

KAISERTOWN DEVELOPMENT PLAN

END450 Environmental Workshop 2019-2020



Acknowledgments

This report was authored by the END450 Fall 2019 senior studio, a compilation of the observations, research, and design work of the class

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Executive Summary

The Kaisertown Neighborhood Development Plan aims to strengthen Kaisertown's existing assets through a series of improvements. We intend to promote the neighborhood's social participation, economic development, main commercial corridors, and urban environment as well as raise awareness of Kaisertown within the region and the context of the Buffalo. This can be achieved through a series of proposals specific to each zone of improvement. These focus areas consist of Kaisertown's Main Streets, Houghton Park, and Waterfront. Proposals are established through our guiding principles. Recommendations should be forward thinking, relevant year round, and kept in context with Kaisertown. All development will aim to be sustainable in efforts to protect bolster cultural and physical assets that make Kaisertown unique. The neighborhood and main street area will be made accessible to all by prioritizing inter-municipal coordination and enhancing connectivity with the

region. These positive and conceivable changes can be accomplished with the help of dedicated residents as well as our clients the Kaisertown Friends Association.

We understand the importance of preserving Kaisertown's rich history while still allowing flexibility for change. This plan hopes to not only address physical improvements in the neighborhood, but improve the quality of lives of the residents. Although catering to Kaisertown's aging population is a significant objective, we plan for our changes to influence Kaisertown to grow and contribute to the revitalization of the City of Buffalo by increasing the diversity of the neighborhood. Kaisertown's untapped potential is not only seen as a resource to improve the neighborhood but the Western New York Region as a whole.

Introduction

History

The neighborhood of Kaisertown sits on the land once occupied by the Seneca Nation along the Buffalo River. In 1838, the land was divided and sold to farmers and developers of the neighborhood. The earliest of these three agricultural immigrant groups were the Germans. The Germans were known for their social impact on Kaisertown by their formation of taverns and social clubs. By the late 1800's Polish immigrants began settling in Kaisertown to take advantage of the job opportunities the railroad industry provided as well as the Snow Steam and Pumps Factory (Worthington Compressor). Kaisertown's Polish community began to dominate the neighborhood with its culture, however, one of their most notable contributions is St. Casimir Church, the social and religious center of their lives. Hungarian immigrants began forming small colonies in Kaisertown seeking labor in the pump factory and railroad. As time progressed, Kaisertown's immigrant communities began to disperse throughout the region. However, there is still a strong sense of nostalgia worth preserving that remains in Kaisertown's bones.

Demographic Snapshot



Data Source: American Communities Survey 2013-2017



Geographic context

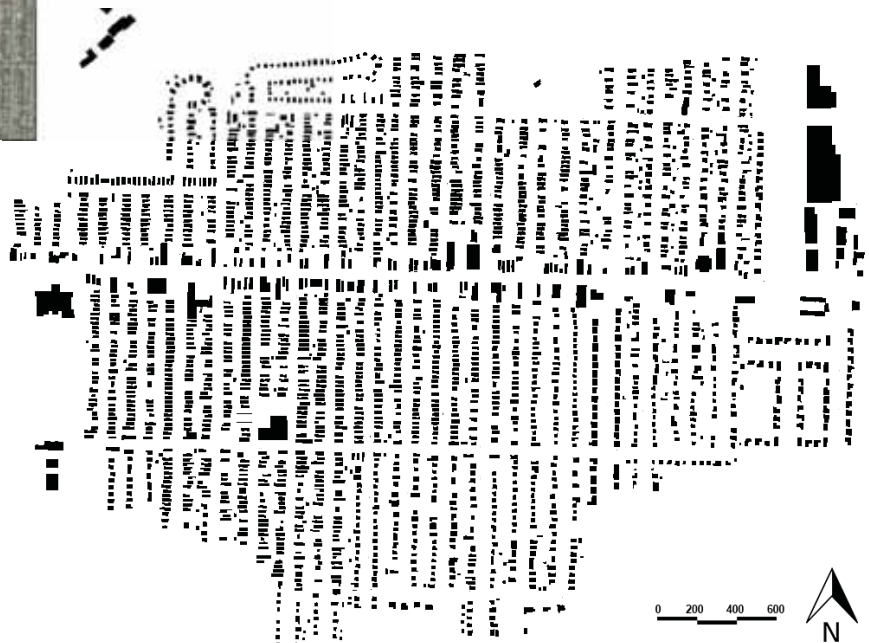
Kaisertown is a residential neighborhood located South east of Buffalo. It is enclosed by the I-190, I-90, and the Buffalo River. The I-190 and I-90 act as hard physical borders and restrict points of entrance for the neighborhood. The highlight and the town’s main business strip is on Clinton Street. It is where most of the town’s economic transactions take place and is often referred to as the center of the neighborhood. South of Clinton Street is the Buffalo River which also acts as a hard boundary, only crossable into Kaisertown by the Ogden street bridge.

