

Lively Lancaster

A plan for Housing, Greenways
and Downtown Vitality

By:

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Department of Urban and Regional Planning Graduate Practicum
University at Buffalo
URP581 | Spring 2022 | Professor Ernest Sternberg

WHO WE ARE

This report was prepared by graduate urban planning students from the University at Buffalo's School of Architecture & Planning. Beginning in January 2022 as coursework for a planning practicum, with supervision and guidance from Dr. Ernest Sternberg, we collaborated with the Village of Lancaster to help advise direction and future decisions. By reviewing the village's documents and plans and communicating with community leaders — mainly Mayor Lynne Ruda and village trustee Joe Quinn — we assessed the current situation and proposed future directions for the village. We believe the village has a bright future and are grateful for the opportunity to be a part of the village's story and the experiences that came along with it. We presented this report to the community of the Village of Lancaster, in May 2022 at the historic Lancaster Opera House.



Our group in the Lancaster Municipal building on February 16, 2022 *Right to Left: First row- Trustee Cynthia Maciejewski, Mayor Lynne Ruda, Silvi Patel, Kyli Tripoli, Andrea Harder, Annapurna Nayak. Second row- Bethany Greenaway, Mike Pesarchick, Cristian Toellner, Parker Webb, Deeksha Nagaraj, Tyson Morton, Christina Brooks. Third row- Trustee Joe Quinn, Nathaniel Miller, Devyn Walker, Dalton Fries, Professor Ernie Sternberg. Participant Jack Draksic not shown.*

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Mayor Lynne T. Ruda

Joe Quinn

Dan Castle

Tom Sweeny

Andrew Dearing

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1 GETTING TO A LIVELY LANCASTER

The Village of Lancaster is located in central Erie County, between dense urban Buffalo and the rural farmlands of Western New York. Just east of the Buffalo River watershed is Cayuga Creek, which the Village Center capitalizes on as it flows from the rolling hills at the edge of the Allegheny Mountains toward the Lake Erie lowlands. The Village is linked to the surrounding region through two major East-West connections that being Broadway and Walden Avenue, and two major North-South connections that being Central Avenue and Aurora Street. As one of the few traditional village centers outside of the city of Buffalo, the Village can become a center for retail, culture, and entertainment for the surrounding suburban and rural communities.

From the picturesque Opera House to the iconic downtown rowhouse buildings, the Village Center has historically been a hub for activity. With the extension of West Main Street and construction of mixed-use residential buildings accompanying the street roundabout additions, the Village is taking advantage of accessibility and connectivity trends in 21st-century urban design.

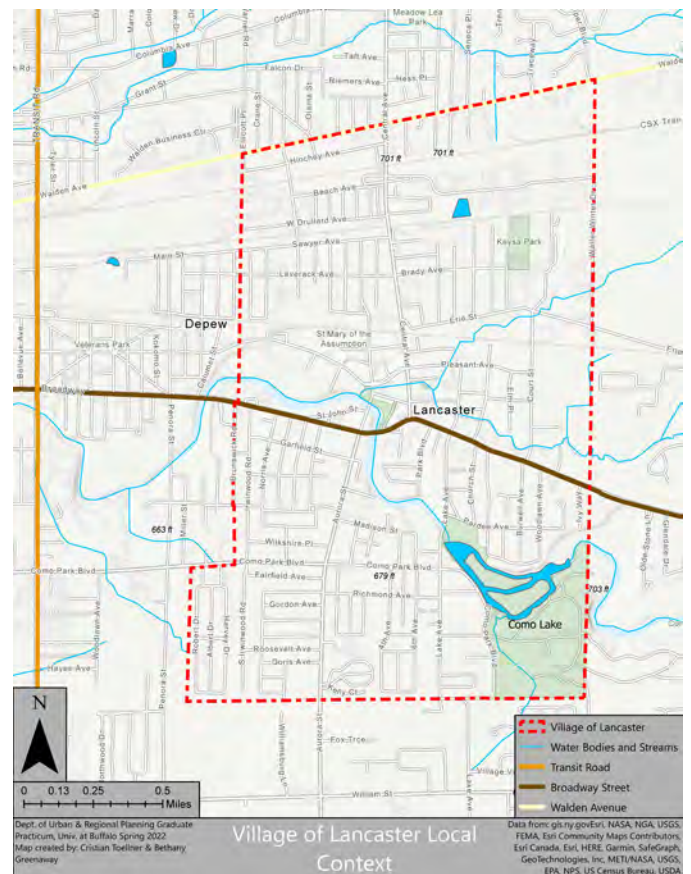
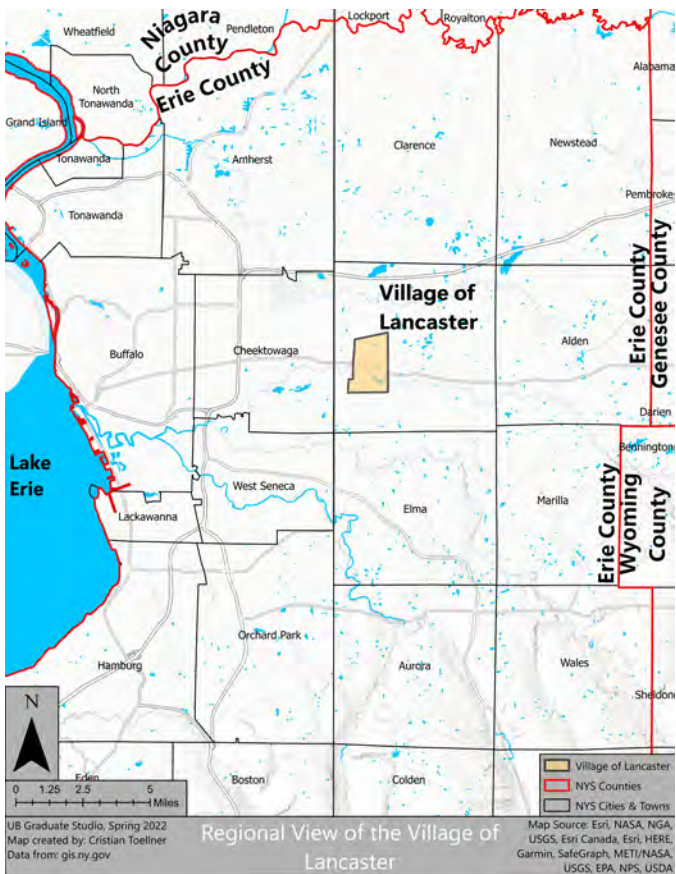


Figure 1-1: Context Maps of the Village of Lancaster

1.1 VISION FOR THE VILLAGE

Our overall vision for the Village of Lancaster is to: 1) create a village center that fosters activity through much of the day, with opportunities to live adjacent to a lively, bustling center; 2) explore adequate housing to give the Village's elderly and young adult population variety in living choices while situating people closer to the village center; 3) connect the Village back to nature through green linkages and open spaces.

A BUSTLING VILLAGE CENTER

Of Buffalo's eastern suburbs, Lancaster is one of the few with a traditional village center. Despite this, residents of the village predominantly shop outside of the village, requiring a vehicle for shopping and can be inconvenient. However, the Village has a unique opportunity insofar as it historically has always had a village center. Growth of Buffalo's metropolitan area overtook traditional historic village centers, and 1960s development in Lancaster restructured the existing village core. This, combined with developments elsewhere, such as the Walden Galleria mall, led people to travel outside the village for shopping and the village center became underutilized. Lancaster has recognized the opportunity to recreate and reinvest in the Village center as a lively and exciting hub for the Village and surrounding municipalities.

Having a lively village center is desirable, as it encourages people to walk around and helps support an environment where stores can thrive. The Village has a great opportunity to design an accessible and exciting village center that is both inviting to outside visitors and convenient and energizing for residents living nearby. Creating this vibrant village center requires a handful of elements: activity through enough people living in and visiting the area; walkability and connection that allows ease of visitation to and around the center; and means of engaging community, be that through parks or cultural attractions.



Figure 1-2 West Main Street, Village of Lancaster, 1913
Source: Lancaster Centennial Planning Committee



Figure 1-3 Central Avenue, Village of Lancaster, 2019
Source: Lancaster Village Website

ADEQUATE HOUSING OPPORTUNITY

For the Village of Lancaster to be vibrant, residents need places to live and must not be forced out due to cost. Therefore, providing adequate housing is an important aspect of our vision to ensure that residents can continue to afford the area. Increasing density through the “missing middle” —housing units such as fourplexes or through accessory dwelling units —keeps the character of the village, while helping provide more affordable residences. This can help create an appealing future for the village that encourages new residents to move to Lancaster while also keeping the cost of housing to a minimum.



Figure 1-4 Houses in Village of Lancaster, 2022
Source: Jordan Dawson, 2022

CONNECTING BACK TO NATURE

As access to open spaces has been proven to affect both physical and mental health of residents, it is important to consider the natural environment of the Village of Lancaster while searching to improve the built environment. Through preservation and awareness of open spaces, and improving trail systems, the village can continue to maintain limited lots of untouched land while improving the overall feeling of the village. Ease of movement and connection to the greater region through an expanded network of trails will help create and encourage interaction with nature.



Figure 1-5 Cayuga Creek, Village of Lancaster, 2019
Source: weather.gov



Figure 1-6 Cayuga Creek Aerial View, Village of Lancaster
Source: Jordan Dawson, 2022

From the gently rolling hills at the north edge of the Allegheny Mountain chain (on the bottom right of the map), Cayuga Creek flows westward from the summits of the highlands of the Southern Tier to the Buffalo River watershed. Even though the Village is relatively flat, it is in the middle ground between the lowlands of Lake Erie and the highlands of the Southern Tier. The Village is positioned perfectly to take advantage of a scenic stream and create increased movement within the village through bike and walking paths described later.



Figure 1-7: The Natural Environment of the Western New York Region

1.2 LANCASTER IN ITS REGION

LAST TRADITIONAL VILLAGE CENTER IN AREA

Lancaster hosts one of the last traditional village centers compared to other suburbs in the greater Buffalo area. It is one of the only traditional village centers in the four-mile radius that is roughly fifty square miles shown in Figure 1-8. It represents a 4 mi radius covering roughly fifty square miles. This area is home to a population of roughly 95,000 (based on census data from tracts within the area).

The shopping centers surrounding Lancaster are primarily west of the village. These plazas include at least two or more stores, with at least one of the stores in each grouping being a grocery store. These areas are the village's best competition for shopping, though a big box store cannot compare to the unique local businesses that occupy Lancaster. This distinctiveness supports the opportunity for the village to enliven its downtown more to keep residence shopping locally. Lancaster's village center therefore has a strong opportunity to serve its region through a traditional center. As this center is further invested in, a stronger pull of residents from the surrounding areas will ensue, further supporting the village's local businesses.

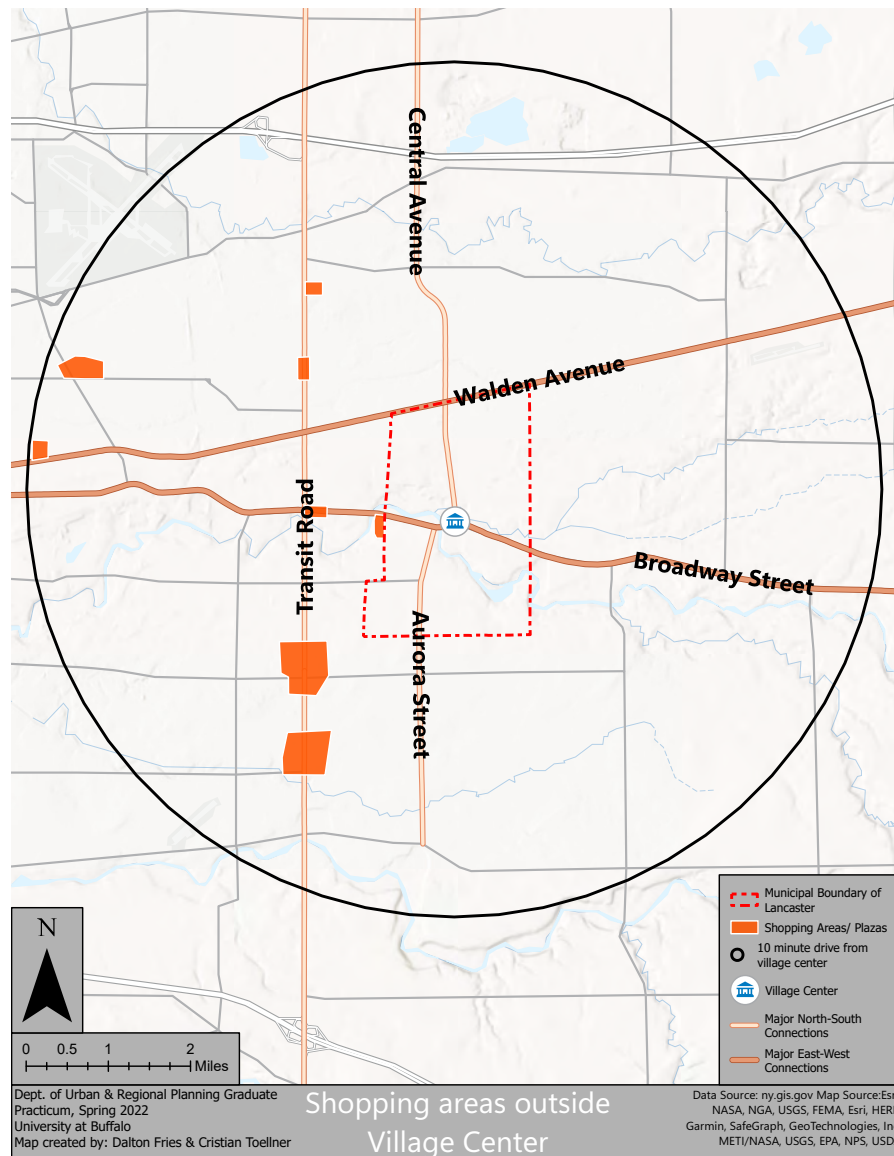


Figure 1-8 Shopping areas within 50 sq mi.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Founded in 1849, the Village of Lancaster traditionally served as the center for the Town of Lancaster. Previously known for glass manufacturing in the late 1800s, the village experienced setbacks at the turn of the century with a multitude of fires and floods. The onset of the latter half of the twentieth century coincided with large changes for the village, including the use of urban renewal to renovate the village center, minimizing the capacity for the center to be used as a sort of “downtown.” Unfortunately, these renovation actions resulted in a grand disruption of the village core, shocking the character and vitality the center had created, causing missed potential for the village’s growth. It is this urban renewal catastrophe that previous plans have aimed to alleviate, and we aim to build off this alleviation to revitalize the village’s center.



Figure 1-9 West Main St. looking West before redevelopment.
Source: Village of Lancaster



Figure 1-10 West Main St. looking North East, before redevelopment.
Source: Village of Lancaster

1.3 TRENDING FORWARD

We assembled a demographic study to examine trends within the Village of Lancaster that would be used to direct our thinking about the village's challenges. Data is essential to any community study because it establishes trends that help tell the story of what has previously occurred, what is currently happening, and opportunities to improve for the future. Our review of the data helped identify trends related to population size, household composition, economic status, and age of the population. Data comparison with other nearby municipalities was used to further help understand the significance of the trends.

POPULATION DECLINE SINCE 1980: LEVELING OFF?

The data presented in Figure 1-11 is based on 1980 to 2020 population trends for the Village of Lancaster and Erie County. Both the Village and Erie County have experienced a population decline from 1980 to 2010. The difference between the graphs is that since 2010 the county has seen a slight increase in population growth, whereas the Village has begun to level off with the current population being 10,027.

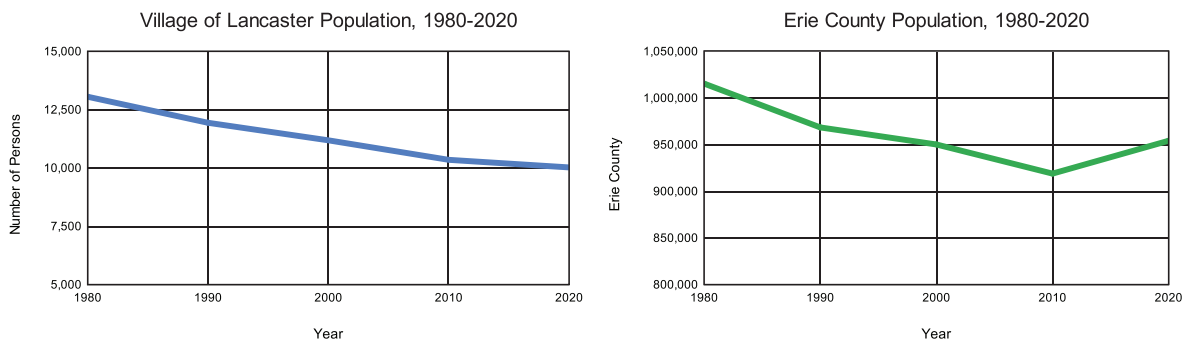


Figure 1-11: Population Change for the Village and Erie County
Source: American Community Survey, (ACS) 1980, 2020

HIGH ELDERLY POPULATION, LOW YOUNG ADULT POPULATION

The Village has lost approximately 23% of its population from 1980 to 2020, a significant decline. Research shows that there has been a significant change in the percentage of young adults between the ages of 20-24 and residents that are older than 65. As seen in Figure 1-12, the population of Lancaster in 2020 compared to in 1980 for the 65+ population has increased from 13.5% to 17%. Meanwhile, Lancaster's 20-24 population has decreased from 8.8% in 1980 to 2.4% in 2020.

There is a possibility that the Village's limited housing stock has resulted in a decrease in young adults over the past 40 years. Some of these young adults may be leaving to pursue their studies. However, those who do wish to return eventually may find it challenging to do so if there is a lack of available housing units for them

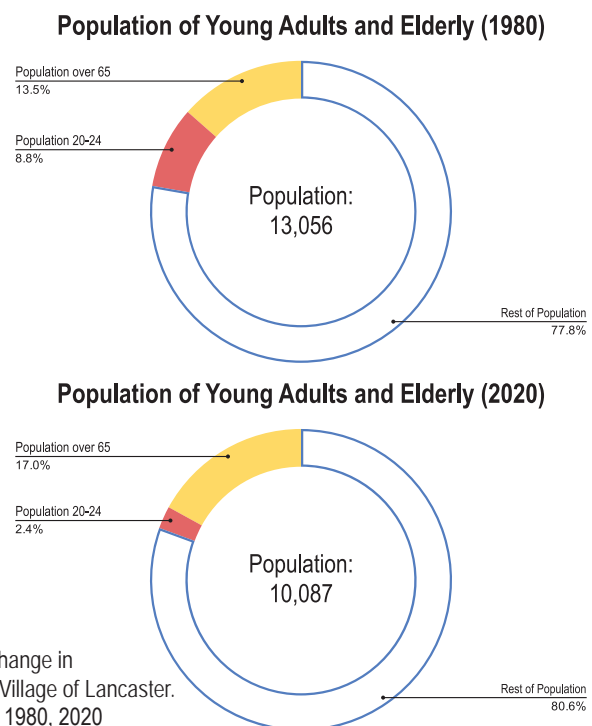


Figure 1-12: Change in Population for Village of Lancaster.
Source: (ACS) 1980, 2020

to move into. Housing is also a concern when it comes to ensuring that older populations have the opportunity to comfortably age in place.

