



# Main Street



# Artspace Buffalo

## Vacant Development Sites on Main Street in the Project Area

Address	Acreage/ Dimensions	Assessed Value	Ownership
1127 Main	80 x 146 ft.	\$40,300	City of Buffalo
1145 Main	101 x 200 ft.	\$80,800	Osmose Realty
11 Dodge	134 x 47 ft.	\$4700	Park Development
1348 Main	58 x 234 ft.	\$10,000	Benderson Development
1356 Main	15 x 237 ft.	\$14,200	Benderson Development
1516 Main	90 x 250 ft.	\$40,575	Robert F. Biniszkiewicz

## Project Area

Main Street between North Street and Ferry Street

## Current Conditions

Currently, the streetscape is in rough shape. Sidewalk conditions vary, but in the majority of cases, the sidewalks are in need of repair or replacement. Street pavement is getting worn with many patched potholes and ruts worn into the pavement near intersections. The curbs are in generally decent shape with some that have shifted over time, but the granite has held up well. The light standards are of a highway type and do not contribute to the overall streetscape design. Street trees exist, but are sporadically placed, and do not have a cohesive feel due to sections of the street having large gaps in placement. Throughout the entire project area, there are no trash receptacles or benches. Overall, there is a lack of any kind of street furniture. There are numerous bus stops along Main Street, at almost every intersection. Bus shelters though, are lacking, with the only shelter on Main Street in front of Delta Sonic. The project area includes two Rapid Transit stops: Summer/Best and Utica, which are starting to show their age.

Building conditions vary throughout the project area. Almost every block still contains a pre-modern style structure usually two stories or higher in various states of repair. Many of these structures still contain the intricate architectural details that embellish the several architectural styles from the 1860's through the 1940's. Three structures from this time period: the Squire House, the Statler Center, and the Packard Building, have been recently renovated. Also contained in the project area, are buildings from the modern period, which mostly have not aged well. These are mainly automobile oriented

## Recommended Development Type: Restoration



## Non-conforming: Modern Suburban Style



structures catering to the 1950's, 1960's auto culture. These structures include motels and auto repair shops. Finally, there are post-modern buildings included in the project area, some of good taste and quality, and some that are not. The Elizabeth Pierce Olmstead, MD Center for the Visually Impaired and the Bethesda Harvest International Church are two post-modern structures that exhibit quality design. The post-modern structures that do not follow quality design or even the Transit District Zoning Overlay design guidelines are generally suburban style retail and fast-food restaurants. These structures do not follow the design characteristics that should exist along Main Street (buildings built to the lot lines, two plus stories, parking to the rear or under the structure) , instead following a more Transit Road style of design (20+ foot setbacks, parking in front of the structure, large percentage of surface parking). These buildings, along with several vacant lots and street facing parking lots, are severely damaging to the streetscape, creating a very anti-urban environment.

### Existing Businesses

There is a wide mixture of business types in the Main Street project area. They range from medical oriented businesses by the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus to community service organizations to delis to fast food restaurants. Some of these businesses compliment the project area, and some, while serving a market, do not compliment the Main Street corridor based on design and condition.

### Complimentary Businesses

In the project area there are several examples of complimentary businesses. These are businesses that fit in with traditional Main Street businesses: offices, medical service, restaurants, and community retail. These businesses follow

**Non-conforming: 1950's Style**



**Complimentary Business**



traditional Main Street design, such as buildings built out to the sidewalk with more than one story and possibly even with mixed uses.

Businesses that fit into this category and that exist in the project area include: the Anchor Bar restaurant, William S. Hein Publishers, Literacy Volunteers, the Statler Center, the Olmstead Center for the Visually Impaired, Steel Drums Restaurant, and Flexlume Neon. These businesses these businesses are all generally service oriented, follow traditional Main Street design, and fit in very well with the community.

### **Non-Complimentary Businesses/Non-conformal**

Non-complimentary businesses or non-conformal businesses are businesses that although providing a service to the Main Street market area, generally do not fit in with traditional Main Street design and may not necessarily contribute to the overall well-being of the Main Street project area.

Businesses that fit into this category and that exist in the project area include: Wendy's, McDonald's, Burger King, Delta Sonic Car Wash, Monroe Muffler Brake, Willoughby Insurance, Around the Clock Gas Station, and Aaron's Appliances. These businesses are all generally automobile oriented, follow suburban design, and do not fit in well with the community.