A unique situation the neighborhood of Kaisertown finds itself in is that it is separated by 3 different municipalities. These include the city of Buffalo, the town of West Seneca, and the town of Cheektowaga. This distinction between the 3 separate municipalities is highlighted in the differences in features in the intersection between Cochrane Street and Clinton Street, such as the design of street lamps and the density of the urban fabric.



Pictured above: A map describing the location of the different municipal boundaries that meet within Kaisertown

Pictured Right: A figure ground map displaying the building footprints of the built form in Kaisertown. Notice the drop in density as you go from the city of Buffalo to the outer towns



Project Approach



Our first step was to analyze the existing conditions of Kaisertown. We did a site visit of Kaisertown and were individually tasked with writing about our experiences. This was one of the most crucial steps in our research because it gave us the opportunity to see Kaisertown firsthand, versus gaining perspective through other people.

Our next step in the planning process was to look at other comprehensive plans to establish the planning context. The plans we looked at pertained to our study area of Buffalo, West Seneca and Cheektowaga. We worked in teams reviewing One Region Forward: A New Way to Plan for Buffalo Niagara, Queen City in the 21st Century- Buffalo's Comprehensive Plan, and the comprehensive plans for both West Seneca and Cheektowaga. From these plans, we gathered broad takeaways and gained knowledge around what planning initiatives are already taking place in our study area.

Following our site visit, we did further research into the existing conditions of Kaisertown. The class split into five groups and covered five different topics:

1. Demographics and Economic Profile
2. Land Use, Natural Environment and Built Form
3. Housing, Community Health and Recreation
4. Community Institutions, History, Arts and Culture
5. Transportation and Connectivity

These topics were used throughout the semester and played a major role in us narrowing down our

recommendations and proposals for Kaisertown.

Next, we switched our focus to look outside of Kaisertown and find some best practices from other cities and neighborhoods. Teams were challenged to find case studies with supporting precedent studies that would be beneficial in making recommendations, focusing on business district revitalization, healthy aging, and waterfront access and development. Examples were pulled from all over the country, and even international. Researching case studies gave us insight into what has worked elsewhere, and what hasn't. Each case study and precedent were then related to Kaisertown and if it would be feasible in the neighborhood.

Finally, we got into the specifics of our design proposals. New teams were arranged to cover the five topics that were mentioned previously. Each team developed a SWOT analysis of Kaisertown pertaining to our assigned topics. A SWOT analysis looks at the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats/Challenges of a place. We used the SWOT to determine our goals and objectives for Kaisertown, then went into specific recommendations that related to those goals. Each team proposed several design ideas and concepts for Kaisertown pertaining to the team's theme, addressing specific planning issues, potential funding, and who would benefit if that idea were to be implemented. After reviewing each team's work individually, the class came together to make a cohesive plan for Kaisertown