Compared to Erie County, shown in Figure 1-13, Lancaster’s population over 65 is roughly similar. On the other hand, Erie Counties’ population between 20 and 24 is much larger than that of Lancaster’s. Showing how small Lancaster’s 20 to 24 population is compared to other municipalities.

Population of Young Adults and Elderly (2020)

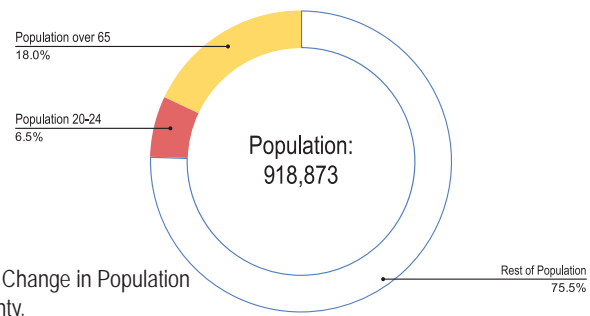


Figure 1-13: Change in Population for Erie County.
Source: (ACS) 1980, 2020

WHERE LANCASTER RESIDENTS WORK

We gathered data to understand the journey to work of people in the village related to average time of commute, types of transportation to work, and inflow and outflow data. The average commute to work time for residents in the village is about 20 minutes per commute. Over 90 percent of the population commutes to work by car. Inflow and outflow pie graphs were generated using data came from the US Census Bureau. The data was organized into three categories: people who are employed in the village but live outside the village, people who live in the village but are employed outside the village, and people who both live and work in the village. For the Village of Lancaster, the majority of people who live in the village are employed outside of the village center. We would like to see the number of people that both live and work in the village increase, an increase would create a more bustling local community.

LANCASTER WORKFORCE DATA (2019)

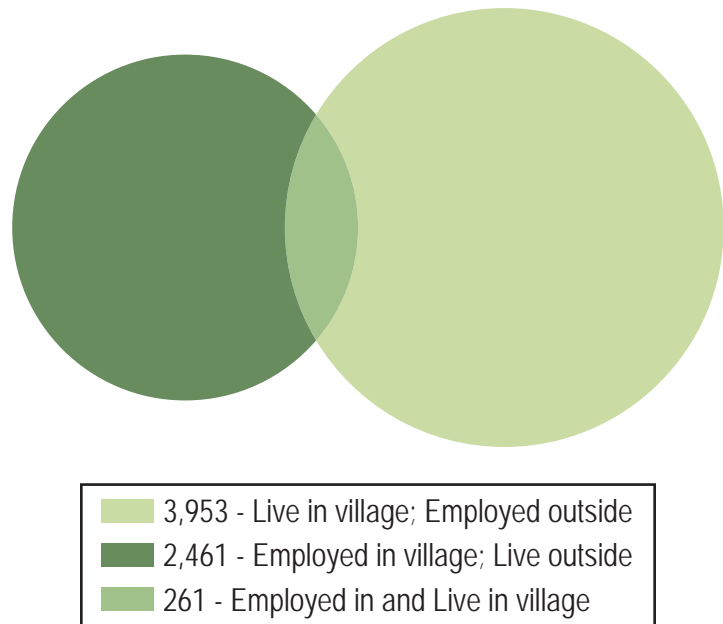


Figure 1-14 Employment Inflow/Outflow within the Village of Lancaster.
Source: (ACS) 2019

LANCASTERS LOWER MEDIAN INCOME

Figure 1-15 compares median household income for the Village of Lancaster in 2020 to adjacent municipalities. The Village of Lancaster has the lowest median household income at \$54,875. One explanation for why the median household income in the Village of Lancaster is that is the result of a larger portion of the population living alone.

Another reason could be that older individuals tend to earn less, work less, or have retired. Finally, median household incomes may be lower because the Village's labor force has a smaller percentage of specialized workers. Economic development is beyond the scope of this graduate planning studio, as recommendations for development would be difficult with a high proportion of Lancaster residents working outside of the village's boundaries.

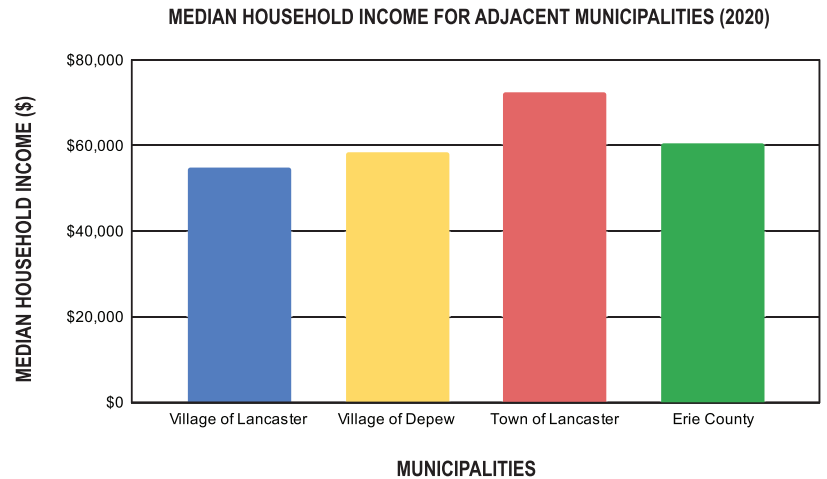


Figure 1-15 Comparison of household median income between the Village of Lancaster, surrounding municipalities, and the region.
Source: (ACS) 2020

LOADS OF SINGLE-PERSON HOUSEHOLDS

In Figure 1-16, compared to other municipalities in the region, Lancaster has a high composition of non-family households within the Village. In 2020 Lancaster's average household size was 2 which is down from 2.36 in 2010. Nearly half of the households in the Village (48%) are non-family and 80% of those non-family households are occupied by individuals who live alone. That means roughly 40% of households in Lancaster are occupied by people who live alone. Roughly 76% of the population over 65 lives alone.

It is possible that the growing number of residents above the age of 65, within the Village, correlates to an increased number of people living alone and, on average, a lower median household income. Despite a higher percentage of people living alone, the Village's housing stock has remained largely unchanged.

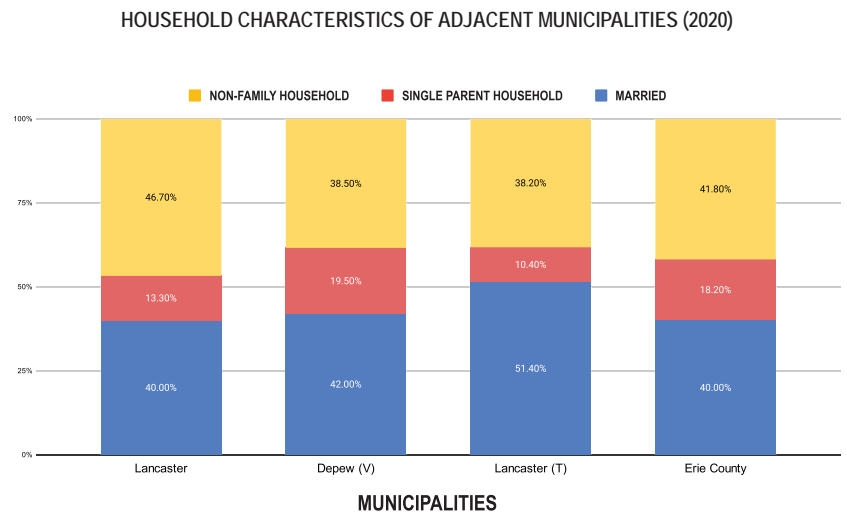


Figure 1-16 Comparison of household familial status between the Village of Lancaster, surrounding municipalities, and the region.
Source: (ACS) 2020

1.4 PREVIOUS STUDIES AND RECENT INITIATIVES

Our vision for the Village of Lancaster builds on the visions of previous plans and studies for the region, namely that of the 2018 Joint Comprehensive Plan for the Town of Lancaster, Village of Depew, and the Village of Lancaster. These previous plans have brought Lancaster into the present, and while they have led to the noticeable improvements, we have concluded there are important, practical steps to be taken. To continue progress from the previous plans, we first center in on the concepts for creating a vibrant village center, helping narrow focus into actionable steps for achieving this goal.

As a region, we are transitioning past de-industrialization while reaching a realization that there is not enough housing infrastructure due to deteriorating quality of homes and a decrease in household size. Previous plans recognized the importance of housing for the village, yet we have to stress the seriousness of building age and household changes to appropriately address this issue.

Finally, in regards to trail development and multi-modal access in the village, previous plans did acknowledge and consider the major trails of the area. However, these trails were simply acknowledged without a vision of increasing awareness and ease of use. Through the trails considered, we have approached how to further develop these trails for engagement and use.

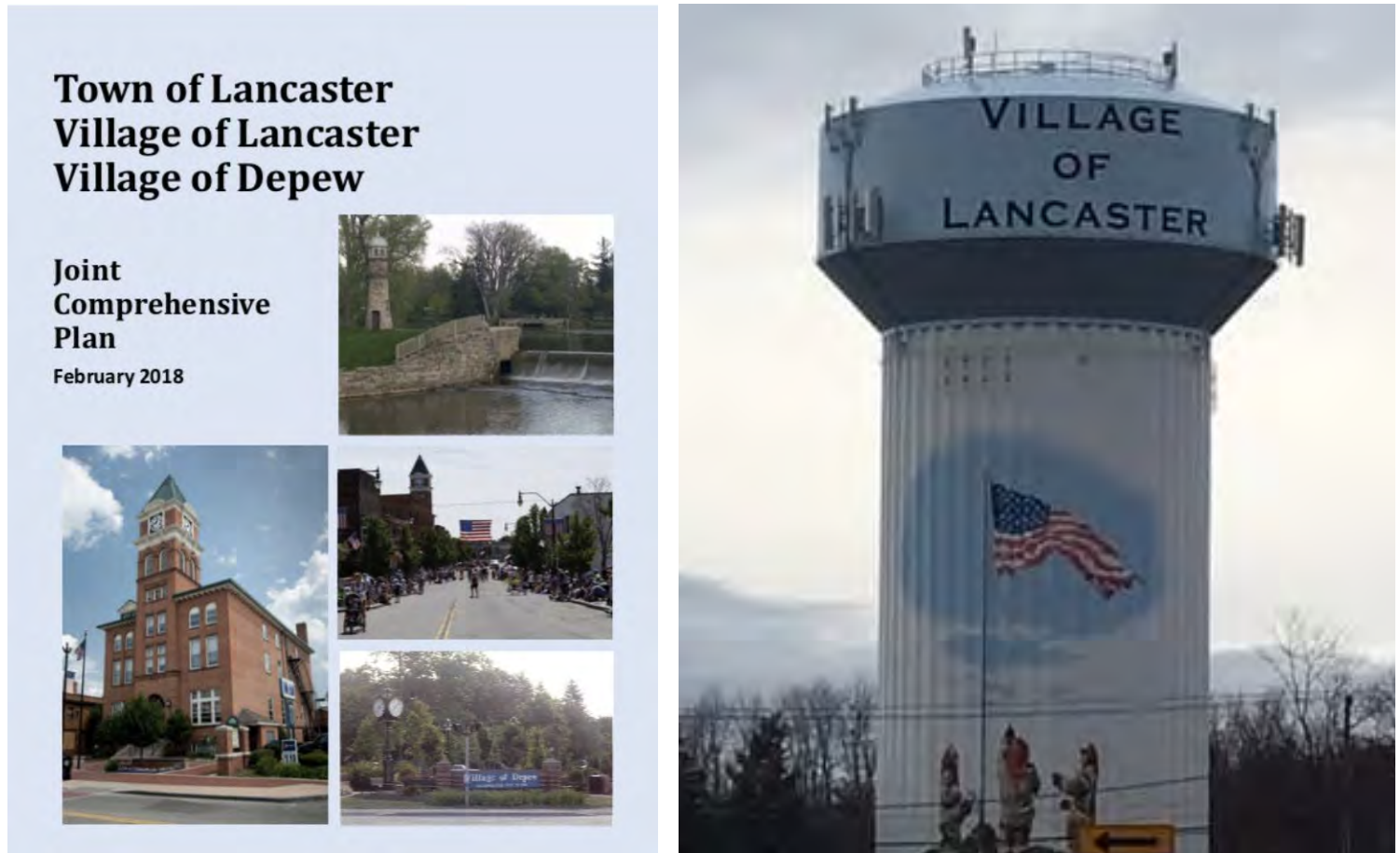


Figure 1-17 Caption: (Left) Cover of the Joint Comprehensive Plan for the Village of Depew and the Town and Village of Lancaster. (Right) Photo of the Water Tower in the Village of Lancaster.

Source: Town of Lancaster, Village of Lancaster, and Village of Depew Joint Comprehensive Plan

It is important to note that many recent initiatives have brought the Village of Lancaster into a great situation for further development and investment in their livelihood. A selection of these initiatives include:

- The restoration of West Main Street
- The future roundabout construction
- The village center's complete streets
- The aim at creating complete streets throughout the village



Figure 1-18 West Main Street Development, 2022
Source: Dalton Fries, 2022

1.5 LOOKING AHEAD

From our initial discussions with the Village of Lancaster, we had many potential avenues for which direction to invest both our energy as well as the village's energy. We strongly believe, given our many discussions with the village and the research we've conducted, that the most effective means to support a Lively Lancaster is through focus on the village center, the issue of housing, and the state of the region's environment. Through the following chapters one can access the reasoning and data to support how to build off of Lancaster's foundation into a livelier place to visit and reside. The Village Center Chapter will discuss means of opportunity for further attracting residents and neighboring suburban communities to the area. The Housing Chapter addresses the issues of older housing, changing household demographics, and solutions to increasing housing prices and limited space. Finally, the two environmental chapters will address issues of open space and connecting trails through the village to encourage an appreciation of the wonderful landscape that Lancaster has to offer.

2 VILLAGE CENTER



FIGURE 2-1: W. Main Street during the road extension project seen from the Lancaster Opera House, Source: Village of Lancaster website

Lancaster is one of the last traditional villages left in Western New York. It has a tight village core and a strong sense of place, a product of its rich history and strategic location on Cayuga Creek. Like so many suburban towns and villages, Lancaster was altered by the automobile-centric culture of the mid-20th century. Despite prior radical changes to Lancaster's original urban fabric, there are strong foundations on which to build a better future. Looking forward we envision a more lively and active village center that supports commerce and culture by attracting visitors and new residents. We believe that the village will attract new businesses and residents alike, with a dense walkable center and a connection to its natural assets via high quality urban design and good traffic management for pedestrians and cars alike.

The village has already done a lot to make it a great place and undo some of the mistakes that were made. The restoration of West Main Street is the most important since it restores the historic street layout, and increases the area of downtown that has an "urban feel". It also expands the area of downtown that has "complete streets" which are streets that serve all users from pedestrians with disabilities to auto traffic. The roundabouts are another important improvement that allow better traffic flow so people don't have to wait at red lights. The construction of new developments along West Main Street has also contributed to the village's improved feel by extending the continuous street facade and providing new residences and commercial space.

In order to achieve this liveliness we propose adding new development in strategic locations in the downtown, which we have defined as the area within a five-minute walk from the Lancaster Opera House. We have laid out several options, but we are not proposing that all of them be implemented. The village leadership and community should decide which are the best development sites to pursue. Some of the sites we suggest are for commercial spaces, and some are residential developments, while others could be mixed-use, meaning there would be commercial space on the ground floor with residential space above.

2.1 WHERE IS THE VILLAGE CENTER ?



FIGURE 2-2: Proposed Village Center Extended Boundary

The historic downtown in the Village of Lancaster is centrally located in one of Western New York's fastest-growing areas. The downtown core is south of Walden Avenue and north of Broadway (US Route 20). Its main cross streets are Central Avenue and West Main Street, and Central Avenue and Pleasant Avenue. We believe the downtown area can once again be a major center of activity for both the village and the region.

The original downtown boundary was prepared in 2018 for the Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI), a state funding program. The application defined the downtown area as a 31-acre area that includes major historic streets and buildings (Figure 2-3) such as the Lancaster Opera House, First Presbyterian Church, and the Greater Lancaster Museum of Firefighting. Major businesses in the area include Dark Forest Chocolate Makers, Lilly Belle Meads, Music Academy of New York, Gilded Maple, and New York Store.

