

The Martin Luther King, Jr. Cultural District & Cultural Corridor

**A Strategic Plan and Action Agenda
For the Masten District
The Center for Urban Studies
University at Buffalo
April 2, 2001**

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The Executive Summary

Introduction:

The Masten District is on a downward trajectory, although a variety of initiatives have been undertaken in the community. Population is still declining, the physical environment has a foreboding look, the housing market is weak, and property values are not appreciating.

The purpose of this report is to develop a strategic plan and action agenda for the Masten District, which is based on the *turning point threshold* concept. Every neighborhood has a *turning point threshold*, which is that point where a snowballing effect takes place that transform the neighborhood when investments rise above it. The ultimate goal of this project is to outline a plan, which if successfully implemented, will push the Masten District beyond the *turning point threshold*.

The report's central theme is that culture is an economic asset that can be used to drive the community development process and that the Masten District possesses a concentration of cultural artifacts that can make the district attractive for investment, heritage tourism, and residential development.

The plan is based on linking economic and residential development in Masten to heritage tourism through the development of six projects and the Jefferson and Fillmore Avenue commercial strips. Within this framework, the idea is to engage in extensive landscaping and streetscaping throughout the target area. The project will build on the cultural assets clustered near the Martin Luther King, Jr. Park and will call for the establishment of a Martin Luther King, Jr. Cultural District and a Cultural Corridor that will tie the district to the cultural treasures in the Delaware Park area.

Part One: Location and Development Trends

Location:

Situated on the eastern side of the City, the Masten District is strategically located near the center of Buffalo (Figure 1). The Kensington Expressway and the Humbolt/Scajaquada Expressway provides easy access from Masten to other parts of the City and region. Best Street, Landon, Laurel, and Genesee form the District's southern boundary. Main Street is the District's western boundary, while the Conrail tracks form the eastern border. The Masten District falls wholly within ten census tracts and partially in two: 32.01, 32.02 (partial), 33.01, 33.02 (partial), 34.00, 35.00, 36.00, 39.01, 39.02, 40.01, 40.02, and 52.02. The Masten District is strategically located in the center of the city and its development can have a significant impact on halting the downward slide of the inner city and the entire central city.

The Martin Luther King, Jr. Cultural District and Cultural Corridor: A Strategic Plan and Action Agenda for the Masten Councilmanic District

Introduction

To revitalize inner city neighborhoods, investments in those communities must rise above a *turning point threshold*. If they do not, conditions of life in them will not change significantly. The traditional approach to neighborhood development typically consist of making a series of rather modest investments, such as building in-fill dwellings, repairing potholes, rehabilitating old houses, and engaging in some commercial development activities. Yet, these modest levels of investment are not sufficient to transform radically a neighborhood's physical and social environment.

Research by the Center for Urban Studies suggest that modest investments, and the modest neighborhood improvements that stem from them, will achieve little. Rather, to obtain a turning point in the development of inner city neighborhoods, the levels of public and private investment must rise above a certain threshold: *the turning point threshold*. Beyond this point, the investments will trigger a set of multipliers and catalytic agents that will spawn the neighborhood's radical transformation.

To move beyond a *turning point thresholds*, neighborhood investments must be informed by a strategic plan that embody four interactive factors:

- **The creation of a synergism among existing neighborhood projects.** Every community must be reconstructed around a theme that not only links together discrete neighborhood projects, but also creates a synergism among them.
- **The development of linkage among neighborhood development, central city, and regional economic development.** The idea is to find innovative ways to connect neighborhood community development to the development of the entire city and region.
- **The creation of bridges between the development of the resident community and the big economic institutions located in the community.**
- **The creation of linkages among all phases of development in the community.**

The purpose of this project is to develop a strategic plan and action agenda for the Masten Councilmanic District that is informed by these four elements. Masten has been the site of extensive planning and analysis over the years, and also it has been the site of substantial investments. Yet, the sum of these efforts has been less than the whole. Efforts to redevelop Masten have not led to the emergence of turning point scenarios.

The purpose of this report is to present a *turning point scenario* for the Masten District. The report will not attempt a detail cost analysis of the redevelopment project. Instead, it will formulate the approach to be taken in redeveloping the Masten District. Also, it specifies the projects required to transform radically the community. Each project, it should be stressed, must be developed fully and a financial plan to fund it outlined. Such work is beyond the scope of this planning study.

The Report will be divided into four parts. The first part will outline the context and developmental trends, while the second part will detail the strategic plan and action agenda. Part three will discuss financing the project, while part four will present the recommendations and implementation plan.

Part One. Location and Development Trends

1.1 The Location

Situated on the eastern side of the City, the Masten District is strategically located near the center of Buffalo (Figure 1). The Kensington Expressway and the Humbolt/Scajaquada Expressway provides easy access from Masten to other parts of the City and region. Best Street, Landon, Laurel, and Genesee form the District's southern boundary. Main Street is the District's western boundary, while the Conrail tracks form the eastern border. The Masten District falls wholly within ten census tracts and partially in two: 32.01, 32.02 (partial), 33.01, 33.02 (partial), 34.00, 35.00, 36.00, 39.01, 39.02, 40.01, 40.02, and 52.02.

Two locational aspects of the Masten District stand out. First, a significant portion of the District fronts the Main Street Corridor. Main Street, as the name implies, is the most important thoroughfare in Buffalo. Thus, the visual image projected on the Masten side of the street not only conveys a picture of everyday life in the District, but also in the City. Second, the Humboldt Parkway links the Masten District to the cultural treasures of the Delaware Park area.

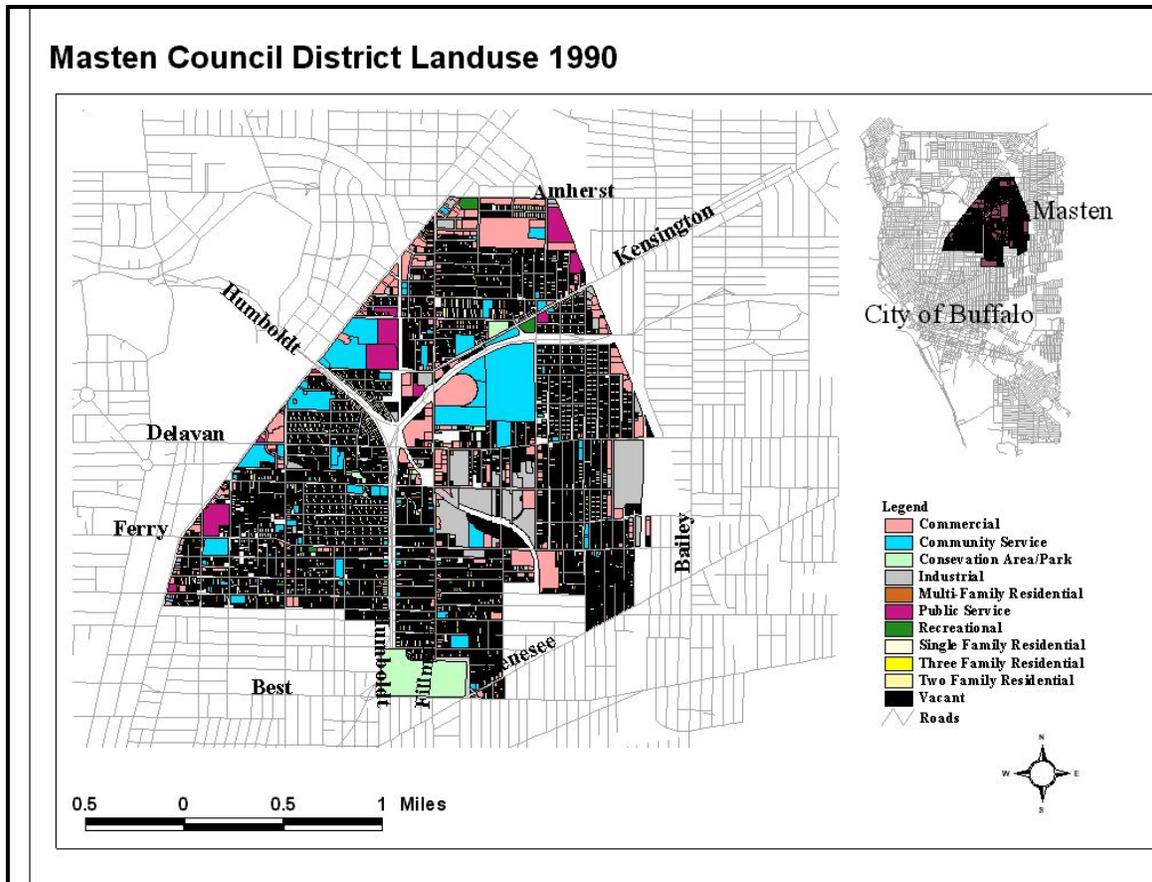
1.2 The Site

The Masten District has a very complex land use and residential structure. The Humboldt Parkway and the Kensington Expressway divides the area into three parts. The western quadrant consists of Masten Park, Kingsley, Cold Springs and Hamlin Park. The eastern quadrant consists of Martin Luther King, Jr. Park, Genesee-Moselle, and Grider neighborhoods, while the northern quadrant is home to Leroy. The building of these roadways through the Masten District has fractured the community and complicated the redevelopment process.

Masten is composed both of a resident community and a wealth-producing community. The wealth-producing community consists of businesses, industries, and big public institutions like Canisius College and the Erie County Medical Center. For example, concentrated in the District's eastern quadrant, there are 42 businesses, industries, and big

public institutions that employ 20 or more employees. In all, these wealth producing industries, including Erie County Medical Center, American Axle & Manufacturing, Harmac Industries, Truly Magic Products, Inc., Pine Hill Concrete Mix Corporation, Hard Manufacturing, Public School 84, and University Radiologists, employ from 7,000 to 10,000 workers. Canisius College and Blue Cross/Blue Shield anchor the western quadrant, while Sisters Hospital and the Tri-Main Center the northern quadrant and also employ thousands of workers.

Figure 14: The Masten Council District



The Masten District is constructed around four major commercial districts: Fillmore Avenue, Jefferson Street, Delavan Avenue, and Kensington Avenue. Although Kensington is no longer a prime location for business, it remains a much-traveled old commercial strip that shapes the District’s image. East Utica, East Ferry, and Genesee Street are also old commercial strips, which are now major thoroughways that also paint a picture of Masten.

A summary of site characteristics in the Masten District reveals three things: (1) No other section of Buffalo has such a rich array of businesses, industries, and big public institutions as the Masten District. (2) The size of Masten combined with the complexity of its land use structure and the age of its housing stock, means radically reconstructing it

will be a difficult and costly affair. (3) A way must be found to link together the development of the resident and the wealth producing communities.

1.3 Developmental Trends

Masten is being shaped by the interplay of several developmental trends. Understanding these trends and how they are shaping the development of this community is key to formulating a strategy to guide successfully its development.

1.3.1 Residential Development. The population composition of the resident community has been well documented, and this story will not be retold in this report. Rather, a few summary statements will be made, and the neighborhood's trajectory will be discussed. Masten is a large, predominantly black community with a 1990 population of about 38,000. The average age is 35 years, which is slightly older than most of Black Buffalo. Compared to other black neighborhoods, Masten is somewhat affluent. Among those workers 25 years and over, 53% have completed high school and 33% have had some college. The average household income is \$20,704, which is slightly higher than the citywide median.

Yet, despite this apparent strength, serious problems exist in the community. About 33% of the population live below the poverty line, less than 40% own their homes, and the average value of housing is only \$34,713. Property values in Masten are not very strong, and the District's population has been declining over the years.

Blacks are moving out of Masten into the University District and into neighborhoods on the western side of Main Street and to the east, in neighborhoods adjacent to Cheektowaga. This trend is expected to continue throughout the decade. Most of those leaving are believed to be higher income groups, searching for improved housing conditions. Over time, then, Masten is expected to continue to lose population and become increasingly poor.

This process of decline could be hastened by the development of the Hozo Zone and the reconstruction of the Fruitbelt neighborhood. New housing developments and improved conditions in the University District could also lure Masten residents. Some new housing construction is taking place in the district, and the Bethel AME church is leading a major redevelopment effort in Cold Springs. These events, however, may not be enough to offset the outmigration.

Overall, residential development in Masten is on a downward trajectory, despite the presence of some strong neighborhoods like Hamlin Park. This story of decline is revealed by the City's Neighborhood Condition Index (NCI). The NCI examines several variables to determine the socioeconomic health of a community (residential assessment, housing burden, unemployment, single-parent households, vacancy rates, presence of renters, and poverty). The NCI rates five of the Masten District neighborhoods as poor and three as fair. So, although millions have been spent in the Masten District, conditions in the neighborhood have not improved significantly.

1.3.2 Trickle-Down Economic Development. Public and private investments in Masten are based on the assumption that the development of wealth producing industries will lead to jobs and opportunities for neighborhood residents. This has not happened. For example, in the District’s western Quadrant, there are about 41 businesses that employ 20 or more workers. Two companies in this area, Erie County Medical Center and American Axel, alone, employ 5000 workers. Yet, most of the workers in these two companies probably live in the suburbs and about 80% of the wages earned in this neighborhood probably go to these suburbanites. Not only this, but the East Delavan commercial strip, which is sandwiched between Erie County Medical Center and American Axel, has not been positively impacted by its strategic location. Few, if any, of the workers at these two institutions shop on the Delavan strip. Trickle-down economic development has not worked in the Masten District.

1.3.3 Piecemeal, Project-Orientated Development. A number of successful projects have been developed in the Masten District: Apollo Theater, Mt. Olive Baptist Church, Charles Drew Science Magnet, Tri-Main Center, C District Police Station, Gaiter Parkway and the Gaiter Parkway Business Incubator. Moreover, in 1997, then council member Byron Brown released his “Masten District Improvement Plan” that outlined a planning framework within which the development of the Masten District could unfold. The year before, the City of Buffalo Department of Planning released its East Delavan Community Master Plan, which outlined a comprehensive strategy for improving the neighborhoods in the western quadrant. Yet, despite the existence of two major planning documents, the project-orientated approach to development was not broken.

Within this framework, a variety of initiatives are being undertaken in the District. For example, Bethel AME Church and Restoration 78 are leading an effort to redevelop the Cold Springs neighborhood. Hamlin Park has been declared a historic district and energetic residents are working hard to sustain and further develop that community. Efforts are underway to renovate Martin Luther King, Jr. Park, Fillmore and Jefferson Avenue. These efforts, notwithstanding, the project approach to development is still dominant. For example, even though The Wiley Sports Stadium, Makowski School, a new fire station, Apollo Theater, 1490 Jefferson have been developed on Jefferson Avenue, along with new streets and sidewalks, the overall image of the strip has still not be changed. Along conditions on Jefferson have improved, it still has a foreboding, declining appearance.

Part Two. The Strategic Plan: The Martin Luther King, Jr. Cultural District & Cultural Corridor Project

The goal of this strategic plan is to identify a community development project that links together various initiatives in the District and that builds on Masten’s unique assets. Considerable assets are found in the Masten District: County Medical Center, Canisius College, Sisters Hospital, American Axel, Blue Cross/Blue Shield, and Tri-Main Center. Also, a plethora of strong community-based organizations are found in the community, along with strong leadership and a rich cultural tradition. Masten should be thriving, but

it is not. The big question is how do we blend these assets together and develop a project that can generate the investments necessary to push community development beyond *the turning point threshold*.

This is where the Martin Luther King, Jr. Cultural District and Cultural Corridor comes in. Several cultural facilities and places are clustered around the Martin Luther King, Jr. Park, with the potential to become major tourist attractions, if the neighborhood containing them is radically reconstructed.

2.1 The Tourist Market and the MLK Cultural District & Cultural Corridor

2.1.1 The Tourist Market

The travel and tourist industry is one of the largest employers in the United States. In 1999, the nearly \$519 billion spent by residents and international travelers in the United States generated an estimated 7.8 million jobs and nearly \$158 billion in payroll income. Cultural and historical tourism is one of the most lucrative sections of the tourist industry. Recently, a survey found that 53.6 million adults visited a museum or historical site in 1999 and 33 million adults attended a cultural event such as theatre, arts, or a music festival. Heritage tourists spend more, stay in hotels longer, visit more destinations, and are twice as likely to travel for entertainment purposes than other travelers.

Tourism is the second biggest industry in New York State and lags only behind agriculture. At the same time, New York has trailed other states in investments in tourism, although there are signs the state will increase its tourism investments in the future.

2.1.2 Heritage Tourism in Greater Buffalo

Buffalo-Niagara is a region with great, but unrealized potential for tourism. The region's greatest attraction is Niagara Falls, Canada, but most of the activity is on the Canadian side of the border. Niagara Falls, USA has not been able to establish a competitive advantage over its Canadian rival. Meanwhile, the challenge facing Buffalo is somewhat different, although no less challenging. The economic task facing Buffalo is to find a way to lure visitors to Niagara Falls down to the Queen City.

The local tourist strategy seems to focus on stimulating interest in architectural and heritage tourism, along with attracting visitors to a well-developed waterfront. For the most part this approach is sound. Buffalo has a number of architectural treasures, along with several sites of historical significance, including the Underground Railroad sites. This combined with Buffalo's live theatre and other regional attractions makes the area a potentially a great place for people to visit.

These assets, notwithstanding, what Greater Buffalo lacks is a draw, which has the magnetic power to pull people into the community. The Martin Luther King, Jr. Cultural District could provide the Buffalo with such a cultural anchor.

2.1.3 Black Buffalo, The East Side, and the MLK Cultural District Idea

When one thinks about heritage tourism and urban development in Buffalo and Western New York, they seldom think about African Americans and Buffalo's East Side, except for Underground Railroad sites. One reason is that local leaders typically think of tourism in terms of theme parks, waterfronts, natural wonders, architectural treasures, or downtown entertainment centers.

The tourist industry, however, is more complex than this. Not only do tourists seek escape from the ordinary experiences of everyday life by immersion in contrived diversion, amusement, and views of breathtaking natural wonders, but also they seek submergence into the *authentic* life of a community. They seek experiences that stand outside the perimeters of "*been there, done that.*" People want to learn about the lives of ordinary people; their heritage, architecture, and culture and way of life.

Buffalo had its robber barons, but also it had its working class neighborhoods. Both architectures are part of the region's industrial heritage, and people would love to see that, especially if the story unfolded within the context of a contemporary neighborhood that had been radically reconstructed. Such a neighborhood would blend together the elements of placemaking and community building, along with the preservation of the historical dimensions of that neighborhood. The end product would not be a historical district in the legal sense of the term, but rather a reconstructed community that captured and maintained its *historical character and charm*. Such redevelopments would allow visitors to experience a reconstructed neighborhood as a *cultural place*.

Across the country one finds a growing list of neighborhood redevelopment projects based on cultural heritage (Appendix B: Profiles of Projects Similar to the Proposed Martin Luther King, Jr. Cultural District Project). The lesson drawn from these examples is that visitors enjoy the experience of *place*. Tourist venues that involve the creative interactions with the lived experience of people and sites that are linked with everyday life and culture offer an adventure that is unsurpassed by visits only to art galleries, historical buildings, and waterfronts. What innovative planners and developers have discovered is that heritage and treasures of bygone days can be resurrected, commodified, and transformed into the principal motifs for urban revitalization and economic development.

2.1.4 The MLK District Concept

This is where the Martin Luther King, Jr. Cultural District comes in. The King name has a magical appeal, and the idea of creating a cultural district in his honor, which celebrates his legacy, has great appeal. Many people, who otherwise might not come to Buffalo, would travel to the city to visit a Martin Luther King, Jr. Cultural District, and once there, they could be enticed to visit other places within the cultural corridor and throughout the City. In the cultural district, people will be introduced to the treasures of the city and given a guide to interacting with them. Places like the Darwin Martin House, Albright-

Know Art Gallery, the Burchfield-Penny Arts Center, Forest Lawn Cemetery, and the Tri-Main Center. In addition, a cultural heritage trail, made up of the various cultural locations and sites of interests, which are scattered throughout the city, could be developed. Thus, the MLK Cultural District could serve as a *portal* and link to the city's cultural treasures.

2.1 The Initiative: The Martin Luther King, Jr. Cultural District and Cultural Corridor

2.2.1 The Location and Site Characteristics

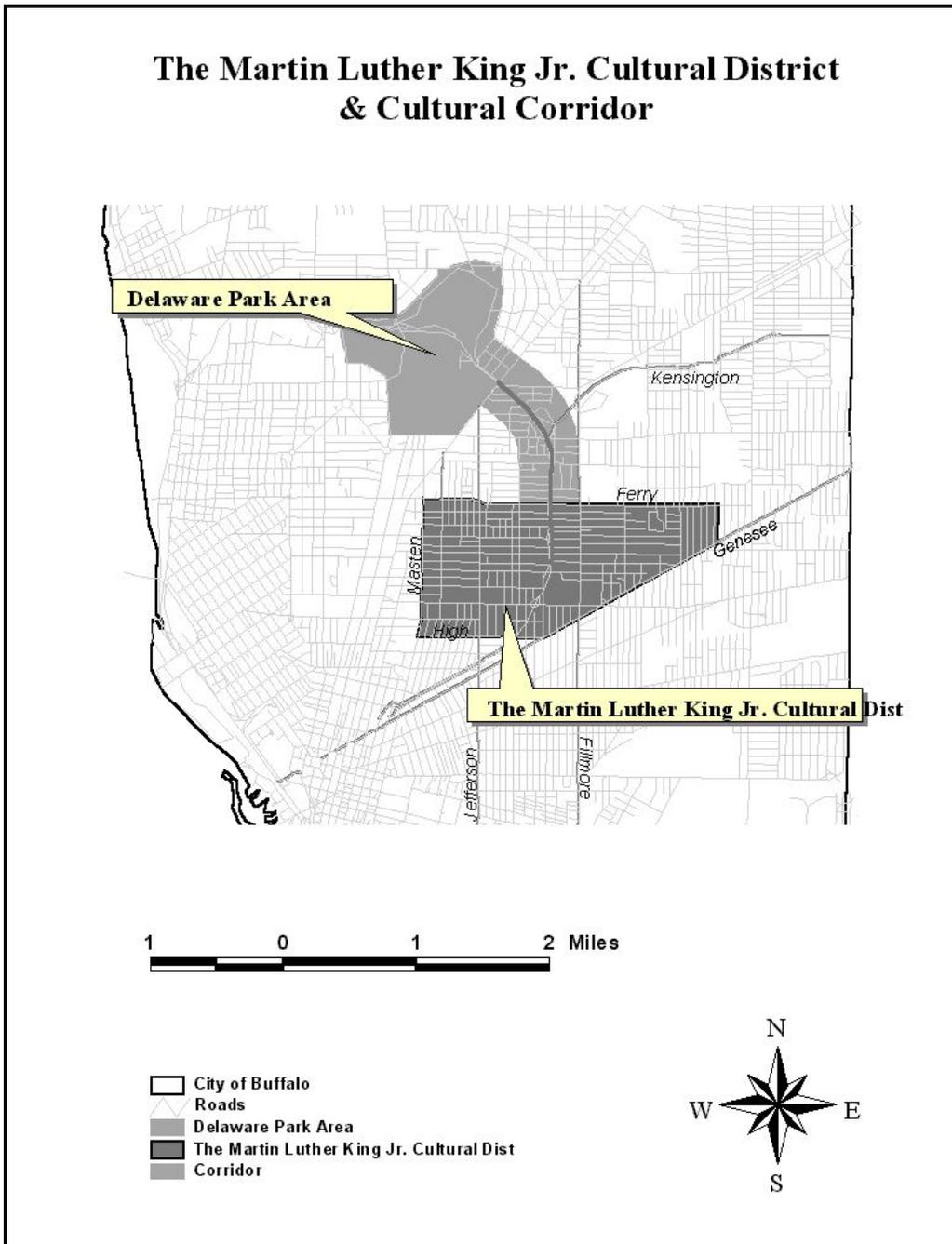
The southern boundary of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Cultural District is formed by Genesee and High Street, while Masten Street forms the western boundary. Moselle Street forms the District's eastern boundary (Figure 2: The Martin Luther King, Jr. Cultural District & Cultural Corridor).

The initiative will consist of a series of discrete projects that will unfold within the framework of a broader vision of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Cultural District and Cultural Corridor project. Extensive landscaping and infrastructure development will form the scaffolding that links together the entire area and gives it the feel of a single place. This means that urban design, landscaping, and streetscaping will be central to the development of the locale. A specific plan and financial estimate will have to be made for each project adopted in this strategic plan. Once these plans and financial projects have been made, it will be necessary to develop a comprehensive financial plan and strategy to fund the project.

2.2.2 Neighborhood Reconstruction and Development Principles

- **A comprehensive site plan will have to be developed to guide the housing and residential development plan, development of the cultural sites, and the commercial development strategy.** Neighborhoods in build-up areas must be restored on the basis of a comprehensive site plan that details all aspects of the development process. This includes the development of a detail physical plan that will serve as a blueprint for reconstructing the physical neighborhood.
- **Housing and neighborhood development will be a central component of the plan.** The cultural sites that anchor the district will work only if the neighborhoods surrounding these cultural sites are delightful and wonderful places to live and work. The idea will be to develop a cross-class, multiracial community that realizes King's dream of a society where little black, white, Asian, and Latino boys and girls walk together, holding hands. To achieve this goal it will be necessary to create housing opportunities and a neighborhood environment that is attractive to all groups.

Figure 15: The Martin Luther King, Jr. Cultural District & Cultural Corridor



- **Image replacement, extensive landscaping and streetscaping, combined with extensive infrastructure development—streets, sidewalks, and curbs—should create the framework or scaffolding for the physical restoration of the community.** The visual image of the target community is a very poor one, which is dominated by unkept vacant lots, unpainted houses, poorly maintained lawns,

and streets filled litter and debris. To make the area attractive to tourists, its dilapidated and rundown image must be changed and the place made to appear an inviting, wholesome, and exciting locale. This can happen by pursuing an aggressive strategy that involves redoing streets, sidewalks, and curbs, along with extensive landscaping and streetscaping.