Before looking into proposals for Kaisertown, it was important to understand the current conditions of the neighborhood. We have spent a considerable amount of time studying the area through site visits, interactions with community members, and research. This research has given us the background information about Kaisertown that is necessary for us to make beneficial recommendations. Our recommendations were then organized into four key categories:

- Transportation
- Economic Development
- Social Participation
- Urban Environment

Transportation



Increasing awareness and accessibility to alternate modes of transportation is an important factor that drives all other areas of improvement. Transportation by automobile dominates Kaisertown, with much of the residential neighborhood bordered by highways on all sides, restricting access to the neighborhood to underpasses and bridges over the Buffalo River. Kaisertown can currently be reached by the many NFTA bus stops along Clinton and South Ogden Street. Biking is also an accessible mode of transportation in Kaisertown, however there is only one shared bike lane which occupies South Ogden Street. Since Kaisertown is dense in size walking is also a feasible option for residents. Kaisertown's main commercial strip known as Clinton Street has recently made efforts to increase the walkability by adding new crosswalks. However, South Ogden Street, the town's other main transportation corridor, is lacking up to date crosswalks. This raises concerns for pedestrians due to the high traffic speeds in this area. There are tremendous opportunities to expand transportation options in and around Kaisertown, doing so, is one way to achieve the overall vision for improvement

Economic Development



One can easily realize Kaisertown's potential for economic growth. However, there are many vacant storefronts that are prohibiting the economic boost the neighborhood needs. Shown below is a land use map of Kaisertown:

Seemingly, Kaisertown appears to be heavily residential with many of the vacant businesses are on Kaisertown's main commercial strips or its waterfront. Clinton Street currently serves as the town's life line, contributing to the neighborhood's economic vitality. There are also few community centers throughout the town that serve as places for residents to hold events that bring in revenue. Although, most of Kaisertown's potential for economic growth lies on the waterfront due to most of Clinton Street already maintaining a considerably lively status.

Social Participation



One of Kaisertown's biggest strengths is the people living in it. There is a strong sense of pride for the neighborhood, and many of the families living there have been there for generations. The current population of Kaisertown has a high level of aging adults. Social participation is extremely important for social and mental health for people of all ages, but the older generation is often excluded when social events and programs are organized. Within Kaisertown, there is one senior community center. Autumnwood Senior Center sits on Clinton Street in the northwestern corner of the neighborhood, near Houghton Park. This is the primary option for Kaisertown's senior community members in providing recreational opportunities and social interaction. There is a huge opportunity to increase not only the number of facilities, but also the types of activities for social participation between Kaisertown's residents, and even guests of the community.



Kaisertown is fortunate enough to have Houghton Park, a large park within the boundaries of the neighborhood. Deeper within the park, there are a series of trails that lead to the Buffalo River, giving a more natural, undeveloped landscape for true nature lovers. Outside of the park, Kaisertown is lacking a continuation of the natural environment throughout the rest of the neighborhood. In order to develop a resilient Kaisertown, we must develop a sustainable Kaisertown. Integrating elements such as green infrastructure and solar tech can help establish Kaisertown as a leading sustainable community

