



# LAND USE PLAN

City of Buffalo

## **CITY OF BUFFALO**

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## MAYOR'S MESSAGE



The Green Code is a historic revision of Buffalo's land use and zoning policies that will promote investment, facilitate job creation, and improve the environment. The work to create a healthy, sustainable, and prosperous community is already well underway, spurred by residents in neighborhoods across the city. The Green Code is designed to support and build upon these efforts.

From its origins as a frontier outpost, through the opening of the nation's interior by the Erie Canal, through its booming growth as a commercial hub and industrial powerhouse, through the pain of deindustrialization and economic restructuring – Buffalo has often thrived, sometimes struggled, but always endured.

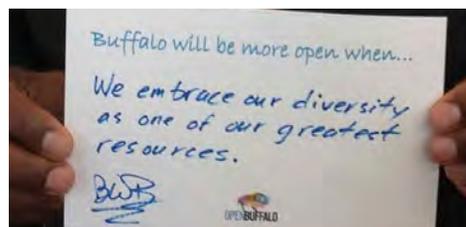
Today the city faces some daunting challenges – an economy in transition, a legacy of environmental damage, vacant lots and abandoned buildings. But we also benefit from great neighborhoods, parks, streets, architecture, and – as always – people. The Green Code will give us the tools to confront these challenges and continue the work of rebuilding Buffalo.

The first step in this process is a Land Use Plan that will guide the city's development over the next 20 years. The second step is a new Unified Development Ordinance – the first in more than six decades – that will promote investment by making the development process simple, transparent, and responsive to the goals we share for our city.

Work on the Green Code has taken place through a broad-based community process involving thousands of residents, and building on two decades of citizen participation. Our goal is nothing less than the economic resurgence, community renewal, and environmental repair of Buffalo.

Let's continue working together to make this goal a reality.

**Byron W. Brown**, Mayor



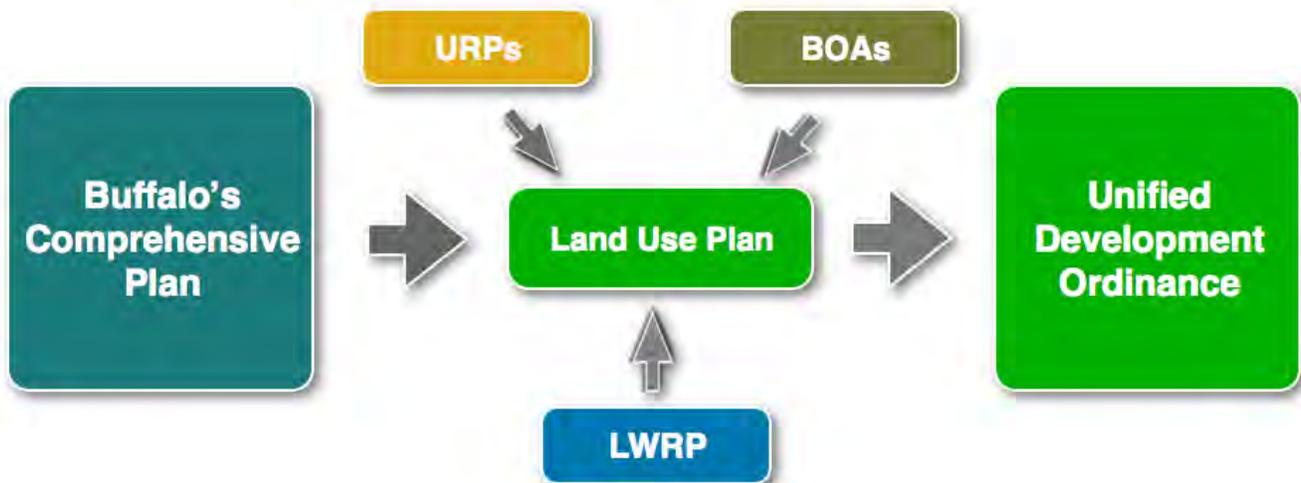
# OVERVIEW

The **Buffalo Green Code** is a place-based economic development strategy designed to implement the city's Comprehensive Plan. It includes the first citywide land use plan since 1977, and the first zoning rewrite since 1953. It incorporates the city's Homestead Urban Renewal Plan, Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan, and Brownfield Opportunity Area Plans into a common vision that will guide Buffalo's physical development over the next 20 years.