- **A market creation strategy must be developed for this the MLK District.** Given the location and current housing conditions in the MLK District, a viable housing market will not emerge unless a special strategy is formulated to simulate the housing market. The strategy should include special mortgage packages and a plan that protects the equity investments in homes.
- **A Mixed Approach to Housing development should be pursued.** The housing approach should pursue a variety of housing development options, including new construction, rehabilitations, development of upscale rental properties, and programs to help low to moderate income homeowners make improvements on their properties. Pressures should be placed on absentee landlords to make substantial improvements on their properties.
- **The project should be phased.** The first phase of the project should focus on the development of the MLK District proper, while the second phase should concentrate on the development of the Mercantile Village community, which abuts the MLK District. This area contains one of the largest concentrations of businesses and industries in Buffalo and Western New York. Yet, the neighborhoods and commercial strips surrounding this area are in disrepair. It is believed that the development of the MLK District will trigger multipliers and catalytic agents that will stimulate development throughout the mercantile area. Moreover, the redevelopment knowledge acquired from reconstructing the MLK District can then be used to guide development in this adjacent part of the community.
- **Rehousing the Displaced Population.** People will be displaced in any redevelopment project, and this one is no different. However, the goal is to democratize the residential environment, not gentrify it. Democratization of the residential environments means creating good, affordable housing for everyone who lives in a community. Also, it accepts the reality of some clustering by class and race will take place within any community. So, restoration of the built environment will intensify some class segregation. However, within the framework the goal is to relocate where possible, people in the neighborhood being reconstructed. If, for whatever reason, this relocation is not possible, then the person *must* be relocated in a housing superior to the one they are displaced from. This way, the redevelopment of one neighborhood does not contribute to the housing problem in another one.

2.3 The Martin Luther King, Jr. District (MLK District)

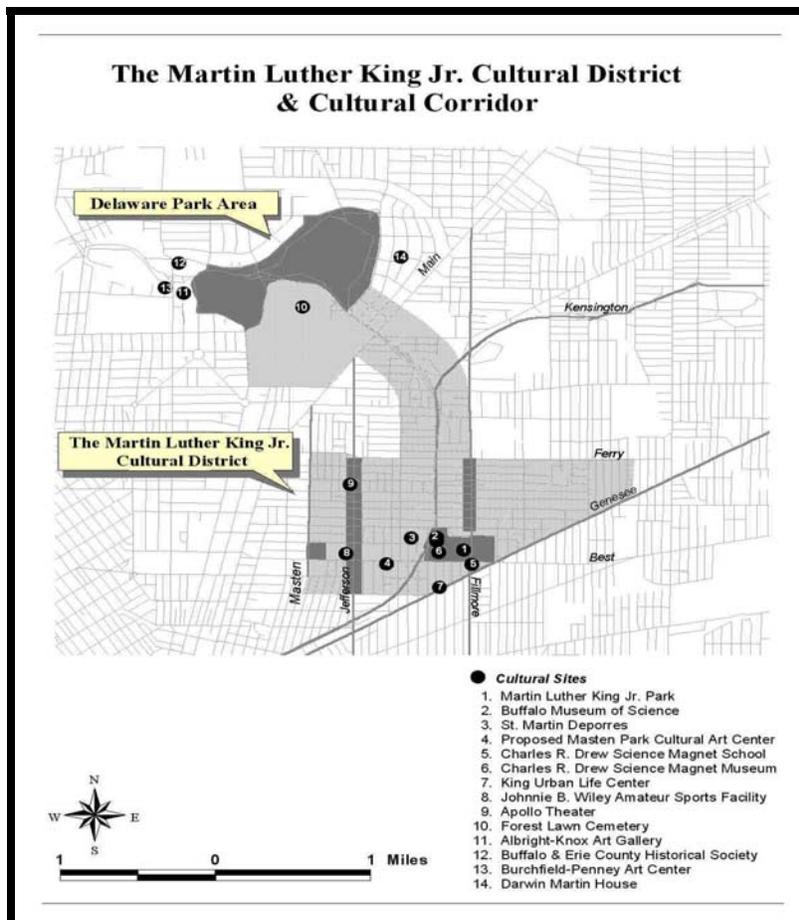
The MLK District Initiative will consist of four interrelated projects:

- **Identification and Development of Cultural Sites**
- **Housing and residential development**
- **Development of a Tourist Bubble: Safety and Security**
- **Commercial Development**

2.3.1 Identification and Development of Cultural Sites

In a broad circle, spiraling outward from the Martin Luther King, Jr. Park, are a series of forgotten and under appreciated cultural treasures. When linked together, these assets form the cultural anchor of the MLK Cultural District and the portal through which tourist will pass en route to other site in the Delaware Park area and across the city (Figure 3).

Figure 16: Sites Found in the MLK, Jr. Cultural District and Corridor



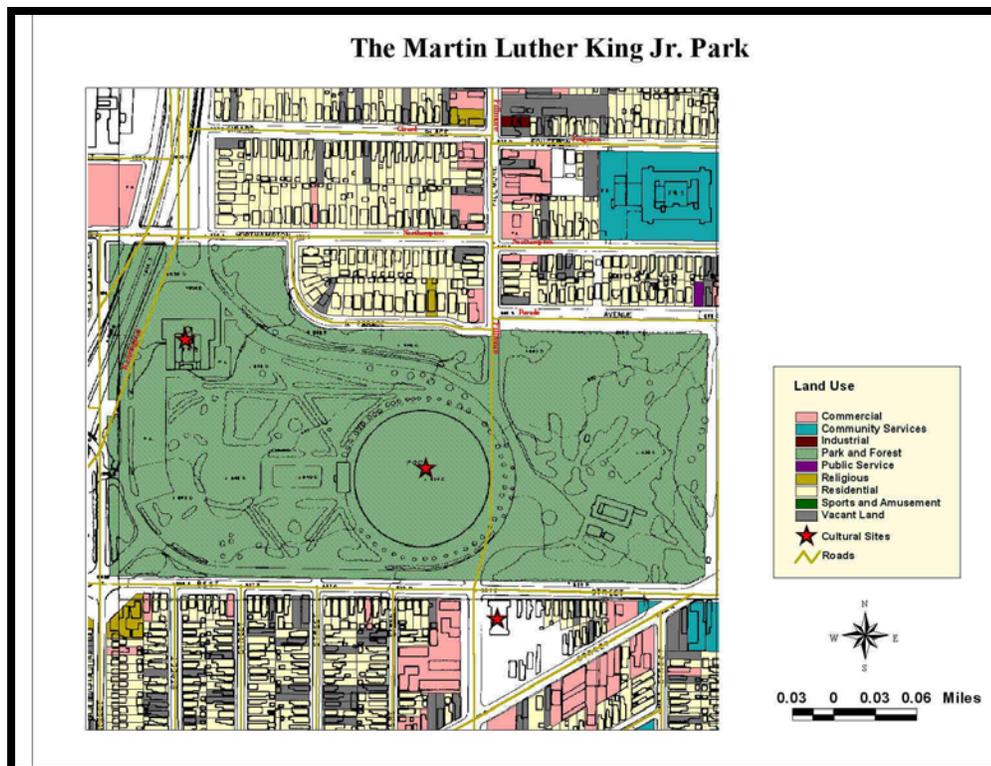
- **The Martin Luther King, Jr. Park**

The Martin Luther King, Jr. Park and the neighborhood surrounding it will be the anchor of the MLK Cultural District (Figure 3). The MLK Park was the first and most significant of Fredrick Law Olmstead’s magnificent park system and represent the foundation upon which the cultural district will be built.

The experiences of Indianapolis, Indiana provides evidence that the remaking of parks can be a powerful spur to the recreation of the surrounding neighborhoods. Operating on the assumption that “an amenity like a park can do wonders for a neighborhood,” the city set aside \$41.2 million to rescue decayed parks and use them as an engine to spur investment. The project was successful.

A reconstructed Martin Luther King, Jr. Park can serve as the focal point of the cultural district. The park contains the Buffalo Science Museum and the Charles Drew Science Magnet, and is the target of a major redevelopment project. The overall idea will be to redevelop the park, the surrounding neighborhood, and the Fillmore Avenue commercial strip, between East Ferry and Martin Luther King, Jr. Park, as a single site. Currently, a redevelopment plan for the park has been initiated and efforts are underway to develop the Fillmore Avenue Commercial strip. This piecemeal approach should be halted and a comprehensive planning approach to the area initiated.

Figure 17: Martin Luther King, Jr. Park

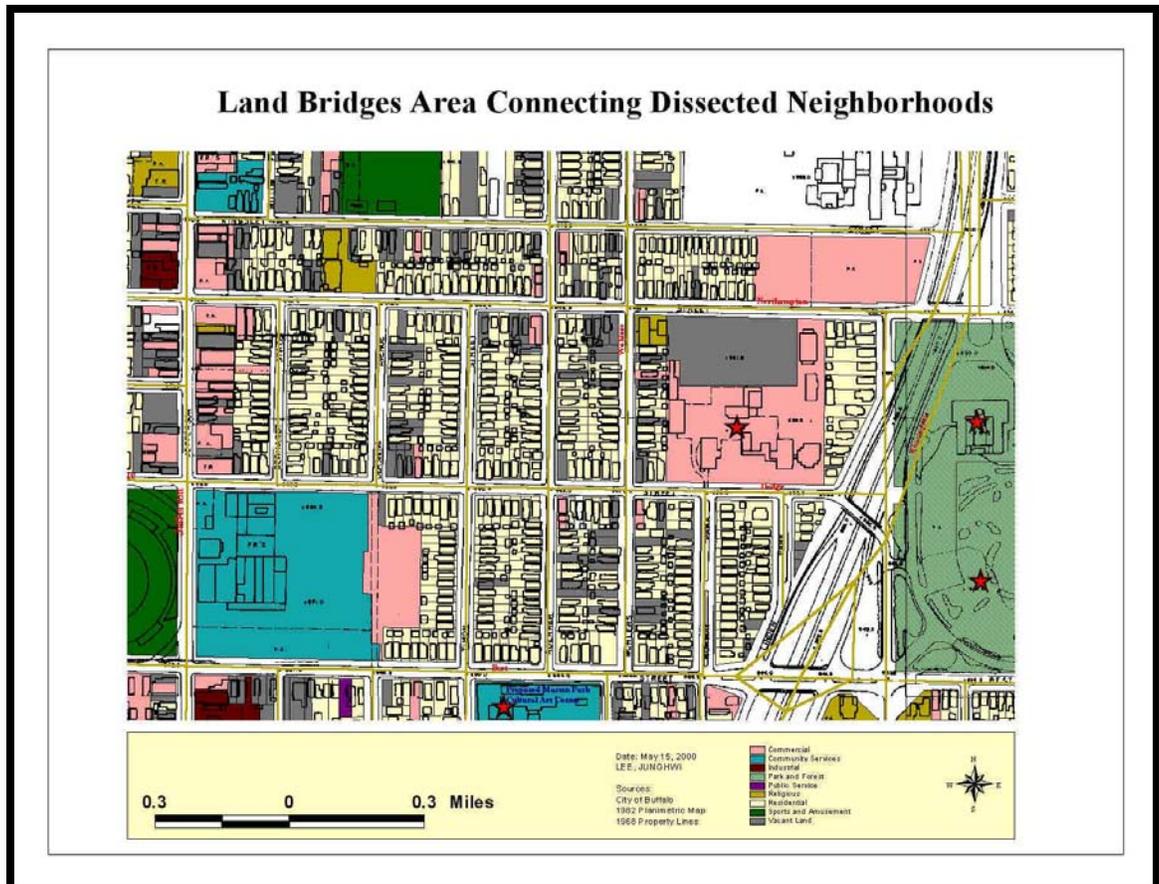


- **The Land Bridge Project**

The goal of the land bridge project is to reconnect the neighborhood surrounding the Martin Luther King, Jr. Park (Figure 4). Before construction of the Kensington Expressway, the Humboldt Park complex was one uninterrupted neighborhood that extended from East Parade to the Catholic Dioceses, between West Parade and Wohlers. The construction of the Kensington Expressway not only disrupted design of Olmsted's park, but also severed the neighborhood surrounding Martin Luther King, Jr. Park and hastened its decline.

Two potential locations for the land bridge are the area between Northampton and Dodge or between Northampton and Best. The second choice would create an opportunity that would reconnect the severed community in a very dramatic fashion, and this is the recommended location. By reconnecting the MLK, Jr. Park neighborhoods, it becomes possible to connect the development of the MLK, Jr. Park to the redevelopment of the St. Martin De Porres Church and the Old Catholic Diocese.

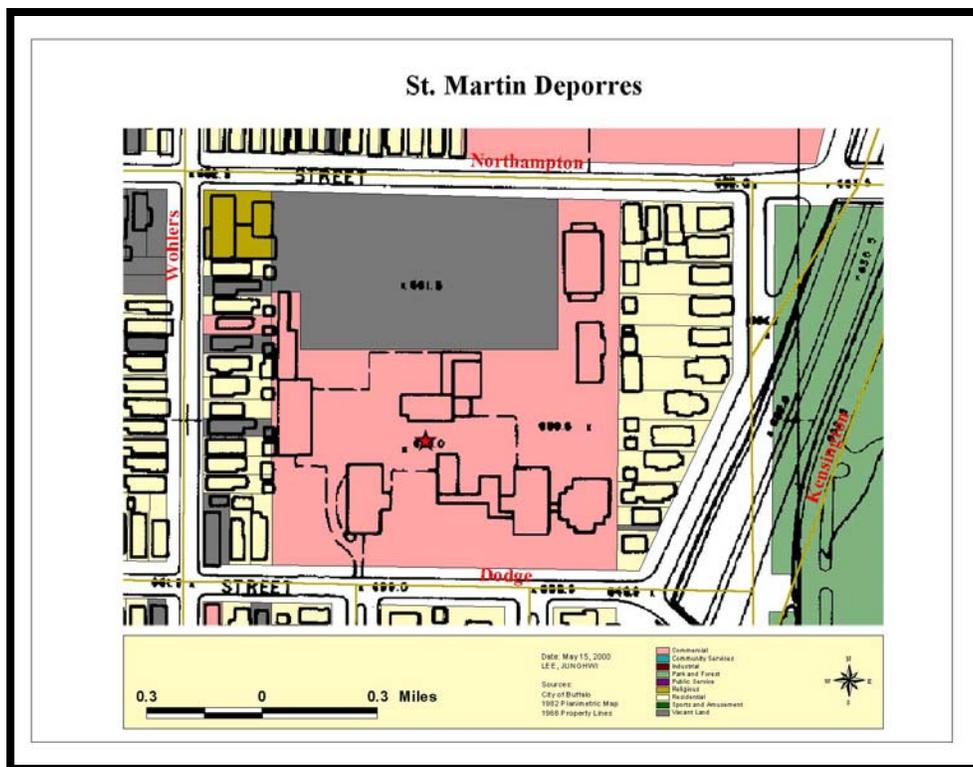
Figure 18: The Land Bridge that Reconnects the MLK Park Neighborhood



The St. Martin De Porres Church and Old Catholic Diocese Project

The campus, which contains the St. Martin De. Porres Church and the old Catholic Diocese could be transformed into a beautiful park setting (Figure 5). The site should be landscaped and flower gardens planted and park benches and setting places set up for reflective thinking and discourse. Rather than redevelop the buildings, they could be sand blasted and colorful window coverings made that depict historical aspects of life in the diocese and community. Later, as resources become available, neighborhood groups could develop the buildings for use. Lastly, a portion of the grounds should be turned into a playground for local children.

Figure 19: St. Martin DePorres and Old Catholic Diocese Site



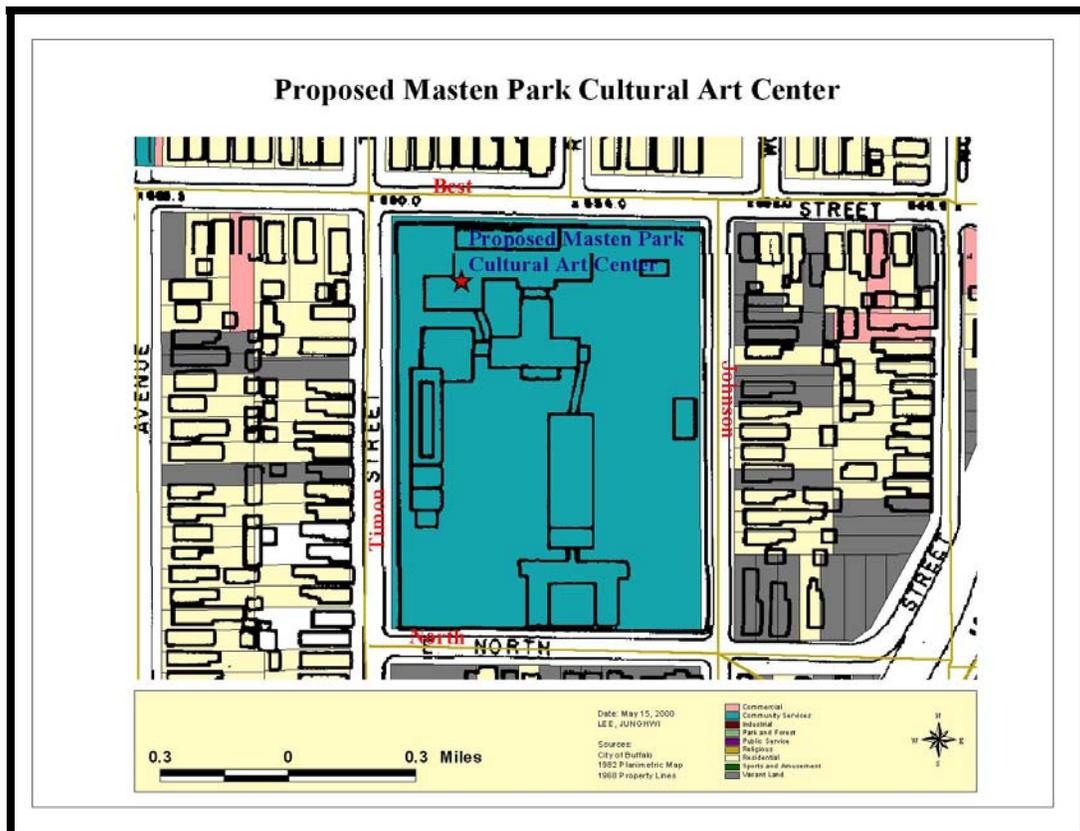
- **The Masten Park Cultural Arts Center:**

This project would transform the Masten Park Correctional facility into a cultural arts center, which would serve as the point of entry for those visiting the MLK, Jr. Cultural District. The idea will be to tear down the walls surrounding the facility and integrate the campus into the surrounding neighborhood. The buildings comprising the old correctional facility are beautiful historical structures, which could create a dramatic home for artists, craftspeople, musicians, and dancers. The idea should be explored of making the cultural center the focal point of black

theatre in the region. The driving principle will be to concentrate black art, music, and theater in this facility.

The anchor for the cultural center would be a black history and civil rights museum. The museum would chronicle the history of blacks in western New York and the state itself. Also, it would document the history of the Civil Rights Movement in New York State. Most significantly, by tearing down the walls and integrating the cultural center with the surrounding neighborhood could transform a rather ordinary local into one that is truly beautiful.

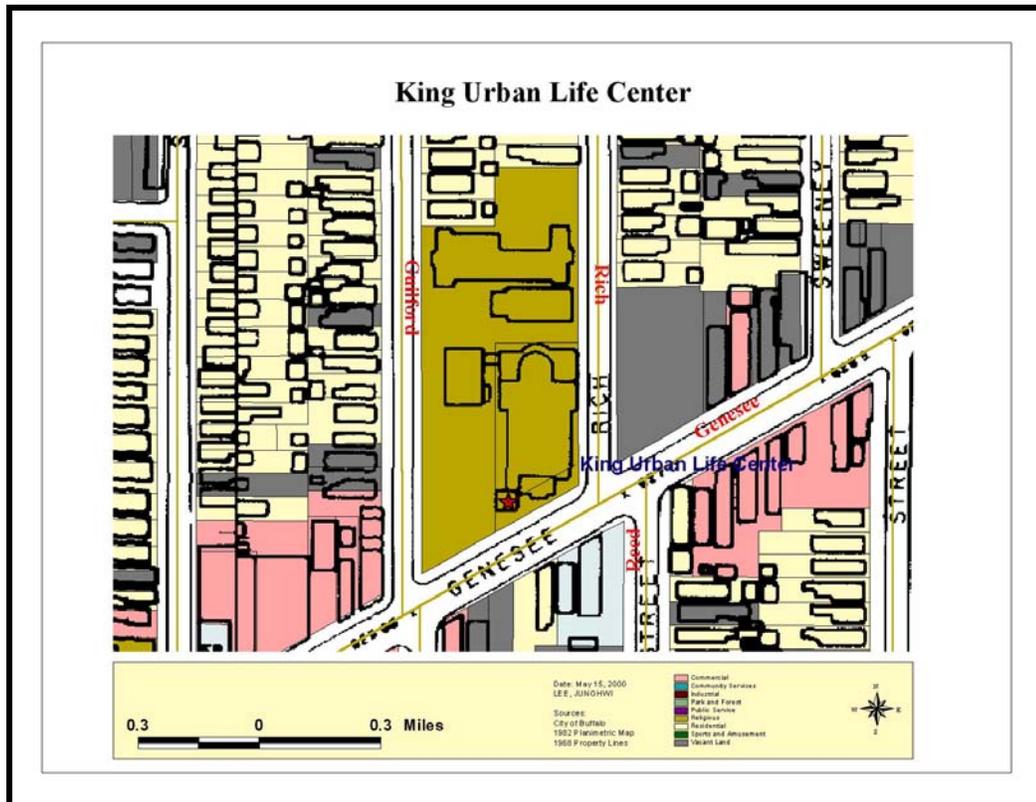
Figure 20: Proposed Masten Park Cultural Center



- **Other Cultural Facilities**

While new projects will be developed around the sites listed above, other existing sites in the community should be linked through landscaping and streetscaping to the projects outlined above. For example, the **King Urban Life Center**, located on Genesee Street, is one of the finest examples of architectural reuse in the United States (Figure 8), and it should be linked to those sites in the immediately vicinity of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Park.

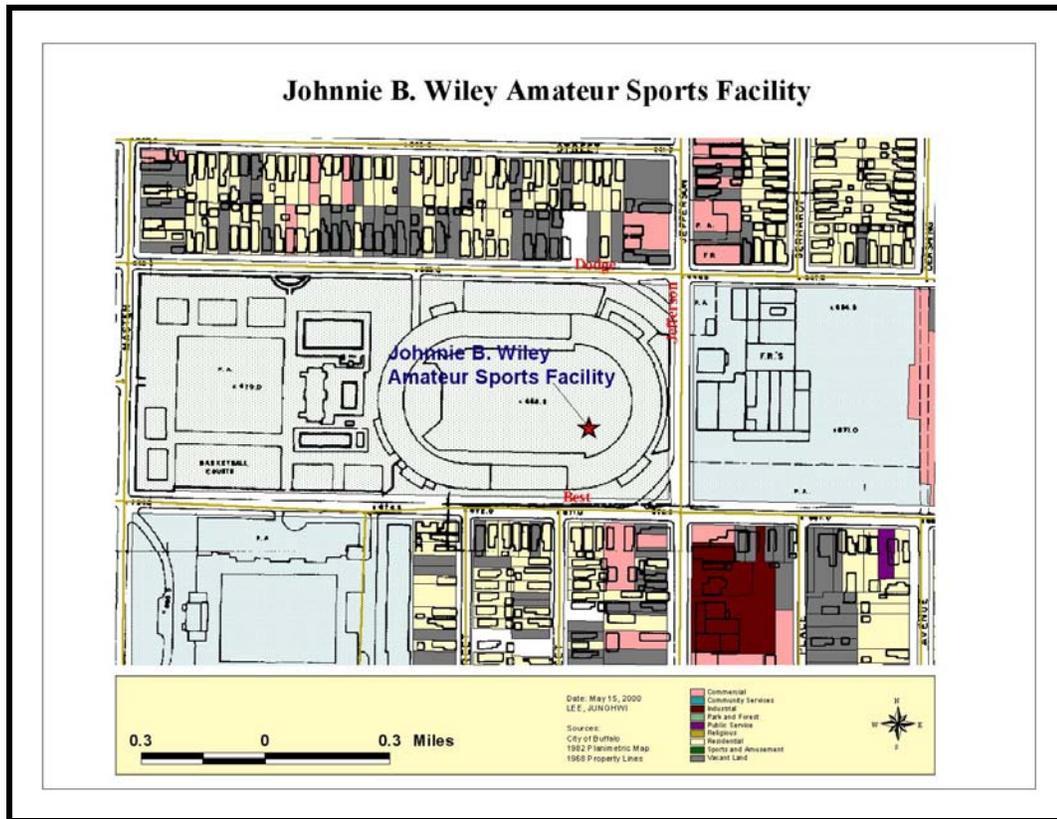
Figure 21: King Urban Life Center



As in the case of the other sites, extensive housing redevelopment, landscaping and streetscaping should take place in the locale immediately surrounding the King Urban Life Center.

Another key facility in the Martin Luther King, Jr. Cultural District is the Johnnie B. Wiley Sports stadium (Figure 9). This site is the former home of the Buffalo Bills and now a major regional sports facility and a key anchor of the Jefferson Avenue commercial district.

Figure 22: Johnnie B. Wiley Amateur Sports Facility



The Apollo Theatre, which has been transformed into a telecommunications center, is also an anchor of the Jefferson Avenue commercial district and can also be made part of a broader tourist scene. When these elements are linked together and tied to the revitalization of Fillmore and Jefferson streets, the Apollo can be a catalytic developmental force.

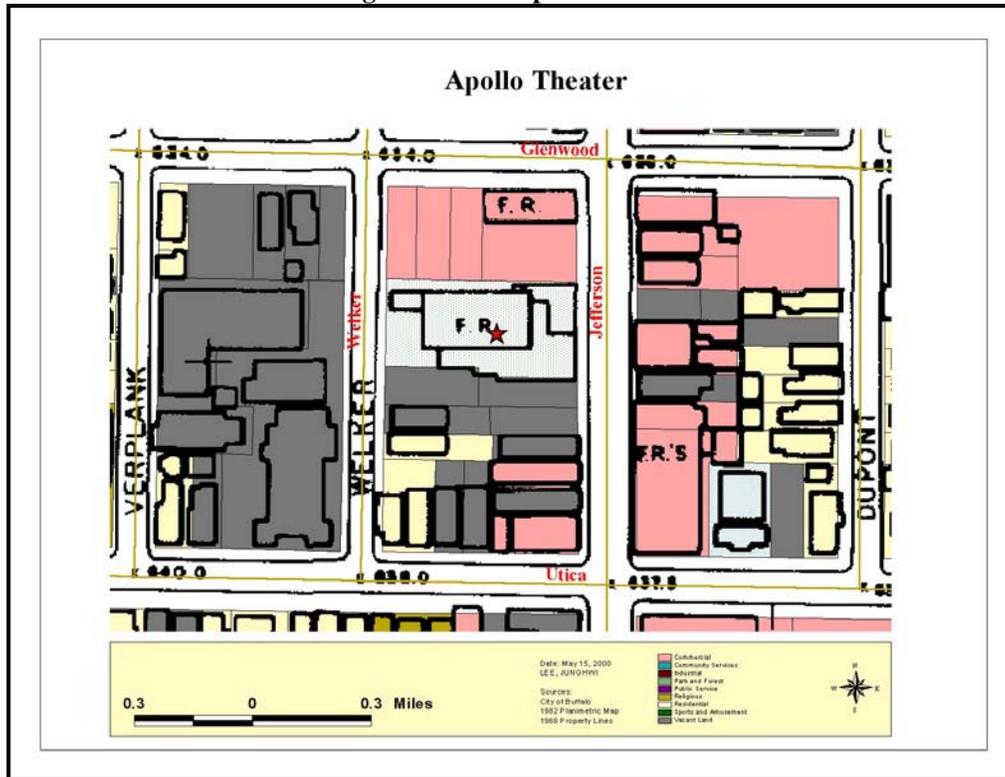
2.4 The Housing Strategy

The Masten District, similar to the City of Buffalo, has experienced dramatic change over the past thirty years, which has left an over abundance of housing stock. Without a strong market, vacant dwellings have had a negative effect on East Side neighborhoods. In most sections of the East Side, property values have declined as low-income population groups increasingly dominate neighborhoods.