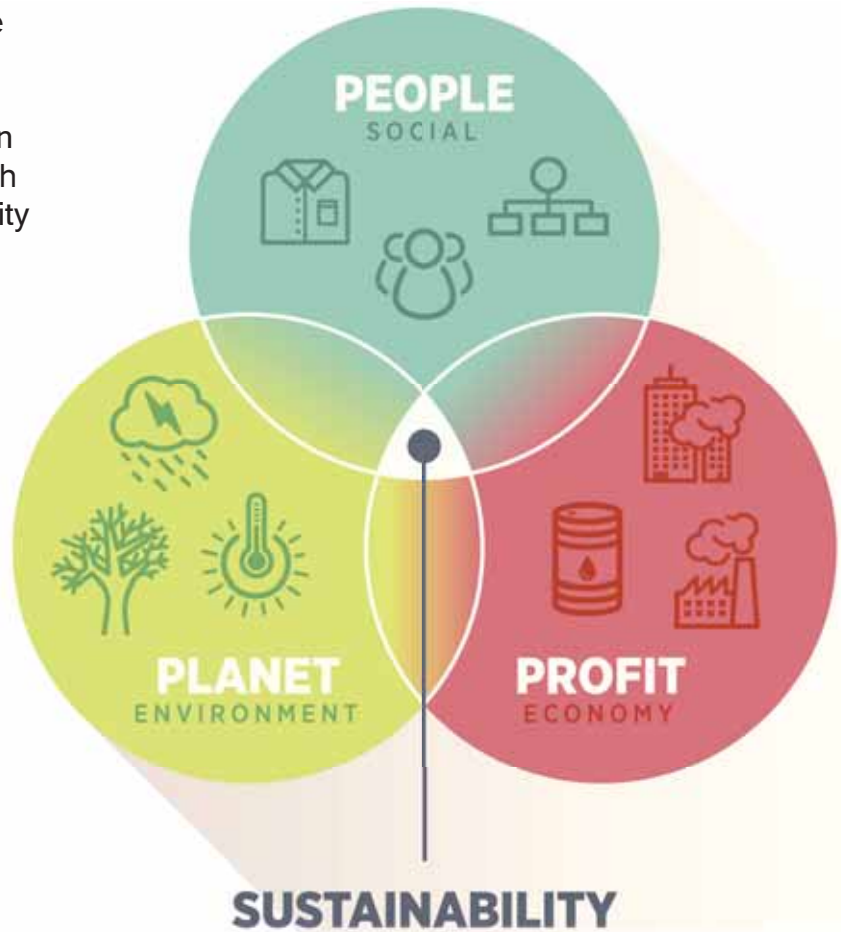
Connecting the people of Kaisertown

Improving their local environment

Developing a solid economic base

Sustainability Triple Bottom Line

Sustainability is often thought of only in an environmental context, but sustainability is often considered the intersection of many elements all working as one. In most models, the interconnection of social, economic, and environmental all contribute to sustainability in what is referred to as the “triple bottom line”



Planning Gaps

Throughout the planning process, our goal has always been to make recommendations that keep the people of Kaisertown in mind. Our project is a single semester studio with a curriculum designed to fit the time constraints and ultimately restricted the research and design process. We did not get the opportunity to get feedback through community engagement. Without community input, we don't know if the residents will be completely onboard with all of our ideas. One way to gain insight from the community could be as simple as holding a neighborhood meeting, inviting residents to come listen to our proposals and provide input. Many of the proposals that we have provided are adaptable and flexible. Before implementation of any idea, we need to collaborate with residents of Kaisertown to ensure that the implementation of new ideas benefit the neighborhood and are sustainable in years to come.



The Project Vision

Using the distinct character of Kaisertown's main streets, waterfront, and community assets we aim to build upon the neighborhood's existing strengths and make it a better place for current residents and a welcoming environment for visitors.



Guiding Principles

- 1 Recommendations should be forward thinking and focused year round.
- 2 Keep in context with Kaisertown, so as to not upset or gentrify current residents. (Includes aging people, resident income)
- 3 Recommendations are to be treated as suggestions and should seek local feedback before moving forward.
- 4 Sustainable Development: Protecting and bolstering cultural/ and physical assets that make kaisertown unique, while still allowing flexibility for growth/ change
- 5 Make the neighborhood and main street area accessible to all.
- 6 Intermunicipal Coordination should be prioritized at every possible opportunity.
- 7 Enhance connectivity with local and regional surroundings.



Neighborhood Development Zones

As a result of our multiple site visits it was concluded that improvements in Kaisertown can be more easily tackled when broken up into multiple areas of concentration. These areas consist of the **Waterfront**, **Houghton Park**, and **Main Streets**, while also taking into consideration neighborhood wide and specific area improvements. Separating our targeted areas allowed for a more in depth focus to take place in each area.