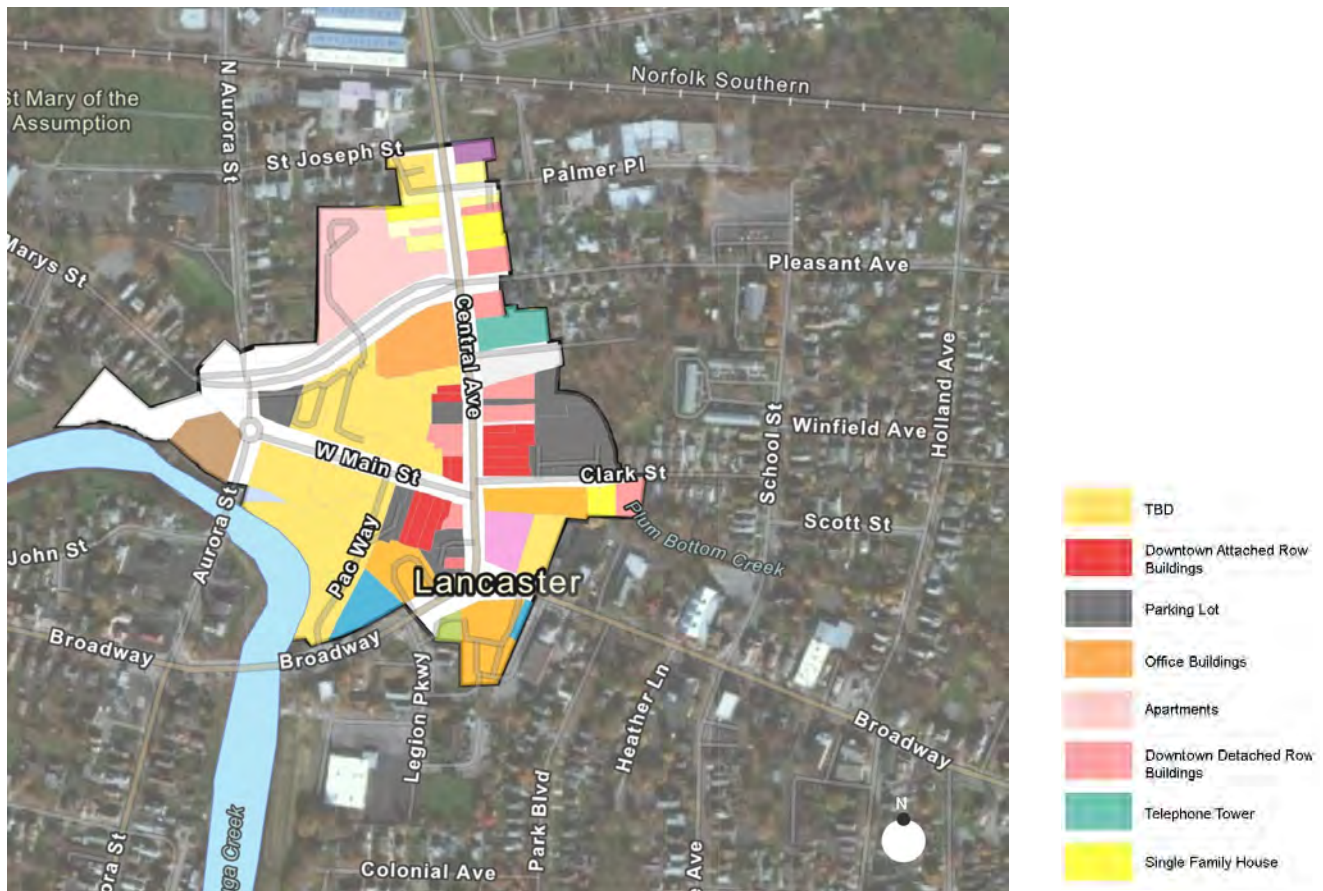


FIGURE 2-3: Existing DRI Boundary

	Past winners of the Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI) funding from the NYS (2017-2019)	Approximate area of the DRI boundary in acres
1	Capital region- Schenectady	400
2	Fulton	185
3	Seneca Falls	116.25
4	Potsdam	137.5
5	Mohawk Valley – Amsterdam	100
6	Central New York – Auburn	176
7	Western New York – Lockport	170
8	Southern Tier – Owego	640
9	Finger Lakes – Penn Yan	234.5
10	North Country – Saranac Lake	110
11	Finger Lakes – Batavia	87.1
12	Long Island – Hicksville	162.2
13	Capital Region – Hudson	130
14	Mid-Hudson – Kingston	267
15	Mohawk Valley – Rome	160
16	North Country – Watertown	160
17	Southern Tier – Watkins Glen	190

Source: NYS Downtown Revitalization Initiative

FIGURE 2-4: NYS DRI Table

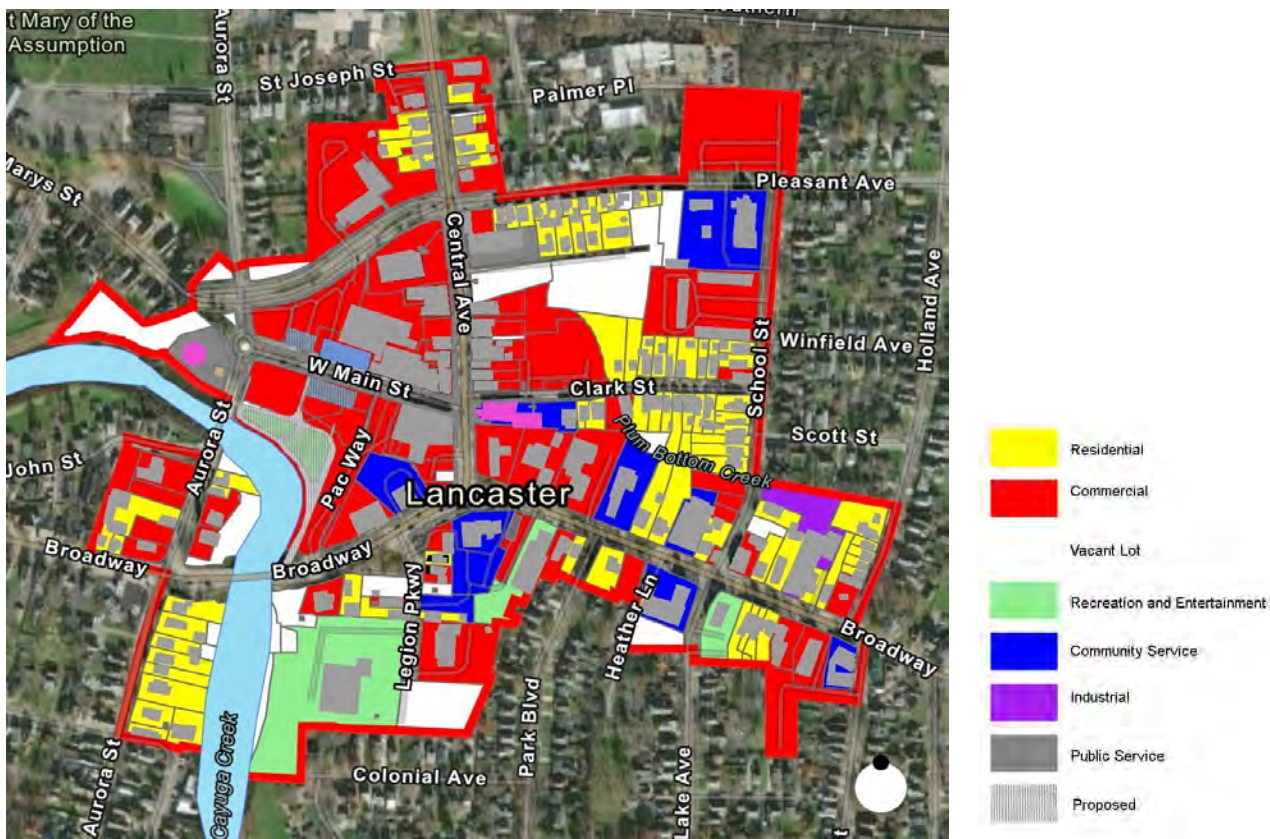


FIGURE 2-5: Proposed Extended Boundary with Land Use and Building Footprints

We believe the boundary should be broader for several reasons:

- Successful DRI applications which we have investigated have defined their downtown boundaries as larger than the initial DRI proposal for the Village of Lancaster (see Table 2-4).
- A larger boundary allows the inclusion of more potential development sites and historic features.
- By having a wider boundary there are more development opportunities for which funding can be found.
- Walkability can extend to a larger area.
- The opportunity to add development sites that will bring increased density, to provide more housing within easy walking distance.

Therefore, we propose a new boundary for the downtown as shown in Figure 2-1. The principal factor for determining the new boundary is an approximately five-minute walk from the village center, which we have defined as West Main Street. As compared to the previous boundary, the new one has its western boundary across Cayuga Creek. It also encompasses a larger area to the south of Broadway. The new downtown area for consideration increases the downtown size to 83 acres.

The extended boundary will bring many opportunities for future economic development within Downtown. As shown in the Table 2-3, villages who have been DRI winners typically have a total area coverage that is greater than 100 acres. Expanding the downtown boundary could increase the opportunity for the village funding for future prospects, creating a bustling village center with more residential density within the downtown area.

2.2 THE PUBLIC REALM

Public realm refers to the spaces that belong to and are accessible to everyone. One of the keys to building an active lively downtown is to have a high quality public realm with accessible pedestrian space and well-designed streetscape. For our purposes of study, we have divided the public realm into:

- Pedestrian Spaces
- Street Accessibility
- Bike and trail connectivity
- Parks
- Cultural Attractions

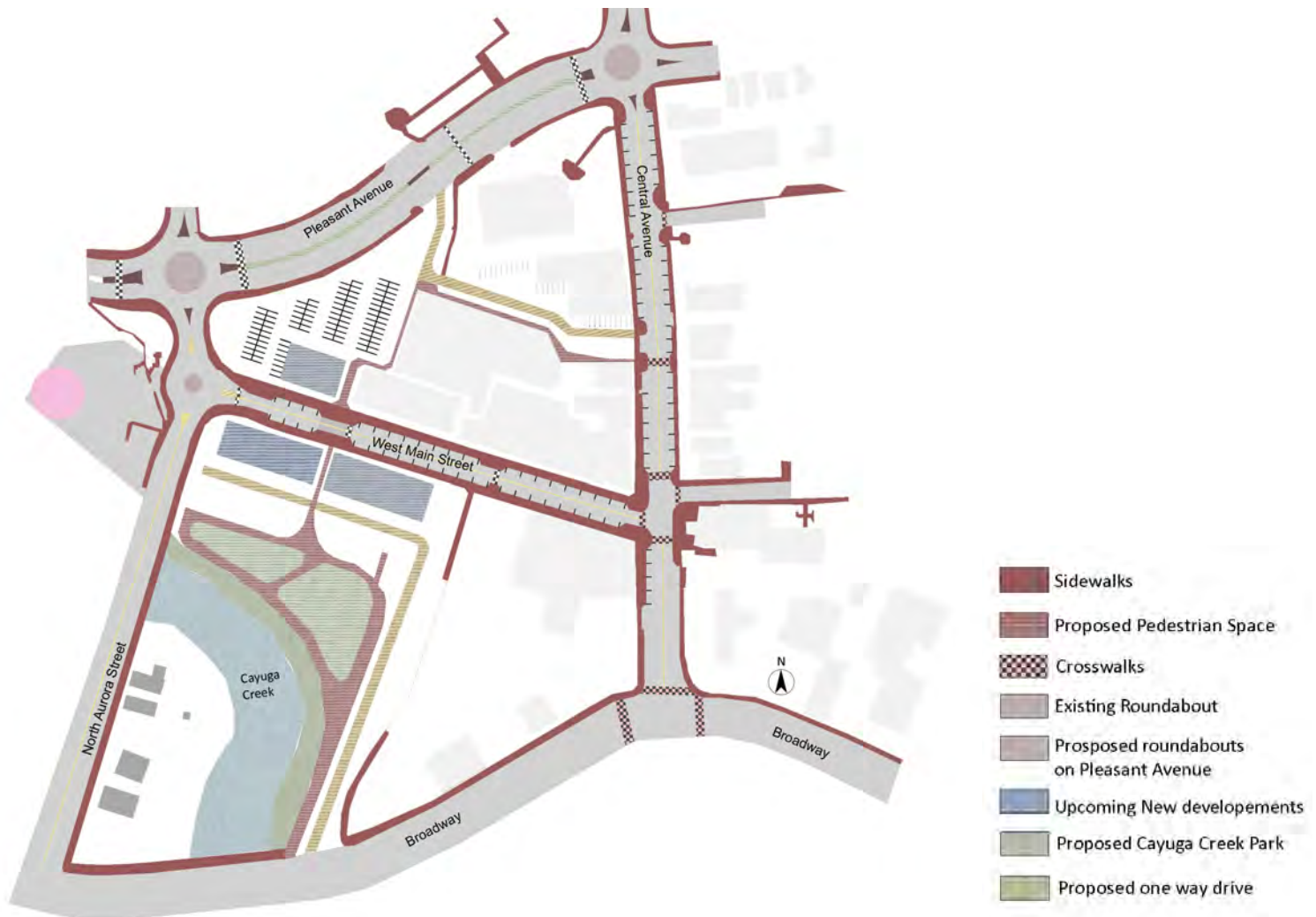


FIGURE 2-6: Existing and Proposed Public Realm

The existing public realm in the downtown is well established and already has features supporting mobility and safety of pedestrians. The streets in the downtown are in a good accessible condition equipped with Complete Street design features identified by the New York State Department of Transportation. The village also intends to improve the streets with the Downtown Roundabouts project, which will replace the signalized intersections of Central Avenue/Pleasant Avenue West and North Aurora Street/Pleasant Avenue West with landscaped roundabouts to improve traffic flow and pedestrian safety. Figures 2-7, 2-8, and 2-9 show the existing features of the public realm and proposed projects and changes that are yet to be implemented.

PEDESTRIAN SPACE

Pedestrian-oriented streets encourage business activity within the downtown, fostering a more vibrant environment. We have found that the Village of Lancaster has taken an initiative toward providing all users with safe mobility in the downtown core. Some mobility features include:

- Narrow traffic lanes on Central Avenue (from Broadway to Pleasant Avenue) and West Main Street, both which have parking on either side, necessitates slower car speeds to increase pedestrian safety.
- Streetscapes in the downtown have been improved with plantings and street lights along sidewalks and can help attract more businesses while providing safe street connections.
- Well maintained sidewalks and crosswalks with adequate signage and crossing signals.

Overall, the core of the downtown already has a well-designed and well equipped public space. We believe this will foster our aim to create a vibrant environment in the village center.



FIGURE 2-7

Sources: Brooks, C., Nagaraj, D., Walker, D., 2022



FIGURE 2-8



FIGURE 2-9

STREET ACCESSIBILITY



FIGURE 2-10: Roundabout proposed plan (Adapted from plans by Mott Macdonald drafted in April 2020)

To be active, people with disabilities should be provided with a barrier-free environment to commute between home and other destinations. Fortunately the Village of Lancaster has many streets that are already equipped with well-designed sidewalks, crosswalks, curbs and ramps with adequate signage. Audio and video signals are provided for pedestrian crosswalks at the intersection of Broadway and Central Avenue. An accessible pedestrian crosswalk on Pleasant Avenue to connect the elderly population of the Lancaster Towers to the Save-A-Lot grocery store is an important addition that is yet to be implemented.

THE NEW CAYUGA CREEK PARK

Residents of Lancaster have expressed the desire and need for open spaces and greenery. Additional open and green spaces provide residents with recreational opportunities. Developing Cayuga Creek Park will fulfill this goal while offering a space for festivals, concerts, and other outdoor events, which contributes in fostering a more active environment in the downtown.

Figure 2-11 shows the conceptual plan for the park and trail that was drafted by the Sundell Landscape Architecture in July 2019. It is yet to be implemented in the 2.7 acre area of land available between Broadway and North Aurora Street.



FIGURE 2-11: Cayuga Creek Park and Trail Concept plan
Source: Sundell Landscape Architecture, July 2019

BIKE AND TRAIL CONNECTIVITY

Cycling activity in the village center benefits in creating a more bustling environment. The village has already taken initiative in providing a safe biking environment by designing bike lanes along some streets. We are further looking into extending and connecting the existing bike lanes to the Heritage Trail, Keysa Park, and Como Lake Park in order to create a higher quality bike network.

Trails can pave the way to reimagining public spaces as areas that provide residents with safe areas to walk, bike and move around more efficiently. The proposed trail connection provides off- and on-road connections to ensure safe passage of residents within the Village and to connect to surrounding communities. The trail would connect Como Lake Park and the Heritage Trail by linking multiple complete streets in the Village Center ensuring better connectivity throughout.



FIGURE 2-12: Trail Connection map

CULTURAL ASSETS

Public offices, libraries, and government agencies located downtown help retain the architectural integrity and provide important destinations for locals and visitors. The walk from the Freemason building to the village water tower follows the history of Lancaster's buildings and structures through the ages. These cultural attractions are important in creating a social impact and reinforcing the identity of the village.



FIGURE 2-13: Map highlighting the historic assets in the village center of Lancaster

Some of the Historic and Cultural assets of the village:

1. Lancaster Presbyterian church

Located at the corner of Broadway and Lake Avenue is one of the historic assets of the village. The church was built using timbers recovered from the steamboat wreck on October 31, 1821. The construction of this place of worship began in the June of 1832 and has since served the community with its services.

2. Maute Hardware and the Greater Lancaster Museum of Fire Fighting

The original building of Maute Hardware was one of the buildings destroyed in the 1896 fire. The hardware store was founded by John N Maute and operated one of the early industries in Lancaster, Maute Iron foundry. The Fire Fighting Museum is a significant structure in the village center that houses vintage firefighting and protection equipment, as well as instructive information about big fires in Western New York. Built in Queen Anne and Italianate styling, this is one of the buildings to have endured the devastating fires of 1894 and 1896 in Lancaster.

3. Lancaster Opera House

The Lancaster Opera House is a historic asset representing a bygone age in America. This was designed by George J. Metzger and was completed in the year 1897 and has since been used for public meetings and presenting musicals. It has received a prestigious Pewter Plate award from the Landmark Society of the Niagara Frontier for outstanding renovation and operations of a historic venue.

4. 1 West Main Street/ Bloomsbury Lane Toy Shoppe

Built in Queen Anne and Italianate styling, this is one of the buildings to have endured the devastating fires of 1894 and 1896 in Lancaster.

5. Village Water Tower

As a memorial to the local volunteer firemen, a mural has been painted on the tower, which serves as a community focal point. It's cultural value and how it benefits the downtown community will be discussed further in the next section.



FIGURE 2-14: Lancaster Opera House
Source: Lancaster Village website

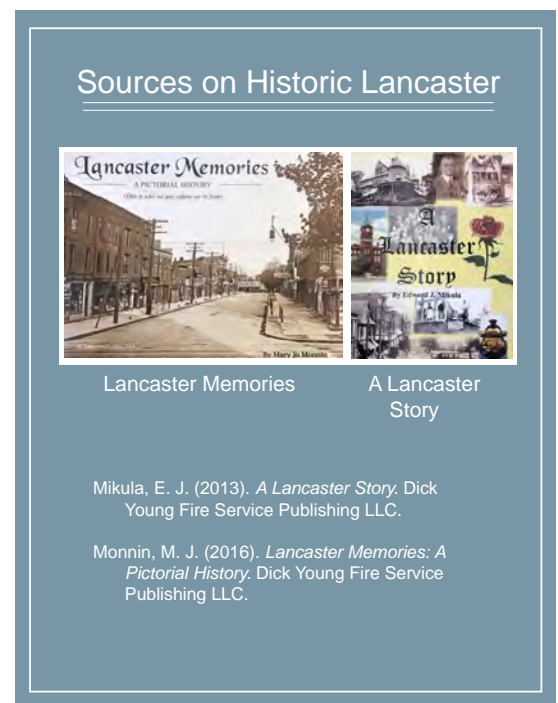


FIGURE 2-15: Sources for historic assets

2.3 POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENT SITES

In order to increase liveliness and ensure a prosperous future for the Village of Lancaster, we are suggesting new developments downtown within a five-minute walk from the village core. We stress that it is not necessary for all sites under consideration be developed, but strategic new developments will make the community less car dependent.

Walkability and accessible streets are important for an aging population, especially if residents wish to age in place. We've selected sites to add housing, recreational opportunities, and commercial or retail space without compromising parking or the village's historic urban design. The sites that we've selected are currently underutilized and could be improved through better design. Parking for individual sites is discussed in chapter 4, as well as estimates for the overall amount of parking in the downtown.



