

Acknowledgments

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Executive Summary

East Buffalo GNPA Neighborhood Plan

The East Buffalo Good Neighbors' Planning Alliance (GNPA) is one of eleven GNPA communities. Covering 5.2 square miles and containing just fewer than 34,000 residents, the East Buffalo GNPA is comprised of five distinct neighborhoods—Broadway-Fillmore, Emerson, Lovejoy, Babcock, and Kaisertown. The physical boundaries of East Buffalo include: Smith Street to the west, Best Street and Walden Avenue to the north, the City line to the east, and the I-190 and the Buffalo River to the South.

The Good Neighbors' Planning Alliance is a neighborhood based planning process that seeks to actively involve citizens in the creation of action plans for their communities. Mayor Anthony Masiello approved the GNPA initiative in August 2001, as part of the City of Buffalo's work in completing a Comprehensive Plan. The GNPA is an empowering structure as community members are given an official role in determining the future direction of their own neighborhoods.

The mission of each Good Neighbors' Planning Alliance is to:

- Include diverse individuals and groups in the process of improving the community;
- Establish new partnerships within the community;
- Improve conditions of the built environment such as housing, education, and recreation;
- Improve public policies and services that impact the community; and
- Improve the quality of life for all.

The East Buffalo GNPA representatives consist of residents and community stakeholders who volunteer from the Broadway-Fillmore, Emerson, Lovejoy, Babcock, and Kaisertown neighborhoods. Some participants are officers in various community organizations or represent church groups while others are local business leaders.

Noting the diversity of the five neighborhoods within the East Buffalo GNPA, this area in many ways epitomizes the working-class and immigrant neighborhoods that inhabited America's great industrial cities during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Narrow side streets contain modest homes and are frequently punctuated by magnificent churches. Well-mannered brick and wooden structures line the lengthy commercial thoroughfares, offering basic services to nearby residents. Rail lines meander like rivers of iron, forming man-made barriers between neighborhoods and bridging streets in wide viaducts. Located near the rails are many factories and warehouses, both old and new, where generations of East Buffalo residents have labored.

Not only does East Buffalo reflect Buffalo's prosperous industrial heritage, it also reflects the impacts of deindustrialization and suburbanization that dominated the last half of the 20th century in all American cities. Vacant housing, empty storefronts, and shuttered factories affect each of East Buffalo's neighborhoods to varying degrees. Although the individual neighborhoods of East Buffalo are unique places, each with a distinct character, they all share in the

consequences of negative forces that, in the past few decades, have caused numerous difficult issues and struggles. For example:

Population

- All neighborhoods have lost at least 1/3 of their residents since 1970.
- Population decline accelerated in most neighborhoods during the 1990s (after a slowdown in the 1980s).

Age

- All neighborhoods lost at least 1/3 of their young adults (ages 20-34) during the 1990s.
- The proportion of the population that is under age 19 is greater today, in all neighborhoods, than at any time since 1970.

Housing

- Despite declines in the total number of housing units due to demolitions and conversions, vacancy rates today are higher, in all neighborhoods, than at any time in recent history. In addition, home ownership has fallen in all neighborhoods since 1980.

Education

- All neighborhoods have seen dramatic increases over the past 30 years in the percentage of residents who are high school graduates.
- The percentage of residents with at least 4 years of college is well below the City average of 18% in each of East Buffalo's five neighborhoods.

Labor Force

- A higher proportion of neighborhood residents are working in the suburbs than ever before (close to 50%, on average, for East Buffalo).
- The proportion of workers engaged in manufacturing has fallen dramatically in the past 30 years, while service and sales jobs now employ more than half of the workers in all neighborhoods.

Income/Poverty

- Almost all neighborhoods had median household incomes below the City average in 2000, and those incomes grew slower than those in the rest of the City during the 1990s.

Because these neighborhoods have some concerns in common, it is fair to say that they also share a desire for improvement. Some interests include a desire for well-maintained parks, safe streets, good schools, a clean environment, and the amenities that make a neighborhood not just a place to live, but a place to thrive. Ultimately, the neighborhoods of East Buffalo share a common future, recognizing that neighborhoods neither decline nor prosper in isolation. The East Buffalo Good Neighbors' Planning Alliance provides a forum through which these commonalities are acknowledged and confronted by East Buffalo's own citizens. It is a means by which these diverse places can form a united front, collective in its goals, influential by its sheer size and formidable in the fight for resources to achieve its goals.

Over the past five years, the East Buffalo GNPA has consistently sought out support for and input on the development of the neighborhood plan from all residents and stakeholders within

the alliance's five neighborhoods. The East Buffalo GNPA gathered information for the draft neighborhood plan through surveys, community planning summits, a neighborhood and demographic trend analysis and a series of East Buffalo GNPA planning committee meetings.

During the neighborhood planning process, residents and community stakeholders defined seven important neighborhood priorities: (1) Police and Public Safety (2) Parks and Environment (3) Public Works (4) Economic Development and Historic Preservation, (5) Schools, Libraries, and Youth, (6) Housing and Vacant Lots, and (7) Transportation. This Neighborhood Plan identifies the goals, strategies, and activities for each priority.

It is intended for several goals, strategies, and activities outlined under each neighborhood priority to be implemented over a time period of one to ten years; others will be ongoing. Action groups will be created to work on the actual implementation of the East Buffalo GNPA Neighborhood Plan's initiatives. Each action group will focus on a specific neighborhood priority. As the lead coordinating organization, the East Buffalo Good Neighbors' Planning Alliance will oversee the entire plan. Agency and organizational sponsors will assist the East Buffalo GNPA with facilitating the action groups. These sponsors will help coordinate meetings and document progress. Community meetings were held in September 2004 to present the draft Neighborhood Plan to East Buffalo. Residents and stakeholders in attendance at those meetings were encouraged to sign up for an action group(s) or to become a sponsor.

In late 2006/early 2007, a Planning Subcommittee undertook the task of prioritizing the approximately 200 strategies in the draft Neighborhood Plan, so that energies could be focused on the most important and feasible strategies. After the Planning Subcommittee held three work sessions and attendees at the GNPA General Meeting reviewed the process and results on January 16, 2007, prioritization was completed on all strategies. The result is that there are 58 high priority strategies which will be the focus of plan implementation, as reflected in Section 5 of this document.

The East Buffalo GNPA will hold annual meetings in each of the five GNPA communities each year to evaluate status of their implementation process. All participants will review the actions of the past year and set the course for the upcoming year. The principal goal of the East Buffalo Good Neighbors' Planning Alliance during the implementation phase will be to maintain momentum toward creating positive change for East Buffalo, in ways consistent with the City comprehensive plan "The Queen City in the 21st Century: Buffalo's Comprehensive Plan".

This plan, "Preserving Our Heritage and Planning Our Future!", is East Buffalo's vision of renewal. Representing the rich diversity that is Buffalo, the East Buffalo GNPA has had the opportunity to broach many important issues. Through several open summits, speaker engagements, and community meetings, many ideas and interests have been presented. We trust that the strategies to address them as represented in this plan will become part of "The Queen City in the 21st Century: Buffalo's Comprehensive Plan". Indeed, the quality of life for all the City of Buffalo's residents and taxpayers will be vastly improved upon the adoption of the interests supplied throughout this document.