A huge barrier blocking the development of the East Side is a growing view that property values will not increase over time. Consequently, investments in the area are not safe, which prevents some potential homeowners from investing in the area. In most parts of the United States, over time, rising real estate values have led to increased equities for homeowners. When equity is threatened, the chance that a homeowner will sell their property in an attempt to “get as much as they can” increases significantly. When a “break even” point is reached in a neighborhood, urban flight often occurs and the fabric

of the neighborhood dramatically changes. Against this backdrop, solving the housing problem is central to transforming the Masten District and making it a heritage tourist site and a great place to live and work.

Figure 23: The Apollo Theater



Housing conditions in Masten vary from neighborhood to neighborhood. Historically, Masten was home to higher paid workers and the middle class, and it dominated by Germans, Polish, and Italians. Germans dominated the neighborhoods around the Martin Luther King, Jr. Park, along with a sprinkling of Polish workers. Many of these homes were built prior to 1940 and need major rehabilitation. Additionally, a need exist for significant landscaping and streetscaping to accompany the renovation effort.

One result of this historical settlement pattern is the number of large, two-family structures found in the community. While many of these homes are in good condition, a large number of them still never renovation. Given the size of the Masten District and the complexity of its housing problem, an incremental strategy should be developed.

Figure 24: Houses Facing Martin Luther King, Jr. Park



Within this framework, the main area for renovation should be those neighborhoods immediately surrounding the key tourist sites, including the Fillmore Avenue, Jefferson Street commercial districts and the Best Street thoroughfare.

- ❑ Martin Luther King, Jr. Park
- ❑ King Urban Life Center
- ❑ Proposed Masten Park Cultural Park
- ❑ The St. Martin De Porres Church and Old Catholic Diocese
- ❑ Wiley Sports Stadium
- ❑ Apollo Theater

Phase one of the housing strategy would focus on housing renovation and complimentary new construction in the neighborhoods immediately surrounding these cultural sites. An extensive landscaping and streetscaping plan would be initiated to complement these activities. As seen in the photograph below, many houses in the proposed cultural corridor need extensive repair. At the same time, part of the strategy should be to bring new infill housing online that is compatible with the neighborhood's existing urban design. This means that both the setback and architectural style of the infill housing should complement the existing structures.

Figure 25: Vacant Lot and House Needing Extensive Rehabilitation



The idea of phase one of the housing strategy is to create a synergism between the development of the cultural sites and the reconstruction of the surrounding neighborhoods. Take, for example, the proposed Masten Park Cultural Park (Figure 13), will have a dramatic impact on the surrounding neighborhood. If the walls are torn down and a beautifully landscaped cultural park is extended into the surrounding neighborhood, the effect could have a dramatic impact on the visual appearance of the community.

The key to the housing strategy is to complement housing renovation and infill housing with extensive landscaping and streetscaping. Within this framework, the goal is not to landscape the cultural sites in the King Cultural District, but also to use landscaping and streetscaping to alter the visual image of the district and connect all parts of it together.

2.4.1 The Housing Market

The housing strategy has a twofold goal. The first goal is to stabilize the existing market by improving owner occupied housing units through grants and making available low-interest rate home improvement loans in the cultural district. An assessment of building permit data suggests that Masten residents currently spend several million yearly on housing repairs and renovations. This program will build on the existing efforts of residents by making more capital available to homeowners. Another goal will be to intensify homeownership in the area by making available mortgage/rehabilitation packages. Currently, Fleet bank is developing such a product, and it should be available for the Masten District by September. Within this framework, an aggressive housing renovation strategy aimed at both owner and renter occupied housing in the cultural district.

Figure 26: The Proposed Masten Park Cultural Park in Context



2.4.2 Proposed Home Equity Assurance Program

Over the past twenty-five years, municipal governments have made continuous attempts to preserve quality of life in inner cities. Various programs have been designed to combat neighborhood deterioration and to promote homeownership. However, many of these programs that continue to exist today are built around the homeowner taking on a loan to improve their property, whether rehabilitation for existing owners or purchase-rehabilitation for new homeowners. While there have been successes utilizing these types of strategies, they do not ensure that the homeowner's investment in the property will not diminish. And in fact, at times, these programs have a reverse effect of placing homeowners in a negative equity situation as the cost of rehabilitation or the after rehabilitation mortgage are nowhere near the resale value of the property a short time after the work is completed.

In these cases, individuals and families are saddled with a loan that would not be paid off in the event they wish to sell their property, thus limiting an individual's or family's mobility in the market place. In many instances, additional work is needed over time and traditional forms of credit (i.e. banks) are difficult to secure, due to existing obligations. Therefore, to secure credit, it is often necessary to do so through a "predatory" lending institution, which charges excessive interest rates and further burdens the inner-city homeowner. The question is "How can you preserve neighborhood stability, increase property values and therefore 'create equity' where there is none?" One of the most innovative programs, and to this point successful, has been the establishment of the "Home Equity Assurance Program" developed and implemented in the City of Chicago.

2.4.3 Home Equity Assurance Program in Action

The Home Equity Assurance Program (HEAP) was a result of fifteen years of grassroots efforts on the part of Chicago's citizens. Created by state statute and approved by 80% of voters in November 1988, the Northwest and Southwest programs were initiated. Boundaries were established for both of these areas that indicated whether or not a property was located in the program service area. To administer the HEAP, a Governing Commission was established, made up of nine unpaid commissioner's that are appointed by the Mayor and approved by the City Council. In Chicago, seven of the nine commissioners are appointed from a list of nominees submitted by community organizations. Five of the nine members must live in the HEAP service area.

The basic idea behind the program is by registering and paying a one-time fee of \$125.00, a homeowner is guaranteed that the value of the member's property will not fall below the fair market value established at the time he or she registers for the program. In order to be eligible for HEAP, the owner must stay in the program for five (5) years, occupy the property as their (or a family member's) principal residence during this time, and keep the property well maintained. The protection that HEAP offers to the member is if a participant decides to sell their property at some point after the five-year period and cannot sell it for the guaranteed value (at the time of registration), the program will make up 100% of the difference between the guaranteed value and the actual selling price. Property owners of one to six unit dwellings are eligible to join the HEAP. The one-time fee a member pays for participation is to cover the expense of an appraisal that establishes the guaranteed value the program insures on the sale of the property. This is the only direct cost involved.

Once a homeowner decides to join HEAP and the registration fee is received, a designated and licensed appraiser will be assigned to complete an appraisal that establishes the value for which the member property will be guaranteed. All appraisers are familiar with the service area and the property values in the community. A copy of the appraisal and a notarized certificate, indicating participation in the program, are provided to the homeowner once the appraisal is approved. There is a process for property owners who do not agreed with the appraised value. If there is disagreement, the homeowner may submit a written appeal to the Governing Commission within thirty days. If the Commission and the owner do not agree over a value within thirty days after the appeal is submitted, the process goes to arbitration, where the arbitrator's decision is binding to all parties involved.

The program is financed by an addition to the property tax levy for all existing one to six unit properties located in the service area. The maximum tax rate at which the HEAP can charge is .12% of "equalized assessed valuation". In Chicago, the equalized assessed valuation worked out to be 16% of market value. In a simple example, an owner of a property valued at \$50,000 would contribute to the program \$9.60 ($\$50,000 \times .16 \times .0012 = \9.60) each year. This amount would appear on your tax bill whether you choose to

join or not, providing a dependable source of revenue for the program. If the program is doing well, the rate of taxation can be lowered. The fund is invested in government securities, which provides a source for interest earnings on the tax revenue.

The Center for Risk Management and Insurance Research at Georgia State University completed a study of the financial condition of the HEAP in May of 1992, a little over two years after the program came into existence. The Center stated that this study presented unique challenges, as this was an untested program without a proven track record.

The summary of results indicated that even though standard methodology and assumptions did not exist due to the newness of the program, a general conclusion could be reached; the HEAP was soundly structured and financed, and that it may be over-funded. The Center also concluded that it appeared that the cost of the HEAP would be low, for several reasons:

- The program is designed to modify behavior and reduce the incentive to move, because of concerns over the condition of the neighborhood, by reducing the probability of loss.
- Everyone contributes to the program through the tax, but not everyone has to join.
- The five-year waiting period is very effective at controlling costs. (I would also say this is a very important factor at the outset, as program has this time frame to invest and increase the overall revenue pool)
- The tradition of a rising real estate market. The study indicated that property values in troubled neighborhoods usually do not decline, but are often flat or growing at a slower rate. (This works against Buffalo somewhat)
- HEAP protects against neighborhood decline relative to the rest of the area. It does not protect against a general decline in real estate values over 5% (This also works against Buffalo somewhat)
- HEAP provides a great deal of security at a very small price tag.

The Georgia State study also made several recommendations:

- Reduce or eliminate the tax levy in the near future (after only two years in existence). They concluded that excessive funding would occur at the present rate.
- If expenses could be provided out of interest income, then the program could be operated on an on-going basis with a reserve fund
- The two commissions should promote the concept elsewhere in Chicago and around the nation.

Finally, the Center listed what they view as the key elements of the HEAP:

- Coverage – HEAP is based in stable communities with a strong base of long-time homeowners. The program does not cover renters, so the occupants of insured properties have a reason to keep the property in good condition

- Financing Structure – Tax levy is paid regardless of whether the property owner chooses to participate. The amount each owner pays is not significant enough to cause a problem.
- Voluntary Participation – Depends on the willingness of the homeowner to pay for the appraisal. Homeowners who do participate have no incentive to file a claim, since no one prefers to sell their home at a loss.
- Waiting Period – Acts as a stabilization piece for the neighborhood. It lessens the likelihood of price declines, which could lead to possible claims. (The Center’s theory was based on the fact that the real estate market has shown an upward trend over time)
- Fair Asking Price – The seller must market the property in order to achieve the “fair market value”. They indicate that the program is protected against a seller “low-balling” the price. (A claim cannot be filed until after ninety days after listing the property. Evidence must be shown that the property was listed and advertised. The contract with a real estate broker and offers received must also be provided.)
- General Market Declines – Neighborhood declines are covered, but not general declines in the overall market, such as a national, regional and municipal recession or depression. A regional decline is defined as 5% in any twelve-month period.
- Investment Earnings – The HEAP fund is invested into low-risk government securities.
- Expenses – The cost of administering the program is paid through the tax revenue and interest on investment of the fund.

This study was completed in 1992. The HEAP program was only two years old at the time and no property owner had passed the five-year waiting period in order to file a claim. However, information has been obtained from the Southwest HEAP regarding program performance and its status. As of November of 1999, there were 4,200 members, with only 10 claims paid to date. The average claim paid out in the Southwest service area has been \$5,500. There is approximately \$7,000,000 in the program reserve. Interest earnings on the reserve have been able to cover the operating expenses of the HEAP. New construction is on the rise and housing demand is escalating. Economic and business investment over time is now in the hundreds of millions of dollars. Key alliances have been made with leaders in the community – banks, schools, community organizations, and realtors. Most importantly, property values are stable and have been appreciating at an annual rate between 3-8%. The Southwest HEAP has clearly had a positive impact on its neighborhood.

2.4.4 Why a Home Equity Assurance Program?

There are several reasons to believe why this type of program may be worth looking into on a pilot program basis for a targeted area of the Masten District. First of all, it promotes homeownership, a key to building a community. The HEAP is targeted as a neighborhood stabilization program designed to insure property values over a long period of time. It directly attempts to combat some of the forces that can lead to neighborhood

de-stabilization, mainly declining property values that encourage those with the means to move away, further contributing to neighborhood decline. With the peace of mind that your value is secure, homeowners may be less likely to be affected by changes in the housing market.

A second reason is that the program promotes and encourages the upkeep of properties. In order to be eligible for a claim, the property must be maintained during the time you are a member of the program. Therefore, the HEAP acts as an incentive to homeowners to keep the property in good condition, thus improving the appearance of the neighborhood and increasing the value of surrounding properties. In fact, a new guaranteed value can be established any time more than \$5,000 in improvements is made to a property. The registration amount is cut in half in this instance and a new five-year waiting period is incorporated, based on the date of the new appraisal. This acts as an incentive to continually improve your property, knowing that an investment on your part will help increase the overall value of the property.

As important, if not more important, is the psychological effect that the HEAP has on its members. A sense of stability is created in the community. Potential homeowners now can look at the neighborhood as a place to purchase, without fear of losing their investment. With property value generally lower in Buffalo vs. other parts of the region, potential homeowners may “come back to Buffalo”, knowing that they can save tens of thousands of dollars on the purchase of a property, with confidence their investment is safe. This is money that can be used towards your children’s college, money that can be invested, and wealth that can be built.

There are also advantages for those who choose not to join. Certain homeowners may not like the fact that their tax bill will increase, small as it would be, to help fund a HEAP. However, HEAP members that improve their property are contributing to an overall increase in property values, as the neighborhood’s condition gets better. Without having to join, non-members can experience the same benefits as members, only without the guaranteed value.

Another important factor is the fact that it does not involve an investment of City dollars. The program is designed in a manner in which property owners share the cost. Money saved by the City can be invested to support the pilot program neighborhood, in needed areas such as infrastructure improvement, safety issues, and commercial development to make the neighborhood attractive to potential homeowners and investors.

2.4.5 Locating the Home Equity Assurance Program

Based on the neighborhood assessment completed during field research, as well as taking the Cultural District and the location of strategic assets in the target area, a preliminary location of a Home Equity Assurance Program (HEAP) neighborhood is presented. HEAP should be initially set up in the cultural district. By correlating improvements in the cultural districts with HEAP, property values in the area can be enhanced, and the market bolstered.

The area designated for the program, according to 1990 census data, contains close to 6,000 housing units. Compared to the Chicago model (60,000 units), this would be a small HEAP area. Therefore, the program area could be expanded. More study would need to occur, taking into account the neighborhood conditions, of any area considered for the target area expansion.

- The HEAP would seem to have a positive effect on the values of the new homes that have recently been built in the community. Improvements to structures in their vicinity will help to maintain the value of the new builds.
- The structure of the program itself could be tailored to the cultural district. Examples could be:
 1. Incentives for homeowners to relocate within the HEAP target area could decrease densities elsewhere and in effect possibly offer a chance for the City to re-create or restructure entire blocks in the future.
 2. Make a landlord program as part of the program – to ensure that renter occupied units are up kept.

Does this program offer an opportunity for the Masten District to reverse neighborhood and housing decline? Possibly. Many factors would need to be taken into account – neighborhood condition, percentage of homeowner vs. renter in an area, vacancy rates, and access to services, among others. What is clear is that the reason behind the development of the HEAP addresses many of the problems the inner city has experienced over the past thirty years. It is a strategy to create incentives for middle-income people to purchase or remain in the city by insuring that the value of a home will remain stable regardless of the economic climate.

2.4.6 The Market Niche

A goal of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Cultural District is to attract residents from across the color divide to live in the community. The key to realizing this goal is to market the housing to young, upwardly mobile residents from all racial cohorts. In particular, efforts should be made to target recent college graduates and first time professional homebuyers. Additionally, the arts community should be targeted. That is, artists, writers, musicians, and those groups that identify with them should be the part of the market focus. In particular, efforts should be made to target young black and Latinos, who are upwardly mobile.

Part Three. Finance and Implementation

Determining the cost of financing the Martin Luther King, Jr. Cultural District and Cultural Corridor project is beyond the scope of this project. Nevertheless, it is possible to outline a general framework within which the quest to find resources can be made.

Each of the key site development efforts must be treated as a separate project and the cost and funding for each one mapped out by a consultant.

3.1 Finance projects

- **Martin Luther King, Jr. Park.** Efforts have already been made to map out a plan for the restoration of Martin Luther King, Jr. Park. Work on the wading pool has commenced and there are discussions about the redevelopment of the Green House and Casino. These projects need to be melded into a comprehensive plan for the park's development, which includes a strategy for redoing the neighborhoods immediately surrounding it, including those on the eastern side of Best Street. Also, as part of the plan, a strategy needs to be put in place for financing the park's maintenance and upkeep over time.
- **Land Bridge Project.** This is a high priority project and its cost and feasibility needs to be determined. The land bridge is a crucial element in the quest to reconnect the Olmstead's original community—the park, the dioceses, and Masten Park.
- **St. Martin De Porres Church and Old Catholic Diocese Project.** The financing of this project includes four elements: landscaping and maintaining the grounds; sandblasting the buildings and developing mural window covering depicting everyday life themes; developing a neighborhood playground and setting places throughout the campus; and developing a plan for maintaining the locale over time.
- **Masten Park Cultural Plaza.** This project will consist of four key elements: (1) Demolition of the walls surrounding Masten Park; (2) Renovation of the buildings, including the creation of theaters, art galleries, and office space. This work will include architectural designs to guide the restoration project; (3) extensive landscaping of the campus, which should be extended into the surrounding community, and a (4) marketing campaign to find tenants for the new facility. The marketing campaign should occur early on in the project. The idea will be to get input from potential users.
- **Housing Strategy.** The project will consist of a detailed housing survey, which not only details the conditions of each dwelling unit and classifies them into owner and renter occupancy, but also that leads to the development of a site plan. The second dimension of the plan will include the cost and feasibility of implementing the HEAP plan and will also include the development of a series of mortgage products for the community, including mortgage/renovation, rent-to-own, and grants to assist existing homeowners in the upgrading of their property. A special plan will also need to be developed for upgrading rental property in the cultural district.

- **Fillmore Avenue and Jefferson Avenue commercial district projects.** Groups are already working on these projects, and the goal should be to have them develop comprehensive plans for the rebuilding of the commercial strip and to develop a financial package that accompanies those plans.
- **Landscaping and Streetscaping.** A key to the Martin Luther King, Jr. Cultural District and Cultural Corridor project is to engage in extensive landscaping and streetscaping throughout the community and the development of a financing plan for maintaining the landscaped infrastructure.
- **Tourist Bubble.** A key to making this initiative successful is the development of a tourist bubble, which makes this one of the safest regions in metropolitan Buffalo. The development of this plan should include the creative use of Americorp volunteers, the hiring and training of local residents to help patrol the streets, and the development of neighborhood courts. A strong youth outreach effort should be made part of the program.

3.2 The Finance Approach

Based on the costs of these individual projects, an overall funding strategy should be developed. The strategy would include revenues from three sources: public, private, and community. Money from public sources should tap into sources normally used only for big economic development projects. Here, the suggestion is that tourism dollars, for example, be examined. Also, economic development dollars should be identified that will enable both Fillmore and Jefferson to reconstruct the entire commercial district and then search out tenants to occupy the renovated and newly constructed buildings. Where possible live near spaces should be constructed, so that owners or renters can have their business on the first floor and their home on the second. Private developers should be encouraged to develop projects within the plan's framework, and a major community fund raising drive should be implemented. The idea will be to use funds raised by residents to leverage both private and public sector funding.

3.3 Implementation

The implementation strategy consists of a two-pronged approach:

- The first is to secure private sector support for the project. The outcome of this effort is to develop a steering committee headed by representatives from the private sector and the community. Their goal would be twofold. The first goal will be to secure the funding necessary to start the actual development and implementation of the two key projects and to provide oversight for the entire project. Two of the most significant projects are the Masten Park Cultural Plaza and the Land Bridge. If these two projects can be jumpstarted, work on other projects will be accelerated. The second goal will be to develop an overarching implementation plan, which includes (1) neighborhood visioning to gain support among residents and a (2) scheme to involve effectively the public sector.

- Developing public sector support will go hand in hand with setting up the project steering committee. The first step in this process will be securing the support of the district council member and making the cultural district proposal part of the citywide Master Plan. The second will be gaining the full support of the coordinator of strategic planning for the City and getting community development block grant funds to fund the extensive landscaping and streetscaping.

Part Four. Action Steps

- A group should be established to oversee the project and to identify developers who would be interested in carrying out individual projects. This group would also be responsible for identifying public sector support for discrete project and for securing the resources to plan the discrete projects, including the cost of developing the infrastructure in which the projects evolve. The group would consist of representatives from the private, public, and civic sectors.
- The City of Buffalo should formally designate the area surrounding the Martin Luther King, Jr. Park as the Martin Luther King, Jr. Cultural District and the center of African American cultural arts in Western New York.
- A Civil Rights Museum should be established at the Masten Park Cultural Arts Center. This museum should depict the history of the Civil Rights Movement in Buffalo, New York and across New York State. In particular, it should document the experiences of Martin Luther King, Jr. in New York State and across the northern states. The museum should be the anchor of the Cultural Arts Center.
- The three big priority projects should be landscaping and streetscaping the locale, the Masten Park Cultural Arts Center initiative, and the land bridge initiative. The implementation of these projects will create the confidence necessary to jump-start the other initiatives.
- Extensive landscaping and streetscaping should form the infrastructure within which the redevelopment project should unfold. The public sector should take the lead in financing this phase of the project.
- Development of the Jefferson Avenue and Fillmore Avenue commercial strips should be made an integral part of the development project. Commercial strip development should be made part of the quest to develop the locale's cultural assets and promote heritage tourism.

The Executive Summary

Introduction:

The Masten District is on a downward trajectory, although a variety of initiatives have been undertaken in the community. Population is still declining, the physical environment has a foreboding look, the housing market is weak, and property values are not appreciating.

The purpose of this report is to develop a strategic plan and action agenda for the Masten District, which is based on the *turning point threshold* concept. Every neighborhood has a *turning point threshold*, which is that point where a snowballing effect takes place that transform the neighborhood when investments rise above it. The ultimate goal of this project is to outline a plan, which if successfully implemented, will push the Masten District beyond the *turning point threshold*.

The report's central theme is that culture is an economic asset that can be used to drive the community development process and that the Masten District possesses a concentration of cultural artifacts that can make the district attractive for investment, heritage tourism, and residential development.

The plan is based on linking economic and residential development in Masten to heritage tourism through the development of six projects and the Jefferson and Fillmore Avenue commercial strips. Within this framework, the idea is to engage in extensive landscaping and streetscaping throughout the target area. The project will build on the cultural assets clustered near the Martin Luther King, Jr. Park and will be call for the establishment of a Martin Luther King, Jr. Cultural District and a Cultural Corridor that will tie the district to the cultural treasures in the Delaware Park area.

Part One: Location and Development Trends

Location:

Situated on the eastern side of the City, the Masten District is strategically located near the center of Buffalo (Figure 1). The Kensington Expressway and the Humbolt/Scajaquada Expressway provides easy access from Masten to other parts of the City and region. Best Street, Landon, Laurel, and Genesee form the District's southern boundary. Main Street is the District's western boundary, while the Conrail tracks form the eastern border. The Masten District falls wholly within ten census tracts and partially in two: 32.01, 32.02 (partial), 33.01, 33.02 (partial), 34.00, 35.00, 36.00, 39.01, 39.02, 40.01, 40.02, and 52.02. The Masten District is strategically located in the center of the city and its development can have a significant impact on halting the downward slide of the inner city and the entire central city.

Development Trends:

Although the Masten District contains a host of wealth producing industries and cultural assets, it is still on a downward trajectory. An examination of the trends shaping Masten's development will give insight into what must be done to reverse the trend and push the community past the *turning point threshold*.

Residential Development. The population composition of the resident community has been well documented, and this story will not be retold in this report. Rather, a few summary statements will be made, and the neighborhood's trajectory discussed. Overall, residential development in Masten is on a downward trajectory, despite the presence of some strong neighborhoods like Hamlin Park. This story of decline is revealed by the City's Neighborhood Condition Index (NCI). The NCI examines several variables to determine the socioeconomic health of a community (residential assessment housing burden, unemployment, single-parent households, vacancy rates, presence of renters, and poverty). The NCI rates five of the Masten District neighborhoods as poor and three as fair. So, although millions have been spent in the Masten District, conditions in the neighborhood have not improved significantly.

The boundaries of the Masten District have been continuously changing, which make studying population trends in that community difficult. Nevertheless, Masten has been losing population over time and that trend continued during the 1990s. The general black population movement is north toward Amherst and east toward Cheektowaga. Moreover, a growing number of blacks are moving into the western part of the city. Unless, there is a successful intervention strategy, Masten will continue to lose population and the downward trajectory will persist.

- **Trickle-Down Economic Development.** Trickle-down economics has not worked in the Masten District. Although numerous wealth producing institutions are found in the district, they have not provided many jobs and opportunities for the people living there, nor have they spawned other forms of development that have led to improved conditions in the community. This means the simple location of businesses and industry in the district will not lead automatically to jobs and opportunities for the people living there.
- **Piecemeal, Project-Orientated Development.** Many excellent initiatives have been implemented in the Masten District, but they not been planned in a way that leads to synergistic development. For example, on Jefferson Avenue a number of important capital projects have been undertaken, including the Wiley Sports Stadium and the Apollo Theater. These have been site-based projects, which were implemented without any plans or strategies for using the project to extend development to the surrounding area.

Part 2. The Strategic Plan: The Martin Luther King, Jr. Cultural District & Cultural Corridor Project

This strategic plan and action agenda is based on a belief that the cultural assets surrounding Martin Luther King, Jr. Park can be turned into an economic engine that drives the district's development and that will make its neighborhoods competitive with other locations in Buffalo and Erie County as a residential choice. Tourism is a huge industry and many who vacation are desirous of experiencing a community's indigenous heritage.