FIGURE 2-16: Potential Develop Sites for downtown

1: CLARK STREET PARKING LOT

The primary advantage of the Clark Street Parking Lot is that it is already owned by the Village and presents no obstacles to acquisition. This site is adjacent to several historic Central Avenue businesses lining the core of the village center.

Currently, this lot functions as a buffer between the dense center and the residential spaces to the east (Figure 2-15). It contains 114 parking spaces that service downtown. Special note should be taken that the site is next to Plum Bottom Creek, which is sometimes prone to flooding.

One vision for redevelopment is shown in figure 2-16. The potential redevelopment would create either 45 units at 860 to 1,000 square feet or 30 units at 1,500 square feet each (Figure 2-16). This has the potential to bring a large influx of new residents close to the village core and increase vitality.

While approximately 60 to 65 of the parking spaces would remain, the loss of parking servicing the commercial core would be a challenge for the Village to consider (See chapter 5 for traffic and parking implications).



FIGURE 2-17: Site 1

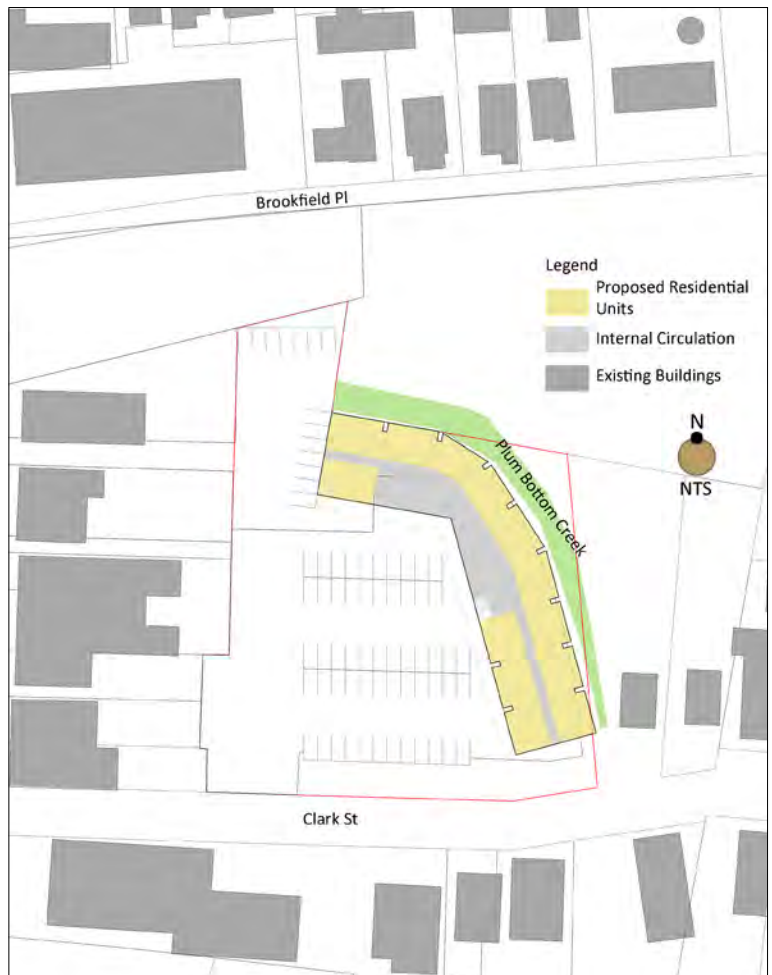


FIGURE 2-18: Potential configuration for site 1

2: BROOKFIELD PLACE



FIGURE 2-19: Site 2

The site is currently owned by St. John's Evangelical Church. While acquisition may be a barrier to redevelopment, it is currently an underused vacant plot and redevelopment would not interfere with an existing use. It is zoned as a residential lot in close proximity to the village center. The site has the potential to add housing and parking space to approximately 26,600 square feet.



FIGURE 2-20: Potential configuration for site 2

3: ST JOHN LUTHERAN CHURCH PARKING LOT



FIGURE 2-21: Site 3

This site is owned by St. John's Evangelical Church, located across the street. This 2.23 acre site is currently underutilized with half of the lot devoted to parking for the church. The site could be redeveloped to include mixed use and/or recreation opportunities, while still providing roughly 90-100 parking spaces for the church.



FIGURE 2-22: Potential configuration for site 3

4: THE ELKS LODGE



FIGURE 2-23: Site 4

The Elks Lodge property, located at 39 Legion Parkway is 3.7 acres. It is currently occupied by the Elks Lodge and includes approximately 163 parking spaces. The site could be redeveloped to provide an improved Elks Lodge and event space with windows and views of the creek, as well as up to 200 new residential units. Negotiation with the Elks Lodge and the community will be important, but we believe that there can be an improved Elks facility while also adding housing. We have laid out a site plan for reconfiguring the site to add housing.



FIGURE 2-24: Potential configuration for site 4

5: NEW YORK STORE PARKING LOT



FIGURE 2-25: Site 5

Site five is important to consider for potential development because of its highly visible location on the corner of Central and Broadway. It represents the opportunity to draw attention to the good things that are happening in downtown Lancaster. The site is 15,500 sq. ft. and owned by the village. We believe that it could accommodate an approximately 10,000 sq. ft. 3-story building at 65% floor area ratio. This would allow for 18 units of 860-900 sq. ft. or 12 units with ground floor retail. This design would leave 4,000 sq. ft. for parking to accommodate an estimated 10-14 parking spaces for the building.



FIGURE 2-26: Potential configuration for site 5

6: WEST MAIN AND NORTH AURORA STREET



FIGURE 2-27: Site 6

This site is essential for potential development because of its highly visible location on the corner of Central and Broadway. It represents the opportunity to draw attention to the good things happening in downtown Lancaster. The site is 15,500 sq. ft. and is owned by the village. We believe it could accommodate approximately 2-3 retail spaces on the lower floor with six residential units on the upper floor. Each unit could be around 860-900 sq. ft., overlooking a node that draws attention to the Central Avenue entrance. The after development, it could also accommodate parking spaces for around 15-16 cars.

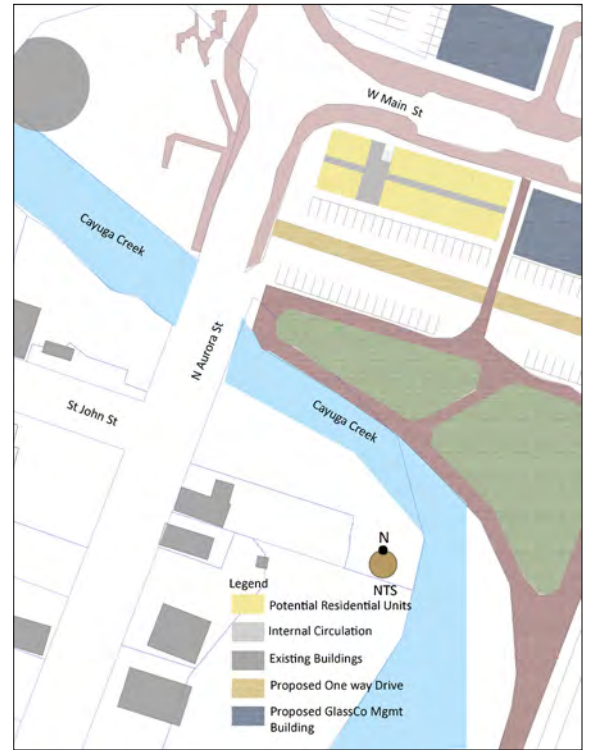


FIGURE 2-28: Potential configuration for site 6

7: NORTH AURORA STREAMFRONT



FIGURE 2-29: Site 7

This plot downtown is promising for residential development because it is currently owned by Erie County and is unused. The plot, which would offer residents views of the creek and Downtown, could provide up to 6 units with three units on each floor. Parking could be accommodated on-site and supplemented with street parking in the neighborhood. The site's visibility would create an opportunity for a piece of architecture that would add to the village's character and charm.



FIGURE 2-30: Potential configuration for site 7

OVERVIEW

To reiterate, not all of these sites need to be developed. However, adding housing within the five-minute walking distance is important in creating a lively downtown. Developing any of these sites will help the village create a more lively and walkable downtown. It would also increase the village's tax base and build a strong foundation for Lancaster to recognize its potential in years to come.

2.4 SITE CIRCULATION

There are two potential primary locations for internal site circulation within Downtown. The proposed circulation within the sites could improve the character of the public realm in the village center. The two major areas are identified within the village center. The first one is the parking lot within the Twin Village Lot and the Save-A-Lot grocery store. The current area consists of two parcels, and the given proposal will connect both parcels through a one way drive. The second site is the existing parking lot on the south side of West Main Street. The Plum Bottom Creek developers own the current lot, and the proposed circulation could improve the vehicular movement approaching Broadway and North Aurora Avenue. It would also enhance pedestrian movement with the upcoming proposed park along Cayuga creek.

TWIN VILLAGE/ SAVE-A-LOT PARKING LOT



FIGURE 2-31: Twin Village/ Save-A-Lot



FIGURE 2-32: Potential Configuration for site

This site is currently owned by the Village of Lancaster Community Development Corporation. The selected site is a combination of two parcels. The area to be discussed consists of two parcels. The small parcel known as the Save-A-Lot site is owned by Glassco Management LLC and the parcel known as the Twin Village Lot is owned by Plum Bottom Creek LLC. The existing area has built structures, including the Save-A-Lot grocery store, bordered by retail stores and a mixed use residential complex (ongoing construction). There are a total of roughly 70-73 existing parking spaces, combining both the Save-A-Lot and Twin Village parking lots. Pleasant Avenue is the primary path to entry for parking at the grocery store. However, the current traffic circulation also flows from Central Avenue into the site and exits on Pleasant Avenue. So, we suggest that there be more efficient circulation for the Twin Village Lot. This would be achieved by converting it to a one-way entry, allowing for a safer and more efficient exit.



FIGURE 2-33: Twin Village Lot viewed from Central Ave,
Source: Jordan Dawson, 2022

The proposed entry will be converted to a 15-foot wide one-way drive-through, which will divert the traffic flow leading from Central Avenue to the Save-A-Lot parking lot. We further suggest adding a 8-foot wide pedestrian sidewalk along the one-way drive-through, passing from the frontage of Save-A-Lot and connecting the sidewalk directly to West Main Street. The same pedestrian walkway would connect with the sidewalk of Pleasant Avenue. The proposed pathway could become a prominent walkway, providing improved landscaping, ensure pedestrian safety, and increase accessibility.

SOUTH SIDE OF WEST MAIN



FIGURE 2-34: South of West Main



FIGURE 2-35: Potential Configuration for site

As mentioned above, this site is one of the sites that presents circulation issues. Within this site, a variety of development proposals are soon to be underway: a second phase of Plum Bottom Creek Properties LLC, and the proposed park along Cayuga Creek. Site 6 is also located on this parcel.

A proposed one-way will help support efficient traffic flow through this difficult site, enhancing the accessibility of the site, while keeping the upcoming park and parking requirements in consideration. This one-way access will enter the site from Broadway and exit on North Aurora.



FIGURE 2-36: Lot on south side of W. Main Street
Source: Jordan Dawson, 2022

2.5 FUTURE OF THE WATER TOWER

The Lancaster water tower is one of the major historical assets of the village. Despite this, we have been told that the water tower was not used for its intended purpose since its height could not support the weight of the water tank. Because of this, the tower has been underutilized for a long time. The tower's ground area is currently leased by Verizon Telephone Towers, and any implementation of the design suggestion needs to be negotiated with the village regarding the lease duration. Because of its location, the tower provides a linear connection to the opera house, creating a direct perspective. In addition, the water tower connects west main street and the creek to the upcoming Cayuga Creek Park.



FIGURE 2-37: Site Connections



FIGURE 2-38: Water tower
Source: Jordan Dawson, 2022



FIGURE 2-39: Inside water tower
Source: Nayak, A. 2022

SITE CONNECTIONS

The site covers an area of 37,679 square feet, including the water tower. It is possible to create an energizing and dynamic environment that, in turn, would provide an asset to the village. The base of the water tower is approximately 1,962 square feet. In the early 1970s, several improvements were made as a tribute to the fire department, including a painting, statues, and landscaping. Steel cables inside the water tower are a sight to behold, and the tower's height could provide an impressive view. There is potential to develop several alternative interventions allowing the site to become a valuable cultural asset for the village, as it is already identified as a distinctive object due to its critical location within the connection between the creek, the opera house, and the upcoming park development. We provide a few design suggestions that would make the area more active and attractive.

OPTION 1: THE SUMMER COFFEE SHOP



FIGURE 2-40: Water tower site plan

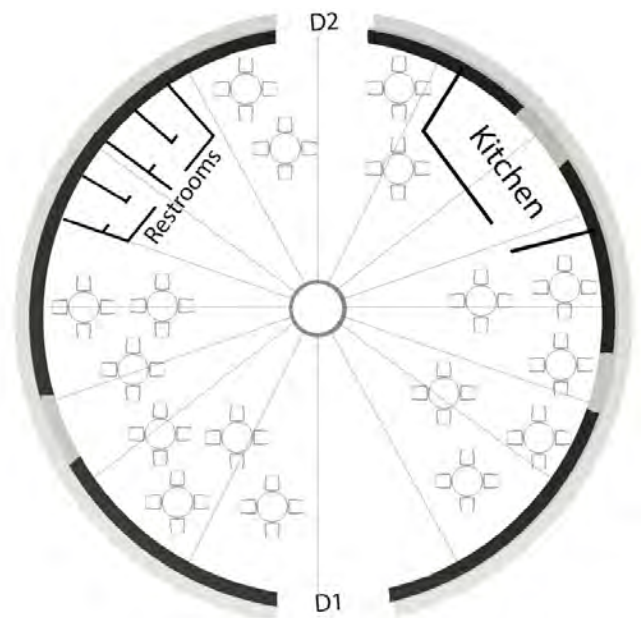


FIGURE 2-41: Concept plan for the interior of the Water Tower

We recommend opening up the ground floor of the water tower and turning it into a summer coffee shop, complete with seating inside that overlooks the internal structure and some outdoor seating that overlooks the creek. It would have a kitchen or pantry and restrooms. The remaining space will be used for seating, which will accommodate 68 people, and the tower already has a main entrance that overlooks West Main Street. There must be an exit door at the back end, along with a few window openings on the ground floor, but we believe that these openings are structurally feasible. Additionally, the water tower serves as an active hub by connecting the bike trail along the creek, providing a place for bikers to rest and see the creek.

The water tower is the central hub of the three arms of our proposed trail system. The first arm comes down from the north connecting the Heritage Trail and Keysa Park through a short off-road connection, and a longer on-road connection through the village. The second arm comes from the east along Cayuga Creek connecting Como Lake Park to Lancaster Middle School and the new Cayuga Creek Park in the heart of the village. The third arm comes from the western border of the village and runs along the Creek to where it links with the other trail arms at the water tower. This node is intended to provide a more active form of recreation that will complement the passive recreation happening in the new Cayuga Creek Park and the vivacity of the village center.

The improved water tower hub will provide multi-modal access to its amenities with vehicle parking across the street and bike parking options on site, along with safe access for pedestrians walking to the site. The Firefighter's Memorial will remain on site with a new prominence in the community as a place to be. A cafe will provide refreshments in the summertime and a variety of seating options will enable gathering opportunities for visitors at the site. Additionally, restrooms will be provided for visitors to utilize after riding the trails. Bike facilities on site may include bike racks, lockers, or sheds as well as places for bike maintenance and repair. Other transportation modes could be included such as skateboards and scooters.

In the summer, keeping the café operational is the optimal solution. It would not require any thermal insulation to keep it warm during the winter, and with such minimal interventions, we can have an active hub at the tower.



FIGURE 2-42: Site section facing Plum Bottom Creek



FIGURE 2-43: Site Rendering of ground floor

OPTION 2: A MORE AMBITIOUS PROPOSAL: A LIGHT TOWER

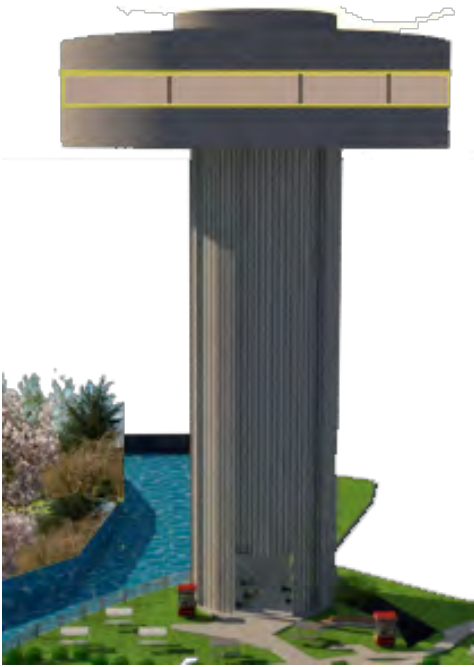


FIGURE 2-44: Concept proposal

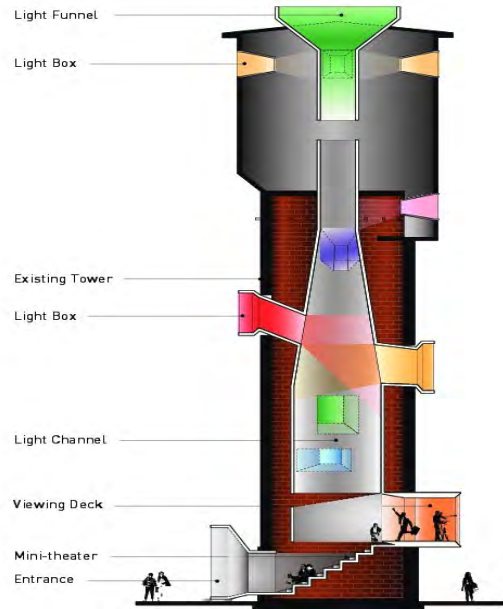


FIGURE 2-45: Precedent of water tower in Shanghai
Source: Su, C., 2012, META-Proejct

Another option is to transform the interior into a light tower. A good example is the water tower in Shanghai, that has been transformed into a light show, in which the ground floor has a theater and viewing platform. Cut openings and angled windows allow the light to enter from different angles, creating an entirely new experience. Even though this is a moderately ambitious project, we are not proposing we copy the Shanghai water tower. The Lancaster water tower has the potential to be transformed into a hub, but it requires

OPTION 3: MOST AMBITIOUS: AN OUTLOOK TOWER

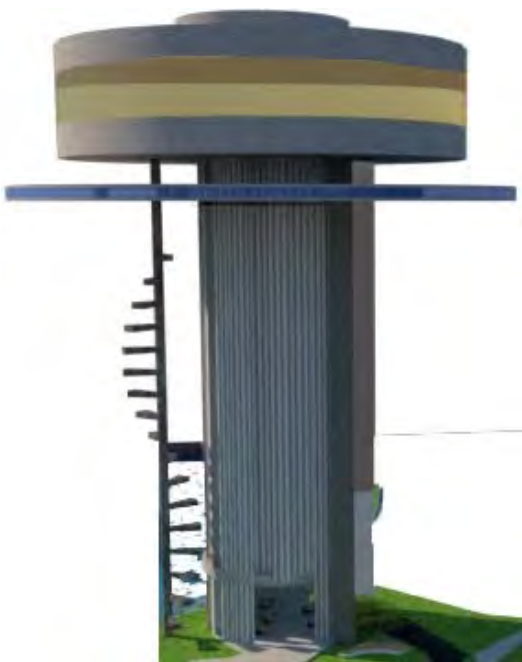


FIGURE 2-46: Concept proposal

We believe that the site could become a significant asset for the village if it were to be enhanced with a new access at 90 feet, an elevator, and two sets of stairs to provide dramatic views of the area. Located directly across from the Opera House, this structure would increase visitors and act as a major attraction.