Waterfront Zone

The waterfront zone encompasses the southern section of Kaisertown that borders the river. The zone encompasses the riverfront from the western edge of Houghton Park to the Ogden street bridge.

Houghton Park Zone

The Houghton park zone encompasses all of the space of the park from its main entrance at Clinton street to the Buffalo river. A rail line forms one edge of the park, making a distinct hard edge.

Main Street Zone

The main street zone focuses on the two perpendicular primary roadways that bisect Kaisertown, Clinton street and Ogden street.

The Story of the Waterfront

The relationship between the Buffalo River and the neighborhood of Kaisertown hasn't been very favored in recent years. Many residential homes are located within 200 feet of the river, but show very few indications that people are actually visiting their waterfront. After having experienced the space ourselves, we feel the reason is very clear. A lack of clear accessibility to the water has deterred residents from using the space to its greatest potential. When attempting to approach any area of the water from Kaisertown, there is a harsh density of trees and greenery. The water is barely visible through a maze of unchecked vegetation. Even more unfortunate, the land near the water slopes directly into the river directly after the tree line ends, preventing visitors from getting a better view. It becomes

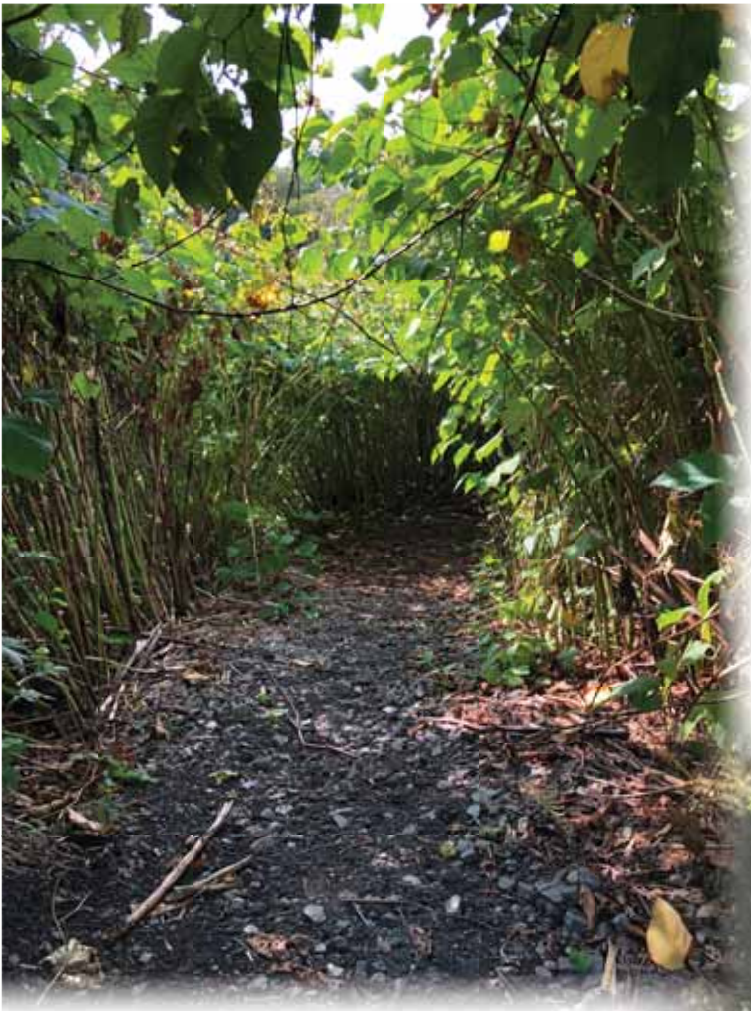
understandable why residents may struggle to utilize the space to satisfy their interests. Nonetheless, there are a small number of residents that don't allow poor accessibility to prevent them from experiencing their passions for waterfront activity. Through meetings with our client and a past resident of Kaisertown, we have learned that some people use the river for kayaking, fishing and similar water/boat related activities. One resident even mentioned his own difficulties while trying to access the water, pulling equipment across the greenery. That is why, when given the opportunity to design for changes across the waterfront, we've kept accessibility as a major focus. We seek more residential engagement with the waterfront, so that it can emerge as a new point of interest for people within as well as outside the neighborhood.