Against this backdrop, the strategic plan calls for the establishment of a Martin Luther King, Jr. Cultural District (MLK Cultural District). The district's southern boundary is formed by Genesee and High Street, while Masten Street forms the western boundary. Moselle Street forms the District's eastern boundary (Figure 2: The Martin Luther King, Jr. Cultural District & Cultural Corridor).

The initiative will consist of a series of discrete projects that will unfold within the framework of a broader vision of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Cultural District and Cultural Corridor project. Extensive landscaping and infrastructure development will form the scaffolding that links together the entire area and gives it the feel of a single place. This means that urban design, landscaping, and streetscaping will be central to the development of the locale. Additionally, a neighborhood and residential development strategy will be implemented to complete the process of framing the cultural assets. The following seven principles:

- **A comprehensive site plan will have to be developed to guide the housing and residential development plan, development of the cultural sites, and the commercial development strategy.**
- **Housing and neighborhood development will be a central component of the plan.**
- **Image replacement, extensive landscaping and streetscaping, combined with extensive infrastructure development—streets, sidewalks, and curbs—should create the framework or scaffolding for the physical restoration of the community.**
- **A market creation strategy must be developed for this the MLK District.**
- **A Mixed Approach to Housing development should be pursued.**
- **The project should be phased.**
- **Rehousing the Displaced Population.**

1.0 The Martin Luther King, Jr. Cultural District and Cultural Corridor Initiative

Central to the development of the Martin Luther King Cultural District will be the development of four cultural sites, along with the creation of linkages to the King Urban Life Center, the Johnnie B. Wiley Sports Stadium, and the Apollo Theater. Another key component of the project will be the development of the Jefferson and Fillmore Avenue commercial strips. The idea will be to keep visitors to the cultural sites in the cultural district as long as possible. To do this, there must be places to shop and eat concentrated on the cultural district's two main commercial districts.

- **The Cultural Sites**

1. **The Martin Luther King, Jr. Park:** The Martin Luther King, Jr. Park and the neighborhood surrounding it will be the anchor of the MLK Cultural District (Figure 3). The MLK Park was the first and most significant of Frederick Law Olmstead's magnificent park system and represent the foundation upon which the cultural district will be built. A reconstructed Martin Luther King, Jr. Park can serve as the focal point of the cultural district. The park contains the Buffalo Science Museum and the Charles Drew Science Magnet, and is the target of a major redevelopment project. The overall idea will be to redevelop the park, the surrounding neighborhood, and the Fillmore Avenue commercial strip, between East Ferry and Martin Luther King, Jr. Park, as a single site.
2. **The Land Bridge Project:** The goal of the land bridge project is to reconnect the neighborhood surrounding the Martin Luther King, Jr. Park. By reconnecting the MLK, Jr. Park neighborhoods, it becomes possible to connect the development of the MLK, Jr. Park to the redevelopment of the St. Martin De Porres Church and the Old Catholic Diocese.
3. **The St. Martin De Porres Church and Old Catholic Diocese Project:** The campus, which contains the St. Martin De. Porres Church and the old Catholic Diocese could be transformed into a beautiful park setting. The site should be landscaped and flower gardens planted and park benches and setting places set up for reflective thinking and discourse.
4. **The Masten Park Cultural Arts Center:** This project would transform the Masten Park Correctional facility into a cultural arts center, which would serve as the point of entry for those visiting the MLK, Jr. Cultural District. The idea will be to tear down the walls surrounding the facility and integrate the campus into the surrounding neighborhood. The buildings comprising the old correctional facility are beautiful historical structures, which could create a dramatic home for artists, craftspeople, musicians, and dancers. The site would also include the Civil Rights Museum.

5. **Other Cultural Facilities:** While new projects will be developed around the sites listed above, other existing sites in the community should be linked through landscaping and streetscaping to the projects outlined above. For example, the **King Urban Life Center**, located on Genesee Street, is one of the finest examples of architectural reuse in the United States, and it should be linked to those sites in the immediately vicinity of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Park.
6. **The Heritage Trail:** To link the MLK Cultural District to the cultural treasures of the Delaware Park area, a heritage trail will be established that will guide visitors to a tourist sites scattered between Martin Luther King, Jr. Park and the sites in the Delaware Park area.

2.0 The Housing and Residential Development Strategy:

Masten has a very serious housing project. More than 20 years ago, Professor Alfred Price detailed the severity of the problem in a seminar study of housing in Masten. The recommendations made by Price were not implemented. Consequently, conditions have worsened over time, despite the construction of some new housing. The main focus of the strategy is to improve significantly housing conditions in those neighborhoods immediately surrounding the cultural sites. Extensive landscaping and streetscaping will be carried out to make the areas beautiful and to link various cultural sites to each other. The strategy will be built around three ideas.

- Housing renovation and complimentary new constructions will be carried out in those neighborhoods surrounding the cultural sites. Extensive landscaping and streetscaping will be done.
- To create a market for the King Cultural District, a Home Equity Assistance program is proposed. To protect the equity investment of people and to keep home ownership from becoming a debt burden to residents, a program will be established that guarantees equity for those individuals buying housing in the locale.
- Fleet bank is working on the development of a mortgage package that folds the rehabilitation of properties into the mortgage package. Such a package would strengthen the housing market by solving the problem of the cost of renovating housing.

3.0 Tourist Bubble. A key to making this initiative successful is the development of a tourist bubble, which makes this one of the safest regions in metropolitan Buffalo. The development of this plan should include the creative use of Americorp volunteers, the hiring and training of local residents to help patrol the streets, and the development of neighborhood courts. A strong youth outreach effort should be made part of the program.

4.0 Commercial Strip Development. The commercial strips serve as the anchor of the cultural district, and the development of Jefferson and Fillmore avenues are important for turning the cultural district into an economic success. The idea is to get people to stay in the district for an extended period. The availability of shopping and eating establishments along the two strips will be critical to achieving this objective.

5.0 Part Three: Finance and Implementation

1.0 Finance. Determining the cost of financing the Martin Luther King, Jr. Cultural District and Cultural Corridor project is beyond the scope of this project. Nevertheless, it is possible to outline a general framework within which the quest to find resources can be made. Each of the key site development efforts must be treated as a separate project and the cost and funding for each one mapped out by a consultant.

Based on the costs of these individual projects, an overall funding strategy should be developed. The strategy would include revenues from three sources: public, private, and community. Money from public sources should tap into sources normally used only for big economic development projects. Here, the suggestion is that tourism dollars, for example, be examined. Also, economic development dollars should be identified that will enable both Fillmore and Jefferson to reconstruct the entire commercial district and then search out tenants to occupy the renovated and newly constructed buildings. Where possible live near spaces should be constructed, so that owners or renters can have their business on the first floor and their home on the second. Private developers should be encouraged to develop projects within the plan's framework, and a major community fund raising drive should be implemented. The idea will be to use funds raised by residents to leverage both private and public sector funding.

2.0 Implementation

- The first is to secure private sector support for the project. The outcome of this effort is to develop a steering committee headed by representatives from the private sector and the community. Their goal would be twofold. The first goal will be to secure the funding necessary to start the actual development and implementation of the two key projects and to provide oversight for the entire project. Two of the most significant projects are the Masten Park Cultural Plaza and the Land Bridge. If these two projects can be jumpstarted, work on other projects will be accelerated. The second goal will be to develop an overarching

implementation plan, which includes (1) neighborhood visioning to gain support among residents and a (2) scheme to involve effectively the public sector.

- Developing public sector support will go hand in hand with setting up the project steering committee. The first step in this process will be securing the support of the district council member and making the cultural district proposal part of the citywide Master Plan. The second will be gaining the full support of the coordinator of strategic planning for the City and getting community development block grant funds to fund the extensive landscaping and streetscaping.

6.0 Part Four: Action Steps

1. A group consisting of representatives from the private enterprise, government, and the neighborhood should be established to oversee the initiative and to identify developers who would be interested in carrying out each of the individual projects. This group would also be responsible for identifying public sector support for discrete project and for securing the resources to plan the discrete projects, including the cost of developing the infrastructure in which the projects evolve.
2. The City of Buffalo should formally designate the area surrounding the Martin Luther King, Jr. Park as the Martin Luther King, Jr. Cultural District and the center of African American cultural arts in Western New York.
3. A Civil Rights Museum should be established at the Masten Park Cultural Arts Center. This museum should depict the history of the Civil Rights Movement in Buffalo, New York and across New York State. In particular, it should document the experiences of Martin Luther King, Jr. in New York State and across the northern states. The museum should be the anchor of the Cultural Arts Center.
4. The three big priority projects should be landscaping and streetscaping the locale, the Masten Park Cultural Arts Center initiative, and the land bridge initiative. The implementation of these projects will create the confidence necessary to jump-start the other initiatives.
5. Extensive landscaping and streetscaping should form the infrastructure within which the redevelopment project should unfold. The public sector should take the lead in financing this phase of the project.
6. Development of the Jefferson Avenue and Fillmore Avenue commercial strips should be made an integral part of the development project. Commercial strip development should be made part of the quest to develop the locale's cultural assets and promote heritage tourism.

The Martin Luther King, Jr. Cultural District and Cultural Corridor: A Strategic Plan and Action Agenda for the Masten Councilmanic District

Introduction

To revitalize inner city neighborhoods, investments in those communities must rise above a *turning point threshold*. If they do not, conditions of life in them will not change significantly. The traditional approach to neighborhood development typically consist of making a series of rather modest investments, such as building in-fill dwellings, repairing potholes, rehabilitating old houses, and engaging in some commercial development activities. Yet, these modest levels of investment are not sufficient to transform radically a neighborhood's physical and social environment.

Research by the Center for Urban Studies suggest that modest investments, and the modest neighborhood improvements that stem from them, will achieve little. Rather, to obtain a turning point in the development of inner city neighborhoods, the levels of public and private investment must rise above a certain threshold: *the turning point threshold*. Beyond this point, the investments will trigger a set of multipliers and catalytic agents that will spawn the neighborhood's radical transformation.

To move beyond a *turning point thresholds*, neighborhood investments must be informed by a strategic plan that embody four interactive factors:

- **The creation of a synergism among existing neighborhood projects.** Every community must be reconstructed around a theme that not only links together discrete neighborhood projects, but also creates a synergism among them.
- **The development of linkage among neighborhood development, central city, and regional economic development.** The idea is to find innovative ways to connect neighborhood community development to the development of the entire city and region.
- **The creation of bridges between the development of the resident community and the big economic institutions located in the community.**
- **The creation of linkages among all phases of development in the community.**

The purpose of this project is to develop a strategic plan and action agenda for the Masten Councilmanic District that is informed by these four elements. Masten has been the site of extensive planning and analysis over the years, and also it has been the site of substantial investments. Yet, the sum of these efforts has been less than the whole. Efforts to redevelop Masten have not led to the emergence of turning point scenarios.

The purpose of this report is to present a *turning point scenario* for the Masten District. The report will not attempt a detail cost analysis of the redevelopment project. Instead, it will formulate the approach to be taken in redeveloping the Masten District. Also, it specifies the projects required to transform radically the community. Each project, it should be stressed, must be developed fully and a financial plan to fund it outlined. Such work is beyond the scope of this planning study.

The Report will be divided into four parts. The first part will outline the context and developmental trends, while the second part will detail the strategic plan and action agenda. Part three will discuss financing the project, while part four will present the recommendations and implementation plan.

Part One. Location and Development Trends

1.1 The Location

Situated on the eastern side of the City, the Masten District is strategically located near the center of Buffalo (Figure 1). The Kensington Expressway and the Humbolt/Scajaquada Expressway provides easy access from Masten to other parts of the City and region. Best Street, Landon, Laurel, and Genesee form the District's southern boundary. Main Street is the District's western boundary, while the Conrail tracks form the eastern border. The Masten District falls wholly within ten census tracts and partially in two: 32.01, 32.02 (partial), 33.01, 33.02 (partial), 34.00, 35.00, 36.00, 39.01, 39.02, 40.01, 40.02, and 52.02.

Two locational aspects of the Masten District stand out. First, a significant portion of the District fronts the Main Street Corridor. Main Street, as the name implies, is the most important thoroughfare in Buffalo. Thus, the visual image projected on the Masten side of the street not only conveys a picture of everyday life in the District, but also in the City. Second, the Humboldt Parkway links the Masten District to the cultural treasures of the Delaware Park area.

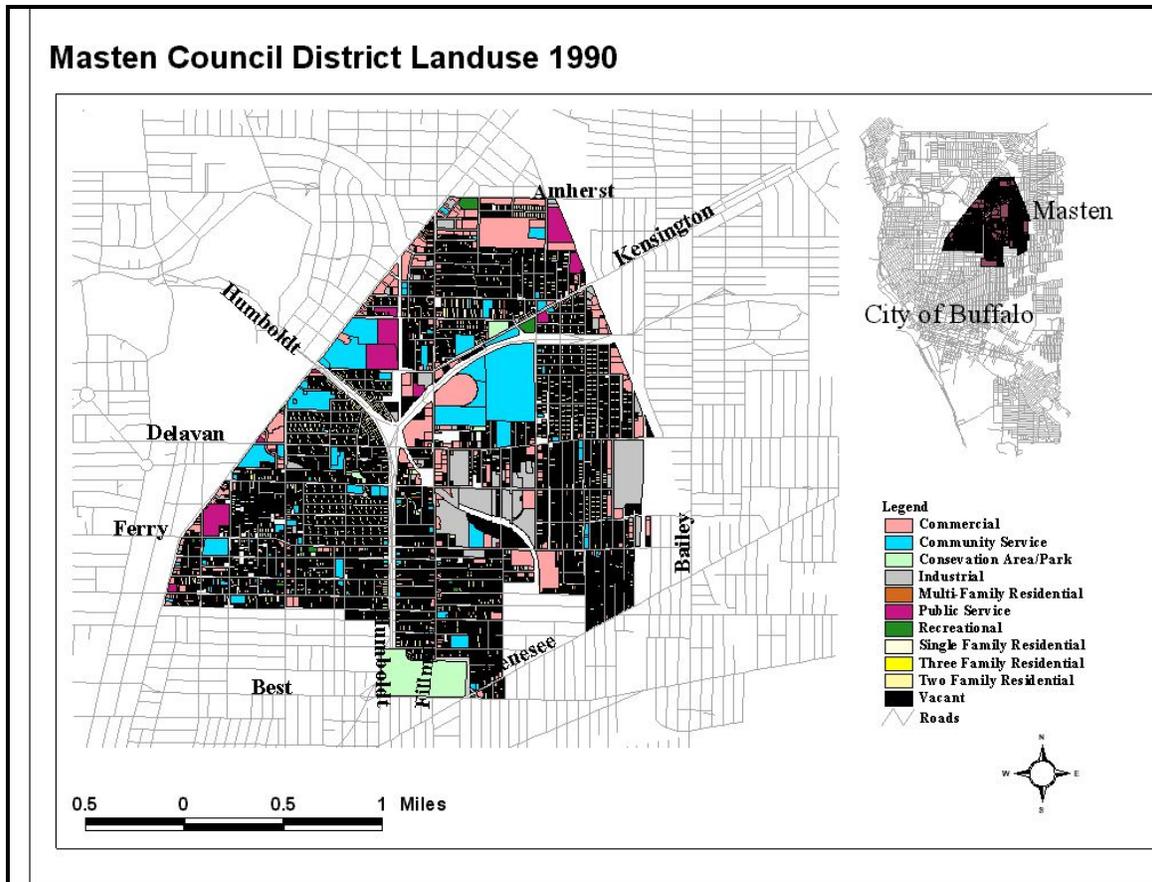
1.2 The Site

The Masten District has a very complex land use and residential structure. The Humboldt Parkway and the Kensington Expressway divides the area into three parts. The western quadrant consists of Masten Park, Kingsley, Cold Springs and Hamlin Park. The eastern quadrant consists of Martin Luther King, Jr. Park, Genesee-Moselle, and Grider neighborhoods, while the northern quadrant is home to Leroy. The building of these roadways through the Masten District has fractured the community and complicated the redevelopment process.

Masten is composed both of a resident community and a wealth-producing community. The wealth-producing community consists of businesses, industries, and big public institutions like Canisius College and the Erie County Medical Center. For example, concentrated in the District's eastern quadrant, there are 42 businesses, industries, and big

public institutions that employ 20 or more employees. In all, these wealth producing industries, including Erie County Medical Center, American Axle & Manufacturing, Harmac Industries, Truly Magic Products, Inc., Pine Hill Concrete Mix Corporation, Hard Manufacturing, Public School 84, and University Radiologists, employ from 7,000 to 10,000 workers. Canisius College and Blue Cross/Blue Shield anchor the western quadrant, while Sisters Hospital and the Tri-Main Center the northern quadrant and also employ thousands of workers.

Figure 1: The Masten Council District



The Masten District is constructed around four major commercial districts: Fillmore Avenue, Jefferson Street, Delavan Avenue, and Kensington Avenue. Although Kensington is no longer a prime location for business, it remains a much-traveled old commercial strip that shapes the District’s image. East Utica, East Ferry, and Genesee Street are also old commercial strips, which are now major thoroughways that also paint a picture of Masten.

A summary of site characteristics in the Masten District reveals three things: (1) No other section of Buffalo has such a rich array of businesses, industries, and big public institutions as the Masten District. (2) The size of Masten combined with the complexity of its land use structure and the age of its housing stock, means radically reconstructing it

will be a difficult and costly affair. (3) A way must be found to link together the development of the resident and the wealth producing communities.

1.3 Developmental Trends

Masten is being shaped by the interplay of several developmental trends. Understanding these trends and how they are shaping the development of this community is key to formulating a strategy to guide successfully its development.

1.3.1 Residential Development. The population composition of the resident community has been well documented, and this story will not be retold in this report. Rather, a few summary statements will be made, and the neighborhood's trajectory will be discussed. Masten is a large, predominantly black community with a 1990 population of about 38,000. The average age is 35 years, which is slightly older than most of Black Buffalo. Compared to other black neighborhoods, Masten is somewhat affluent. Among those workers 25 years and over, 53% have completed high school and 33% have had some college. The average household income is \$20,704, which is slightly higher than the citywide median.

Yet, despite this apparent strength, serious problems exist in the community. About 33% of the population live below the poverty line, less than 40% own their homes, and the average value of housing is only \$34,713. Property values in Masten are not very strong, and the District's population has been declining over the years.

Blacks are moving out of Masten into the University District and into neighborhoods on the western side of Main Street and to the east, in neighborhoods adjacent to Cheektowaga. This trend is expected to continue throughout the decade. Most of those leaving are believed to be higher income groups, searching for improved housing conditions. Over time, then, Masten is expected to continue to lose population and become increasingly poor.

This process of decline could be hastened by the development of the Hozo Zone and the reconstruction of the Fruitbelt neighborhood. New housing developments and improved conditions in the University District could also lure Masten residents. Some new housing construction is taking place in the district, and the Bethel AME church is leading a major redevelopment effort in Cold Springs. These events, however, may not be enough to offset the outmigration.

Overall, residential development in Masten is on a downward trajectory, despite the presence of some strong neighborhoods like Hamlin Park. This story of decline is revealed by the City's Neighborhood Condition Index (NCI). The NCI examines several variables to determine the socioeconomic health of a community (residential assessment, housing burden, unemployment, single-parent households, vacancy rates, presence of renters, and poverty). The NCI rates five of the Masten District neighborhoods as poor and three as fair. So, although millions have been spent in the Masten District, conditions in the neighborhood have not improved significantly.

1.3.2 Trickle-Down Economic Development. Public and private investments in Masten are based on the assumption that the development of wealth producing industries will lead to jobs and opportunities for neighborhood residents. This has not happened. For example, in the District's western Quadrant, there are about 41 businesses that employ 20 or more workers. Two companies in this area, Erie County Medical Center and American Axel, alone, employ 5000 workers. Yet, most of the workers in these two companies probably live in the suburbs and about 80% of the wages earned in this neighborhood probably go to these suburbanites. Not only this, but the East Delavan commercial strip, which is sandwiched between Erie County Medical Center and American Axel, has not been positively impacted by its strategic location. Few, if any, of the workers at these two institutions shop on the Delavan strip. Trickle-down economic development has not worked in the Masten District.

1.3.3 Piecemeal, Project-Orientated Development. A number of successful projects have been developed in the Masten District: Apollo Theater, Mt. Olive Baptist Church, Charles Drew Science Magnet, Tri-Main Center, C District Police Station, Gaiter Parkway and the Gaiter Parkway Business Incubator. Moreover, in 1997, then council member Byron Brown released his "Masten District Improvement Plan" that outlined a planning framework within which the development of the Masten District could unfold. The year before, the City of Buffalo Department of Planning released its East Delavan Community Master Plan, which outlined a comprehensive strategy for improving the neighborhoods in the western quadrant. Yet, despite the existence of two major planning documents, the project-orientated approach to development was not broken.

Within this framework, a variety of initiatives are being undertaken in the District. For example, Bethel AME Church and Restoration 78 are leading an effort to redevelop the Cold Springs neighborhood. Hamlin Park has been declared a historic district and energetic residents are working hard to sustain and further develop that community. Efforts are underway to renovate Martin Luther King, Jr. Park, Fillmore and Jefferson Avenue. These efforts, notwithstanding, the project approach to development is still dominant. For example, even though The Wiley Sports Stadium, Makowski School, a new fire station, Apollo Theater, 1490 Jefferson have been developed on Jefferson Avenue, along with new streets and sidewalks, the overall image of the strip has still not be changed. Along conditions on Jefferson have improved, it still has a foreboding, declining appearance.

Part Two. The Strategic Plan: The Martin Luther King, Jr. Cultural District & Cultural Corridor Project

The goal of this strategic plan is to identify a community development project that links together various initiatives in the District and that builds on Masten's unique assets. Considerable assets are found in the Masten District: County Medical Center, Canisius College, Sisters Hospital, American Axel, Blue Cross/Blue Shield, and Tri-Main Center. Also, a plethora of strong community-based organizations are found in the community, along with strong leadership and a rich cultural tradition. Masten should be thriving, but

it is not. The big question is how do we blend these assets together and develop a project that can generate the investments necessary to push community development beyond *the turning point threshold*.

This is where the Martin Luther King, Jr. Cultural District and Cultural Corridor comes in. Several cultural facilities and places are clustered around the Martin Luther King, Jr. Park, with the potential to become major tourist attractions, if the neighborhood containing them is radically reconstructed.

2.1 The Tourist Market and the MLK Cultural District & Cultural Corridor

2.1.1 The Tourist Market

The travel and tourist industry is one of the largest employers in the United States. In 1999, the nearly \$519 billion spent by residents and international travelers in the United States generated an estimated 7.8 million jobs and nearly \$158 billion in payroll income. Cultural and historical tourism is one of the most lucrative sections of the tourist industry. Recently, a survey found that 53.6 million adults visited a museum or historical site in 1999 and 33 million adults attended a cultural event such as theatre, arts, or a music festival. Heritage tourists spend more, stay in hotels longer, visit more destinations, and are twice as likely to travel for entertainment purposes than other travelers.

Tourism is the second biggest industry in New York State and lags only behind agriculture. At the same time, New York has trailed other states in investments in tourism, although there are signs the state will increase its tourism investments in the future.

2.1.2 Heritage Tourism in Greater Buffalo

Buffalo-Niagara is a region with great, but unrealized potential for tourism. The region's greatest attraction is Niagara Falls, Canada, but most of the activity is on the Canadian side of the border. Niagara Falls, USA has not been able to establish a competitive advantage over its Canadian rival. Meanwhile, the challenge facing Buffalo is somewhat different, although no less challenging. The economic task facing Buffalo is to find a way to lure visitors to Niagara Falls down to the Queen City.

The local tourist strategy seems to focus on stimulating interest in architectural and heritage tourism, along with attracting visitors to a well-developed waterfront. For the most part this approach is sound. Buffalo has a number of architectural treasures, along with several sites of historical significance, including the Underground Railroad sites. This combined with Buffalo's live theatre and other regional attractions makes the area a potentially a great place for people to visit.

These assets, notwithstanding, what Greater Buffalo lacks is a draw, which has the magnetic power to pull people into the community. The Martin Luther King, Jr. Cultural District could provide the Buffalo with such a cultural anchor.

2.1.3 Black Buffalo, The East Side, and the MLK Cultural District Idea

When one thinks about heritage tourism and urban development in Buffalo and Western New York, they seldom think about African Americans and Buffalo's East Side, except for Underground Railroad sites. One reason is that local leaders typically think of tourism in terms of theme parks, waterfronts, natural wonders, architectural treasures, or downtown entertainment centers.

The tourist industry, however, is more complex than this. Not only do tourists seek escape from the ordinary experiences of everyday life by immersion in contrived diversion, amusement, and views of breathtaking natural wonders, but also they seek submergence into the *authentic* life of a community. They seek experiences that stand outside the perimeters of "*been there, done that.*" People want to learn about the lives of ordinary people; their heritage, architecture, and culture and way of life.

Buffalo had its robber barons, but also it had its working class neighborhoods. Both architectures are part of the region's industrial heritage, and people would love to see that, especially if the story unfolded within the context of a contemporary neighborhood that had been radically reconstructed. Such a neighborhood would blend together the elements of placemaking and community building, along with the preservation of the historical dimensions of that neighborhood. The end product would not be a historical district in the legal sense of the term, but rather a reconstructed community that captured and maintained its *historical character and charm*. Such redevelopments would allow visitors to experience a reconstructed neighborhood as a *cultural place*.

Across the country one finds a growing list of neighborhood redevelopment projects based on cultural heritage (Appendix B: Profiles of Projects Similar to the Proposed Martin Luther King, Jr. Cultural District Project). The lesson drawn from these examples is that visitors enjoy the experience of *place*. Tourist venues that involve the creative interactions with the lived experience of people and sites that are linked with everyday life and culture offer an adventure that is unsurpassed by visits only to art galleries, historical buildings, and waterfronts. What innovative planners and developers have discovered is that heritage and treasures of bygone days can be resurrected, commodified, and transformed into the principal motifs for urban revitalization and economic development.

2.1.4 The MLK District Concept

This is where the Martin Luther King, Jr. Cultural District comes in. The King name has a magical appeal, and the idea of creating a cultural district in his honor, which celebrates his legacy, has great appeal. Many people, who otherwise might not come to Buffalo, would travel to the city to visit a Martin Luther King, Jr. Cultural District, and once there, they could be enticed to visit other places within the cultural corridor and throughout the City. In the cultural district, people will be introduced to the treasures of the city and given a guide to interacting with them. Places like the Darwin Martin House, Albright-

Know Art Gallery, the Burchfield-Penny Arts Center, Forest Lawn Cemetery, and the Tri-Main Center. In addition, a cultural heritage trail, made up of the various cultural locations and sites of interests, which are scattered throughout the city, could be developed. Thus, the MLK Cultural District could serve as a *portal* and link to the city's cultural treasures.