2.6 CONCLUSION

The downtown core is one of the Village of Lancaster's greatest assets. It combines history, arts, culture, commerce, and housing in a walkable area. The area is pleasant to be in because its design creates a sense of safety and coziness where people come together for a variety of activities. The village's historic design promotes an active and healthy lifestyle by making walking and biking safer, while still providing parking for people who need it. The combination of density and accessible design also creates opportunities for people who do not drive to be more active, mostly the elderly, youth and differently-abled. This means there will be more people in the downtown to support business and arts.



FIGURE 2-47: West Main Street seen from the Lancaster Opera House
Source: Brooks, C. 2022

3 LANCASTER HOUSING



The UB studio team outside Sweeney Development's new housing project on West Main Street in February 2022
(Mike Pesarchick)

No city or village can have an economic renaissance without people to support it. This chapter will analyze Lancaster's existing housing situation and will offer considerations for village officials for future housing policy.

For over a century, the Village of Lancaster has remained a small suburban municipality with majority single-family housing and has remained fairly consistent in preserving this character over the years. The unchanging nature of housing conditions within the Village however has created housing problems for both new and existing residents.

The Village's total population has steadily declined from 1980, but despite this decline there has been little to no change in the availability of housing units for rent or for sale. With no new housing construction in recent years, the Village failed to construct a sufficient number of housing units to facilitate a growing population (Figure 3-1). The Village has an aging housing stock and an aging population, which is also causing the cost of ownership to increase (Figure 3-2). Should the Village want to attract a younger demographic, more housing units will be required.

A series of regional and national trends are driving the demand for housing. These trends will affect housing policy decisions in the Village. A primary drive for housing is the rise in single-person households, a trend that is very clear nationally and in Lancaster.

This section will offer a variety of housing development sites to be considered along with sites proposed in Chapter 2. The sites proposed in this chapter are smaller infill sites to be developed on smaller plots. We believe these are viable sites due to a lack of available large parcels in the Village. "Gentle density" developments on these smaller parcels would add sorely needed housing units to the Village without compromising the village character.

We also believe that at least a portion of these new housing units should be affordable. There are a variety of sources of funding available for municipalities from both county and state sources, such as Low Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC) available from New York State's Department of Housing and Community Renewal. These funds may encourage developers to build affordable housing.

Above all, we believe that housing is a major problem facing Lancaster. Encouraging the development of new housing units will go a long way towards securing the Village's economic future.



A.



B.



C.

Multiple forms of housing exist in Lancaster besides single-family detached. Duplexes (19 N. Aurora St., A.), low-rise apartments (Lord Lancaster Apartments, 50 School St., B.) and high-rise apartments (Lancaster Towers, 1 Pleasant Ave. West, C.) all contribute to a diverse, albeit scarce, housing stock in the Village. Photos by Mike Pesarchick, May 2022

3.2 HOUSING SNAPSHOT AND DATA

Homeowner Burden

Homeowner Building Age	Village of Lancaster		Village of Depew		Town of Lancaster		Buffalo		Erie County	
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage
2014 to 2019	0	0.0%	15	0.2%	552	5.1%	740	0.7%	5,162	1.3%
2010 to 2013	13	0.3%	20	0.3%	740	6.9%	740	0.7%	5,698	1.5%
2000 to 2009	0	0.0%	19	0.3%	1,479	13.7%	1,821	1.7%	18,485	4.7%
1990 to 1999	151	3.2%	215	3.2%	2,789	25.9%	3,230	2.9%	26,471	6.8%
1980 to 1989	140	3.0%	236	3.5%	1,625	15.1%	2,472	2.2%	25,233	6.5%
1970 to 1979	595	12.6%	560	8.4%	635	5.9%	4,031	3.7%	40,001	10.3%
1960 to 1969	737	15.6%	2,163	32.4%	1,235	11.5%	5,636	5.1%	47,838	12.3%
1950 to 1959	1,097	23.3%	1,719	25.8%	720	6.7%	12,092	11.0%	72,574	18.6%
1940 to 1949	456	9.7%	469	7.0%	334	3.1%	11,565	10.5%	34,051	8.7%
1939 or Earlier	1,524	32.3%	1,251	18.8%	677	6.3%	68,107	61.7%	114,072	29.3%

Source: American Community Survey (ACS) 2019 (5-Year Estimates)

Figure 3-1 - Age of Lancaster housing stock compared to other municipalities

Housing Burden

Percentage of Annual Income Spent on Home Ownership Expenses	Village of Lancaster		Village of Depew		Town of Lancaster		Buffalo		Erie County	
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage
Owner-Occupied Housing Units:	3,331		4,872		8,809		44,965		251,583	
Homeowners Paying 30 to 49 Percent	749	22.5%	867	17.8%	1,327	15.1%	8,162	18.2%	44,771	17.8%
Homeowners Paying 50 Percent or More	227	6.8%	410	8.4%	559	6.4%	3,067	6.8%	17,404	6.9%

Source: American Community Survey (ACS) 2019

Figure 3-2 - Ownership burden in the Village of Lancaster compared to other municipalities.

Homeowners in Lancaster face a set of burdens. A majority of Lancaster's housing stock, 32.3%, was constructed before 1939, and only 13 units were constructed between 2000 and 2019 (Figure 3-1). This does not consider the new housing project on West Main Street currently underway by Sweeney Development. Lancaster's housing stock is older than the Erie County average.

An older housing stock means additional costs of ownership, such as maintenance. 22.5% of homeowners in Lancaster are paying 30-49% of their annual income in housing ownership expenses, far more than neighboring Depew and more than Erie County homeowners. Considering Lancaster has an older population that might be living on a lower, fixed income, this is a sign that new housing units are needed.

The Shrinking American Household

Lancaster's population in 2020 was 10,087 according to the 2020 Census, a steady decrease from 13,056 in 1980. Despite the drop in individual residents, the number of single-person households has increased in the Village - fewer people taking up more housing units (Figure 3-3). This correlates with national Census data showing that about 28% of American households are single-person, an increase from about 13% in 1960 (Figure 3-3).

This is a concerning trend for Lancaster considering the limited housing stock available. Housing will simply not be available.

Furthermore, a 2021 study conducted by AARP showed that 77% of Americans over the age of 50 wanted to "age in place," or stay in the same home as they get older. With the majority of homeowners in the Village being over the age of 55, a scarcity of available housing units in the Village will continue unless new units are built.

Rising Housing Prices

Despite a looming scarcity of housing, the Village has constructed just 13 new housing units since 2000 (Figure 3-1). As noted, most of Lancaster's existing housing stock is single-family detached, primarily constructed before 1960. Scarcity in the face of growing demand is visible in median sales price data (Figure 3-4). According to the Buffalo Association of Realtors, for these homes has increased roughly 80 percent since 2008.

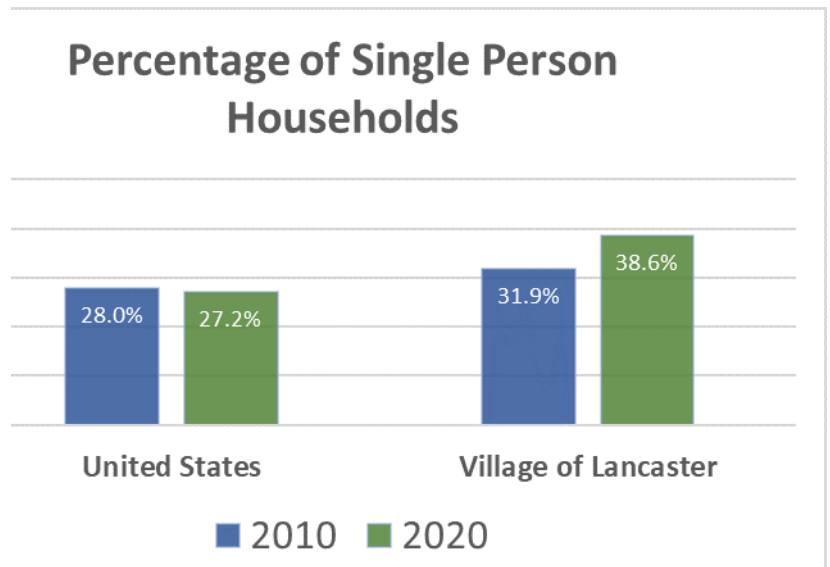


Figure 3-3: (American Community Survey, 2019; U.S. Census, 2021)

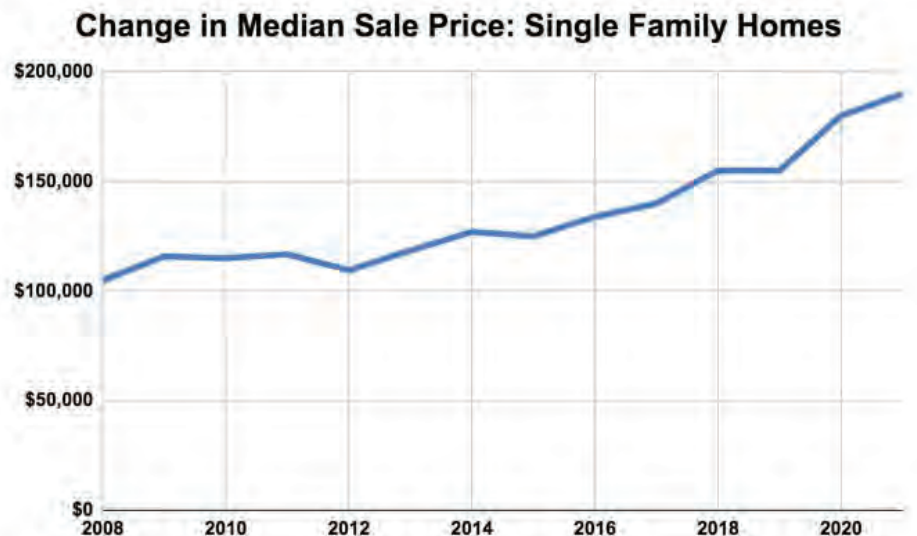


Figure 3-4 (Buffalo-Niagara Association of Realtors)

Tenant Burden

Currently, a majority of renters in the Village pay somewhere between 10 and 29 percent of their income in rent (Figure 3-5). This is comparable to other municipalities in Western New York; however, with rent in the South Submarket expected to rise, we anticipate that the rent burden will increase as well in the Village.

Village of Lancaster - Rent as a Percentage of Household Income		
Less than 10 Percent	91	6.6%
10 to 29 Percent	816	59.0%
30 to 49 Percent	293	21.2%
50 Percent or More	169	12.2%
Not Computed	13	0.9%

Source: American Community Survey (ACS) 2019

Figure 3-5 - Lancaster rent burden. (2019 ACS, U.S. Census)

The growing demand for housing is reflected in rising rent costs. According to REIS (Regional Economic Information System) data, average median rent per unit has increased steadily in the past decade (Figure 3-6). Median rent in the South section of the Buffalo housing market, where the Village is located, has overtaken the Buffalo market. This suggests that remaining vacant rental housing units are becoming more valuable.



Figure 3-6: Rent and vacancy trends for Buffalo and Buffalo South rental submarket (REIS).

Each of these data points leads to the conclusion that the Village needs additional housing units. In the next section, we analyze a variety of housing options the Village may consider in future housing policy.

3.3 HOUSING DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS

With consideration for the existing housing trends, we believe it would be in the best interest for the Village to introduce new residential units to alleviate current and future housing issues.

One major obstacle for the village is the lack of available vacant lot space. There are limited spaces for new housing development in residentially zoned areas either owned by the Village or other entities. Outside of the aforementioned proposed housing developments by the Central Village Center team, we have identified four potential locations to consider for infill development. These sites are good choices for gentle density housing, such as duplexes or fourplexes.

We also discuss accessory dwelling units as a solution to put more housing units on existing parcels of land while giving landowners more control over their property.

Infill Development

Considering the lack of large open parcels, the Village may consider new housing development on smaller parcels. This will increase density while preserving the village character. These infill suggestions are offered in tandem with options in the village center (see Chapter 2) and use “missing middle” characteristics.

“Infill” simply refers to development on existing vacant parcels within an existing municipality, as opposed to new developments outside a community’s boundaries. Small structures have the ability to add several units of housing in some of the most desirable parts of a city while greatly increasing density and walkability.

Infill structures on a main street can also feature retail or office space on the ground floor as a mixed-use development. Such structures should be considered in the Village as part of the expanded downtown core and as a way to increase housing units while preserving the village character.

The “Missing Middle”

The term “Missing Middle” was first introduced in 2010 by the architect Daniel Parolek to refer to the style or residential homes commonly built before World War II. These styles included various versions of row-homes and multiplexes where multiple residential units share the same structure. Single-family zoning popular in the mid-20th century significantly reduced - and in some cases outlawed - this type of housing, thus the “missing” part of the term. The “middle” refers to the fact that the housing is in the middle between detached single-family housing and large high-rise housing developments such as Lancaster Towers. Housing activists and planners have begun to push for this style of housing development, often referred to as “gentle density” as a viable solution to the housing crisis.

“Gentle Density” in Lancaster

This sort of housing exists in Lancaster in the form of numerous duplexes and fourplexes in the neighborhoods surrounding the village center. They are on lots about the same size as single-family homes, yet can hold several more people at a lower cost.

Our proposals for infill housing can be considered to be “gentle density” housing. It would allow for multiple units sharing the same site and housing structure, creating smaller per-unit land costs and effectively making housing more affordable.

Gentle density housing will work nicely within Lancaster’s village fabric, given the lack of large open parcels viable for housing.

In the next section, we offer four different sites that Village officials may consider for new housing, in addition to development suggestions discussed in Chapter 2.



“Gentle density” housing is often indistinguishable from single-family homes, as in the case of these duplexes on Cambria Street next to single family housing (Mike Pesarchick, May 2022)



Fourplexes such as this building at Central Avenue and Brady Avenue can fit multiple units on a relatively small lot. (Mike Pesarchick, May 2022)

Site 1: St. Joseph Street & Central Avenue:



(Google Earth, 2021)

Figure 3-7: Empty parcel at St. Joseph Street and Central Avenue.

This parcel just north of the Village Center is on a visible elevated corner (Figure 3-7) and would be a good fit for a small, two-unit complex with retail on the ground floor. Challenges include parking and the odd elevation of the site. At right is an example of a two-unit structure with ground-floor retail on Seneca Street in Buffalo on a similarly-sized lot.



Figure 3-8: Map of sites 2-4

Site II: Thornapple Lane

This site takes advantage of an empty parcel of land at the end of Thornapple Lane, off Como Park Boulevard in the southern half of the Village (Figure 3-8). The parcel is roughly three acres in size and is owned by a 50/50 partnership split between Edmund Wick and John Loecher.

Considering the proximity to Como Lake Park, we believe this will be an attractive development site for a larger group of dwelling units. We envision extending Thornapple Lane to a cul-de-sac with 12 structures that can be built as duplexes or fourplexes, potentially creating 48 units of housing. Thornapple Lane could even be extended through the lot to connect to Lake Avenue and improve connectivity.

Concerns for developing this site include neighbor concerns and the site's relative distance from the Village Center.



Site III: 6th Avenue Agglomerations

Site '3A'



Site '3B'



This pair of sites would be created by extending 'paper roads' from Lake Avenue to 6th Avenue (Figure 3-8). Site 'A' is a paper road dubbed "Dagget Lane" in parcel records and is a half-acre site owned by Erie County. Site 'B' is also a half-acre parcel owned by Erie County and is dubbed Florence Avenue.

We believe these sites would be suited to walkup rowhouses or duplexes with on-street parking. Concerns surrounding the site include neighbor concerns, isolation from the Village Center, and a relative lack of parking.

Site IV: Richmond Avenue

This proposal takes advantage of a series of Village-owned parcels on a paper road off Richmond Avenue between 2nd Avenue and 4th Avenue. We believe there is ample opportunity for a larger development at this site, which would be linked to Richmond Avenue via a cul-de-sac. As many as 50 units are possible at this site.

Challenges include neighbor concerns and parking.



3.5 ACCESSORY DWELLING UNITS

Accessory Dwelling Units are small housing units built on an existing housing lot or as part of an existing housing structure. Several municipalities currently allow dwelling ADUs in their zoning codes. These small units are a viable option to increasing housing units given the relative scarcity of empty land in the Village. ADUs are cheaper than full-size units and offer property owners more choice over their land. The 2021 AARP “Trends in Home and Community Preferences” survey reports that 60% of adults would consider living in ADUs such as “mother-in-law cottages.”

The Village may consider clarifying its ADU policy in the Village Code to resemble other municipalities, such as Depew. Currently, accessory units are allowed under Village zoning code §350-18B for a variety of uses such as “servant quarters” and “home occupation,” which would allow dwelling units with specific requirements such as “no exterior evidence ... other than permitted identification sign” (Article X). In contrast, the Village of Depew also specifically allows “accessory housing units” under §260-23-B of its code.

The Village should also be aware of a bill currently in committee in the state Senate, S4547A “Accessory Dwelling Unit Act of 2022,” which would require all NYS municipalities to allow ADUs in their zoning codes. The bill would also provide a \$85 million for ADU development from the State budget.

Several different forms of ADUs are described by the American Planning Association (APA) (Figure 3-9). Any of these would be a viable method of increasing the availability of housing units in the Village.



Figure 3-9: Different types of ADUs (APA)

3.6 FUNDING AFFORDABLE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

An important part of housing development in Lancaster will be the development of affordable housing units. A classic challenge to affordable housing development is enticing a developer to build units that will not bring as much profit.

There are a variety of funds available at the federal, state, and county levels to help mitigate the costs of affordable housing. These funds include American Rescue Plan allocations, New York State Housing and Community Renewal (HCR) funds, and the Erie County Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) program.

The amount of funding available from the county and state varies annually and can be difficult to navigate. We've gathered a collection of funding opportunities that the village might want to consider to facilitate future affordable development. A complete discussion of these financing programs goes far beyond the scope of this report; however, we believe there is ample opportunity for financing affordable projects in Lancaster through NYS and other grants.