River access points from Cable Street (above) and Houghton park (right).

Photos taken by Govind Grewal





Images showing the different locations of invasive species around the park, mostly a variant of Japanese Knotweed



Photos taken by Joseph Meyers

Urban Environment



Recommendations

One of the first measures to take in the rehabilitation of the waterfront zone would be to reign in the over-prevalence of invasive species. Currently, the waterfront is flooded with bushes and shrubbery to the point of blocking access. What many don't understand is that some of these plant species are actually invasive and do not benefit from being in this area. However, simply clearing the whole lot will not solve the problem. To that end, we propose implementing a program specifically designed for managing vegetation growth while cleaning out invasive species.

In the larger context of the Western New York and Greater Buffalo region, environment has become more and more significant. The One Region Forward Plan encompasses nearly all of western New York and discusses the need to invest in greener methods in an attempt to mitigate climate change¹. Invasive species are titled invasive largely in part by the fact that they do not benefit the land they encompass.

Mitigating invasive species has been a priority in Western New York for several years now. The two main methods of mitigating plants are through destruction and removal. Completing a task such as this would be very difficult for any small neighborhood. By looking into partnerships with larger programs such as the Buffalo Niagara Waterkeepers, Kaisertown is more likely to receive assistance with this issue. Gaining recognition from major programs such as the Waterkeepers may take a long period of time, but other options do exist. The five star and Urban Waters Restoration Program provide grants for urban waterway restoration projects that not only mitigate invasive species, but also for projects that aim to foster community outreach and education². Hosting a school program from Houghton Park's academy would fit the requirements very well.

Our final possible cleanup method comes from the NYSDEC Invasive Species Grant Program. This program works to rapidly remove invasive species in New York state, and in 2019 alone was awarded 2.8 million dollars³. An additional benefit to looking into this program is that one of the program's receivers targeted and successfully removed Japanese knotweed, one of the invasive plant species found within Houghton

Park. As mentioned, simply destroying invasive plants will not solve the issue. After removing these species they must be replaced with native plant life that serve to benefit the local vegetation. The design intent is to demarcate a certain amount of area that will be dedicated on both sides of the river to the preservation of green space. This will allow shoreline vegetation to flourish in a comparatively controlled environment while allowing for the introduction of new plant species as well as mitigation of their encroaching subsets. The state mandate for preserving waterfront greenspace notwithstanding, these measures offer numerous practical benefits for the town as well. Rearing a healthy shoreline vegetation is equivalent to enforcing natural erosion control methods and it has a direct and positive impact on the betterment of river habitat. This allows for vegetation to naturally adapt and respond to environmental changes like water level rise and land subsidence. It is also aesthetically pleasing and, in the case of green space between the path and residential areas, forms a fairly effective barrier to isolate audio and visual traffic from each other.



Kaisertown's location to the water serves as a gem economically as well as environmentally. The river holds high economic possibilities for the neighborhood after the addition of minimal development. Using the river to its greatest potential while maintaining our principle of sustainable development is one of our highest priorities when making recommendations along the water. First and foremost, the introduction of a dock for boats and other water related activities is a highly significant gain to the neighborhoods value. Boat docks may have a misleading image of being an expensive addition to the park, however depending on the materials used and the style of dock the cost could be as little as \$1,500⁴. At that price range, you'd be

implementing a floating dock that is most cost effective due to the fact that floating docks require minimal maintenance and aren't greatly affected by water freezing around them because they are not deeply submerged. Bringing a boat docking area to the water adds the potential for hosting rental equipment; for example kayaks, paddle boards and other small boats. All of which can be stored in another location once they are no longer in use or kept at the site, depending on the neighborhood preference. Another benefit adding a boat launch does for the neighborhood is creating a destination. Access from the water adds potential for people traveling along the river to stop and visit Kaisertown for lunch or to relax at Houghton Park.