2.1 The Initiative: The Martin Luther King, Jr. Cultural District and Cultural Corridor

2.2.1 The Location and Site Characteristics

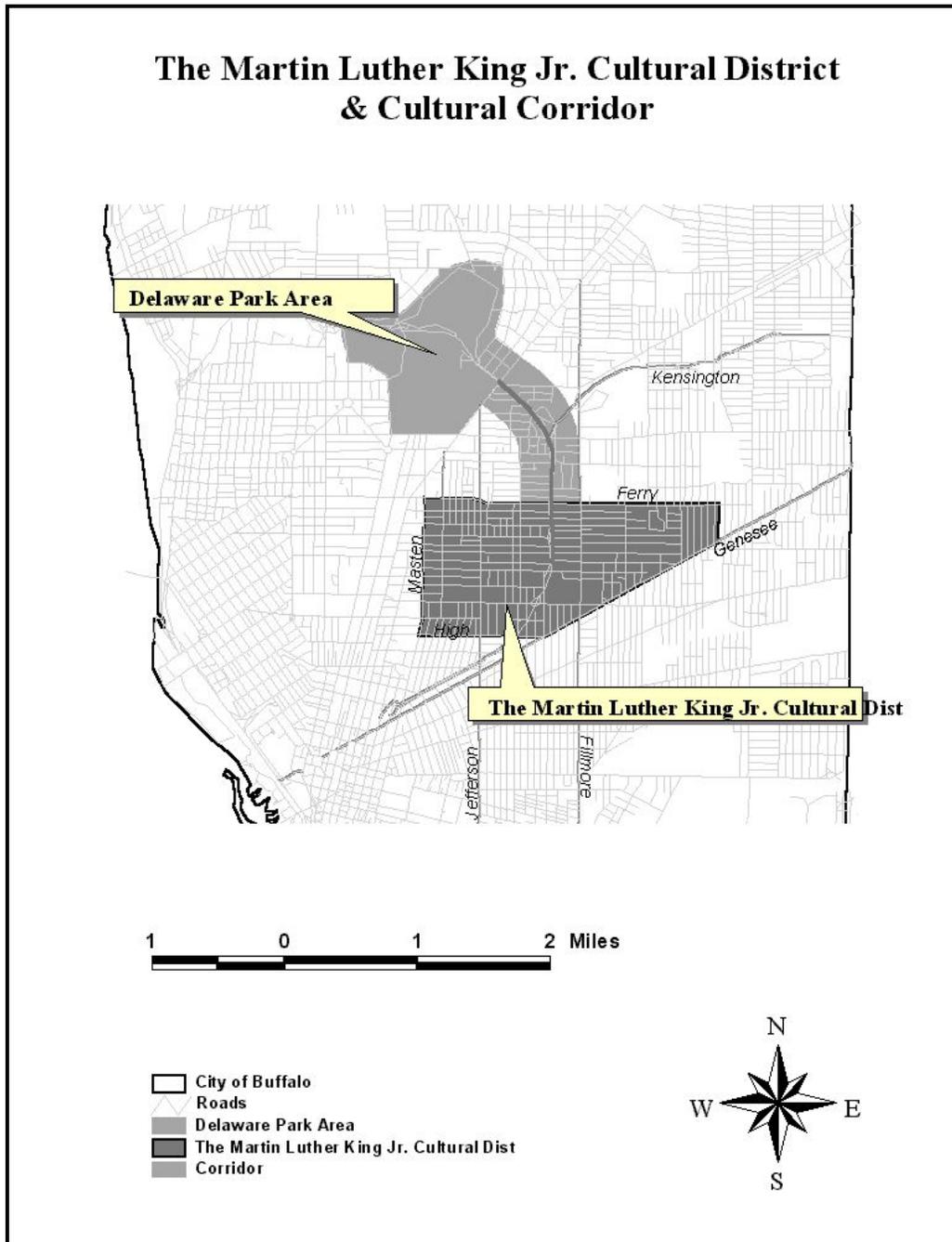
The southern boundary of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Cultural District is formed by Genesee and High Street, while Masten Street forms the western boundary. Moselle Street forms the District's eastern boundary (Figure 2: The Martin Luther King, Jr. Cultural District & Cultural Corridor).

The initiative will consist of a series of discrete projects that will unfold within the framework of a broader vision of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Cultural District and Cultural Corridor project. Extensive landscaping and infrastructure development will form the scaffolding that links together the entire area and gives it the feel of a single place. This means that urban design, landscaping, and streetscaping will be central to the development of the locale. A specific plan and financial estimate will have to be made for each project adopted in this strategic plan. Once these plans and financial projects have been made, it will be necessary to develop a comprehensive financial plan and strategy to fund the project.

2.2.2 Neighborhood Reconstruction and Development Principles

- **A comprehensive site plan will have to be developed to guide the housing and residential development plan, development of the cultural sites, and the commercial development strategy.** Neighborhoods in build-up areas must be restored on the basis of a comprehensive site plan that details all aspects of the development process. This includes the development of a detail physical plan that will serve as a blueprint for reconstructing the physical neighborhood.
- **Housing and neighborhood development will be a central component of the plan.** The cultural sites that anchor the district will work only if the neighborhoods surrounding these cultural sites are delightful and wonderful places to live and work. The idea will be to develop a cross-class, multiracial community that realizes King's dream of a society where little black, white, Asian, and Latino boys and girls walk together, holding hands. To achieve this goal it will be necessary to create housing opportunities and a neighborhood environment that is attractive to all groups.

Figure 2: The Martin Luther King, Jr. Cultural District & Cultural Corridor



- **Image replacement, extensive landscaping and streetscaping, combined with extensive infrastructure development—streets, sidewalks, and curbs—should create the framework or scaffolding for the physical restoration of the community.** The visual image of the target community is a very poor one, which is dominated by unkept vacant lots, unpainted houses, poorly maintained lawns,

and streets filled litter and debris. To make the area attractive to tourists, its dilapidated and rundown image must be changed and the place made to appear an inviting, wholesome, and exciting locale. This can happen by pursuing an aggressive strategy that involves redoing streets, sidewalks, and curbs, along with extensive landscaping and streetscaping.

- **A market creation strategy must be developed for this the MLK District.** Given the location and current housing conditions in the MLK District, a viable housing market will not emerge unless a special strategy is formulated to simulate the housing market. The strategy should include special mortgage packages and a plan that protects the equity investments in homes.
- **A Mixed Approach to Housing development should be pursued.** The housing approach should pursue a variety of housing development options, including new construction, rehabilitations, development of upscale rental properties, and programs to help low to moderate income homeowners make improvements on their properties. Pressures should be placed on absentee landlords to make substantial improvements on their properties.
- **The project should be phased.** The first phase of the project should focus on the development of the MLK District proper, while the second phase should concentrate on the development of the Mercantile Village community, which abuts the MLK District. This area contains one of the largest concentrations of businesses and industries in Buffalo and Western New York. Yet, the neighborhoods and commercial strips surrounding this area are in disrepair. It is believed that the development of the MLK District will trigger multipliers and catalytic agents that will stimulate development throughout the mercantile area. Moreover, the redevelopment knowledge acquired from reconstructing the MLK District can then be used to guide development in this adjacent part of the community.
- **Rehousing the Displaced Population.** People will be displaced in any redevelopment project, and this one is no different. However, the goal is to democratize the residential environment, not gentrify it. Democratization of the residential environments means creating good, affordable housing for everyone who lives in a community. Also, it accepts the reality of some clustering by class and race will take place within any community. So, restoration of the built environment will intensify some class segregation. However, within the framework the goal is to relocate where possible, people in the neighborhood being reconstructed. If, for whatever reason, this relocation is not possible, then the person *must* be relocated in a housing superior to the one they are displaced from. This way, the redevelopment of one neighborhood does not contribute to the housing problem in another one.

2.3 The Martin Luther King, Jr. District (MLK District)

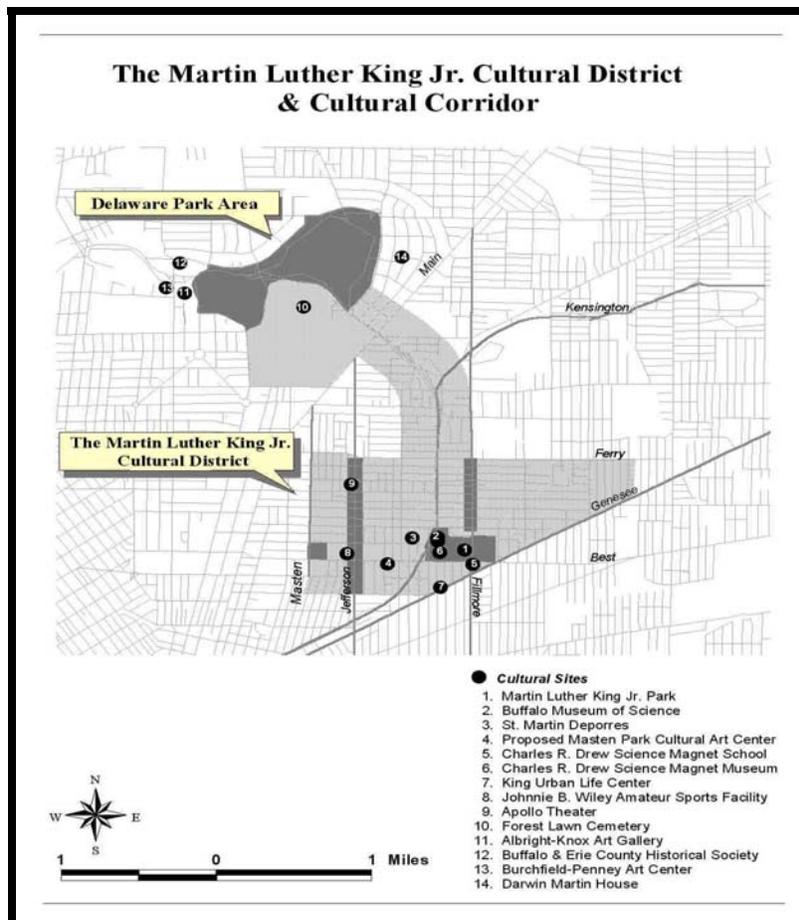
The MLK District Initiative will consist of four interrelated projects:

- **Identification and Development of Cultural Sites**
- **Housing and residential development**
- **Development of a Tourist Bubble: Safety and Security**
- **Commercial Development**

2.3.1 Identification and Development of Cultural Sites

In a broad circle, spiraling outward from the Martin Luther King, Jr. Park, are a series of forgotten and under appreciated cultural treasures. When linked together, these assets form the cultural anchor of the MLK Cultural District and the portal through which tourist will pass en route to other site in the Delaware Park area and across the city (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Sites Found in the MLK, Jr. Cultural District and Corridor



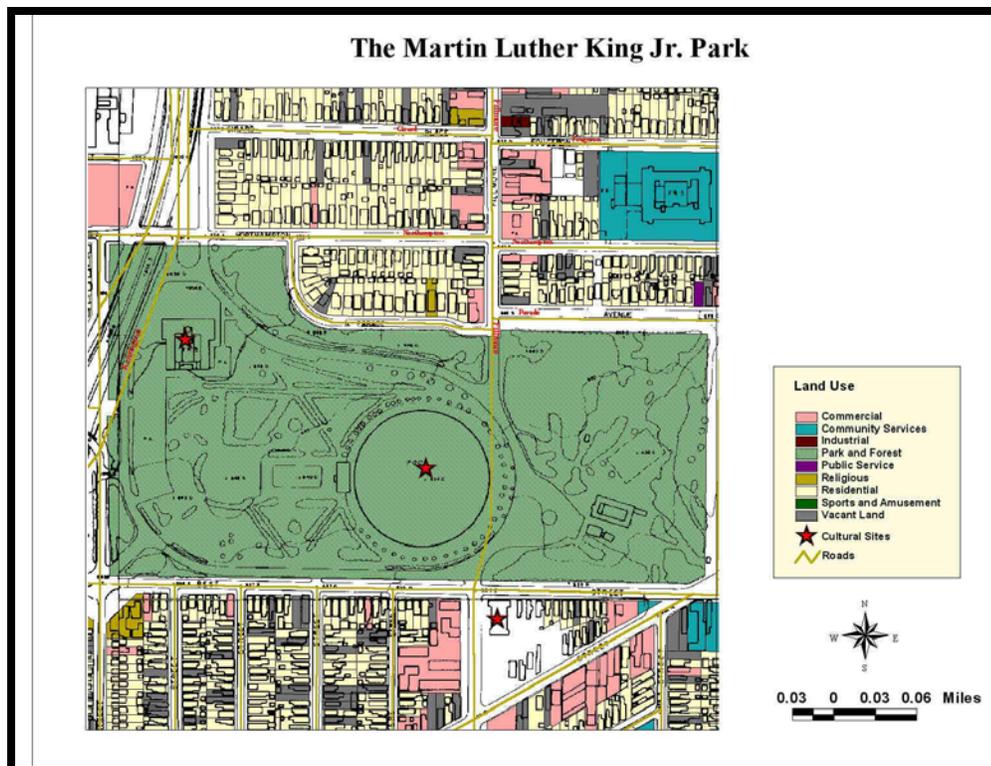
- **The Martin Luther King, Jr. Park**

The Martin Luther King, Jr. Park and the neighborhood surrounding it will be the anchor of the MLK Cultural District (Figure 3). The MLK Park was the first and most significant of Fredrick Law Olmstead’s magnificent park system and represent the foundation upon which the cultural district will be built.

The experiences of Indianapolis, Indiana provides evidence that the remaking of parks can be a powerful spur to the recreation of the surrounding neighborhoods. Operating on the assumption that “an amenity like a park can do wonders for a neighborhood,” the city set aside \$41.2 million to rescue decayed parks and use them as an engine to spur investment. The project was successful.

A reconstructed Martin Luther King, Jr. Park can serve as the focal point of the cultural district. The park contains the Buffalo Science Museum and the Charles Drew Science Magnet, and is the target of a major redevelopment project. The overall idea will be to redevelop the park, the surrounding neighborhood, and the Fillmore Avenue commercial strip, between East Ferry and Martin Luther King, Jr. Park, as a single site. Currently, a redevelopment plan for the park has been initiated and efforts are underway to develop the Fillmore Avenue Commercial strip. This piecemeal approach should be halted and a comprehensive planning approach to the area initiated.

Figure 4: Martin Luther King, Jr. Park

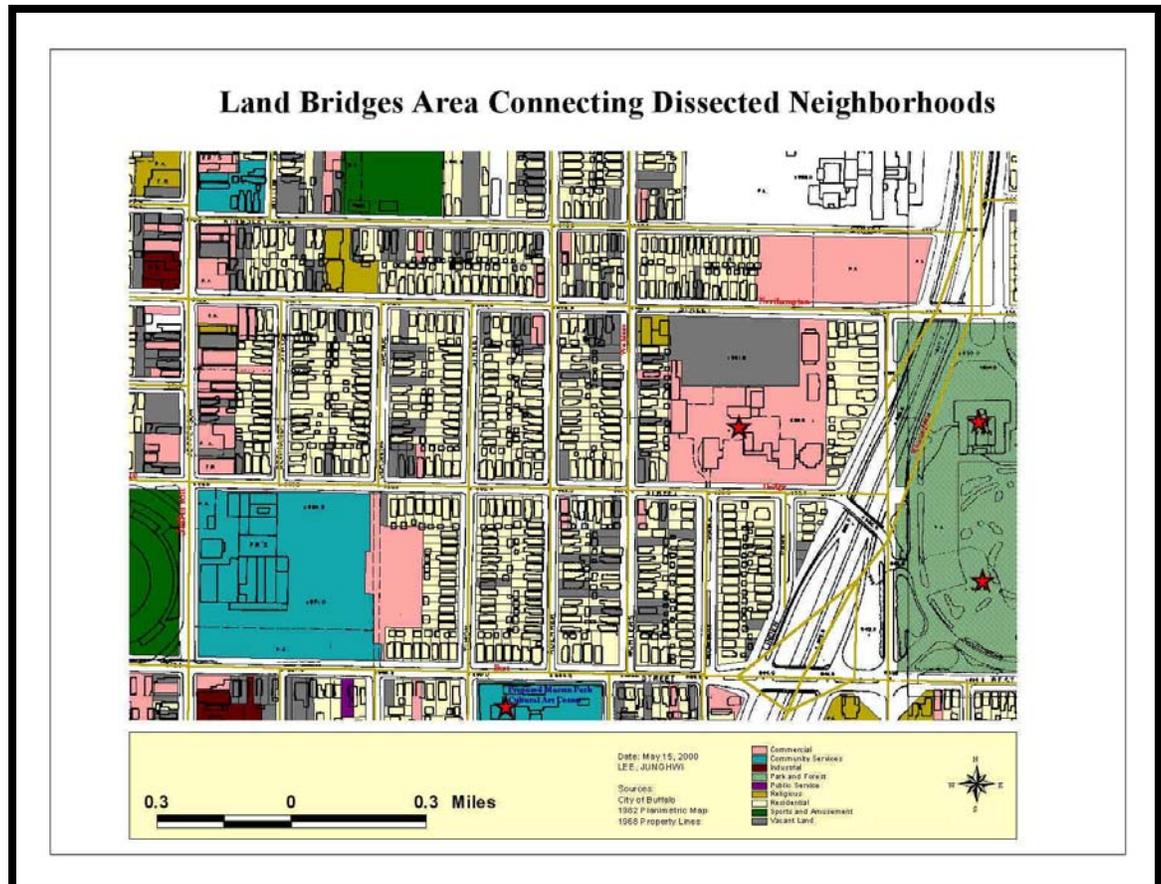


- **The Land Bridge Project**

The goal of the land bridge project is to reconnect the neighborhood surrounding the Martin Luther King, Jr. Park (Figure 4). Before construction of the Kensington Expressway, the Humboldt Park complex was one uninterrupted neighborhood that extended from East Parade to the Catholic Dioceses, between West Parade and Wohlers. The construction of the Kensington Expressway not only disrupted design of Olmsted's park, but also severed the neighborhood surrounding Martin Luther King, Jr. Park and hastened its decline.

Two potential locations for the land bridge are the area between Northampton and Dodge or between Northampton and Best. The second choice would create an opportunity that would reconnect the severed community in a very dramatic fashion, and this is the recommended location. By reconnecting the MLK, Jr. Park neighborhoods, it becomes possible to connect the development of the MLK, Jr. Park to the redevelopment of the St. Martin De Porres Church and the Old Catholic Diocese.

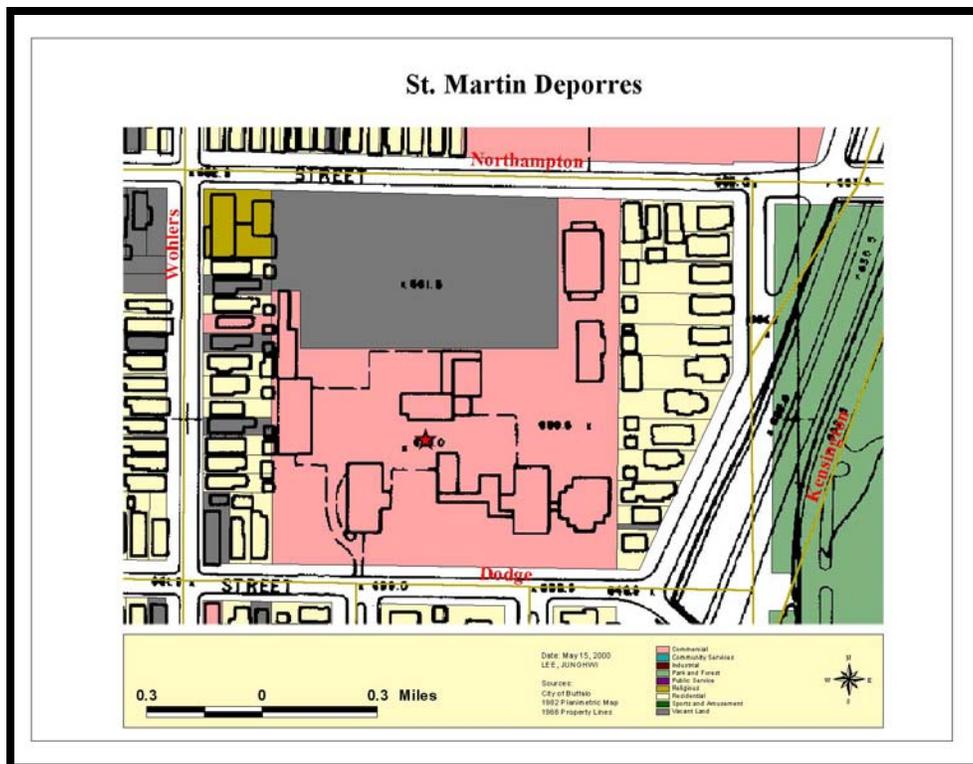
Figure 5: The Land Bridge that Reconnects the MLK Park Neighborhood



The St. Martin De Porres Church and Old Catholic Diocese Project

The campus, which contains the St. Martin De. Porres Church and the old Catholic Diocese could be transformed into a beautiful park setting (Figure 5). The site should be landscaped and flower gardens planted and park benches and setting places set up for reflective thinking and discourse. Rather than redevelop the buildings, they could be sand blasted and colorful window coverings made that depict historical aspects of life in the diocese and community. Later, as resources become available, neighborhood groups could develop the buildings for use. Lastly, a portion of the grounds should be turned into a playground for local children.

Figure 6: St. Martin DePorres and Old Catholic Diocese Site



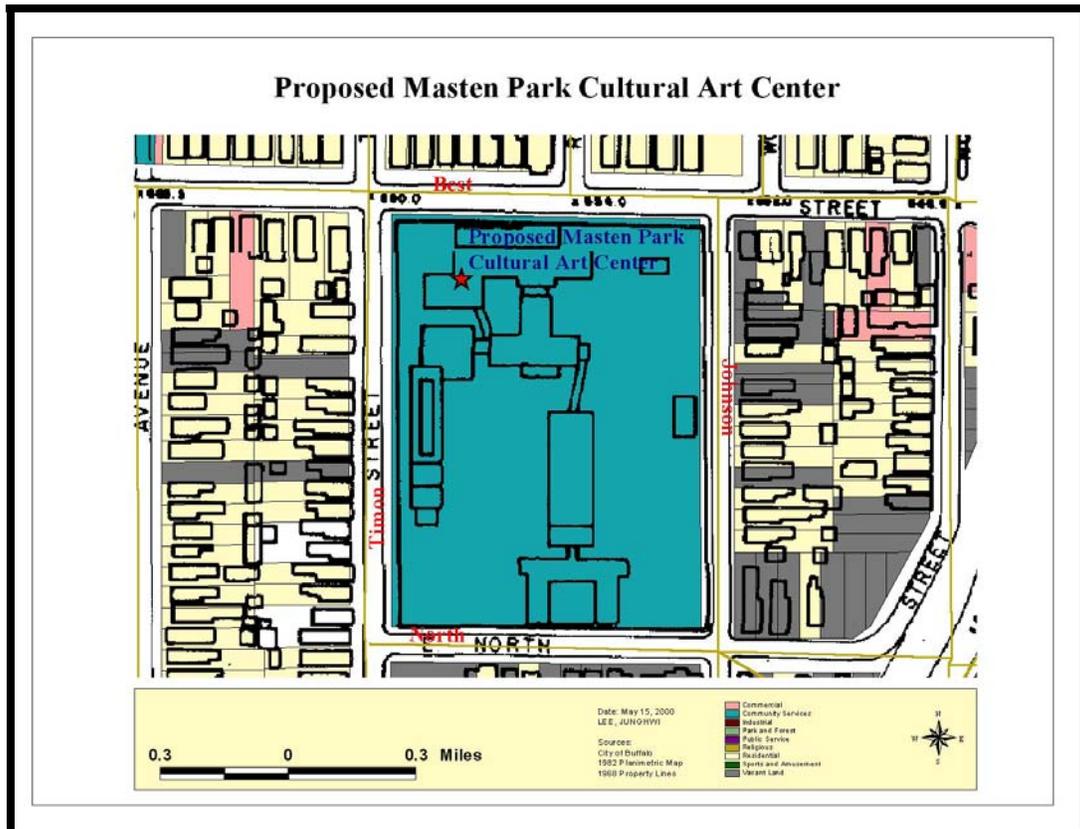
- **The Masten Park Cultural Arts Center:**

This project would transform the Masten Park Correctional facility into a cultural arts center, which would serve as the point of entry for those visiting the MLK, Jr. Cultural District. The idea will be to tear down the walls surrounding the facility and integrate the campus into the surrounding neighborhood. The buildings comprising the old correctional facility are beautiful historical structures, which could create a dramatic home for artists, craftspeople, musicians, and dancers. The idea should be explored of making the cultural center the focal point of black

theatre in the region. The driving principle will be to concentrate black art, music, and theater in this facility.

The anchor for the cultural center would be a black history and civil rights museum. The museum would chronicle the history of blacks in western New York and the state itself. Also, it would document the history of the Civil Rights Movement in New York State. Most significantly, by tearing down the walls and integrating the cultural center with the surrounding neighborhood could transform a rather ordinary local into one that is truly beautiful.

