physical appearance. It also involves different ideas, perspectives and values.

**EQUITABLE / EQUITY**

is dealing fairly and equally with all concerned.

**ERAP**

Emergency Rental Assistance Program

**ESA**

East Side Avenues

**E-TOD**

Equitable Transit Oriented Development

**HOME**

Housing Opportunities Made Equal

**INCLUSION**

Authentically bringing traditionally excluded individuals and/or groups into processes, activities, and decision/policy making in a way that shares power.

**MWBE**

Minority and/or Women-Owned Business Enterprise

**MOBILITY**

is the ability to move or be moved freely and easily.

**MULTI-MODAL**

simply means involving several different forms of activities.

**OPEN4**

A private funding initiative focused on regional inclusive entrepreneurship

**RACIAL WEALTH GAP**

The rate at which white householders own their homes compared to African American householders. Further, the overarching housing values in African American predominant neighborhoods are just a third of values in the region’s predominantly white neighborhoods.

**RACIAL INCOME GAP**

This refers to the income gap between white residents in the region and Black and Latino residents. In Buffalo-Niagara, this gap is more than doubled for white residents compared to Black and Latino residents.

**SECTION 8**

The housing choice voucher program is the federal government’s major program for assisting very low-income families, the elderly, and the disabled to afford decent, safe, and sanitary housing in the private market.

**TOD**

Transit Oriented Development

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**AFRICAN HERITAGE  
FOOD COOP**

**ALBRIGHT KNOX**

**AMERICAN AXLE**

**BCCWNY**

Black Chamber of Commerce  
Western New York

**BEAU FLEUVE MUSIC &  
ARTS**

**BELMONT HOUSING  
RESOURCES FOR WNY,  
INC.**

**BFNC**

Buffalo Federation of  
Neighborhood Centers

**BFNHS**

Broadway Fillmore  
Neighborhood  
Housing Services

**BNMC**

Buffalo Niagara  
Medical Campus

**BTRU**

Buffalo Transit Riders United

**BUDC**

Buffalo Urban  
Development Corporation

**BUFFALO FOOD  
EQUITY NETWORK**

**BUFFALO FREEDOM  
GARDENS**

**BUFFALO GO GREEN**

**BUL**

Buffalo Urban League

**BURA**

Buffalo Urban  
Renewal Agency

**CANISIUS COLLEGE**

**CAO**

Community Action  
Organization

**CATHOLIC HEALTH**

**CDC**

Community Development  
Corporation

**CDFIS**

Community Development  
Financial Institutions

**CEDARLAND  
DEVELOPMENT**

**CEJ**

Center for Economic Justice

**CEL**

Center for Entrepreneurial  
Leadership

**CITIZEN'S ALLIANCE**

**CITY OF BUFFALO**

**COMMERCIAL DISTRICT  
GROUPS**

**COMMUNITY FIRST**

**CTRC**

Central Terminal  
Restoration Corporation

**DEVELOPING OUR  
TRANSIT FUTURE  
PARTICIPANTS**

**DOT**

NYS Department of  
Transportation

**EAST SIDE AVENUES**

**EAST SIDE BIKE CLUB**

**EAT OFF ART**

**ECIDA**

Erie County Industrial  
Development Agency

**ECMC**

Erie County Medical Center

**EFORALL**

Entrepreneurship  
for All Erie County

**ESA**

East Side Avenues

**ETOD COORDINATING  
COMMITTEE**

**FBCLT**

Fruit Belt Community  
Land Trust

**FILLMORE FORWARD**

**FOOD FOR THE SPIRIT**

**FOOD FUTURES WNY**

**GBNRTC**

Greater Buffalo Niagara  
Regional Transportation  
Council

**GJABA**

Greater Jefferson Avenue  
Business Association

**GOBIKE BUFFALO**

**GRASSROOTS GARDENS**

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**HEALTHY CORNER STORES INITIATIVE**

**HOCN**

Heart of the City Neighborhoods

**HOME**

Housing Opportunities Made Equal

**HOME HEADQUARTERS**

**IDA**

Incremental Development Alliance

**INCREMENTAL DEVELOPMENT ALLIANCE**

**LINCOLN MEMORIAL CHURCH**

**LISC (WNY)**

Local Initiatives Support Corporation (Western New York)