The proposal for the waterfront specifically ensures to keep a buffer for the riparian banks of the Buffalo river. Healthy vegetation along a river's banks helps promote a resilient river ecosystem, and prevents erosion. Access for kayaks will be centered to one location



One example of a temporary dock solution for Kaisertown until a more permanent solution can be established

Image Source: https://cdn.shopify.com/s/files/1/0056/43/6/3801/products/IMG_4263_grande.JPG?v=1545929677

Located directly next to this shed for rental equipment could be a snack food shack with benches and space for residents to interact and spend time there. One of our guiding principles is to keep projects forward thinking and year round based. Having the rental space switch items during winter and summer, such as having the snack shack sell hot chocolate in the winter and lemonade during the summer are ways of achieving that goal. Currently our proposed design for this boat dock and rental space is located at the end of Cable street and enters Houghton Park. We also see great potential in the space located at the end of Fenton street. It is a large plot of land that is currently owned by a private business consultancy firm (PRZ Enterprises). Should the neighborhood be met with the opportunity to acquire that plot of land and prefers the location and potential design of that area, we recommend looking into this areas

potential. Again, looking back at making the rental space viable year round, there is also potential for the shed to rent out sleds during the winter. This requires that during winter months Houghton Park groom snow into a large enough hill for families to bring their children. Alternatively, residue dirt and foliage from improving river access can be stockpiled at one designated spot for snow to naturally accumulate over time in winters. This way, same spot can be used year around for social activities like sledding.



Fenton street lot proposal





Renderings depicting a small vendor stand near the waterfront in the summer season and winter

Transportation 

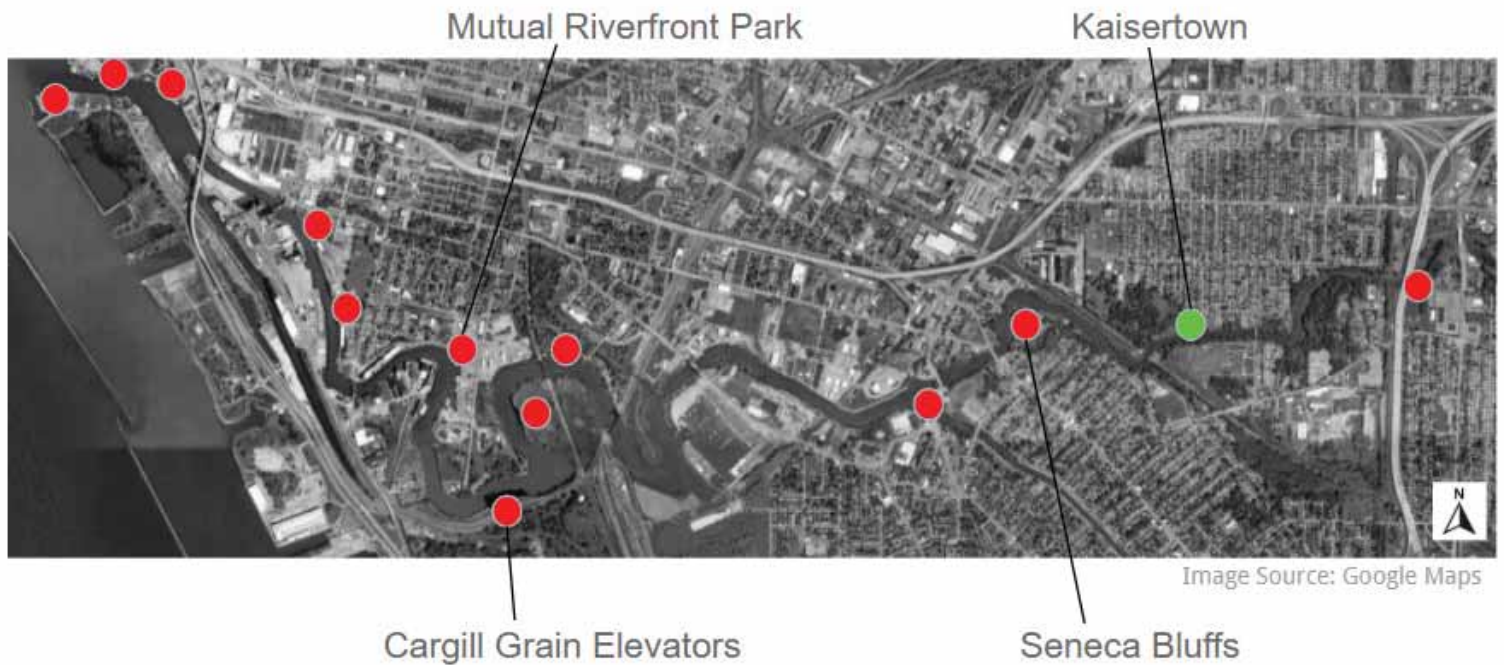
The Buffalo river presents a potentially convenient avenue of approach for Kaisertown to access riverside locations; two of the streets (Cable and Barnard) in particular are well within 100ft of the shoreline. Installing a dock for boat traffic would thus essentially make the town’s southern border into a riverside destination. At a local level, it will allow for