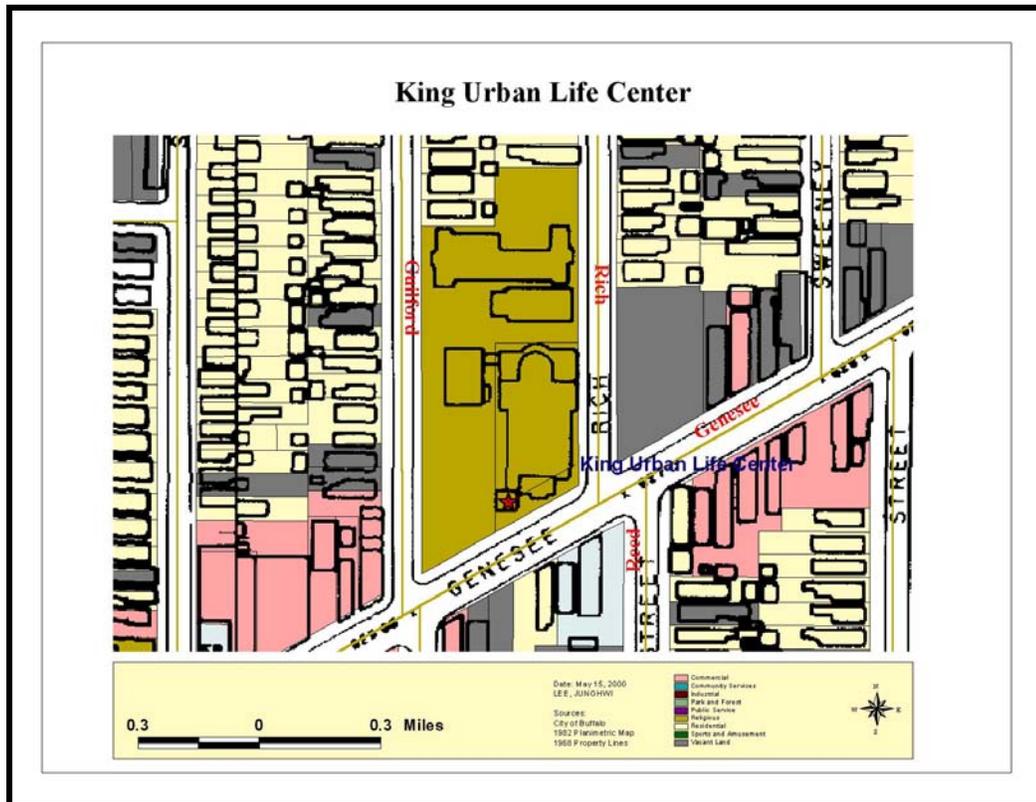
Figure 7: Proposed Masten Park Cultural Center



- **Other Cultural Facilities**

While new projects will be developed around the sites listed above, other existing sites in the community should be linked through landscaping and streetscaping to the projects outlined above. For example, the **King Urban Life Center**, located on Genesee Street, is one of the finest examples of architectural reuse in the United States (Figure 8), and it should be linked to those sites in the immediately vicinity of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Park.

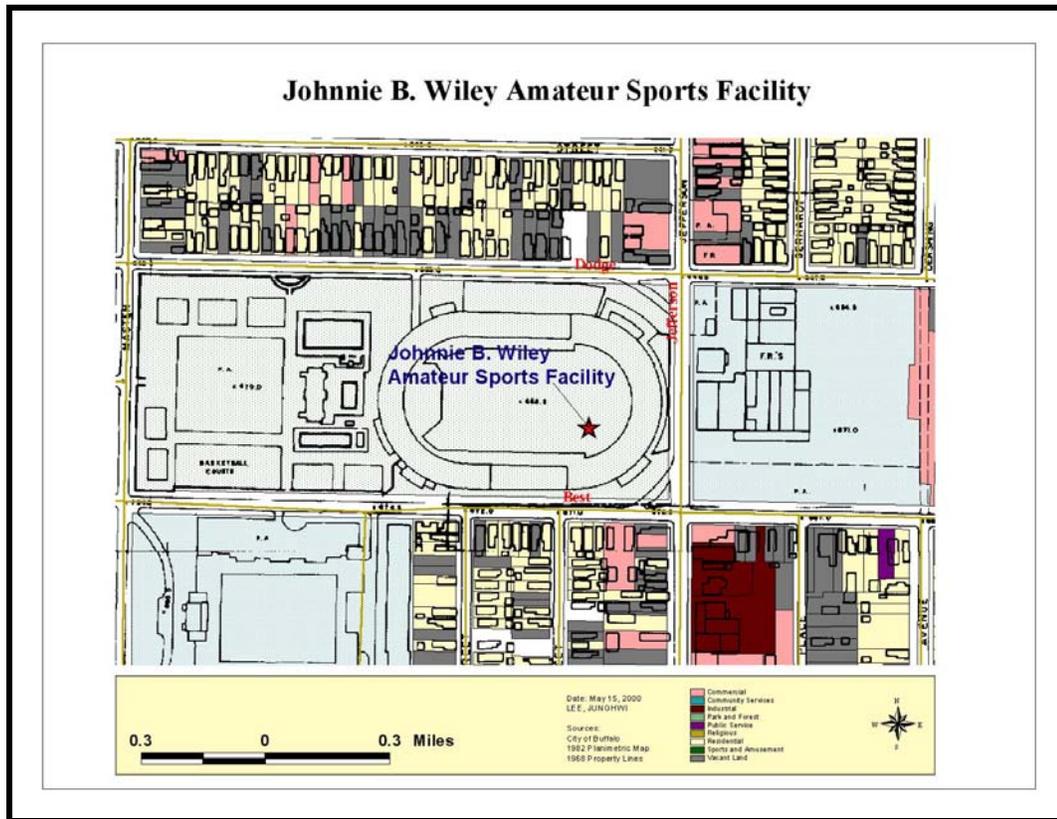
Figure 8: King Urban Life Center



As in the case of the other sites, extensive housing redevelopment, landscaping and streetscaping should take place in the locale immediately surrounding the King Urban Life Center.

Another key facility in the Martin Luther King, Jr. Cultural District is the Johnnie B. Wiley Sports stadium (Figure 9). This site is the former home of the Buffalo Bills and now a major regional sports facility and a key anchor of the Jefferson Avenue commercial district.

Figure 9: Johnnie B. Wiley Amateur Sports Facility



The Apollo Theatre, which has been transformed into a telecommunications center, is also an anchor of the Jefferson Avenue commercial district and can also be made part of a broader tourist scene. When these elements are linked together and tied to the revitalization of Fillmore and Jefferson streets, the Apollo can be a catalytic developmental force.

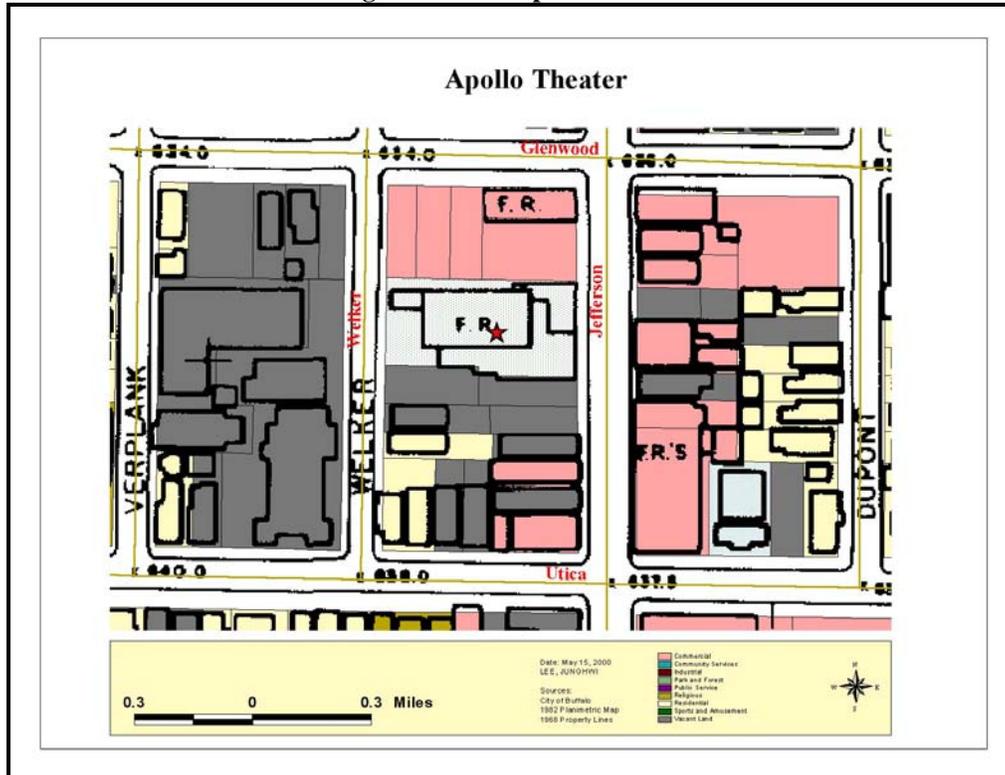
2.4 The Housing Strategy

The Masten District, similar to the City of Buffalo, has experienced dramatic change over the past thirty years, which has left an over abundance of housing stock. Without a strong market, vacant dwellings have had a negative effect on East Side neighborhoods. In most sections of the East Side, property values have declined as low-income population groups increasingly dominate neighborhoods.

A huge barrier blocking the development of the East Side is a growing view that property values will not increase over time. Consequently, investments in the area are not safe, which prevents some potential homeowners from investing in the area. In most parts of the United States, over time, rising real estate values have led to increased equities for homeowners. When equity is threatened, the chance that a homeowner will sell their property in an attempt to “get as much as they can” increases significantly. When a “break even” point is reached in a neighborhood, urban flight often occurs and the fabric

of the neighborhood dramatically changes. Against this backdrop, solving the housing problem is central to transforming the Masten District and making it a heritage tourist site and a great place to live and work.

Figure 10: The Apollo Theater



Housing conditions in Masten vary from neighborhood to neighborhood. Historically, Masten was home to higher paid workers and the middle class, and it dominated by Germans, Polish, and Italians. Germans dominated the neighborhoods around the Martin Luther King, Jr. Park, along with a sprinkling of Polish workers. Many of these homes were built prior to 1940 and need major rehabilitation. Additionally, a need exist for significant landscaping and streetscaping to accompany the renovation effort.

One result of this historical settlement pattern is the number of large, two-family structures found in the community. While many of these homes are in good condition, a large number of them still never renovation. Given the size of the Masten District and the complexity of its housing problem, an incremental strategy should be developed.

Figure 11: Houses Facing Martin Luther King, Jr. Park



Within this framework, the main area for renovation should be those neighborhoods immediately surrounding the key tourist sites, including the Fillmore Avenue, Jefferson Street commercial districts and the Best Street thoroughfare.

- ❑ Martin Luther King, Jr. Park
- ❑ King Urban Life Center
- ❑ Proposed Masten Park Cultural Park
- ❑ The St. Martin De Porres Church and Old Catholic Diocese
- ❑ Wiley Sports Stadium
- ❑ Apollo Theater

Phase one of the housing strategy would focus on housing renovation and complimentary new construction in the neighborhoods immediately surrounding these cultural sites. An extensive landscaping and streetscaping plan would be initiated to complement these activities. As seen in the photograph below, many houses in the proposed cultural corridor need extensive repair. At the same time, part of the strategy should be to bring new infill housing online that is compatible with the neighborhood's existing urban design. This means that both the setback and architectural style of the infill housing should complement the existing structures.

Figure 12: Vacant Lot and House Needing Extensive Rehabilitation



The idea of phase one of the housing strategy is to create a synergism between the development of the cultural sites and the reconstruction of the surrounding neighborhoods. Take, for example, the proposed Masten Park Cultural Park (Figure 13), will have a dramatic impact on the surrounding neighborhood. If the walls are torn down and a beautifully landscaped cultural park is extended into the surrounding neighborhood, the effect could have a dramatic impact on the visual appearance of the community.

The key to the housing strategy is to complement housing renovation and infill housing with extensive landscaping and streetscaping. Within this framework, the goal is not to landscape the cultural sites in the King Cultural District, but also to use landscaping and streetscaping to alter the visual image of the district and connect all parts of it together.

2.4.1 The Housing Market

The housing strategy has a twofold goal. The first goal is to stabilize the existing market by improving owner occupied housing units through grants and making available low-interest rate home improvement loans in the cultural district. An assessment of building permit data suggests that Masten residents currently spend several million yearly on housing repairs and renovations. This program will build on the existing efforts of residents by making more capital available to homeowners. Another goal will be to intensify homeownership in the area by making available mortgage/rehabilitation packages. Currently, Fleet bank is developing such a product, and it should be available for the Masten District by September. Within this framework, an aggressive housing renovation strategy aimed at both owner and renter occupied housing in the cultural district.

Figure 13: The Proposed Masten Park Cultural Park in Context



2.4.2 Proposed Home Equity Assurance Program

Over the past twenty-five years, municipal governments have made continuous attempts to preserve quality of life in inner cities. Various programs have been designed to combat neighborhood deterioration and to promote homeownership. However, many of these programs that continue to exist today are built around the homeowner taking on a loan to improve their property, whether rehabilitation for existing owners or purchase-rehabilitation for new homeowners. While there have been successes utilizing these types of strategies, they do not ensure that the homeowner's investment in the property will not diminish. And in fact, at times, these programs have a reverse effect of placing homeowners in a negative equity situation as the cost of rehabilitation or the after rehabilitation mortgage are nowhere near the resale value of the property a short time after the work is completed.

In these cases, individuals and families are saddled with a loan that would not be paid off in the event they wish to sell their property, thus limiting an individual's or family's mobility in the market place. In many instances, additional work is needed over time and traditional forms of credit (i.e. banks) are difficult to secure, due to existing obligations. Therefore, to secure credit, it is often necessary to do so through a "predatory" lending institution, which charges excessive interest rates and further burdens the inner-city homeowner. The question is "How can you preserve neighborhood stability, increase property values and therefore 'create equity' where there is none?" One of the most innovative programs, and to this point successful, has been the establishment of the "Home Equity Assurance Program" developed and implemented in the City of Chicago.

2.4.3 Home Equity Assurance Program in Action

The Home Equity Assurance Program (HEAP) was a result of fifteen years of grassroots efforts on the part of Chicago's citizens. Created by state statute and approved by 80% of voters in November 1988, the Northwest and Southwest programs were initiated. Boundaries were established for both of these areas that indicated whether or not a property was located in the program service area. To administer the HEAP, a Governing Commission was established, made up of nine unpaid commissioner's that are appointed by the Mayor and approved by the City Council. In Chicago, seven of the nine commissioners are appointed from a list of nominees submitted by community organizations. Five of the nine members must live in the HEAP service area.

The basic idea behind the program is by registering and paying a one-time fee of \$125.00, a homeowner is guaranteed that the value of the member's property will not fall below the fair market value established at the time he or she registers for the program. In order to be eligible for HEAP, the owner must stay in the program for five (5) years, occupy the property as their (or a family member's) principal residence during this time, and keep the property well maintained. The protection that HEAP offers to the member is if a participant decides to sell their property at some point after the five-year period and cannot sell it for the guaranteed value (at the time of registration), the program will make up 100% of the difference between the guaranteed value and the actual selling price. Property owners of one to six unit dwellings are eligible to join the HEAP. The one-time fee a member pays for participation is to cover the expense of an appraisal that establishes the guaranteed value the program insures on the sale of the property. This is the only direct cost involved.

Once a homeowner decides to join HEAP and the registration fee is received, a designated and licensed appraiser will be assigned to complete an appraisal that establishes the value for which the member property will be guaranteed. All appraisers are familiar with the service area and the property values in the community. A copy of the appraisal and a notarized certificate, indicating participation in the program, are provided to the homeowner once the appraisal is approved. There is a process for property owners who do not agreed with the appraised value. If there is disagreement, the homeowner may submit a written appeal to the Governing Commission within thirty days. If the Commission and the owner do not agree over a value within thirty days after the appeal is submitted, the process goes to arbitration, where the arbitrator's decision is binding to all parties involved.

The program is financed by an addition to the property tax levy for all existing one to six unit properties located in the service area. The maximum tax rate at which the HEAP can charge is .12% of "equalized assessed valuation". In Chicago, the equalized assessed valuation worked out to be 16% of market value. In a simple example, an owner of a property valued at \$50,000 would contribute to the program \$9.60 ($\$50,000 \times .16 \times .0012 = \9.60) each year. This amount would appear on your tax bill whether you choose to

join or not, providing a dependable source of revenue for the program. If the program is doing well, the rate of taxation can be lowered. The fund is invested in government securities, which provides a source for interest earnings on the tax revenue.

The Center for Risk Management and Insurance Research at Georgia State University completed a study of the financial condition of the HEAP in May of 1992, a little over two years after the program came into existence. The Center stated that this study presented unique challenges, as this was an untested program without a proven track record.

The summary of results indicated that even though standard methodology and assumptions did not exist due to the newness of the program, a general conclusion could be reached; the HEAP was soundly structured and financed, and that it may be over-funded. The Center also concluded that it appeared that the cost of the HEAP would be low, for several reasons:

- The program is designed to modify behavior and reduce the incentive to move, because of concerns over the condition of the neighborhood, by reducing the probability of loss.
- Everyone contributes to the program through the tax, but not everyone has to join.
- The five-year waiting period is very effective at controlling costs. (I would also say this is a very important factor at the outset, as program has this time frame to invest and increase the overall revenue pool)
- The tradition of a rising real estate market. The study indicated that property values in troubled neighborhoods usually do not decline, but are often flat or growing at a slower rate. (This works against Buffalo somewhat)
- HEAP protects against neighborhood decline relative to the rest of the area. It does not protect against a general decline in real estate values over 5% (This also works against Buffalo somewhat)
- HEAP provides a great deal of security at a very small price tag.

The Georgia State study also made several recommendations:

- Reduce or eliminate the tax levy in the near future (after only two years in existence). They concluded that excessive funding would occur at the present rate.
- If expenses could be provided out of interest income, then the program could be operated on an on-going basis with a reserve fund
- The two commissions should promote the concept elsewhere in Chicago and around the nation.

Finally, the Center listed what they view as the key elements of the HEAP:

- Coverage – HEAP is based in stable communities with a strong base of long-time homeowners. The program does not cover renters, so the occupants of insured properties have a reason to keep the property in good condition

- Financing Structure – Tax levy is paid regardless of whether the property owner chooses to participate. The amount each owner pays is not significant enough to cause a problem.
- Voluntary Participation – Depends on the willingness of the homeowner to pay for the appraisal. Homeowners who do participate have no incentive to file a claim, since no one prefers to sell their home at a loss.
- Waiting Period – Acts as a stabilization piece for the neighborhood. It lessens the likelihood of price declines, which could lead to possible claims. (The Center’s theory was based on the fact that the real estate market has shown an upward trend over time)
- Fair Asking Price – The seller must market the property in order to achieve the “fair market value”. They indicate that the program is protected against a seller “low-balling” the price. (A claim cannot be filed until after ninety days after listing the property. Evidence must be shown that the property was listed and advertised. The contract with a real estate broker and offers received must also be provided.)
- General Market Declines – Neighborhood declines are covered, but not general declines in the overall market, such as a national, regional and municipal recession or depression. A regional decline is defined as 5% in any twelve-month period.
- Investment Earnings – The HEAP fund is invested into low-risk government securities.
- Expenses – The cost of administering the program is paid through the tax revenue and interest on investment of the fund.

This study was completed in 1992. The HEAP program was only two years old at the time and no property owner had passed the five-year waiting period in order to file a claim. However, information has been obtained from the Southwest HEAP regarding program performance and its status. As of November of 1999, there were 4,200 members, with only 10 claims paid to date. The average claim paid out in the Southwest service area has been \$5,500. There is approximately \$7,000,000 in the program reserve. Interest earnings on the reserve have been able to cover the operating expenses of the HEAP. New construction is on the rise and housing demand is escalating. Economic and business investment over time is now in the hundreds of millions of dollars. Key alliances have been made with leaders in the community – banks, schools, community organizations, and realtors. Most importantly, property values are stable and have been appreciating at an annual rate between 3-8%. The Southwest HEAP has clearly had a positive impact on its neighborhood.

2.4.4 Why a Home Equity Assurance Program?

There are several reasons to believe why this type of program may be worth looking into on a pilot program basis for a targeted area of the Masten District. First of all, it promotes homeownership, a key to building a community. The HEAP is targeted as a neighborhood stabilization program designed to insure property values over a long period of time. It directly attempts to combat some of the forces that can lead to neighborhood

de-stabilization, mainly declining property values that encourage those with the means to move away, further contributing to neighborhood decline. With the peace of mind that your value is secure, homeowners may be less likely to be affected by changes in the housing market.

A second reason is that the program promotes and encourages the upkeep of properties. In order to be eligible for a claim, the property must be maintained during the time you are a member of the program. Therefore, the HEAP acts as an incentive to homeowners to keep the property in good condition, thus improving the appearance of the neighborhood and increasing the value of surrounding properties. In fact, a new guaranteed value can be established any time more than \$5,000 in improvements is made to a property. The registration amount is cut in half in this instance and a new five-year waiting period is incorporated, based on the date of the new appraisal. This acts as an incentive to continually improve your property, knowing that an investment on your part will help increase the overall value of the property.

As important, if not more important, is the psychological effect that the HEAP has on its members. A sense of stability is created in the community. Potential homeowners now can look at the neighborhood as a place to purchase, without fear of losing their investment. With property value generally lower in Buffalo vs. other parts of the region, potential homeowners may “come back to Buffalo”, knowing that they can save tens of thousands of dollars on the purchase of a property, with confidence their investment is safe. This is money that can be used towards your children’s college, money that can be invested, and wealth that can be built.

There are also advantages for those who choose not to join. Certain homeowners may not like the fact that their tax bill will increase, small as it would be, to help fund a HEAP. However, HEAP members that improve their property are contributing to an overall increase in property values, as the neighborhood’s condition gets better. Without having to join, non-members can experience the same benefits as members, only without the guaranteed value.

Another important factor is the fact that it does not involve an investment of City dollars. The program is designed in a manner in which property owners share the cost. Money saved by the City can be invested to support the pilot program neighborhood, in needed areas such as infrastructure improvement, safety issues, and commercial development to make the neighborhood attractive to potential homeowners and investors.

2.4.5 Locating the Home Equity Assurance Program

Based on the neighborhood assessment completed during field research, as well as taking the Cultural District and the location of strategic assets in the target area, a preliminary location of a Home Equity Assurance Program (HEAP) neighborhood is presented. HEAP should be initially set up in the cultural district. By correlating improvements in the cultural districts with HEAP, property values in the area can be enhanced, and the market bolstered.

The area designated for the program, according to 1990 census data, contains close to 6,000 housing units. Compared to the Chicago model (60,000 units), this would be a small HEAP area. Therefore, the program area could be expanded. More study would need to occur, taking into account the neighborhood conditions, of any area considered for the target area expansion.

- The HEAP would seem to have a positive effect on the values of the new homes that have recently been built in the community. Improvements to structures in their vicinity will help to maintain the value of the new builds.
- The structure of the program itself could be tailored to the cultural district. Examples could be:
 1. Incentives for homeowners to relocate within the HEAP target area could decrease densities elsewhere and in effect possibly offer a chance for the City to re-create or restructure entire blocks in the future.
 2. Make a landlord program as part of the program – to ensure that renter occupied units are up kept.

Does this program offer an opportunity for the Masten District to reverse neighborhood and housing decline? Possibly. Many factors would need to be taken into account – neighborhood condition, percentage of homeowner vs. renter in an area, vacancy rates, and access to services, among others. What is clear is that the reason behind the development of the HEAP addresses many of the problems the inner city has experienced over the past thirty years. It is a strategy to create incentives for middle-income people to purchase or remain in the city by insuring that the value of a home will remain stable regardless of the economic climate.

2.4.6 The Market Niche

A goal of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Cultural District is to attract residents from across the color divide to live in the community. The key to realizing this goal is to market the housing to young, upwardly mobile residents from all racial cohorts. In particular, efforts should be made to target recent college graduates and first time professional homebuyers. Additionally, the arts community should be targeted. That is, artists, writers, musicians, and those groups that identify with them should be the part of the market focus. In particular, efforts should be made to target young black and Latinos, who are upwardly mobile.

Part Three. Finance and Implementation

Determining the cost of financing the Martin Luther King, Jr. Cultural District and Cultural Corridor project is beyond the scope of this project. Nevertheless, it is possible to outline a general framework within which the quest to find resources can be made.

Each of the key site development efforts must be treated as a separate project and the cost and funding for each one mapped out by a consultant.

3.1 Finance projects

- **Martin Luther King, Jr. Park.** Efforts have already been made to map out a plan for the restoration of Martin Luther King, Jr. Park. Work on the wading pool has commenced and there are discussions about the redevelopment of the Green House and Casino. These projects need to be melded into a comprehensive plan for the park's development, which includes a strategy for redoing the neighborhoods immediately surrounding it, including those on the eastern side of Best Street. Also, as part of the plan, a strategy needs to be put in place for financing the park's maintenance and upkeep over time.
- **Land Bridge Project.** This is a high priority project and its cost and feasibility needs to be determined. The land bridge is a crucial element in the quest to reconnect the Olmstead's original community—the park, the dioceses, and Masten Park.
- **St. Martin De Porres Church and Old Catholic Diocese Project.** The financing of this project includes four elements: landscaping and maintaining the grounds; sandblasting the buildings and developing mural window covering depicting everyday life themes; developing a neighborhood playground and setting places throughout the campus; and developing a plan for maintaining the locale over time.
- **Masten Park Cultural Plaza.** This project will consist of four key elements: (1) Demolition of the walls surrounding Masten Park; (2) Renovation of the buildings, including the creation of theaters, art galleries, and office space. This work will include architectural designs to guide the restoration project; (3) extensive landscaping of the campus, which should be extended into the surrounding community, and a (4) marketing campaign to find tenants for the new facility. The marketing campaign should occur early on in the project. The idea will be to get input from potential users.
- **Housing Strategy.** The project will consist of a detailed housing survey, which not only details the conditions of each dwelling unit and classifies them into owner and renter occupancy, but also that leads to the development of a site plan. The second dimension of the plan will include the cost and feasibility of implementing the HEAP plan and will also include the development of a series of mortgage products for the community, including mortgage/renovation, rent-to-own, and grants to assist existing homeowners in the upgrading of their property. A special plan will also need to be developed for upgrading rental property in the cultural district.

- **Fillmore Avenue and Jefferson Avenue commercial district projects.** Groups are already working on these projects, and the goal should be to have them develop comprehensive plans for the rebuilding of the commercial strip and to develop a financial package that accompanies those plans.
- **Landscaping and Streetscaping.** A key to the Martin Luther King, Jr. Cultural District and Cultural Corridor project is to engage in extensive landscaping and streetscaping throughout the community and the development of a financing plan for maintaining the landscaped infrastructure.
- **Tourist Bubble.** A key to making this initiative successful is the development of a tourist bubble, which makes this one of the safest regions in metropolitan Buffalo. The development of this plan should include the creative use of Americorp volunteers, the hiring and training of local residents to help patrol the streets, and the development of neighborhood courts. A strong youth outreach effort should be made part of the program.

3.2 The Finance Approach

Based on the costs of these individual projects, an overall funding strategy should be developed. The strategy would include revenues from three sources: public, private, and community. Money from public sources should tap into sources normally used only for big economic development projects. Here, the suggestion is that tourism dollars, for example, be examined. Also, economic development dollars should be identified that will enable both Fillmore and Jefferson to reconstruct the entire commercial district and then search out tenants to occupy the renovated and newly constructed buildings. Where possible live near spaces should be constructed, so that owners or renters can have their business on the first floor and their home on the second. Private developers should be encouraged to develop projects within the plan's framework, and a major community fund raising drive should be implemented. The idea will be to use funds raised by residents to leverage both private and public sector funding.