Federal: HOME-ARP Program

The Department of Housing and Urban Development has created the American Rescue Plan (ARP) to assist households at risk of homelessness as well as other vulnerable populations. This can include the development of affordable housing of participating jurisdictions (PJ's). In 2021, HOME investment Partnership Program allocated over \$12 Million in funding to the Buffalo region. By completing and submitting an ARP plan, the Village could open themselves to receive some of that funding towards the construction of developments that are up to 30% units for sale at 80% of the area's median income (subject to change based on HUD's findings).

State: Housing and Community Renewal Funds

There is ample opportunity for funding from the NYS Department of Housing and Community Renewal (HCR) as part of a five-year, \$25 billion state program targeting housing affordability. The NYS Housing Finance Agency (HFA) offers two types of bond financing through Low Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC): 4% financing and 9% financing in annual allocation as a part of the costs of construction or renovation. There are several "strings attached" to the financing bonds, such as requiring a certain amount of dwelling units to be set aside for different area median income (AMI) levels, eligible targeted populations, and regulatory agreement periods.

Erie County: PILOT

Another potential funding opportunity from Erie County for future affordable housing development would be the Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) program. Being Erie County's most widely used method of financing for low and extremely low income affordable housing development for the past decade, the PILOT Policy should be taken advantage of for future construction. The PILOT Policy can alleviate the tax burden for up to 15 years on the future affordable construction making it more feasible for developers. To qualify for the policy, the low income development must have at least 60% of its units must be affordable for residents that earn no more than 60% of the area median income.

3.7 CONCLUSION



(Jordan Dawson, May 2022)

With the mixed use and park development along West Main Street, we believe it to be more important than ever for the Village to create available housing for families to live and enhance the existing culture the Village provides. Increasing urban density can provide a greater tax revenue, support for local business, and provide vitality for the new development within the Village. We believe it is not only feasible, but necessary in order to fight the national trends of decreasing housing density with the rise of single person households.

While it has been proven that the Village has a general need for housing, we believe the most beneficial type of housing would be affordable and senior housing. As mentioned earlier, Lancaster is a village of both aging residents and aging housing stock that may prove to be a great concern as the number of single person households increases.

Providing new units that are both affordable and ADA accessible, opens the door to retain the elderly population while creating space for new and diverse residents to live in the village.

Adding more specificity with ADUs within the existing zoning regulations within the Village would also be recommended. As the number of single person households grow within the Village, the housing burden will also be a growing concern in which residents might want to explore opportunities for additional sources of income that benefits the Village as well.

If all of the proposed residential developments were realized, the Village could increase the number of residential units by roughly ten percent. This could provide an opportunity for the Village to raise its diversity as well as the benefits that come with urban density all while preserving the character of a suburban village.

4 TRAFFIC AND PARKING IMPACTS

The Village of Lancaster provides suitable parking for its visitors and residents within the downtown core. In our extended boundary of the village center, we are proposing new developments to bring residents into the downtown area. Each of our proposals fixes the parking needs of residents and visitors while also promoting walkability in the downtown area. Therefore, some existing parking may have to be moved to make space for the new developments proposed above. The village has to make decisions about the trade-off between parking spaces and new developments. As seen in Figure 4-1 below, there are 24 existing parking lots. The map depicts off-street and on-street parking within the new downtown area.



Figure 4-1: Existing parking in the extended downtown boundary. Lots listed 1 through 13 are larger parking lots in the village. Lots numbered 14 through 24 on the map are lots in the village that belong to small businesses or private owners.

4.1 CURRENT PARKING NUMBERS AND STANDARDS

Central parking in the downtown core consists of 76 on-street parking spaces located on W. Main St. and Central Ave. Parking lots listed 1 through 13 consists of 776 spaces. The amount of parking is due in part to private lots. The number of required parking lots per business or residence is controlled by the village's code. Below are the off-street parking regulations for different establishments seen in the Village of Lancaster's Municipal code library.

- Single-family or two-family dwelling units require 1 space for each unit.
- Multi-family dwelling units require 1.5 spaces for each unit.
- Office use requires 5 spaces for each office.
- Senior homes require 1 space for every 5 persons in the residence.
- Churches require 1 space for every 5 seats.
- Libraries and museums require 1 for every 300 square feet of gross floor area.
- Wholesale businesses require 1 space for every 700 square feet of gross floor area.
- Gas stations require 3 spaces for each servicebay.
- Grocery stores require 1 space for every 175 square feet of gross floor area.
- Individual retail stores require 1 space for every 175 square feet of gross floor area.

FIGURE 4-2: Parking requirements per property type.

The downtown core of the village presents numerous parking spaces for its visitors as well as its residents. Using the parking standards above, we can infer that there is an ample amount of available and accessible parking in the village. We recognize that parking is a crucial aspect of maintaining and increasing density in the downtown core, so we propose to retain much of the existing parking as well as create additional parking spaces.

PROPOSED PARKING PER DEVELOPMENT

SITE 1- CLARK STREET PARKING LOT

By increasing housing stock with a potential 26 units in the existing Clark Street parking lot. This potential project would remove some of the current parking spaces in the lot to make room for multi-family structures. The 26-unit proposal requires 39 parking spaces for residents, leaving approximately 31 spaces available to the public. Reducing the supply by 26 from 776 public spaces creates a lower availability of parking spaces in the village.



FIGURE 4-3 Clark Street Lot location on map.

SITE 2- BROOKFIELD PL.

The addition of housing developments could add up to 16 units of housing on the dead-end lot. A 16-unit multi-family configuration requires 24 parking spaces for its residents. All parking to meet the requirements will be on-site and there will be no net loss in parking spaces.



FIGURE 4-4 Brookfield Pl. lot location on map.

SITE 3- ST. JOHN LUTHERAN CHURCH

Parking here is underutilized, therefore added development demands a proper proportion of units to keep the parking. The proposal with 24 residential units and 4 retail units would require 71 parking spaces. The proposal would not remove existing parking spaces and will only make better use of the site. Parking will remain available for church members in this lot.



FIGURE 4-5 St. John Lutheran Church lot location on map.

SITE 4- ELKS LODGE

The proposed mixed-use development for recreational and residential use would retain all 99 parking spaces that currently exist. With a proposal of 54 residential units, the space would require at least 81 parking spaces for residents and visitors of the space. And there would be approximately 140 available on the parcel for the new Elks Lodge.



FIGURE 4-6 Elks Lodge lot location on map.

SITE 5- MUNICIPAL LOT (NY STORE)

The depicted proposal with 4 residential units and 3 ground-floor retail spaces would require 21 parking spaces for residents and customers. The alternative proposal with 8 residential units would require 12 parking spaces just for residents. Both proposals include parking behind the building.



FIGURE 4-7 Municipal Lot (NY Store) location on map.

SITE 6- W. MAIN ST. / N. AURORA ST.

A mixed-use development could provide ground-floor retail and 6 residential units. The multi-family residence and retail proposal would require 23 parking spaces. Parking could be configured behind the building and should be integrated sensitively with the neighboring park. The future inclusion of ground-floor retail should depend on the success of the retail spaces in the buildings already constructed or planned on West Main Street. If demand for retail space appears to decline, the ground floor could be planned for residential use instead.



FIGURE 4-8 W. Main St. / N. Aurora St. lot location on map.

Each set of proposals must be considered separately as each presents a different set of issues regarding the availability of parking. The amount of parking depends on the size of the building, units, and their use. The Elks Lodge and the St. John Lutheran Church sites are large, underutilized parking areas where new developments would not have any undesirable impact on the downtown area, and they would retain much if not all their existing parking spaces.

While sites such as the Municipal lot and W. Main/ N. Aurora sites are easily accessible locations within the downtown boundary, they could pose concerns over their small area and how much space would be available for parking. If a specific new building is a relatively expensive development, then it is possible that ground floor parking could be accommodated within the structure to retain more of the area. Each of our proposed developments presents a different scenario for parking, but each of them can be adjusted to accommodate the proper amount of parking to accommodate the needs of the village. Since each site presents a separate problem of floor space in relationship to parking and the number of proposed sites to actually be developed is unclear, it is not possible to predict the exact impact on overall parking. In view of the care being taken, we believe that the village's generous parking area will be only moderately impacted.

4.3 TRAFFIC IMPACT OF DEVELOPMENT

It is important to note that the development sites we have proposed for the downtown area would each increase traffic density at peak hours. However, each site is not a significant enough increase in existing traffic to cause perceptible congestion.

For example, the Elks Lodge creates the greatest opportunity for new units. On the assumption that 132 units would be built there, traffic would increase at Broadway and Central Avenue, and would have the highest number of vehicles compared to the other proposed sites. This development would increase the nearby traffic on Broadway and Central by the greatest volume both morning and evening commutes as it would add the highest number of apartment units. According to

the New York State Department of Transportation, during peak hour trips, current peak trips along Broadway and Central are about 1,800 per hour during the morning peak and 2,200 per hour again during the evening peak hours. The proposed development at the Elks Lodge would add 38 morning peak hour trips and 45 new evening peak hour trips with 396 trips added throughout the day. It can be surmised that this new development would have minimal perceivable impact on traffic at Broadway and Central.

Figure 4-9 shows the proposed development options plus the current daily traffic on major roads. Current traffic is measured by the New York State Department of Transportation as annual average daily traffic. This means that the average number of vehicles passing through a

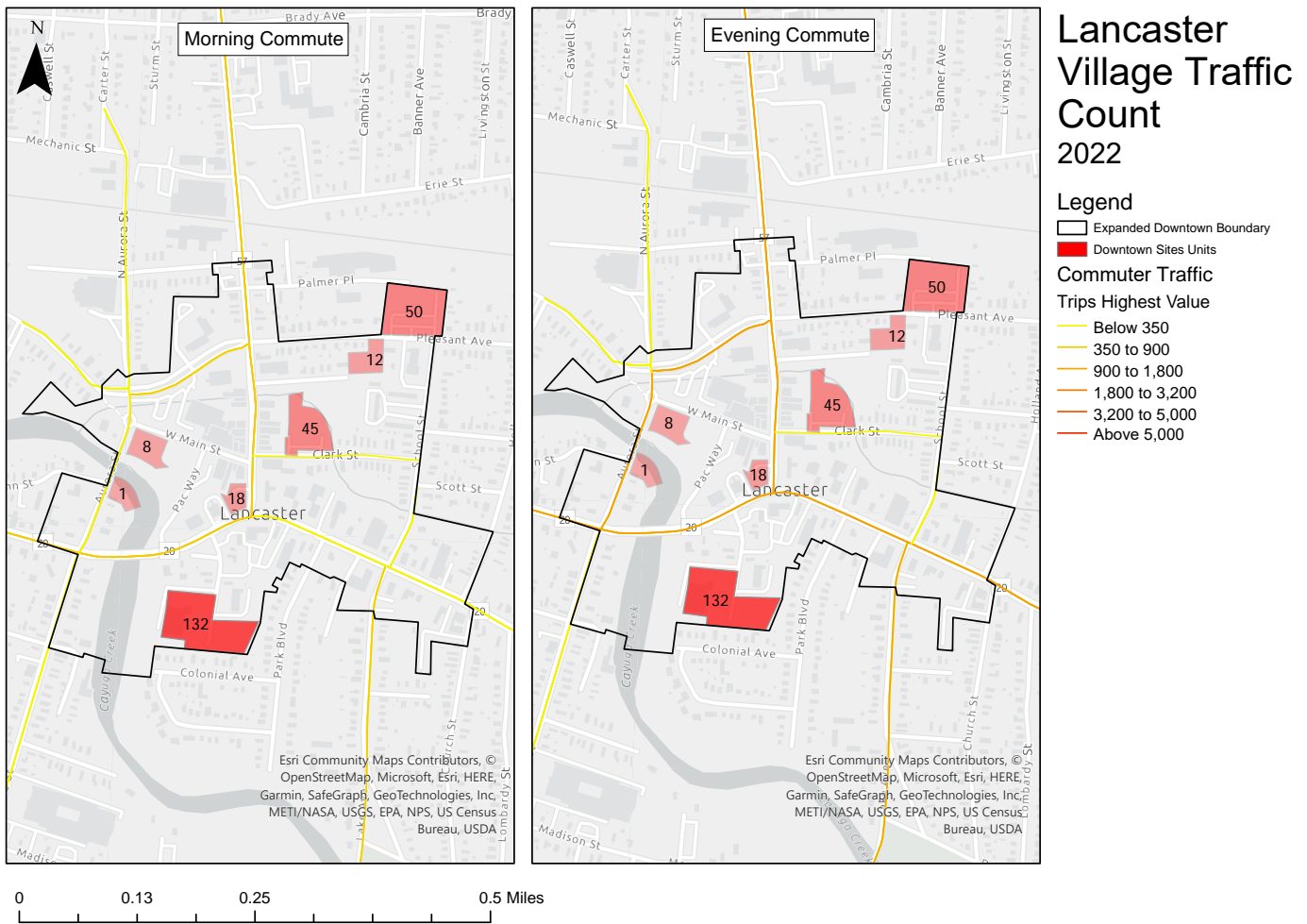


FIGURE 4-9: Density and Traffic Commutes
Source: NYSDOT

point on the street in one day. We are estimating the added number of vehicles to be added by new development. The proposed Clark Street development would have a lesser impact as it would generate about 20 trips during morning peak hour and evening peak hour commutes (Figure 10.1). The next most impactful increase in traffic flow would come from the New York Store site at the corner of Central Avenue and Broadway (Figure 10.1). These roads serve approximately 2,000 commuters in the morning and 2,200 in the evening during their peak hours, while the modest proposed housing would increase commute trips at this intersection by no more than eight to 12 trips each. Another site which could create complex traffic effects is the North Aurora Stream site, hence the multiple options we proposed. If residences were added to the site, added commute traffic would be comparable to other sites. However, should the village choose to add a creek-side restaurant as a feature for visitors, traffic patterns could be quite different and even erratic at the evening hours. Should this proposal be pursued, morning trips would only

add about 12, while evening and daily peak hour trips from the site would reach 50 and 70 respectively. The Main Street and North Aurora Street, Saint John's Lot, and Brookfield Place developments would not significantly increase peak hour trips on adjacent roads that they are servicing at present. As it is now, the Village is advantaged regarding density and traffic as it is situated within a suburban space. The flow of private auto traffic is well accommodated while major roads, such as Broadway, serve regional commuters. While it is generally found that increasing density in the urban core of major cities increases traffic, the gentle density proposed for Lancaster Center would not reach the threshold of stressing arterial road capacity. While there are significant economic advantages in densifying the Lancaster Village Center, pedestrian safety may become a greater concern than automobile traffic. We believe that recent improvements in downtown crosswalks and pedestrian infrastructure make the village center a safe place for pedestrians.

5 TRAILS AND CONNECTIVITY

A Vision for Lancaster's Trails

The Village of Lancaster is home to an existing trail, the Gar Galvin Trail which currently runs along Cayuga Creek, but this trail path is not connected to a system. The demand for pedestrian and bicycle pathways is growing. Providing a means of outdoor recreation through a trail helps encourage community growth and involvement. We recognize the scenic connection between the village and Cayuga Creek and the need to connect existing trails to the growing system of trails in Western New York. The village has beautiful natural resources that should be showcased to the community and other recreational users. The proposed trail path will provide this much-needed connection between new and existing routes. The trail will run through the village boundary, allowing for members to safely travel within the village by whichever modal means they choose. The village must act on emphasizing its environmental and historical beauty through the means of a recreational path.

The creation of a multi-use trail system in the Village of Lancaster would enhance multi-modal activity, reduce congestion, and ensure the safety of pedestrians and cyclists while connecting them to community anchors and green spaces such as Como Lake Park, Keysa Park, Heritage Trail, and Cayuga Creek from the central business district. By "multi-use," we mean it is accessible to pedestrians, cyclists, and other modes of active transportation.

Cayuga Creek is a valuable asset and natural resource that flows throughout the Village of Lancaster. The proposed greenway would highlight Cayuga Creek and increase resident access to the waterfront and other recreational opportunities. Conservation and beautification efforts along Cayuga Creek could also improve water quality and boost tourism in the central business district. There is also an opportunity to extend beyond the village's boundaries and connect to a larger network of bike routes and trails.

We believe that a trail network that converges in the heart of the village would improve pedestrian and bicycle access to local businesses and services which has the potential to spur economic activity, especially in the spring and summer months. Additionally, we believe that there is an opportunity to turn the village's water tower into a hub for multi-modal activity and to serve as a centerpiece for green recreation and transportation. Chapter 2 details a plan for the water tower in more detail.

Ultimately, a multi-use trail network that increases opportunities for active transportation and recreation while promoting environmental sustainability could improve resident health and the quality of life within the Village of Lancaster.



Figure 5.1: A view of Opera House from Cayuga Creek (Andrea Harder, 2022)

5.2 Proposed Trail Development

A Three-pronged Trail System

The proposed trail network includes two main segments for pedestrians and cyclists to utilize: Segment B and Segment A. Segment B will include an off-road multi-use trail that follows the flow of Cayuga Creek and extends from Como Lake Park to the Western boundary of the village. Segment A will include a mix of on and off-road connections in which pedestrians and cyclists can connect to Heritage Trail and Keysa Park from the central business district. Both of these segments have been broken down into multiple sub segments that vary in character. Segment B is subdivided into Segments B1, B2, and B3. Segment A has been subdivided into Segments A1 and A2.

All segments will converge in the heart of the village with the goal of enhancing multi-modal activity and increasing pedestrian and bicycle access to local institutions, businesses, and services that are located in the village center. Additionally, there is an opportunity to establish the water tower as a central feature and attraction in our proposed network of trails and greenways. This logical terminus can be solidified through the creation and implementation of pedestrian and bike amenities including but not limited to seating areas, bike racks, and signage that can help orient trailway users.