Non-complimentary businesses do provide services which the Main Street market area indeed utilizes, yet their individual designs generally detract from the Main Street environment. The design of, for example, McDonald's is a small one story structure surrounded by parking and including a drive thru, all of which creates a very unfriendly pedestrian environment. The single use of McDonald's also does not lend to increased street level activity since the only people that are utilizing the

McDonald's property are those individuals looking to eat at McDonald's. Now, if McDonald's was located in a multi-story structure with the restaurant on the first level, maybe offices on the second, and then a couple of levels of residential units above, the activity levels of the property would be significantly increased, as well as overall activity on that section of Main Street. This is an example of a method to turn a non-complimentary business into a complimentary business.

### **Non-Complimentary Business**



## Redevelopment Potential

The stretch of Main Street from North to Ferry has not seen significant development in some time. Yes, there have been several individual projects over the last few years, such as the restoration of the Squire House and the Packard Building, as well as the new Delta Sonic Carwash and National Training Center. Yet, there has not been a single development driver pushing a redevelopment of the Midtown neighborhood. The Artspace Project will, with the proper planning and collaboration, be that impetus for redevelopment. Artspace's location in the Sarabeth Building puts it right in the heart of the Midtown neighborhood. To the south-east is the rapidly expanding Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus, for which the Artspace Project can be the driver to continue the momentum further up Main Street.

Along the stretch of Main Street from North to Ferry there are numerous sites for development. A few of these sites are completely vacant, while several more are presently used as surface parking lots. As build out of the streetscape occurs, several of the non-conforming sites should be reconfigured into properly designed sites as to blend in with the rest of the streetscape. To conform with the Transit District, new developments should conform to proper design standards: such as zero lot lines, consist of two or more stories, and have any parking confined to the rear of the lot or under the structure. New developments should also consist of multiple uses such as commercial space on the ground floor with residential space above. Around the LRRRT Stations, particular attention should be placed on locating small markets, dry cleaners, and day care facilities to encourage use of the rapid transit system by offering the convenience of having retail stores for which daily commuters must usually make separate trips. Where possible, any pre-existing conforming structures

## Vacant Redevelopment Sites



should be reused instead of demolished for new development. This will help to create a varying streetscape of architectural styles and add interest to the built environment.



### Parking Lots that are prime for Redevelopment



## Development Standards

### Specific standards and considerations

1. **Scale.** New buildings should maintain the predominant scale of other buildings in the Main Street project area:
  - a. New buildings should respect the predominant height of buildings within the area. The predominant height of buildings varies in the project area. Buildings less than that of two stories would be inappropriate in the project area.
  - b. The floor-to-floor height of the ground floor story should be approximately 15 – 18 feet tall or approximately 50% greater than the upper story(s) floor – to – floor height(s).
  - c. New storefronts should respect the predominant width of storefronts in the project area, which tends to be not more than 25' to 30' wide. Where a new storefront is intended to be wider than this, it should incorporate architectural elements, such as bays, columns, and divided windows, that allow it to appear to be several smaller storefronts and thus allow it to be subdivided into smaller storefronts in the future.
2. **General Design.** Architectural designs and details that respect the character of Main Street should be incorporated to encourage building design diversity, break up the mass of larger buildings, and create a strong pedestrian orientation.
  - a. Traditional organizational composition, including a strongly articulated lower façade, an identifiable upper façade, and a decorative cornice capping the building is encouraged.
  - b. Buildings should create visual separation between the lower façade and the upper façade, as this creates a strong orientation toward the pedestrian. Some design elements that are particularly successful in creating this separation include utilizing canopies, varying textures, varying window patterns, and incorporating sign friezes or storefront cornices. Signage extending above the first story of a building is discouraged for ground floor uses that do not extend to upper floors.
  - c. Include design elements such as window bays, columns, awnings, changes in material or texture, and window and entrance design and placement, in a way that serves to break up the massing of the building.
  - d. Details on existing buildings, such as transoms, decorative cornices, pilasters, columns, or belt courses are encouraged and should not be covered up or removed from existing buildings.
  - e. Exterior materials should be durable and of high quality. On facades that are easily visible from the street(s), synthetic materials that mimic natural materials (such as vinyl siding, dry-vit or concrete block) may be inappropriate.
  - f. Buildings built on corners, or on lots where the size or setback of adjacent buildings makes more than one side visible from the public right-of-way, must treat each visible side as a primary façade and incorporate the appropriate details, materials, and fenestration.
  - g. Mechanical equipment should be located on the rear of buildings or on the roof and be properly screened (e.g., with a parapet).
  - h. Roof design should be functional and in-scale and character with the building and the community. In the Main Street project area, roofs are generally flat/slightly pitched surrounded by a parapet. Roofs

should not make up more than 25% of the visible façade area of the building, except where the portion of the roof on the façade is considered “useable space,” as with a Mansard style roof. The cornice and/or parapet is an area where architectural detail and materials are important as they can add distinctiveness and visual emphasis to a building, but they should be designed to be consistent with the body of the design in scale and detail.