3.3 Implementation

The implementation strategy consists of a two-pronged approach:

- The first is to secure private sector support for the project. The outcome of this effort is to develop a steering committee headed by representatives from the private sector and the community. Their goal would be twofold. The first goal will be to secure the funding necessary to start the actual development and implementation of the two key projects and to provide oversight for the entire project. Two of the most significant projects are the Masten Park Cultural Plaza and the Land Bridge. If these two projects can be jumpstarted, work on other projects will be accelerated. The second goal will be to develop an overarching implementation plan, which includes (1) neighborhood visioning to gain support among residents and a (2) scheme to involve effectively the public sector.

- Developing public sector support will go hand in hand with setting up the project steering committee. The first step in this process will be securing the support of the district council member and making the cultural district proposal part of the citywide Master Plan. The second will be gaining the full support of the coordinator of strategic planning for the City and getting community development block grant funds to fund the extensive landscaping and streetscaping.

Part Four. Action Steps

- A group should be established to oversee the project and to identify developers who would be interested in carrying out individual projects. This group would also be responsible for identifying public sector support for discrete project and for securing the resources to plan the discrete projects, including the cost of developing the infrastructure in which the projects evolve. The group would consist of representatives from the private, public, and civic sectors.
- The City of Buffalo should formally designate the area surrounding the Martin Luther King, Jr. Park as the Martin Luther King, Jr. Cultural District and the center of African American cultural arts in Western New York.
- A Civil Rights Museum should be established at the Masten Park Cultural Arts Center. This museum should depict the history of the Civil Rights Movement in Buffalo, New York and across New York State. In particular, it should document the experiences of Martin Luther King, Jr. in New York State and across the northern states. The museum should be the anchor of the Cultural Arts Center.
- The three big priority projects should be landscaping and streetscaping the locale, the Masten Park Cultural Arts Center initiative, and the land bridge initiative. The implementation of these projects will create the confidence necessary to jump-start the other initiatives.
- Extensive landscaping and streetscaping should form the infrastructure within which the redevelopment project should unfold. The public sector should take the lead in financing this phase of the project.
- Development of the Jefferson Avenue and Fillmore Avenue commercial strips should be made an integral part of the development project. Commercial strip development should be made part of the quest to develop the locale's cultural assets and promote heritage tourism.

APPENDIX A

BLACKS AND THE TOURISM INDUSTRY

SECTION I

TRAVEL INDUSTRY AND HERITAGE/CULTURAL TOURISM

Overview

In the United States, the travel and tourism industry is one of the largest employers. In 1999, the nearly \$519 billion spent by U.S. resident and international travelers in the U.S. directly generated an estimated 7.8 million jobs and nearly \$158 billion payroll income for Americans.¹ A new trend, Cultural and Historic Tourism is one of the more popular sectors of the travel industry. The tourism industry is finally waking up to the fact that 25 percent of the U.S. population is made of ethnic groups other than Northern European whites.

Heritage and cultural tourism strategies gained momentum among practitioners and policymakers in early 1990s. Typically, heritage and cultural tourism protects environmental and cultural resources, while encouraging development for tourism and other economic opportunities at regional level. Since most heritage areas involve more than one jurisdiction, they are guided by regional management. It is common for such initiatives to combine public and private sector leadership, and bring economic, social, and environmental benefits to the region that it serves. Today, the celebration of culture as heritage has evolved into a growing industry at local levels with an enormous potential to promote uniqueness or differences of ethnic cultures. Currently, there are more than 150 heritage areas across the country.

A recent Travel Industry of America (TIA) survey found that 53.6 million adults said they visited a museum or historical site in the past year and 33 million U.S. adults attended a cultural event such as a theater, arts, or music festival. Cultural and historic travelers spend more, stay in hotels more often, visit more destinations and are twice as likely to travel for entertainment purposes than other travelers.²

Profile of Travelers Who Participate in Cultural and Historic Activities

The latest report published by TIA indicates that thirty three percent of all cultural travelers are 55 or older, compared to 27% of the U.S. adult population. Retired travelers account for 19% of all cultural travelers compared to 15% of the adult population. Mature travelers (age 55+) spend more time on the road than other age group. On average they spend 4.9 nights traveling (vs. 4.2 nights total, not including day trips). There is no statistics on the relationship between race and heritage travel activities, however, surveys indicate that minorities' travel habits are similar to all U.S. travelers. That is, the travel traits are common to all American travelers, regardless of race. Among minorities, pleasure travel is the most common form of travel, and visiting family and friends is the

most common reason given, followed by entertainment; a majority of all travelers use cars as their primary mode of transportation; the typical travel party includes two people; the typical trip involves at least one overnight stay; and shopping is the top activity-by far.

Travel statistics and trends by mature Americans are summarized below:

	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Total Household trips for U.S.	546.5	558.5	557.9	563.3	573.7	572.0
Household Trips for Household Heads 55+	170.9	175.7	178.8	176.7	181.6	178.8
55+ Household Trips as % of Total	31%	32%	32%	31%	32%	31%

Household Trips. (Source: Travelscope®)

Mature travelers, age 55 and older, spend more money on outdoor vacations than any other age group in the U.S.. The average spending by mature travelers on their last adventure travel vacation was \$1,300 compared to \$950 for travelers between the ages of 35-54 and \$660 for travelers between the ages 18-34. Mature travelers, age 55 and older, account for 14% of all soft adventure travelers and account for 9% of all hard adventure travelers. (Source Adventure Travel Report 1997)

Mature travelers enjoy historic trips and travelers age 55 and older account for 32% of all travelers who have visited a historic site or museum. In comparison 27% of all U.S. adults have taken a trip to a museum or historic site. In addition, 18% of all historic travelers are retired. Travelers who attend cultural events are more likely to be age 55 or older. Thirty three percent of all cultural travelers are 55 or older, compared to 27% of the U.S. adult population. Retired travelers account for 19% of all cultural travelers compared to 15% of the adult population. (Source: Profile of Travelers Who Participate in Cultural and Historic Activities)

Other Travel Characteristics and Trends in the 1990s

In addition to cultural and historic tourism that showed a significant growth in 1990, the following summarizes other facts about traveling or travelers in the U.S:

Adventure travelers are everywhere. One-half of U.S. adults, or 98 million people, have taken an adventure trip in the past five years. This includes 31 million adults who engaged in hard adventure activities like whitewater rafting, scuba diving and mountain biking. Adventure travelers are more likely to be young, single and employed compared to all U.S. adults.

Beaches are one of the most popular travel activities during the Summer. Nearly 50 million travelers say they hit the beaches in June, July and August. Over one-third of travelers (35%, 48.8 million adults) plan to take a trip of 100 miles or more, one-way, to visit a beach in the summer. Higher shares of men than women are beach-bound. Beach appeal is also high for those with children at home and travelers ages 18-34. Nearly one-half of beach goers (45%, 22.1 million travelers) say they expect to stay overnight in a hotel or motel. Another group, 29%, says they stay with family or friends. Women are more likely than men to stay with family or friends (36% vs. 24%) are.

Biking vacations attracted more than 27 million travelers in the past five years and they rank as the third most popular outdoor vacation activity in America, (following camping and hiking). People who take biking trips tend to be young and affluent. About half are between the ages of 18, 34, and one-fourth are from households with an annual income of \$75,000 or more. More than 80% of biking travelers took a camping trip in the past five years and 72% took hiking trips in the past five years.

Business travelers often take kids on their business trips. In 1998, 31.6 million business trips included a child compared to the 9.1 million business trips, which included a child in 1988. This is an increase of 247% in ten years. Despite the increase business trips with children, still account for only 16% of business trips, but this figure has increased from 5% in 1988. Seventy-one percent of all business trips still include only one person, about the same as in 1997. However, 20% of all business trips include two household members. The survey also found that 28% of all business travel taken in 1997 included some time for pleasure travel, which is about the same as in 1998. In addition, 38% of all business travel in 1998 included an overnight weekend stay.

Camping is the number one outdoor vacation activity in America. One third of U.S. adults say they have gone on a camping vacation in the past five years and only 6% of people who have gone camping said it was not for them. Camping vacationers tend to be married with children at home. The average age of travelers who go camping is 37 and their median household income is \$43,000. People who go camping also tend to enjoy hiking, biking, canoeing. Fifty-nine percent of campers said they traveled with their spouses on their most recent outdoor vacation and nearly half traveled with their children.

Canada and Mexico send more travelers to the U.S. than any other foreign nations. About 90% of the foreign travelers who leave Mexico each year come to the U.S. and 71% of the international travelers in Canada visit America. In 1998, 13.4 million Canadians and 9.3 million Mexicans visited the U.S.

Children make great travel companions. Nearly one-half of U.S. adults (46%) said they included a child (or children) on a trip in the past five years. Ninety-two million U.S. adults took a child with them on a trip of 100 miles or more from home. Three-fourths of these travelers (76%) took their own child on the trip. Sixteen percent included grandchildren on a trip, eight percent took a niece or nephew on the road and six percent took children from another household on their trip.

Crimes against travelers occur 40 percent less often than crimes against non-travelers.

Dining, Shopping, Museums and Tours are the top activities for travelers. Over one-half of U.S. adult travelers (53%) planned activities after they arrived at their destination while on a trip of 100 miles or more, one-way, in the past year. This equates to 74.3 million U.S. adults. Dining out in restaurants were popular with more than 67 million travelers (48%) in 1998 and was the most popular activity planned after arrival at a destination. Going to a shopping area was the second most popular spontaneously planned activity (45%), followed by visiting a museum (26%). Other activities planned after arrival include: sightseeing tour (24%), movie (16%), theme park (15%), religious service (14%), live theatre or live performance (14%) and festival or parade (13%). One-quarter of past year travelers (24%) went to some other type of attraction, which they planned after arrival at their destination

Family Reunions are popular with about one third family traveler according to the Better Homes & Gardens Family Travel Report. Thirty-four percent of family vacationers attended a family reunion in 1996 accounting for approximately 32 million travelers. Among age groups, Generation X travelers (18 to 34 years old) are the most likely to attend a family reunion. The regions of the country with the highest percentage of family reunion travelers are the Midwest (42%), the Northeast (37%) and the South (36%). Families with Children love to take their kids on family trips (87%) and family trips with children represented just over half of all family vacations (54%) in 1998. This is about the same as in the recent past. In all, vacation trips with children were up 5 percent in 1998. Travel parties with children included not only one's own kids (77%), but grandchildren (15%) and others (20%), as well. In addition, one in five trips (20%) spanned three family generations. In addition, the number of family vacations that include children has increased by 55% since 1992. In 1998, family vacation trips accounted for 72 percent of all vacation trips. In all, 91.3 million adults took a family vacation, down from 104.2 million family vacationers in 1997.

Family vacations are defined as vacation of 100 miles or more away from home with other members of the same household. Despite fewer travelers overall, those families that did travel took more trips. Consequently, total family vacation trips were stable in 1998. The majority of family travelers took one or two trips in 1998 (71%). However, nearly a third of family vacationers (29%) took three or more vacations during 1998, a significant increase from 1996 at 20%. Overall, the average number of family trips in 1998 was 2.4 vacations.

Festivals are a popular way for travelers to experience new and interesting cultures. One-fifth of U.S. adults (21%) attended a festival while on a trip away from home in the past year. This translates to 31.0 million U.S. adults. One third of festival travelers (33%) attended an arts or music festival in the past year, making it the most popular type of festival to attend while traveling. Twenty-two percent of festival travelers attended an ethnic, folk or heritage festival. This was followed by county or state fairs

(20%), parades (19%), food festivals (12%) and religious festivals (11%). Thirty percent of festival travelers attended a type of festival other than the six previously mentioned.

Gambling is a common component of many American's vacations. In 1996, 79.2 million person-trips included gambling as an activity.

Garden Tours are popular with many travelers. Nearly 40 million Americans, or one-fifth of U.S. residents (20%) went on a garden tour, visited a botanical garden, attended a gardening show or festival, or participated in some other garden-related activity in the past five years. This translates to 39.3 million U.S. adults. Ten million U.S. adults (5% of U.S. adults, 7% of past year travelers) participated in a garden-related activity in the past year. College graduates (33%), travelers with an annual household income of \$75,000 or more (33%), residents of the New England census region (31%), married travelers (28%) and travelers 55-64 years old (28%) are most likely to take in a garden-related activity while travelling. Nearly three-fourths of garden travelers (71%) visited a botanical garden in the past five years, making it the most popular garden activity. Thirty-six percent of garden travelers attended a gardening show or festival and 29 percent went on some type of garden tour. Another 16 percent participated in some other type of garden-related activity or tour.

Golf and Tennis are popular travel activities in the U.S. One in eight U.S. travelers (12%) played golf while on a trip of 100 miles or more, one-way, away from home in the past year. This translates to 17.3 million U.S. adults. Six million U.S. adults (4% of past year travelers) played tennis while on a trip of 100 miles or more, one-way, away from home in the these two groups, 2.7 million U.S. adults played both golf and tennis while traveling in the past year.

Green travel is important to travelers. Eighty-three percent of travelers are inclined to support "green" travel companies and are willing to spend, on average, 6.2 percent more for travel services and products provided by environmentally responsible travel suppliers.

Honeymooners outspend the average traveler by more than three times. On average, they spent \$1,402, while the average trip expenditure in 1994 for all travelers was considerably less at \$421.

Hotel/motel travelers take more trips, use more services including travel agents and rental cars, and report higher household incomes than do non-hotel travelers.

The Internet and online services are very popular with travelers. Six million travelers booked trips online in 1997 and the percentage of travelers who use online services and/or the Internet for travel plans or reservations jumped from 11% in 1996 to 28% in 1997. Meanwhile there was a 19% increase in the share of Americans who prefer the Internet for travel reservations, rather than using a travel agent. In 1998 the number of travelers booking online should increase by 12.1 million. (Report Available)

Kids programs are popular with family travelers. Nearly 60% of family travelers use children's services offered on the road but special kids meals (41%) and hotel discounts (30%) are the most popular children's services followed by video and other games (22%), supervised activities (13%) and baby-sitting (6%). Among travelers taking children along, those aged 35-44 had the highest use of children's services (71%), while travelers aged 65+ had the lowest use (28%).

Travelers with family incomes of \$50,000+ have the highest use (67%), while travelers with family incomes of <\$20,000 have the lowest use (30%).

Married folks are travelers. Married households represent the largest group of travelers with 61 percent of all trips being taken by married households. Single households took 21 percent of the trips.

Mature Americans, those 55 years and older, are less likely to travel than their younger counterparts; however, their growing numbers coupled with their financial power and availability of time, make them a very attractive market for the U.S. travel industry.

Outlet shopping malls are becoming major attractions for U.S. travelers, with 37% of all travelers saying they visited a discount outlet mall in 1997. Discount outlet travelers account for 55 million travelers out of 149 million adult travelers annually. This number includes 25 million men (46%) and 29 million women (54%). One in ten discount outlet mall travelers (10%) cited the outlet shopping experience as the as the primary reason for their trip but most (79%) said it was a secondary reason.

Religious services are often an important part of any travel experience. One-fourth (28%) of adult travelers in the U.S. went to a church, temple, mosque or other place of worship to attend a regularly scheduled religious service while on a trip of 100 miles or more, one-way, in the past year. This equates to nearly 43 million U.S. adults. Residents of the West South Central region (Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma and Texas) reported the highest attendance while traveling (37%). Residents in New England (Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island and Vermont) registered the lowest (21%). Among those who attended a religious service during a trip one-half of them were on trips to visit friends and relatives (50%) and one-fourth traveled for other leisure reasons (23%). Nine percent traveled for business reasons and 18 percent traveled for other reasons. One-half of travelers (51%) who attended a religious service had their spouse with them on their most recent trip and over one-third had children with them (34% own children/4% grandchildren).

Romantic vacations are popular with all Americans, especially married couples, who are looking to rekindle the romantic feelings in their relationships. Thirty-one percent of U.S. adults (61.8 million Americans) said they took a romantic getaway in the past 12 months. The average traveler took 2.5 romantic trips in the past year. Romantic travelers without children in their households took more getaways in the past 12 months

than romantic travelers with children (3.1 vs. 1.9 trips, respectively). Visiting a city for dining and entertainment purposes is the number one type of romantic getaway taken by Americans last year.

Small businesses dominate the travel and tourism industry. In 1992, the last year for which government data is available, there were 346,000 firms with under 50 employees in four travel-related industry segments. This represents 93.7 percent of the all the firms within these segments. These firms are an important part of the American Dream, the opportunity for business ownership.

Sports and Travel go together. Two out of five U.S. adults (38%) attended an organized sports event, competition or tournament as either a spectator or as a participant while traveling in the past five years. This equates to 75.3 million U.S. adults. A majority of these sports event travelers took their most recent sports trip in the past year (70% or 52.7 million adults). The most popular organized sports event to watch or participate in while traveling is baseball or softball, with 17 percent of U.S. adults traveling 50 miles or more to see or play in a baseball or softball game in the past five years. This is followed by football (15%), basketball (9%) and auto/truck racing (8%).

Staying wired while traveling is important to business and pleasure travelers. Fifty-one percent of the 39.8 million business travelers over the past year brought their cellular telephone with them on a business trip. Twenty-two percent brought a pager, 20% brought a laptop computer and 6% brought a handheld personal digital assistant with them on at least one business trip. Pleasure travelers are only slightly less likely than business travelers to want to stay connected while away from home. Forty-six percent brought a cellular telephone, 18% brought their pager, 6% brought a laptop computer, and 3% took a handheld personal digital assistant. The increased usage of the Internet and the popularity of e-mail as a form of communication is evident among many travelers, as 22% of business travelers used the Internet or e-mail while on a business or convention trip in the past year, compared to 10% of pleasure travelers.

Travel agencies are the consumer's preferred source for making reservations and seeking information about travel prices and schedules, but a significant number of Americans have shifted their preference to the Internet in the past year. In 1997 there was a 19% increase in the share of Americans who prefer the Internet for travel reservations, and six million Americans say they have done so. Travelers who prefer the Internet over travel agents tend to be younger, have children at home, have several wage earners in their households and are more likely to live in the South Atlantic region.

International visitors traveling to the U.S. also spent \$21.0 billion outside the United States on U.S. flag carriers and other miscellaneous transportation. Including the \$21.0 billion in international passenger fares, the U.S. travel and tourism industry received a total of nearly \$540 billion during 1999.

SECTION II

TOURISM AND THE BLACK COMMUNITY

Overview

Cultural tourism has introduced a new renaissance of restoration in African American historic neighborhoods across the nation. A sure sign is the publications like the African American heritage brochure put out by almost every state tourism agency and the fact the commerce Department's Tourism industries Office earmarked multicultural tourism as its major initiative in 1997. The New York State's tourism industry has caught on with this phenomenon to boost its tourism budget which has been lagging far behind some other states in recent years.³ As the result the African American historic sites are getting new respect in New York City. Interestingly, the new trend is occurring in the service of neighborhood rebuilding. According to Mark Weber, technical director of the nonprofit New York Landmarks Conservancy, historic row houses are being rehabbed in several districts in Harlem, with some spin-off effects. Most notable is Astor Row, a landmark block of 23 buildings that have benefited from about \$2.7 million in loans and grants. The conservancy is also working with the Apollo Theater Foundation on the restoration of the auditorium, an institution on 125th Street.

African American Culture/Heritage Districts

Communities thought the United States have developed successful cultural tourism programs linking the African American arts, culture, history to promote their ethnic inner-city neighborhoods. Museums, symphony orchestras, festivals, and historic preservation groups have formed partnership with minority organizations, tour operators, state travel offices, convention and visitor bureaus, hotels, and air carriers to create initiatives that can serve as models for similar efforts across the U.S. Profiles of some successful African-American Heritage Districts are presented below:

Bronzeville: South Lake Shore Drive, Chicago, IL. Bronzeville is the hub of the African-American new businesses and tourism in Chicago, "City of Neighborhoods." This old neighborhood, with its architectural landmarks, is located on the South-East side of the city between Hyde Park and the Chicago Loop. Economic stagnation between 1940-1960s turned this historical neighborhood into a black ghetto. However, the area gained popularity when revitalization efforts promoted it focusing on its rich cultural heritage and restoring the history that once was lost. It started with promoting collaborative art and photographic exhibits using people who work and live in the community. The European model of cultural tourism (e.g., Grand Tours) was a major influence on tourism planning for the area.

Today, Bronzville is a growing tourist destination community, originally settled by waves of African-Americans fleeing the South beginning after World War I. The most touching landmark may be the 15-ft statue at 26th Place and King Drive--the neighborhood's symbolic entrance--that depicts a new arrival from the South bearing a

suitcase held together with string. The neighborhood was dubbed Bronzeville after the Chicago Bee, a black newspaper of the time, held a contest in 1930 to elect a "Mayor of Bronzeville." The influential Chicago Defender newspaper was also originally based here and attracted talent that included Langston Hughes. Group tours promote Bronzeville as the most fascinating, uplifting, educational, cultural, and inspirational multicultural neighborhood in Chicago, known as the "The Soul Side of the Windy City." Reported in Chicago press, today, housing in the South Side is going up, the projects are coming down, real estate has never been better and the Lou Rawls Theater project may get off the ground.

The City of Angeles: "Soul of LA" Los Angeles, CA. Today, this vast megalopolis is a kaleidoscope of all types of lifestyles and cultures, making it one of world's premier cities. The African American population here has thrived for decades, contributing a wealth of arts, culture, business, and the like of this land of opportunity. Afrocentric attractions like the Leimert Park Afrocentric shops and dining area, the California Afro-American Museum, the first Magic Johnson Theater, and murals by Black artists all over town are only a small taste of what you'll experience here.

Kings' "Sweet Auburn" Atlanta, GA. Auburn Avenue was dubbed "Sweet Auburn" by early civil rights leader John Wesley Dobbs because of the opportunities it afforded blacks even under strict segregation laws. For decades, Sweet Auburn was Atlanta's black downtown-a city within a city where African Americans created the institutions they were excluded from by white Atlanta. In the 1980s, remaining business owners that that construction of the Martin Luther Kings Jr. National Historic Site would bolster renewal. King's birth place is open for tours. A block west is Ebenszer Baptist Church, where King Preached. They are listed as some of the city's most popular attractions.

Magic Touch: Earvin "Magic" Johnson and Plaza Construction Corporation Brooklyn NY Magic Johnson and Plaza Construction Corporation and Mayor, on March 23, 1999, announced the plan to revitalize and operate historic Loews Kings Theater in Flatbush, Brooklyn. The team of Magic Johnson Theater, Plaza Construction Corporation and Fowle Architects will transform the Loews Kings Theater into a 12-screen movie theater complex. The plan focuses on providing family entertainment to neighborhoods previously underscreened, while helping to revitalize those areas and investing in the neighborhoods where blacks are located. The first Magic Johnson Theater opened in 1995 in Los Angeles. Other Magic Johnson Theaters are located in Houston and Atlanta. Future theaters will be located in Prince Georges County, Maryland and in Cleveland, Ohio.

African-American National Historic Site Boston, MA. Located in the heart of Boston's Beacon Hill neighborhood, the site includes 15 pre-Civil War structures relating to the history of Boston's 19th century African-American community, including: the African Meeting House, the oldest standing African-American church in the United States. The sites are linked by the 1.6 mile

(2.5 km) Black Heritage Trail®. Augustus Saint-Gaudens', memorial to Robert Gould Shaw and the African-American Massachusetts 54th Regiment, stands on the trail.

Upper Manhattan, New York City, New York. Upper Manhattan has a rich historical and cultural legacy that even through hard times has been a source of pride and strength to its residents and people of color all over the world. Upper Manhattan Empower Zone Development Corporation developed the area as the prime location of new institution of art, performance and theater such as the Dance Theater of Harlem, El Museo del Barrio, Aaron Davis Hall and the Boys Choir of Harlem.

Avenue of the Arts: Broad Street, Philadelphia. As part of a strategic planning effort in Philadelphia the Avenue of the Arts is the hub of African American culture in Philadelphia. The Avenue of the Arts Inc., is currently examining the economic activity on and adjacent to the South Broad Street Corridor mostly inhabited by African Americans. Since its inception in 1993, the Avenue of the Arts has striven to become more than a setting for cultural development, but a model for economic development for the city and the region. The notion of arts as a driver of economic development has been key in South Broad Street's growth and has helped spark neighborhood revitalization projects in communities adjacent to the Avenue of the Arts. An economic development report about the project reports that the Avenue of the Arts' cultural organizations, hotels, restaurants, and retail businesses along South Broad Street generate a minimum of \$157 million in revenue and support 2,800 full time and over 1,000 part-time jobs.

Main Street Arkansas: Arkansas. Heritage Tourism Main Street Arkansas is program of the Arkansas Historic Preservation program, an agency of the Department of Arkansas Heritage. The Main Street Arkansas program's association with the National Main Street Center, a resource facility set up by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, provides access to the very best consulting and training services available for downtown revitalization.

Historic Preservation for Tourism: Lowell, Massachusetts, Jackson Appleton Middlesex Projects. This project is part of a comprehensive neighborhood revitalization program, which is currently implemented in Jackson Appleton and Middlesex neighborhood in Lowell, Massachusetts. In both neighborhoods revitalization program is aiming at historic preservation to develop old neighborhoods and encourage tourism.

Pike Place: Public Market Historic District Seattle, Washington State. Downtown is the soul of Seattle, the oldest continually operating farmers market in the country, a civic resource saved from the wrecking ball of "progress" by public vote in 1971. But the market is no staid historic site preserved for tourists. It is a free-form funhouse of sights and smells and sounds and characters, a place where farmers and craftspeople display their wares and where residents and visitors alike jostle their way along crowded aisles and brick streets. Up from the market is the commercial heart of Seattle, a lively downtown district of department stores, specialty shops, renovated historic theaters, hotels of every size, multi-plex cinemas, espresso stands, restaurants and

unexpected shopping experiences. City Centre's atrium includes a dazzling display of art glass, with work by Dale Chihuly and others from the internationally known Pilchuck School. Westlake Center's spacious exterior balconies overlook Westlake Park, the city's unofficial gathering place, where the paving tiles display a Northwest Indian design.

Warehouse District: Austin, TX. The site is within the Downtown Austin Public Improvement District, which provides a number of services such as enhanced security, streetscaping and maintenance. The Warehouse District, as the name implies, was once largely industrial in character, but has experienced development of both new and renovated buildings in the last decade. Although often thought of as having a western “cowboy” culture, Austin has transcended that image into one of a multi-cultural, international and diverse city where talent is prized, opportunity abounds, differences are valued, and yet the slower, calmer pace set by the original founders continues and is cherished. Combined with a beautiful natural environment, marvelous people and rapidly expanding economy, it is no wonder the Central Texas region is fast becoming a national leader in some of the hottest developing industries, such as computers, software, semiconductors, film, music, telecommunications, multimedia and bioscience. Other industries, such as transaction services, logistics and distribution are keeping pace in supporting this rapid growth.