**LIVE WELL ERIE**

**MASTER GARDENERS**

**MATT URBAN CENTER MISSION IGNITE**

**MOM MARKET**

Market on Michigan A

**NFTA**

Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority Northland Campus

**NYPA**

New York Power Authority

**OLMSTED PARKS CONSERVANCY**

**ONE REGION FORWARD**

**OPEN4**

A private funding initiative focused on regional inclusive entrepreneurship

**PAPPY MARTIN LEGACY JAZZ COLLECTIVE**

**PROJECT RAINFALL**

**REGION CENTRAL**

**RE-TREE WNY**

**ROCC**

Restore Our Community Coalition

**SALVATION ARMY**

**SBDC**

Small Business Development Center

**SHARED MOBILITY INC.**

**ST. JOHN'S CREDIT UNION**

**STAND UP BUFFALO**

**THE EXCHANGE AT BEVERLY GRAY**

**THE FOUNDRY**

**TRUST FOR PUBLIC LAND**

**UFV**

Urban Fruits & Veggies

**ULI**

Urban Land Institute

**URBAN PLAN 4ALL**

**WAKANDA ALLIANCE**

**WBC**

Canisius Women's Business Center

**WNY COVID-19 RESPONSE TEAM**

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### **Team Support**

LISC WNY, with the financial support of the John R. Oishei Foundation, provided capacity and technical support through staff and consultant teams throughout the WITHIN program.

### **Consultants**

#### **Prospect Hill Consulting LLC and JBK Consulting**

Prospect Hill is a small, NYS Certified Minority and Women-owned Business Enterprise (M/WBE) LLC located in the Prospect Hill Historic District within the vibrant West Side community of Buffalo, NY. Prospect Hill has more than 60 years of combined nationwide experience in the environmental consulting industry and provided all of the GIS mapping data analyses, design, construction, and maintenance of the HUB site throughout the WITHIN program. JBK Consulting provided scenario planning analyses, education, and training support for LISC and community partners.

#### **White Bicycle and Renata Toney**

White Bicycle is a nationally recognized branding team based in Buffalo, New York. White Bicycle focuses on brand strategy, brand design, and brand content. Part studio, part agency, they are a group of creatives who integrate strategy, project management, and client collaboration into our process. White Bicycle contracted with Renata Toney, owner of On Message Communication and Public Relations Strategist at the Burchfield Penney Art Center, to design and develop the WITHIN WNY / East Side brand and messaging. This incredible report document design was also generated through White Bicycle.

#### **Buffalo Urban League and Jacques Planning & Consulting**

The Buffalo Urban League empowers African Americans, other minorities, and disadvantaged individuals to secure economic self-reliance, parity, power, and civil rights. The Buffalo Urban League partnered with Jaques Garcia of Jacques Planning & Consulting Services, LLC to provide support for WITHIN East Side community outreach and focus groups focused on topics in economic inclusion during the summer of 2021.



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CONTRIBUTIONS

**LISC WNY**

**Julie Barrett O’Neill**, LISC WNY Executive Director 2018-2022;

- Local Government Relations
- Housing processes, including the Regional Housing Market Study, Moving Forward Together Housing proposal and Mission Based Affordable Housing program.

**Tyra Johnson Hux**, LISC WNY Operations Director;

- Support for emerging Black developers through the Community Based Real Estate Development Training
- Built synergies and connections with regional economic development players
- Anchor institution & workforce development strategies
- Manages our local small business grant programs (ie. General Motors)
- Co-authored the Regional Inclusive Economic Development Agenda

**Kate Rebhan**, Nonprofit Coaching & Capacity Support

- Provided one on one assistance to nonprofit organizations
- Manages our LISC AmeriCorps & Section 4 grant programs
- Manages all general office grants and contract management

**Saira Siddiqui**, Neighborhood Business Support

- Manages neighborhood based economic development initiatives, including commercial corridor program management and placekeeping initiatives
- Co-authored the Regional Inclusive Economic Development Agenda
- Co-authored the WITHIN East Side Neighborhood Plan
- Assisted in AARP Pride in Place project & early win activities

**Brittany Perez**, Livability Program Support

- Secured AARP grant funding for the Pride in Place project & early win activities
- Secured Regional Plan Association funding
- Manages LISC’s health equity portfolio inclusive of transportation and food access work
- Co-authored the WITHIN East Side Neighborhood Plan

**Maggie Hamilton Winship**, Real Estate & Lending Support

- Support for emerging Black developers through the Community Based Real Estate Development Training
- Mission Based Affordable Housing & Affordable Housing 101 Trainings
- Provides direct financing & real estate assistance to partner organizations and businesses

**Thank you.**