3. **Entrances.** Entrances should be well articulated and oriented toward the primary street.
  - a. Architectural detail should be incorporated into the ground floor façade in order to create an easily identifiable and welcoming entrance. This is typically accomplished through: recessed entries placed between two display windows; decorative or distinctive entryway paving; bulkheads of contrasting materials – note that bulkheads should not extend higher than 30” from the ground plane; and/or perpendicular signage or awnings placed directly over the entrance.
  - b. Major entrances should be oriented toward the primary street. Under no circumstances should a building’s primary entry be located through a parking lot.
4. **Fenestration.** Window design should respect the window patterns (including size, proportion, spacing, and rhythm) of the street. First floor window and display design should create a feeling of transparency on the ground floor of the building. This contributes to a sense of safety and is welcoming to pedestrians.
  - a. The viewing zone of the first floor façade (from 2’ to 8’ above the ground plane) should be made up of approximately 75% transparent glass. Signs painted on windows and temporary window signs are encouraged, so long as they do not obstruct more than 30% of the view from the sidewalk to the interior. This amount of transparent, unobstructed glass is necessary on first floor facades in order to provide a safe and welcoming sidewalk environment. Where a new building is to be located on a corner, each side visible from a street should be considered a primary storefront façade and incorporate these fenestration patterns, unless



doing so should be unduly obtrusive into a primarily residential street.

- b. Sill heights for window displays should not exceed 30". Window displays are encouraged, but visibility into the building from the sidewalk should be maintained.
- c. Display windows should generally be designated as large full glass openings. Smaller panes or ornamentations on storefront windows should generally be reserved for clerestories or sidelight areas so as not to present a residential or fake historic character.
- d. Upper stories should incorporate window patterns and designs that are compatible with and complimentary to existing upper story window patterns on the block.
- e. Existing windows, transoms, or sidelights are important scale and character elements and should not be covered up or changed in size unless in an effort to restore the original appearance of the building. Transparent glazing should be retained and not replaced with translucent glass or any opaque material.
- f. Security devices such as coiling shutters and accordion gates are discouraged on front facades. Alternative security devices such as lighting, alarms, and interior barriers are generally more effective in deterring crime and less likely to create an oppressive or unsafe feeling on the sidewalk.

5. **Signage and Awnings.** Signage and awnings should be pedestrian oriented in size, placement, material, and color.

- a. Perpendicular signs placed about 8' – 12' feet above the ground plane, extending no more than 5' from the building face, and with a total area of no more than 16 sq. ft. are strongly encouraged. No

more than one horizontal sign per establishment shall be permitted, except in those instances where an establishment has more than one customer entrance or faces onto more than one public right-of-way/side street.

- b. Wall signs attached flush to the building façade are also encouraged, so long as they do not extend above the roofline and do not obscure architectural details or features, including windows, transoms, and clerestories. On existing buildings there will often be a fascia signboard spot above the first floor windows and entryway where wall signs can be attached.
- c. Signs for ground floor establishments should not extend above the ground floor façade, unless the establishment itself extends to the upper stories.
- d. Freestanding pole signs should not be used under any circumstances. Freestanding signs may be permissible in circumstances where a commercial use is being developed in a building that has already been developed with a substantial setback from the property line (such as offices being developed in former residential spaces). Under these circumstances, freestanding signs should not project past the property line, obscure the building, be more than five feet in total height, or have a total area exceeding 16 sq. ft. Nor should these signs extend all the way to the ground, allowing someone to conceal themselves behind them. These signs should be set back at least 2' from the public right-of-way.
- e. Under no circumstances should signs or awnings be attached to a building in such a way that obscures or damages significant architectural elements of the building.