SECTION III

THE STATE OF WESTERN NEW YORK TOURISM

Overview

In recent years, the Greater Buffalo Convention & Visitor's Bureau (CVB) is promoting Western New York's profile in the state tourism arena. Richard Geiger is the first CVB president from the Buffalo area. His philosophy is to build a better image of the city outside the state for attracting new customers. In a plan to develop a long-range marketing plan, Geiger is pushing for increases in state matching funds that help local tourism bureaus to promote their regions. Geiger approach is to change the current strategy which spends 70 percent of the *I Love New York* tourism budget within the state to one that spend more dollars outside New York in border states and Ontario.

Destination Visitor Profiles in Western New York

The latest statistics available on visitor profiles in Western New York is compiled by D.K. Shifflet & Associates, Ltd. (1998). DKS&A's report compares the Buffalo-Niagara Falls MSA with the Total Domestic U.S. Travel. ⁴ The main findings of the report are listed below. Mainly, other than a few discrepancies, the profile of the visitor to the Buffalo-Niagara region is quite similar to the average visitor throughout the U.S.:

- Only 29.9% of trips to Buffalo-Niagara are for a vacation (compared to 41.4% for the U.S. as a whole)
- 50.8% of the visitors to Buffalo-Niagara are from the Middle Atlantic region (NY, NJ, PA)
- 85.1% of visitors travel by car to our region
- 75.8% of visitors are married. ⁵

In March of this year, over 1, 100 tourism professionals made a visit to Buffalo Convention Center. Tour guides from Cleveland, Hamilton in Ontario, Memphis, and Pittsburgh had positive comments about Buffalo's architecture, museums, live theater, and regional attractions. Most believe that Buffalo has a lot to offer out-of-state tour operators, but belief is that the city must improve the curb appearance of some city neighborhoods.

A significant change in tourist market in Western New York is the since 1998, Buffalo's Visitors and Convention Bureau, has been receiving increased request for B&B accommodations. The recent push for investment along the Erie Canal corridor has resulted in a network of B&Bs spanning 10 counties from Rochester to Niagara Falls, from the Genesee Gorge to Ellicottville and from the Lake Erie wine county to Buffalo. In 1999, occupancy rate in the area's B&B reached to 85-90 percent.

Architectural and Heritage Tourism in Western New York

Cultural tourism, travel directed toward experiencing the art, heritage, and special character of a place, has never been an important component of tourism industry or economic development activity in Western New York. In recent years, however, a heightened interest is observed among regional marketers in architectural and heritage tourism to help attract out-of-town visitors to Erie County and keep them here longer. Tourism officials in Buffalo are also hoping new alliances will be forged this year among major hotels, cultural institutions and shopping malls. The goal is to create a synergy between entities that will fuel joint marketing at the Albright-Knox Art Gallery. The Greater Buffalo Convention and Visitors Bureau believes that the most effective tool for boosting tourism is to do a better job selling the "locals." The theory is that most out-of-town visitors come here to see friends and relatives. If the CVB can convince residents to be tourists in their own town, they will be more likely to treat visitors to nearby attractions. Richard Geiger, CVB President and CEO, is introducing a roving visitor center this year—a recreational vehicle that will trek to local fairs, festivals and even shopping malls. The mobile facility will have exhibits of area attractions and be generously stocked with brochures. A list of sites that are currently promoted as tourist location are:

- Jewett Parkway which is projected to attract 100,000 each year.
- Underground Railroad sites and adjacent historic neighborhoods.
- Coit House a home on Virginia Street near Elmwood Avenue.
- Casino Niagara in Niagara Falls, Ont. marketing will attract 25 million visitors each year.
- Darwin Martin House promotions projected to generate up to \$100 million in economic spin-off for the region in its first five years of operation.
- Reverend J. Edward Nash Sr. home built in the late 1800s is promoted as an African-American historical site.

Burchfield Penny Art Center Architectural Tourism Plan

Burchfield Penny Art Center will work in collaboration with 16 area cultural and civic organizations on specific projects to develop architectural tourism. The new initiative is possible with a \$25,000 grant awarded to the center through the state's Arts and Business Council. The center plan is to target tour operators and travel planners, alerting them to tours planned around such Buffalo architectural treasures as Frank Lloyd Wright's houses, the grain elevators and industrial architecture generally, and the area's many Arts and Crafts buildings.

¹ Profile of 1999 U.S. Domestic Traveler Households are:

Average age of Household Head*: 48 years
64% married, 18% single/never married, 18% divorced, widowed, separated
57% of Household Heads* have a college degree, including 20% with graduate work started or completed
43% of Household Heads* with a managerial or professional occupation,

17% retired
36% with Children in the Household
Annual Household Income: \$61,500 mean, \$52,700 median**

* If there is both a male and female head of household, then the male head of household is used.

** Median is the point where one-half of traveling families earn more and one-half earns less.

² Currently, there are more than 150 heritage areas across the country.

³ Tourism has been the second biggest industry, only behind agriculture. The figures compiled for 1997 by the Travel Industry of America in 1997 indicated that nine other states spent more money on promoting tourism, including Illinois, Massachusetts, Virginia and Pennsylvania. The state's 1999 appropriation was \$15 million. The proposed increase for the 1999-2000 has been 15 to 20 percent. The states on the list of top tourist promoters are (in \$millions): Hawaii \$60.0, Illinois \$55.5, Florida \$54.3; Pennsylvania, \$34.4, Texas \$30.9, New York \$20.8; Virginia \$19.2, Iowa \$17.6; Louisiana 16.8; Wisconsin \$15.5.

⁴ For these destinations, the profile data is based on 1998 visitation only. Provides basic information for 180 destinations, based on 1999 Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs) and Primary Metropolitan Statistical Areas (PMSAs). The information is on U.S resident visitation (no international numbers are included). DKS&conducts the largest monthly travels survey (45,000 different households each month).

- About 60% of these households respond on their travel habits over the last three months
- Approximately 18% of households have traveled in a given month
- Data is collected for trips over 50 miles or where an overnight stay occurs
- For areas that are 'leaders' in tourism, 1998 numbers have been used.
- For smaller or less popular destinations, averages (by combining multiple years of data) are used.

⁵ For additional statistics of Buffalo-Niagara Fall, NY MSA see the Appendix.

Housing Characteristics – MLK Cultural Corridor

1. West of Jefferson, to Michigan

- **High (Michigan to Jefferson)** – There is a mix of refurbished bldgs on the street, including one new build. However, several structures need to come down. Part of the Fruitbelt. There is a lack of trees on the street. At Mulberry St. landscaping is needed.
- **East North** – Similar to High in that there is a mix of standard and sub-standard housing. There is a new church (Apostolic Church of Christ) at Grape and East North. Also, at East North and Masten Ave. are Buffalo Traditional H.S. and the Masten Park School, both impressive structures.
- **Fosdick** – Public housing is located along the entire block. The complex is well maintained. This street is situated behind the Masten Park School.
- **Fruitbelt streets (between High and East North)**
 1. **Peach** - Mainly 2F, properties are in fair to good condition, needs cosmetic work. **(East North to Best)** – Mainly 2F structures, in decent shape, mostly cosmetic improvements needed.
 2. **Grape** – Large structures, neighborhood is in O.K. condition, there is a new build at the corner. **(East North to Best)** – Mainly 2F structures, in decent shape, mostly cosmetic improvements needed.
 3. **Lemon** – Not a good street. Mainly 1F houses, many in bad condition
 4. **Orange** – Mainly 2F, housing stock is in fair condition

The streets are in need of paving, lots of potholes.
- **Mulberry (between High and East North)** – Mix of 1F and 2 F properties, fair condition on a whole. There are a couple of properties that need to be demolished.
- **Maple** – There are 3 or 4 vacant lots on this street that need landscaping. There are not many houses on the street, but those that remain are in decent condition. One new build has been recently erected on the street.
- **Best (between Masten and Jefferson)** – Not that many properties in this area. The Wiley Athletic Complex dominates one side of Best and another large facility is on the other side.
- **Dodge** – The corner at Jefferson is bad. There is a need for demo's and clean up, especially since Dodge is contiguous to the Wiley Complex. If you demo the first property in from Jefferson, as well as 332 Dodge, a large tract of land would be opened up to create a little sitting park or some other use. Because of Wiley, between Jefferson and Masten Ave. there are houses on only one side of the street. Between Masten and Michigan properties are mixed between 1F and 2F and are generally in O.K. condition. There are also large open lots at the corner of Dodge and Michigan, on either side.
- **Southampton** – Another street that is not in good shape. It seemed to get a little better as you approach Jefferson, but there are several properties that still need to come down in addition to the ones already down.

- **Northampton** – The whole street needs to be redeveloped. Between Jefferson and Masten Ave. I counted seven (7) properties that probably need to be demo'd. From Masten to Michigan it is not much better, with many properties at various stages of dilapidation.
- **Eaton** – Many lots of unbuilt land. Mainly 2F structures, a good number in disrepair. There is a lack of trees on the street.
- **Riley** – There are large unbuilt pieces of land on either side at Jefferson. The street is made up of large 2F and possibly 3F units that are in good condition.
- **Laurel** – Large unbuilt lots of land between Masten and Michigan. The housing is in O.K. condition and is primarily 2F properties.
- **East Utica** – Interesting mix of new builds and some nice older structures (some are in need of repair). Several lots are empty and not landscaped as a result of a demo.
- **Streets between Ferry and East Utica (Verplank, Waverly, Chester, Welker)**
All of these streets have followed the same type of pattern. There are mainly 2F properties with various rehab needs (from minor to major) and more demo's are needed. Open tracts of land, from previous demo's are located on each street. There are some new builds that have occurred in the area, mainly on Chester and Welker Street (roughly five (5) on each).
- **Glenwood** – This street is also situated between Ferry and East Utica. Like the streets above, it contains a mix of older houses in several rehab stages as well as a number of new houses. Not that bad a street, but like many others, it is a mixed bag.
- **Emerson** – The two sides of this street are vastly different. On one side you have mainly 2F properties that follow the development pattern of the rest of this section of the district – properties in different stages of repair. On the opposite side is a multi-family complex that is connected that takes up a whole block of Emerson. There is probably a minimum of twenty (20) units and the complex is in good condition and appears to be well maintained. There could be more units, if the second story is a separate unit.
- **Woodlawn** – This street seems to get better as you move from Jefferson, towards Michigan. On the Jefferson end there are a couple of demo's needed and there is some empty land. The street is mostly made up of 2F structures, many needing some cosmetic work.
- **Ferry** – There is no landscaping at all. Mainly commercial uses, but there is a cluster of new builds near Jefferson.
- **Michigan (between High and Ferry)** There is a high percentage of dilapidation everywhere along Michigan. Many demo's are needed. Ironically, there are also some new builds on Michigan, but they really do not make any impact whatsoever, because of the large number of sub-par housing.
- **Masten (East North to Ferry)** Buffalo Traditional H.S. and the Masten Park School are at the corner of East North. After that it is residential, moving towards Ferry. There is a mix of 1F, 2F, and new builds. The 1F and 2F properties are in fair to good condition. Many of the corners are empty lots that need landscaping.

Overall

- This area continues the pattern that is touched on in area 2 (the next section). The pattern is that the condition of the neighborhood and the housing stock gets worse as you move farther away from the Kensington Expressway. In area 2 the properties seem to be worse just in from Jefferson. In area 1, many of the streets are in rough shape throughout the entire block (from Jefferson to Michigan). I do not believe this is the area for the housing strategy/pilot program. There is too much work to be done and would take away from the impact.
- The cost of rehab (overall) will be high. Many structures are sub-standard
- An increased number of demolitions are needed.
- The streets need to be paved throughout the area.
- There is a vast amount of unbuilt land. Strategic demolitions near unbuilt areas would open up space for creative re-use.
- Jefferson and Best area is probably the ideal place for investment.
- This may be a market for the Home Equity Assurance Program. Moving families from this area to a nearby target area would not only improve the individual or family's quality of life, but would also allow the City to bank land in order to clear for future development. It may take 1, 10 or 30 years, but amassing land near the downtown area could interest investors in the future. I think it also makes sense simply because the quality of housing is not on the same level as with other areas in the MLK district.

2. East of Jefferson, to the Kensington Expressway "33")

- **High Street** – There are two (2) points of interest located on this street. First, there is the "Martin Luther King Multi-Cultural Institute" (near Jefferson). This is a grammar school. Secondly, although it does not look connected to the school, there is a "Family Life Center" across the street from the MLK facility.
- **Pershing Ave. (to Best St.)** – Probably about 50% one-family (1F) and 50% two-family. A good percentage of the properties are in disrepair. The homes in this area are most likely among the oldest in the study area, as well as the City. Between Dodge St. and Northampton there are a couple of demolitions needed, and there are a couple of parcels where demo's occurred that need landscaping/cleaning.
- **Timon St. (to Northampton)** – This street runs between High St. and Northampton. Between Timon and Best, most properties are in fair condition, with about 80% being 2F units. From Timon to Northampton, however, there is an improvement in the condition of the structures. In this section, 50-75% are 2F. An added amenity is that the street, in this area, is brick. One of the few remaining in Buffalo.
 - "God City" (Senior Housing) is located here, behind the Makowski School complex. ("Makowski" is located at the corner of Best and Jefferson, opposite the Wiley Sports Complex) Makowski is an impressive facility.

The Wiley complex and Makowski offer two strong anchors for that intersection and the surrounding neighborhood.

- **Northampton (from Jefferson to the 33)** – There are five (5) properties slated for demolition. Four (4) of these properties are within the first block in from Jefferson. Large structures, most are in fair to good condition.
- **Kingsley** – Mix of older (than the rest of the area) 1F and 2F properties, many of which appear structurally deficient. The corners at intersections look awful, mainly due to demolished properties where no landscaping occurred after the property was taken down. The street lacks trees. There is an existing park area, on the South side of the street, as you approach Jefferson. This could be an area to consider relocating existing residents, flatten to grade, and expand the park area.
- **Riley** – Large, mainly 2F (and possibly 3F) structures. Most look in good shape and seem to be structurally sound. Cosmetic upgrades would really add to a decent looking street. There are large tracts of undeveloped land that front Jefferson on either corner (potential for redevelopment). The same goes for the corner of Riley and Roehrer.
- **Landon** – In from Jefferson, it is mainly 1F, but gradually as you approach the Ken-Ex. it changes to 2F. This is not one of the better looking streets in the area. Many demo's have occurred on the street.
- **East Ferry (Jefferson to Ken-Ex.)** – A major thoroughfare that spans the corridor from west to east. There is a lack of commercial activity as you move from Jefferson to the Ken-Ex. The properties are in decent condition for the most part, but there is a lack of trees/landscaping.
- **Woodlawn (Ken-Ex. towards Jefferson)** – Like many of the other streets in this part of the district, the condition of the properties get progressively worse as you approach Jefferson. Woodlawn is mainly 2F structures. On the Ken-Ex. end of the street properties are in good condition and a tree planting has recently occurred.
- **Winslow (to Roehrer)** – Another street that is not bad at all. Buffalo Public School #53 is located within the neighborhood. At the corner of the two streets is a very interesting “urban garden/park” that sits across from the school. It possibly is a school project.
- **Glenwood** – Similar to Woodlawn and Winslow in that the properties are nicer as you approach the Ken-Ex. Glenwood, on the Ken-Ex. side is especially well kept. The houses also seem to be older towards Jefferson. The street is occupied mainly by 2F structures.
- **There are several small Side Streets between Glenwood and East Utica (Dupont, Hauf, Brooklyn, Stortz)** – Most are in decent condition. The only exception is Stortz and the problem is mainly that there is no grass surrounding any of the houses.

Overall

- The area is not as bad as you would think. I would guess that at least 85-95% of the housing stock was built before 1940. It does not appear that many new-builds have been erected.
- General impressions are that the condition of the properties and the surrounding neighborhoods improve as you move further north through this section of the

district. The architecture and style of the individual dwellings also follows this pattern. Your typical 2F house that you will find throughout the City mainly dominates the southern area. The northern portion contains a lot of the turn of the century housing that offers some of the most unique woodwork and variety of design styles in Buffalo.

Secondly, the condition of properties and neighborhoods also improve as you move from Jefferson towards the Ken-Ex., which is the eastern border of this section.

- In general, properties appear to be structurally sound. Most needs for homeowners are probably cosmetic, although I did notice a good amount of properties that seem to have old/outdated roofs. Therefore, there is most likely a need for some system replacement (roof, gutters).
- Outside of a couple of streets, there are not too many demolitions needed in this area. Nor does there appear to be a lot of need.
- The area contains a lot of churches
- There are more unbuilt areas in the southern portion than the northern. In many cases, the unbuilt land (post-demo) is at the corner of a street. This offers opportunities for unique uses. Landscaping and cleaning up these areas will brighten the neighborhood somewhat. They could easily serve as “common areas” for neighborhood residents to meet. However, most of the corner lots are serving as nothing more than a collection area for junk and paper.
- My unofficial breakdown of housing types would be about 70% (two-family) and 30% (one-family)
- The commercial strip traveling on Jefferson, towards Ferry, gets busier as you approach Ferry. Ferry does not possess much commercial activity in this section of the MLK district.

3. MLK Park Neighborhood

- **Parade** – This street fronts MLK Park. The unique architecture and large size of the houses speak to the importance and prominence of the park itself and the type of people that have and still choose to live here. Each property has its own distinct design. It is still a very nice looking street and will serve as an important component of the cultural district, as outside visitors may use their impression of this street as a barometer for the rest of the experience and Buffalo in general.
- **Northampton/Girard** – These are the next two streets north of Parade. Both have a mix of 1F and 2F homes. There are moderate rehab needs in order to improve each street.
- **Riley/Landon** – Both streets are made up of mainly 2F structures. There are serious problems on each block. The level of dilapidation is at a critical stage that could lead to the blighting of each block.
- **East Utica** – This section of East Utica is not that bad. Properties are generally in good condition. A tree planting would add to the character of the street.

- **Woeppel** – The condition of the street and the homes on it is poor. Many of the properties on Woeppel are in need of repair. There is no streetscape as well, trees are needed.
- **Woodlawn** – The street itself has been repaved. Properties are in fair to good condition.

Overall

- There is a good mix of housing types/styles throughout this area. Many are unique and have a lot of character.
- The “X” factor is what the cost would be to repair a good number of these properties. There are a few streets that have serious problems that would require significant investment. In addition, many of the properties would have moderate to high rehab costs.
- The first few streets above the park are in decent condition, but as you travel further north towards Ferry, the condition of the area begins to deteriorate.
- Need to know the percentage of homeowners vs. renters.

4. East of Fillmore, to Colorado

- **North and East Parade** – Both streets front MLK Park. Some nice properties, mainly 2F, but there is some cosmetic work needed on both streets. Not as impressive as Parade on the other side of Fillmore, but it is still an important street as it relates to the MLK district.
- **Northampton/Fougeron/Urban** – There is a lot of non-residential, including industrial/manufacturing, activity in this area above the Park. Some of the companies located in the area are Wonderbread, a former steel company, Urban Street Apartments (former School 62), Build Academy, Buffalo Vocation Technical Center. Residentially, Fougeron has some serious problems, as many of the properties are in disrepair and there are parcels of unbuilt land. Northampton and Urban street have better properties. All three have a mix of 1F/2F units.
- **French** – Similar to Northampton and Urban. Mix of 1F/2F units with various rehab needs and some unbuilt lots where properties have been demolished. The street seems to be relatively stable although it could go either way (depending on if there is investment or not). French has larger street trees.
- **Box** – Not very good housing stock, most of the 1F/2F properties need work. There is a good amount of unbuilt land on Box. Similar to French the street has some large street trees.
- **Glenwood** – Mainly 2F, generally in good condition. Large street trees.
- **Winslow** – Mix of older 2F and 1F new builds. Good condition. A new Police Precinct is currently under construction at the corner. This could make the area attractive to new homeowners in the future. There are some industrial/manuf. uses on the street between Fillmore and Kehr.
- **Kehr** – An important cross street that runs from Genesee to Ferry (in order to avoid Fillmore). However almost the entire street can be categorized as in fair to bad condition. There is a good percentage of unbuilt land the length of the street

- **North Fillmore** – A main commercial strip for the community. There seems to be enough empty commercial structures to allow for an effective re-use. The new Police Precinct at Winslow could help spur development in that area. There is a large tract of unbuilt land at the corner of Ferry.
- **Ferry** – Another commercial strip (for the most part). There is what appears to be a public housing development at Donovan St.
- **Colorado** – The railroad tracks on this street act as an Eastern border for the MLK district. Properties on the street are a mix of 1F/2F and are in decent condition.
- **Montana/Nevada/Goodyear** – Each street seems to have the same characteristics as well as similar problems. There are unbuilt areas on each street, landscaping is needed, properties are in fair condition (rehab costs would seem to be higher in this area).
- **Bissell** – Mainly 1F and 2F units. The street is in better shape than the reputation it carries. There are unbuilt lots on the street that need landscaping.
- **Rohr (to Northampton)** – Very nice street, mix of 1F/2F units.
- **Marshall** – Similar to the Montana/Nevada/Goodyear area (see above).
- **Speiss** – The whole street could be demo'd. There are only a few properties on this small street.

Overall

- The streets immediately above MLK Park are in decent shape. They are larger structures. This is an ideal place to concentrate part of the housing strategy.
- Rehab costs, on a whole, would seem to be higher than in other parts of the MLK district.
- There is a good deal of industrial/manufacturing/economic activity on the commercial strips (Ferry, N. Fillmore, Genesee) and in the Urban, Northampton, Louisen area. The N. Fillmore and Ferry commercial strips have definite potential. There re-emergence should be explored.
- Throughout the area there is a lot of unbuilt land, from previous demolitions, that needs to be addressed
-

5. Northeast of Ferry

- **Ferry (to Fillmore)** – This side of Ferry contains mainly 2F houses and is generally in good condition.
- **Inter Park** – This is one of a few side streets as you move north on Fillmore . They are short streets, with no more than ten (10) houses on each. Properties are in fair condition. There is a empty lot at the corner of Inter Park and N. Fillmore.
- **Sidney** – Mainly 2F homes, very small lawns, if any, and few trees. Properties are in fair condition.
- **Rickert/Lark** – Both of these streets run between Sidney and Northland. The housing stock on both streets is in good condition, although some minor cosmetic work is needed. The street itself needs to be paved on both.

- **Northland** – This street is mostly 2F homes in fair to good condition (no major problems).
- **Mohican/Buell** – These are two (2) small side streets that are on the Ken-Ex side, off of N. Fillmore. They are both dead ends in the middle of an industrial area and contain a minimal amount of houses. Both streets need to be cleaned up.
- **Monticello/Loring/Gillette/Oakgrove/Shelbourne** – This area is north of Delevan Ave (which is all industrial in this area). It is its own little community because of the physical barriers that exist, the Ken-Ex., Kensington Ave., and industrial sites. The only entrance/access to this neighborhood is from Kensington Ave. The housing stock is nice, mixed between 1F and 2F. Some minor cosmetic would improve a good thing.

Overall

- This is mainly an industrial area with a couple neighborhoods that exist within the industrial uses.
- The housing stock is in decent condition, there have not been many (if any) demo's in the area. There really is not much room for expansion though, as most of the land is either still being used to support business or may be contaminated. Supportive services to maintain what exists is probably the best answer. However, the commercial strips of N. Fillmore, and Delevan could use clean-up and landscaping in order to take the “urban edge” off the area.

6. Northwest of Ferry (Hamlin Park and Canisius College)

(Hamlin Park neighborhood)

- **Wohlers (to Northland)** – Nice neighborhood
- **Northland** – Another nice street, mainly 2F structures. Northland Street fronts the Hamlin Park School. There is also a church, which appears to be vacant, at the corner of Northland at the Ken-Ex that could possibly be a prime location for re-use.
- **Brunswick/Butler/Goulding** – All well kept streets, which are mainly populated by 2F homes. Butler St. has newly planted trees in front of most houses between Wohler/Hager and Ken-Ex.
- **Hager (to East Delevan)** – Typical of the neighborhood, well kept houses.
- **Viola** – This street is very unique. First, it another street that has retained its original brick. It is also probably one of the few cul-de-sac's existing in the inner City. It is nicely hidden within the rest of the residential area.
- **Florida** – There is a “Lutheran Rehab Home” located between Florida St. and E. Delevan. Another interesting aspect of this street is the urban park that is located in the middle of the neighborhood.
- **Daisy** – Another brick street, nice properties, mix of 1F and 2F.

(Canisius College area)

- **Hedley/Oakgrove/Blaine/Hughes** – Only a few cosmetic improvements needed. The area is a mix of residents as well as students of the college. Also a mix of 1F and 2F.

Overall

- This is a nice, stable area/neighborhood. Along with the northern part of area #2, this is an area to build in, around, and attempt to expand. The stability of the community is indicated by the number of block clubs that serve the area (and these are only the block clubs that I saw signs for) – Brunswick, Hager/Delevan, Butler, and Viola. This is all contained within the Hamlin Park atmosphere.
- Most of the houses in the area are larger than the average home in the City of Buffalo and have been maintained well. There is/has been a historic preservation movement in the neighborhood for some time.
- Improvements in the neighborhood are only needed aesthetically. Repairs to homes will only be cosmetic for the most part.
- Few houses are for sale.
- An improved commercial district along East Delevan would contribute significantly to the neighborhood.

Next Steps...

1. Finish neighborhood assessment either on 4/21 or by 4/28 at the latest.
2. Analyze 1990 Census data – Housing Characteristics. I wanted to do this second only because the data is 10 years old. My thought is that I would rather go through and get my impressions of the area before I begin to look at the data. The reasoning is that when I begin to look at the 1990 data, I can get a feel for the change (positive or negative) that has occurred during the previous decade.
3. Analyze/obtain information on the latest property values/tax assessment
4. Get information on housing sales for the past few years. This will help to see where people are buying in Masten as well as where people are moving from.
5. Talk to City Inspectors/Rehab Construction Analyst to get an idea of the average rehab costs to bring a property up to code with cosmetic improvement in the study area.
6. Begin to break down the components of the Chicago – Home Equity Assurance Program (once the information I have requested is received)
7. Also begin to think about a infrastructure/landscaping strategy to encourage homeownership (as opposed to a property improvement funded strategy).