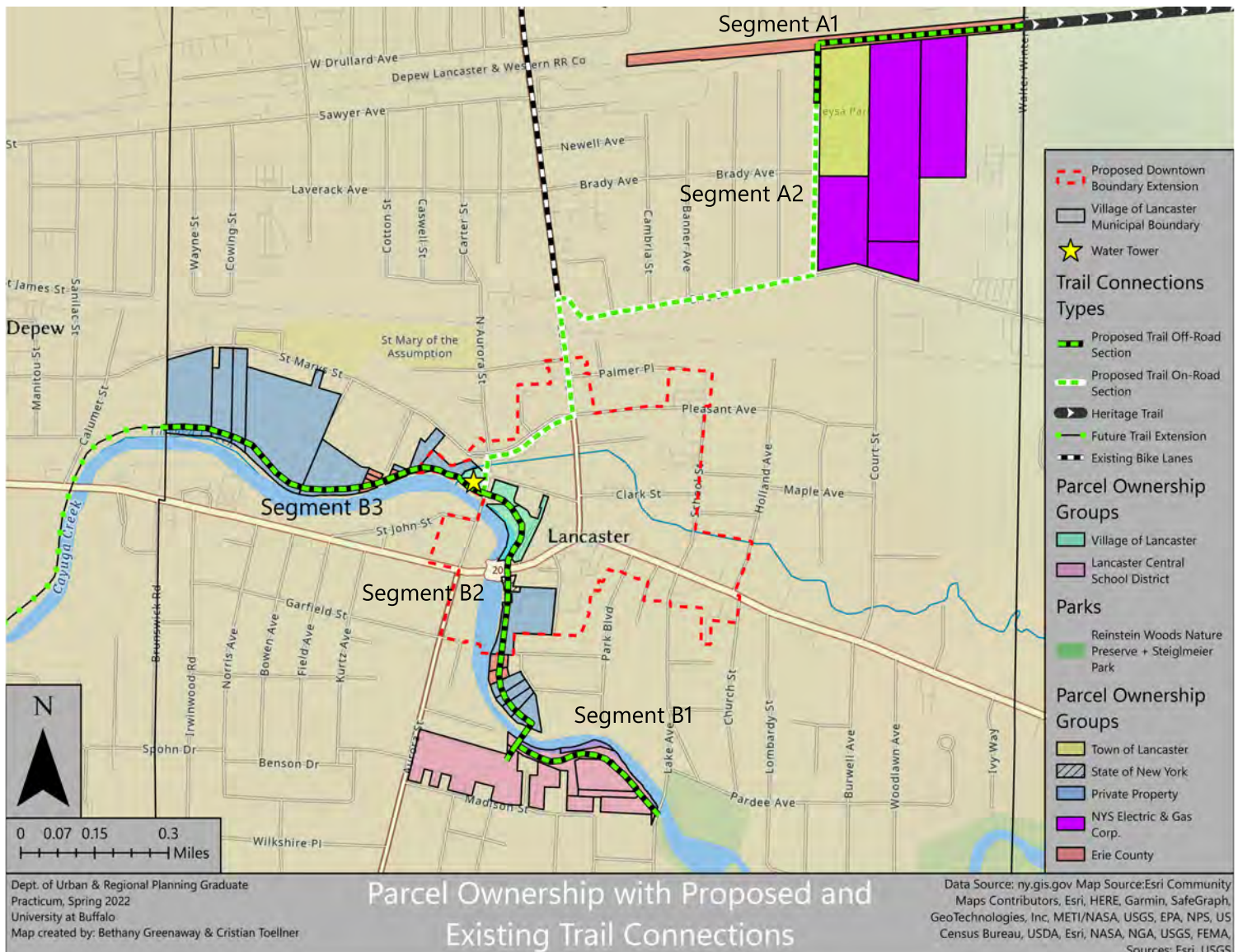


Figure 5.2: An overall trail map showing the convergence of Segment A and Segment B in the village center

5.3 Segment B: Connecting to Cayuga Creek

Como Lake Park to the Village Center

The segments of the Cayuga Creek Trail labeled B1 and B2 connect Como Lake Park and the village center (see Figure 4.3). Segment B1 connects Como Lake Park to the Lancaster Middle School on the southern side of Cayuga Creek. This portion is a completely off-road connection, ensuring safety for students traveling from the school to the park. Segment B2 is also completely off-road and connects the middle school to the village core. Segment B2 needs to incorporate a multi-modal bridge to connect segment B1 to segment B2. Segment B2 of the trail will run through the village's proposed Firefighter Memorial Park plan, as well as connect to the existing Gar Galvin Trail. These connections will allow pedestrians and cyclists a safe route to the village center and Como Lake Park. The school district and the village own the majority of parcels in this section; however, some parcels are privately owned. The village may be able to work with the school district to create this path and obtain easements through any privately owned parcels.

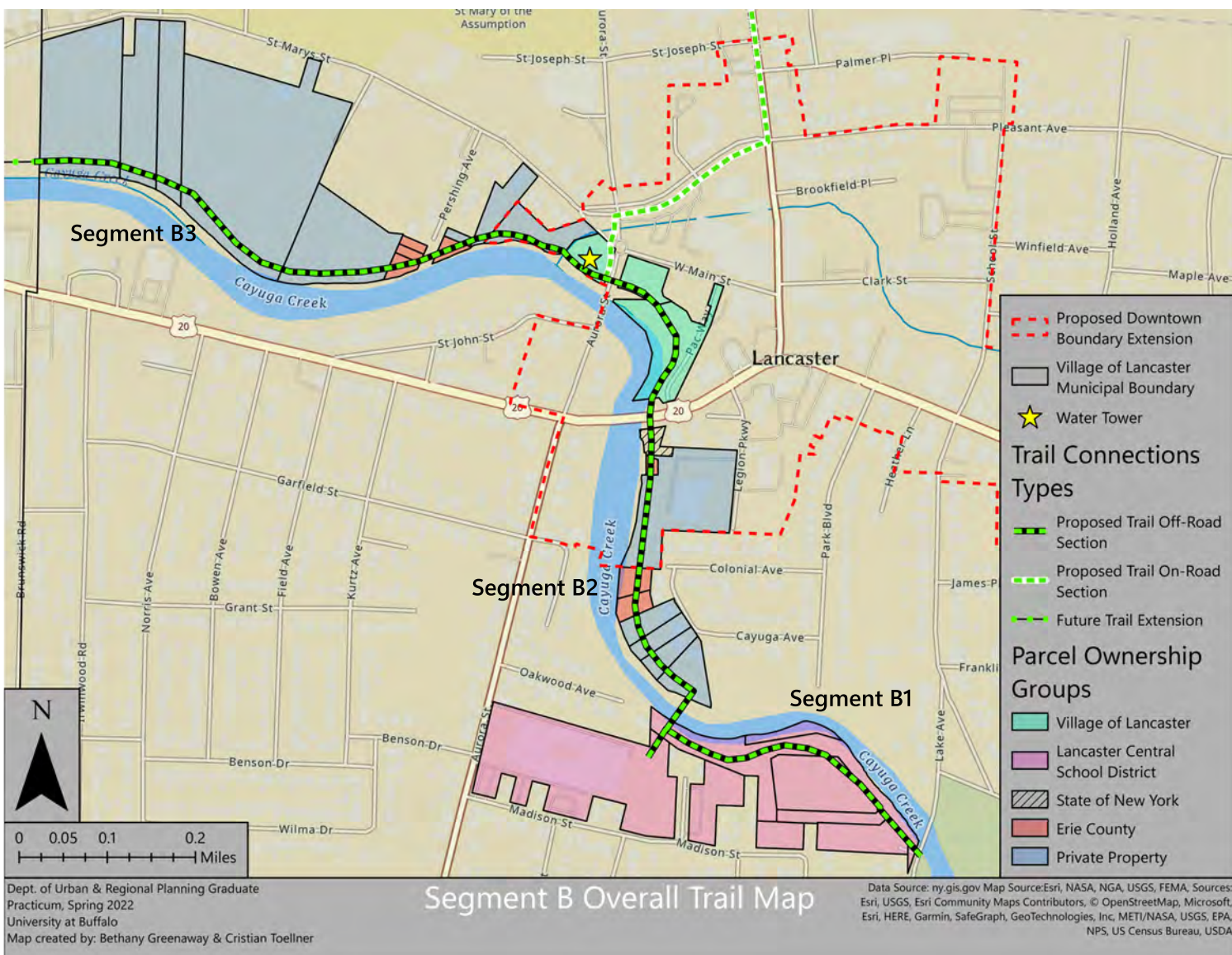


Figure 5.3: Segment B and its sub-segments

The Pedestrian Bridge Path

Segment B2 would need to incorporate a roughly 62-foot pedestrian bridge, connecting the southern part of the trail (B1) across Cayuga Creek to the north side (B2), that could handle foot and bicycle traffic. The Federal Highway Administration estimates that pedestrian bridges range from \$150 to \$250 per square foot (CED Program, 2016). Typical pedestrian bridges are 10 to 12 feet wide, and in flood-prone areas, it is recommended that the bridge be constructed a foot above the highest projected water level. The bridge needed for the proposed trail would be roughly 61.2 ft across, leading to total construction costs to be around \$147,000 including the cost of materials and labor.

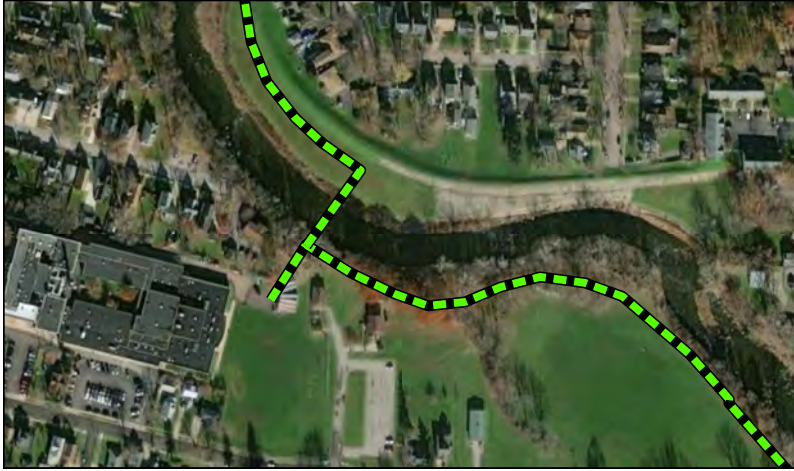


Figure 5.4: The proposed location for the pedestrian bridge near Lancaster Middle School



Figure 5.5:
A proposed wood bridge (Tom Joy, 2021)



Figure 5.6:
A proposed metal bridge (Morris Bridge Path, 2010)

The Village Center to the Village of Depew

The segment of the trail labeled B3 is a completely off-road connection. This segment of the B trail will connect the village center through the remaining green space along Cayuga Creek within the village boundaries. The parcels along Cayuga Creek within segment B3 of the trail are primarily privately owned; therefore, the village would need to obtain easements to complete this portion. This segment of the proposed trail is located within the 100-year flood zone, something to consider during the construction of the physical path. The best material to use in flood-prone areas would be a non-permeable pavement such as concrete or asphalt. A stone dust path similar to sections of the Erie Canal Trail between Pendleton and Gasport could be feasible if the elevation of the path was raised to mitigate flooding.



Figure 5.7: A view of the water tower from Cayuga Creek (Andrea Harder, 2022)



Figure 5.8: Green space along the banks of Cayuga Creek (Andrea Harder, 2022)



Figure 5.9: A view of a levee in the 100-year flood zone along Cayuga Creek near Lancaster Middle School (Andrea Harder, 2022)

5.4 Segment A: Heritage Trail to the Village Center

Section A would include a mix of on and off-road connections that would increase pedestrian and bike access to Keysa Park and Heritage Trail from the increasingly multi-modal village center. From the downtown core, we propose that trailway users travel northeast along Pleasant Avenue, Central Avenue, Erie Street, and Vandenberg Avenue until they reach Keysa Park where they can continue their journey off-road along Heritage Trail.

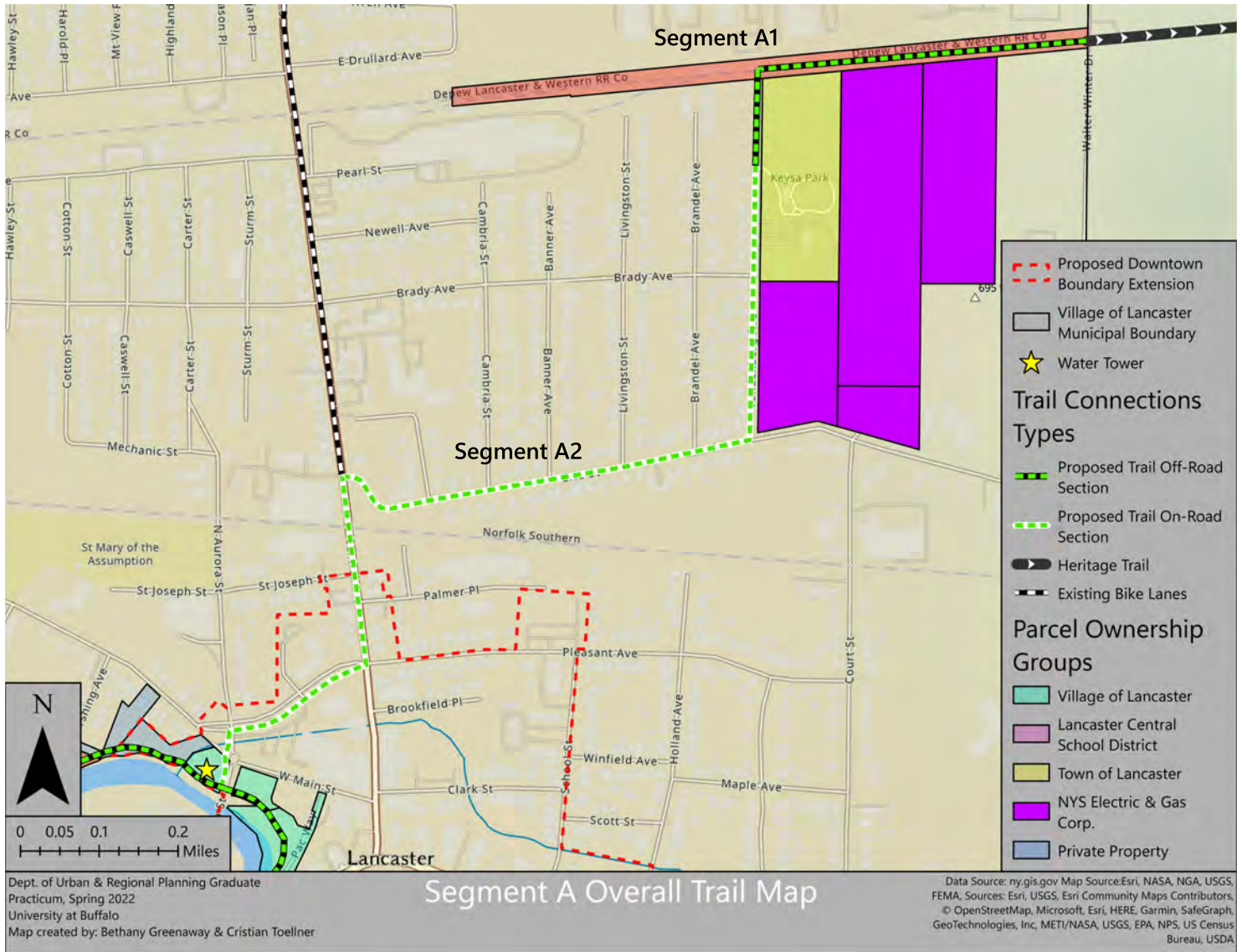


Figure 5.10: Segment A and its sub-segments

Segment A1:

Heritage Trail is a 4-mile off-road trail that currently stretches from Walter Winter Drive to Town Line Road and runs along former DL&W railway rights-of-way. Segment A1 of the proposed trail system would run east to west and would extend the trail into the village as it currently lies outside of its boundaries. This strip of land, also known as Commerce Parkway, is currently fenced off from Keysa Park and is utilized by NYSEG and other industrial and commercial facilities in the area as a service road. Despite the presence of commercial and industrial vehicles we still believe that it is feasible to allocate space to pedestrians and cyclists given that the vehicles travel at relatively low speeds. There is also a train shed and service area to the left of Segment A1 but given that the railroad bed ends at Walter Winter Drive, the tracks along Keysa Park likely do not see much activity besides from the occasional parking and turning around of freight cars.



Figure 5.11:
Looking east towards
Heritage Trail along the
railroad tracks and an
existing service road near
Keysa Park
(Andrea Harder, 2022)



Figure 5.12:
The fence that currently
borders Keysa Park
(Andrea Harder, 2022)



Figure 5.13:
The train shed and service
area to the left of Keysa Park
(Andrea Harder, 2022)

Segment A2:

From Segment A1 pedestrians would utilize sidewalk infrastructure and cyclists would continue their journey on-road from Keysa Park towards the central business district starting at Vandenberg Avenue. Keysa Park is a town-owned community anchor with several attractions including a public pool, baseball diamonds, and a playground. The presence of a skate park and other bicycle amenities at Keysa Park increases the viability of our proposed connections as pedestrians and cyclists likely already utilize Vandenberg Avenue to access Keysa Park.

Currently, there are no bike lanes or amenities along Vandenberg Avenue to ensure the safety of cyclists. Given that the street width is limited along Vandenberg Ave and traffic counts are relatively low, implementing a bike sharrow along with other traffic calming measures would be most effective in ensuring the safety of trailway users. More specifically, a bike sharrow allows cyclists and motorists to share the road instead of separating these modes through the implementation of a dedicated bike lane. Trailway users would then travel west along Erie Street towards Central Avenue where bike lanes have already been established. Currently, there are no bike lanes along Erie Street, but we believe that the street is wide enough to reallocate space to cyclists through the implementation of a separated bike lane or bike sharrow. Traffic calming measures and signage alerting vehicles to the presence of pedestrians and cyclists would be necessary to ensure a safe transition from Erie Street to Central Avenue. Finally, cyclists would continue along Pleasant Avenue towards the water tower where bike lanes are anticipated to be implemented in accordance with the Lancaster Roundabout Project.



Figure 5.14: Bryce Buchholz Memorial Bike Park at Keysa Park (Andrea Harder, 2022)



Figure 5.15: Bike lanes along Central Avenue near Erie Street (Andrea Harder, 2022)



Figure 5.16: The corner at Erie Street and Central Avenue (Andrea Harder, 2022)

5.5 Connecting to the Region

The goal of the village trail is to be utilized by village residents as well as members of surrounding communities. The proposed trail links multiple complete streets and off-road paths throughout the village. Section A of our proposal connects to the existing Heritage Trail that previously stopped just before the village of Lancaster boundary. Further connections to trail along Section B could be developed in the Village of Depew along Cayuga Creek, possibly leading into Reinstein Woods Nature Preserve. We strongly encourage the village to work with Depew to increase the connectivity between the neighboring communities.

Future steps for the Village of Lancaster would be to further identify existing trail paths in the region and work with each trail corporation to connect the proposed village trails to a larger network. The village should also be in communication with neighboring communities such as Depew to make this complete network possible.