- f. Awnings that are functional for shade and shelter purposes are encouraged. These awnings should be made of canvas or a canvas-like material should fit the shape and scale of the window or door they are sheltering, and should be designed to be compatible with and complimentary to building signage and design. Awnings should not be considered signs and lettering or signage should not be located on any portion of an awning, including the valance.
- g. Under no circumstances should plastic-formed or vacuum-formed awnings or any other style of awning whose primary purpose is to act as signage be permitted.
- h. Under no circumstances should awnings or signs be backlit or internally lit. Instead lighting should typically come from direct shielded light sources and be carefully integrated into the overall design of the building so as to provide visibility and safety but to avoid creating glare or light distribution that adversely affects motorists, pedestrians, or neighboring properties.
- i. Neon signs and accents are a part of the character of the Main Street project area and are generally encouraged so long as they are carefully designed with shapes and colors that complement the architecture of the building and the project area. Temporary neon advertising signs should be limited to no more than two individual signs per storefront.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Development Standards based on *Draft Elmwood Site Plan Design Review Guidelines Amendment to Citywide Design and Site Plan from Community of the Arts Draft Neighborhood Plan*



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## Transit Oriented Development Guidelines

Development along the Main Street Corridor should not only respect, but feed off the Main Street MetroRail line. In order to achieve this, development should follow Transit Oriented Design guidelines, which will not only help to encourage pedestrian-scale development, but also encourage greater patronage of the MetroRail.

In Buffalo there tends to be a stigma that the Main Street MetroRail line was a major mistake, and that it was the major factor for the decline of Main Street. This is far from the case. MetroRail was a wise investment in the future, which has paid some dividends in reduced traffic congestion in the corridor, yet has failed as a development generator. This may be more attributed though of: first, the relocation of most retail to large suburban shopping malls and plazas, and second to an overall exodus of residents from the city. Only recently, has Buffalo been able to begin to retain residential development, mainly in the form of apartments and condos in the downtown area. This new trend can be spread to other areas of the city, especially to the Main Street Corridor, thanks largely in part to its easy access to downtown via MetroRail.

To make the most of the MetroRail, new developments on Main Street should take into account their relationship to the nearest MetroRail station. In some cases there are development sites immediately adjacent to a MetroRail station. In these cases, developments should be built out to the sidewalk, be of multiple stories, and be mixed use, combining retail and residential development.

Beaverton, Oregon - Transit oriented development



Current MetroRail station design is generally not of a design to encourage development on the individual station sites. In the case of MetroRail sites in the Main Street Project area, only the Allen Street/Medical Campus Station is slated for any type of mixed use development. In that case the station is to be redesigned so that Allen Street can be extended into the Medical Campus. Also, retail and possibly a mixed use structure is to be included in the station redesign. This plan could be reused at the other two stations in the project area, Summer/Best and Utica Stations. Both stations are large and take up reasonable sized parcels which if reconfigured could present prime development opportunities. In both cases, if the MetroRail stations were reconfigured to accommodate the construction of multi-story mixed use buildings on their respected sites, the stations could be relocated to the lobbies of the new structures. Examples of this type of construction can be found in most major cities with subway systems including: Toronto, New York, and Washington. Reconfiguration of these stations would lead to better use of the station property as well as add regular users to the system since people who live directly above a transit facility are more likely to use it than to drive a car on a regular basis. These are concepts that were proposed during the original construction of the system, yet the Buffalo Market did not allow for until very recently as we have seen in Downtown Buffalo.

In the short-term, to encourage business interaction at the MetroRail stations, non-permanent retail stands and carts should be allowed to set up in the MetroRail stations on the mezzanine levels and also in the above ground station areas both indoors and out.

**Entrance to a TTC Subway Station, Toronto, Ontario**



## Recommendations

Overall, the following recommendations are offered up for implementation in the Main Street Project area:

1. That the development standards offered up in this proposal be implemented and that all new developments be held to these guidelines.
2. That the Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Guidelines recommended in this proposal be implemented and that the responsible agencies in the City of Buffalo as well as the NFTA work together to find the necessary funds for TOD to occur around Buffalo's MetroRail stations.
3. That Form-based zoning be implemented in the project area so as to protect the character of Main Street as well as to promote a proper redevelopment of the Main Street corridor following the transit district guidelines as well as the development standards offered in this proposal.
4. That the physical structure of Main Street itself is rebuilt along the lines as proposed by the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus and as the current Main Street Reconstruction Project in North Buffalo are reconstructing the streetscape in a way to encourage pedestrian activity and to diminish the role of the automobile along the Main Street Corridor.
5. Finally, to fully use the ArtSpace project as the redevelopment generator that it should be and revitalize a much needed section of Main Street.