The 2006 **Comprehensive Plan** positioned the city as Western New York's regional center, and provided a road map for reversing declines in employment, population, and environmental quality. It was driven by three principles: fix the basics and build on assets; target sustainability; and employ smart growth. The plan identified strategic investments in economic development, neighborhoods, and infrastructure; and called for a revised zoning ordinance to achieve the city's smart growth goals.

This **Land Use Plan** translates the Comprehensive Plan into policies for directing future growth. It assesses existing conditions and trends, and offers direction on land use, transportation, and urban design. The plan sets the foundation to revise the zoning ordinance, establish capital improvement priorities, and drive neighborhood planning efforts. It provides guidance that support community objectives, but maintains enough flexibility to take advantage of unanticipated opportunities that may arise.

The **Unified Development Ordinance** integrates land use and urban design into a legal framework that addresses both public and private realms. It facilitates development by protecting and strengthening what residents like about the city, while addressing aspects they dislike. The ordinance consolidates development regulations into a simple, user-friendly document, providing fair and transparent rules and procedures based upon public consensus.



## ► Leverage and repurpose former industrial assets

Industry originally grew up along the waterfront and rail lines, depending on these locations for receiving, processing, and shipping. As the city expanded outward in the late 1800s, manufacturing grew at the stops along the New York Central Belt Line.

Buffalo may no longer be a major grain port or steel producer, but emerging sectors such as advanced manufacturing can contribute to expanding the local economy. As the WNY Regional Economic Development Council notes, no region has yet reversed its fortunes without growth in advanced manufacturing.

The city has an abundance of industrial land, much of which is underutilized and requires remediation to be

placed back into productive use. Brownfield cleanup has been aggressively pursued, as shown by the successful effort to reactivate the former Republic Steel site into the largest solar panel manufacturing facility in the US.

The Land Use Plan targets industrial uses for sites adjacent to railroads, expressways, high-voltage power lines, and other infrastructure. It also encourages the reuse of former manufacturing buildings and sites into a mix of new uses such as residential, commercial, and artisan industrial. In all cases, remediation and reuse improves the environment and reduces pressure on undeveloped greenfields and farmland in suburban and rural areas.

### Land use policies

- Prioritize strategic brownfield sites, and support their remediation and reclamation.
- Preserve industrial sites, particularly with rail or highway access; and increase the availability of reuse-ready structures and shovel-ready land.
- Reinforce employment centers along the Belt Line by encouraging a mix of uses for underutilized structures.
- Protect existing manufacturing uses from conflicting land uses.
- Support infrastructure improvements that facilitate water, rail, and highway freight movement consistent with economic development and environmental justice objectives.



The **Brownfield Opportunity Area Plans** consist of four redevelopment strategies: Buffalo Harbor, Buffalo River Corridor, South Buffalo, and Tonawanda Street Corridor. Despite their environmental challenges, the BOAs include several sites that have significant prospects for

redevelopment, such as the Outer Harbor, Ohio Street, RiverBend, and Niagara Street. The studies have provided in-depth analyses of these areas and identified strategic sites that are ready for investment.

## Support related planning efforts

Regional cooperation on various planning initiatives is essential to realizing Green Code goals. This includes efforts such as One Region Forward, Western New York Regional Economic Development Strategic Plan, Buffalo-Niagara 2050, Buffalo Building Reuse Project, and the Buffalo Billion Investment Development Plan.

It also includes coordination with partners such as Empire State Development Corporation, Western New York Regional Economic Development Council, Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus, Erie Canal Harbor Development Corporation, Greater Buffalo Niagara Regional Transportation

Council, Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority, Erie County Industrial Development Agency, Buffalo Erie Niagara Land Improvement Corporation, and others to help assure that objectives are achieved.

A number of parallel efforts are either underway or anticipated, each of which will contribute to Green Code goals:

- Bicycle master plan
- Open space plan
- Preservation plan

*Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan*



*Brownfield Opportunity Area Plans*