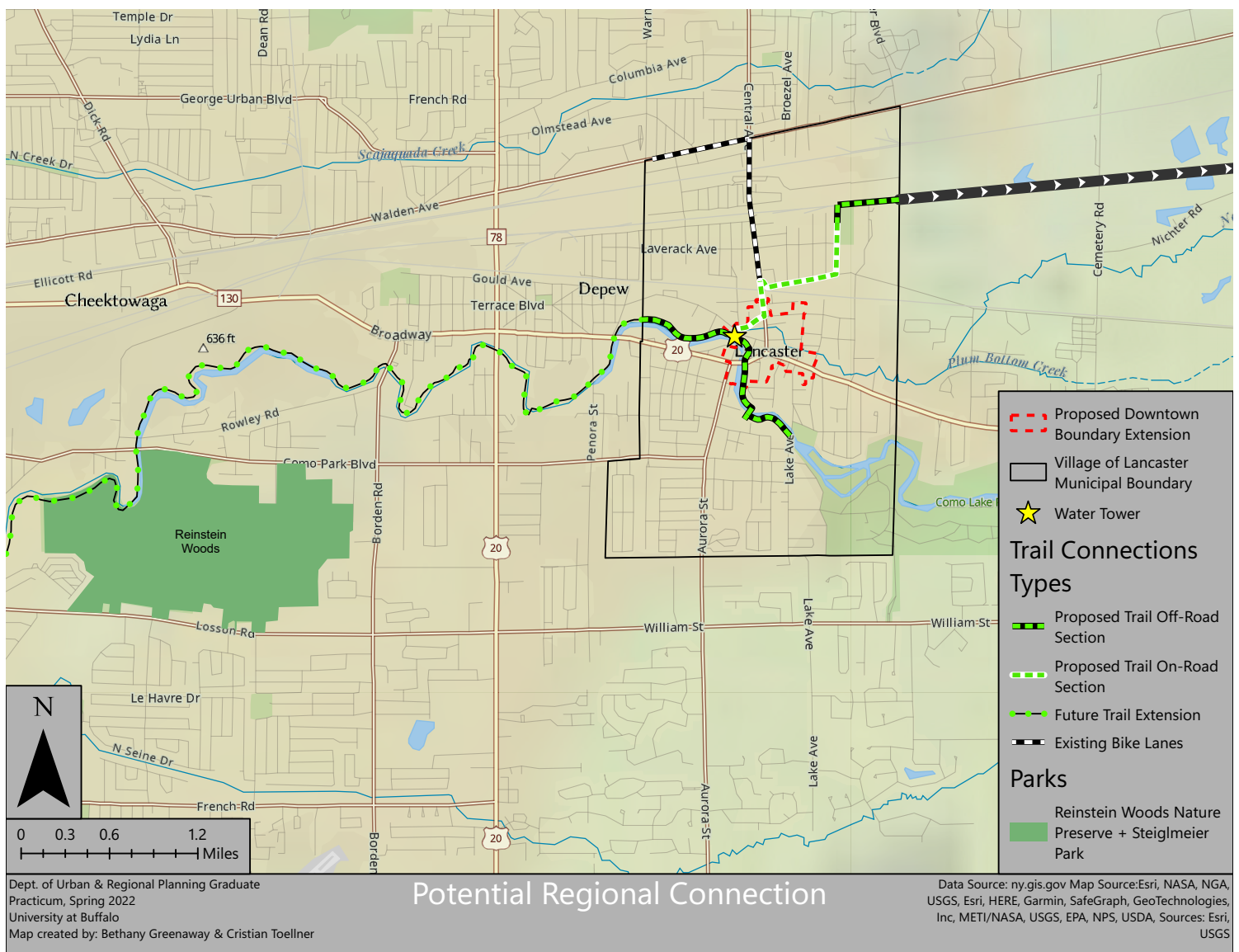


Figure 5.17: A map showing potential regional connections

5.6 Trail Implementation and Design

Trail Design, Costs, and Implementation

Trails in New York State are typically constructed following standardized measurements. For instance, pedestrian and bike trails are typically twelve feet wide. Typical pedestrian paths are constructed from asphalt, concrete, or a stone dust mixture. The three choices would all need a subbase of gravel costing approximately 50 cents per square foot.

The price of each material for the final surface would be as follows: asphalt at \$1.30 per square foot; concrete at \$3.00 per square foot; stone dust at 50 cents per square foot (NIRPC Trail Cost Analysis, 2010). Trails within flood-prone areas are typically constructed using a concrete base as it is more absorbent than an asphalt surface. Stone dust paths are also used near waterways but are not the most ideal for year-round trails.

A seasonal trail may be constructed using a stone dust base in flood-prone areas. Below are examples of trails along waterways using each prospective material. The village would need to determine which method of materials is most feasible for them as well as if the trail will be open year-round or seasonally, before constructing this path. The proposed trails would need to be constructed by obtaining a series of easements, street right of way, and arrangements with other landowners.

Best Practices:



Figure 5.18:
Portions of the Empire State Trail are complete with a Stone Dust Path
(Empire State Trail, 2017)



Figure 5.19:
Willamette River Trail is a concrete trail in Portland, Oregon
(Brogan Woodburn, 2019)



Figure 5.20:
Toonerville Rail-Trail is an asphalt trail that runs along the Black River, Vermont (S. Bendrix, 2013)

5.7 Parcels and Ownership

The proposed trail network will run through and alongside a variety of publicly and privately owned parcels. There are many opportunities and challenges regarding the reallocation of space for the construction of each segment. Segment B will run along the banks of Cayuga Creek and largely through privately owned land with the exception of a handful of parcels that are owned by the Lancaster School District, the Village of Lancaster, Erie County, and NYS. Obtaining space for pedestrian and bike paths on privately owned land will require the transfer of easements from property owners. An easement grants permission to use privately owned land for public purposes without the transfer of ownership. Ultimately, landowners will have the final say regarding the nature and agreement of the easement, but we believe that landowners could benefit from Creekside beautification and revitalization efforts as well as through increased access to a multi-use trail system that would connect them to the rest of the village.

There may be more opportunities than challenges when it comes to obtaining property rights from publicly owned parcels. The construction of Segment A will require cooperation between a variety of stakeholders at different levels of governance including the Village of Lancaster, the Town of Lancaster, and Erie County. We believe that these stakeholders would be willing to come to an agreement in support of the proposed trail network as it will increase pedestrian and bicycle access to local businesses, institutions, and green spaces.

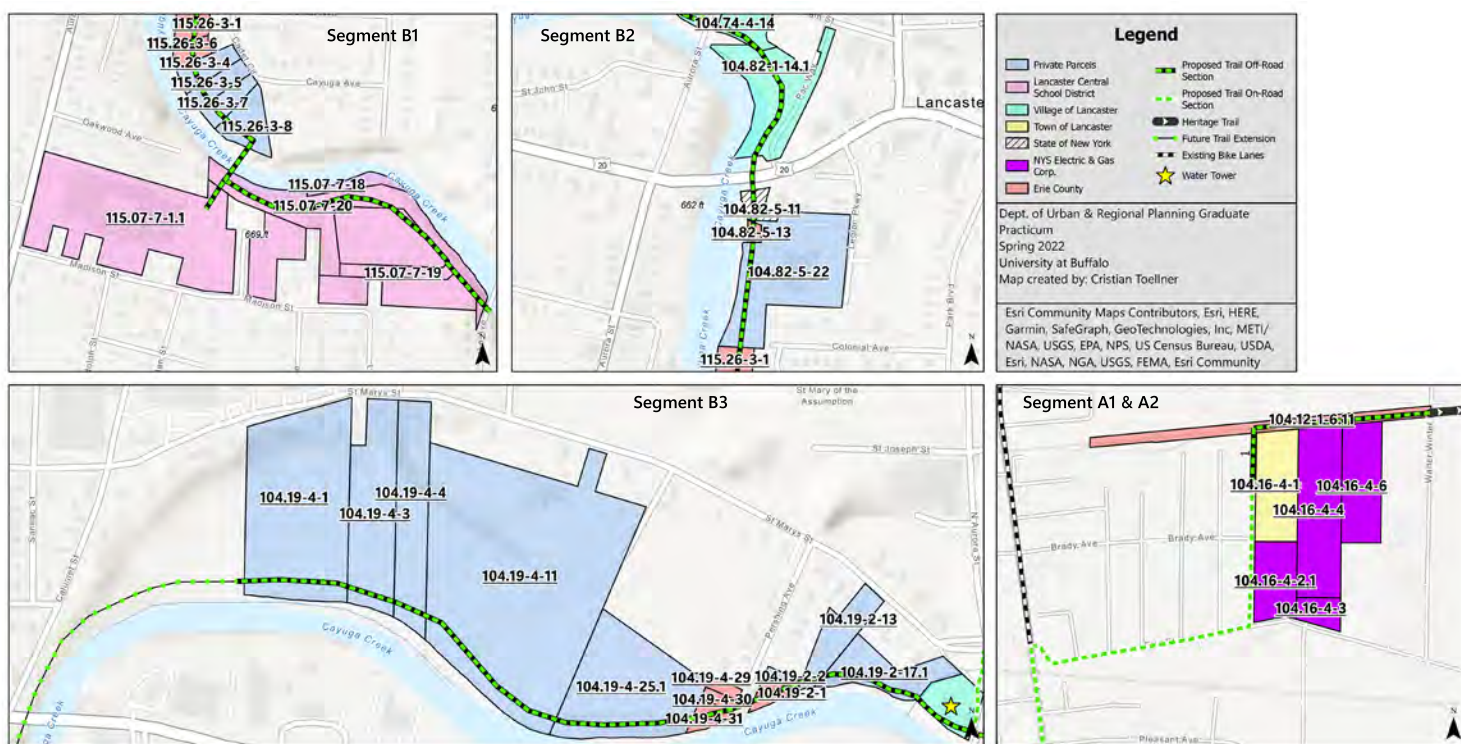


Figure 5.21: Parcel Map

Segment B1

Parcels with SBL's 115.07-7-18 to 115.07-7-20 & 115.07-7-1.1 is owned by the Lancaster Central School District and is primarily open space with some tree coverage. The B1 portion of the proposed trail would run through this parcel with cooperation from the school district.

Parcel with SBL 115.26-3-8 is privately owned by a community member, Gary Diem. An easement would need to be configured to allow for the bridge portion of Segment B2 to be constructed.

Parcel with SBL 115.26-3-7 is privately owned by a community member, Paul Garland. An easement would need to be configured in order to allow the B2 portion of the bike trail to be constructed. This area is primarily open space along the creek shore.

Parcel with SBL 115.26-3-5 is privately owned by the Garland Family Trust. An easement would need to be configured for trail construction. This area is primarily open space along the creek shore.

Parcel with SBL 115.26-3-4 is privately owned by the Besch Family Trust. An easement would need to be configured in order to allow the B2 portion of the trail to be constructed. This area is primarily open space along the creek shore.

Parcel with SBL 115.26-3-6 is owned by Erie County and with cooperation between the village and the county, this land can be obtained to construct a portion of Segment B2.

Segment B2

Parcel with SBL 115.26-3-1 is owned by Erie County and with cooperation between the village and the county, this land can be obtained to construct a portion of Segment B2.

Parcel with SBL 104.82-5-22 is owned by Lancaster Lodge 1478 Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks. An arrangement would need to be made with the lodge to allow for the construction of this segment.

Parcels with SBL 104.88-5-13 is owned by Erie County and with cooperation between the village and the county, this land can be obtained to construct a portion of Segment B2.

Parcel with SBL 104.82-5-11 is owned by NYS and with cooperation between the village and the state, this land can be obtained to construct a portion of Segment B2.

Parcel with SBL 104.82-1-14.1 is the site of the village's proposed Cayuga Creek Park. If the village were to allocate space in their design of the park to this portion of Segment B2, the trailway would connect the central business district to Como Lake Park.

Parcel with SBL 104.74-4-14 is currently owned by the Village of Lancaster. This will aid in the construction of the trail because no further steps need to be taken to obtain a portion of the parcel.

Segment B3

Parcel with the Star is currently owned by the Village of Lancaster and is where the water tower is located. This will aid in the construction of the B3 portion of the trail because no further steps need to be taken to obtain a portion of the parcel.

Parcel with SBL104.19-2-17.1 is privately owned by a community member, Carol King. An easement would need to be obtained in order to construct the portion of the bike trail that would be needed to connect the water tower to the remaining green space along Cayuga Creek.

Parcel with SBL104.19-2-13 is privately owned by a community member, Timothy Powell. An easement would be needed to construct this portion of the proposed trail.

Parcel with SBL 104.19-2-1 is owned by the Erie County and with cooperation between the village and the county, this land can be obtained to construct a portion of Segment B3.

Parcel with SBL 104.19-2-2 is owned by St Mary's of the Assumption. An easement would be needed to construct this portion of the proposed trail.

Parcel with SBL 104.19-4-30 is owned by the Erie County and with cooperation between the village and the county, this land can be obtained to construct a portion of Segment B3.

Parcel with SBL 104.19-4-29 is owned by the Erie County and with cooperation between the village and the county, this land can be obtained to construct a portion of Segment B3.

Parcel with SBL 104.19-4-31 is owned by the Erie County and with cooperation between the village and the county, this land can be obtained to construct a portion of Segment B3.

Parcel with SBL 104.19-4-25.1 contains residential homes. An easement would be needed to have the proposed bike trail run alongside Cayuga Creek.

Parcel with SBL 104.19-4-11 is privately owned by a community member, John Stephan. An easement would be needed to construct this portion of the proposed trail.

Parcel with SBL 104.19-4-4 is privately owned by a community member, Michelle Zappia. An easement would be needed to construct this portion of the proposed trail.

Parcel with SBL 104.10-4-3 is privately owned by a community member, Edwin Kowalczyk. An easement would be needed to construct this portion of the proposed trail.

Parcel with SBL 104.10-4-1 is privately owned by a community member, Ronald Czapl. An easement would be needed to construct this portion of the proposed trail.

Segment A1

Parcel with SBL 104.12-1-6.11 is owned by Erie County and with cooperation between the village and the county, this land can be obtained to construct Segment A1 along Commerce Parkway.

Segment A2

Parcel with SBL's 104.16-4-4 and 104.16-4-3 are owned by New York State Electric and Gas (NYSEG). The proposed trail network will not run directly through these parcels but adjacent to them. Given that an electricity substation is located here, discussions should be had between the village and NYSEG to minimize conflict and negative externalities.

5.7 Conclusion

In conclusion, the demand for pedestrian and bicycle pathways is growing. Villages and townships that provide their communities with a means of outdoor recreation through a trail path, encourage community growth and involvement. The Village of Lancaster has beautiful natural resources that need to be emphasized. The creation of this proposed railway system can do that. The trail will run through the whole village boundary, linking members from different areas of the community while providing them with a safe way to get across the village without the need for a motorized vehicle. This trail will allow middle school students to safely walk from their homes to school grounds as well as from school to the downtown core through off-street conditions. This trail also highlights the village's greatest asset, Cayuga Creek. The construction of the trail alongside the creek will allow recreational users to have a breathtaking view of the stream. The desire for off-road trail systems is at its peak, there are many funding opportunities available. The village should further look into grants from the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation, as well as other nonprofit organizations aimed at increasing outdoor activity and beautification of natural environments. The village must take advantage of the growing activity and demand for an offroad recreational path.



Figure 5.22: A weathered sign indicating a local flood protection project along Cayuga Creek (Andrea Harder, 2022)

6 STEPS TOWARD THE FUTURE



Figure 6-1: West Main Street looking towards East Buffalo. (J. Dawson, May 2022)

6.1 CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

The Village of Lancaster has already taken steps towards a better future, such as the renovation of West Main Street, preservation of significant cultural assets, and ongoing construction of a new park. We believe that further attention should be given to housing and walkability that would support an already strong village center and provide more economic opportunities for the village. Lancaster has the last traditional village center east of Buffalo, and we believe the following steps could ensure it remains a strong and vibrant village that is well-prepared for the challenges of the future. We are hoping the community of Lancaster will come together to discuss these ideas.

VILLAGE CENTER



Figure 6-2: The historic Lancaster Opera House (J. Dawson, May 2022)

The recent extension of the village center specifically aimed to improve the street connectivity and the quantity of mixed-use infrastructure. Our vision will support a bustling future community with new residential, commercial, and green space that will both improve the quality of life in the village and expand economic opportunities for the community.

We selected nine distinct sites within our proposed expanded village center that would provide a series of opportunities for both housing and commercial space on visible and underutilized parcels of land, some left over from the 1960s urban renewal efforts. Returning people to the village center will maintain vitality and ensure a strong economic base. There is also a unique opportunity to activate the water tower as a centerpiece of this strong village center, perhaps as a multi-use gathering space. Along the way, there should be improved traffic circulation in the development sites to the north and south of West Main Street.

Additionally, a strong village center emphasizing Lancaster's unique historic fabric could be a draw for regional visitors looking to experience a traditional village setting. There are few traditional villages like Lancaster left in Western New York; this is something we believe our recommendations would support.

HOUSING



Figure 6-3: Housing in the Village of Lancaster (J. Dawson, May 2022)

As housing units in the village are majority single-family homes, effective and adequate growth in the village requires an increase in housing stock. The Village of Lancaster should consider a variety of new housing that is affordable, whether that is single-family units, apartments, or mixed-use developments.

There are a series of steps necessary to implement these changes. While we have laid out five distinct sites where more housing can be developed, there are further parcels throughout the village where construction can occur. Through funding sources listed in Chapter 3, there are multiple opportunities for support in this endeavor. Both for these projects and for the nine sites recommended for the village center, the Village needs to consider who will take on this development, whether it is a not-for-profit housing agency, or whether a partnership with a private firm is an easier course of action.

Furthermore, changes within the Village zoning code will increase the ease of permitting accessory dwelling units. Currently, the Village code is fairly vague regarding ADUs for housing. Clarifying this will give property owners more control over their land and would allow for more housing units on relatively scarce land.

TRAILS AND CONNECTIVITY

Lancaster is fortunate to be situated on a variety of natural assets such as Cayuga Creek, Plum Bottom Creek, and Como Lake Park. We believe that a “greenway” trail system linking these natural assets to the Village’s built environment will greatly enhance the quality of life and make the community far more walkable.

Cayuga Creek is the most important environmental feature for connectivity considerations. Extended bike and walking trails will improve accessibility for pedestrians within the village and create connections to other communities, with the ultimate goal of a regional multi-modal trail system. The village’s small size makes it well-suited to be a walkable community, and new greenway trails would create a desirable route for pedestrians that would take advantage of assets such as Cayuga Creek.



Figure 6-4: Cayuga Creek and the Lancaster Water Tower (J. Dawson, May 2022)

For implementation of an extended trail system, the village should consider discussions with the Village of Depew for collaborative efforts to extend greenways and add cohesion throughout the region. Similarly to the Erie Cattaraugus Rail Trail System, the Village of Lancaster may want to work with other communities to create an organization dedicated to the development and maintenance of this trail.



Figure 6-5: The Village of Lancaster (J. Dawson, 2022)

The suggestions we have given need coordination and daily effort, which is challenging for a small community. Therefore, we propose creating an entry-level “development coordinator” position to oversee partnership efforts to ease implementation and to guide the Village’s vision and trajectory. Coordinator duties should include:

- Village Center Development
- Housing Development
- Trail Development

We believe Lancaster is well-suited to tackle the challenges of the future. There is ample opportunity to continue and build upon the Village’s legacy of a tight-knit, strong community nestled within Western New York. It will be up to Lancaster’s residents to seize these opportunities.