an alternate means of transportation to reach Seneca Bluffs (Southwest of Kaisertown) as well as Harlem Road dock (Southeast of Kaisertown). As for the other possible locations, residents will be able to go as far as Outer Harbor near Lake Erie on the western edge of Buffalo and safely visit all locations in between.



Image Source: https://live.staticflickr.com/6148/5951998508_ed/98e2943_b.jpg

The Cargill grain elevators along the buffalo river



Apart from just using the river for transportation purposes, it also allows for a variety of recreational uses. The elevation difference between the river surface and shoreline (river altitude being roughly 5 meters less than the surrounding landmass) essentially isolates the people from their immediate surroundings, thus, allowing them to briefly “get away from it all” by immersing their senses with a view of the river and foliage in all directions. Boat access would also open the door for Kayaking and Rafting. With improved water filtration over time, it would become an ideal location for swimming and fishing as well.

afternoons fishing on the docks during the summer. All the excess dirt and foliage excavated to improve access by implementing trails can be gathered together for a small hill in the nearby Houghton Park location and be used as a sliding hill for a bit of winter fun. Additionally, the Invasive Species Cleanup program itself can be designed to incorporate community involvement by promoting volunteer-based actions for the health of both the environment as well as the participants

Sledding hills are an extremely popular form of winter entertainment, especially for children



Image Source: https://www.popsci.com/sites/popsci.com/files/styles/opensograph_1_91x1/public/images/2018/02/children-sledding-downhill.jpg?itok=xzFKgPfi

Social Participation

All the aforementioned recreational uses can also easily translate to social activities as well. Teams comprised of local residents can gather periodically for friendly kayaking competitions or enjoy leisurely



The Story of Houghton Park

In order to get a better understanding of how our final neighborhood plan would look like and the components that needed to be included, it was imperative that we look at plans such as One Region Forward and Queen City. By establishing the planning context involved with developing a neighborhood plan through the plans aforementioned, we were able to determine shared goals and challenges amongst these plans that could serve as a guideline on what to look for when compiling a neighborhood plan for Kaisertown. Given that plans like One Region Forward and Queen City encompass the entire Buffalo region, we realized some of the shared goals and challenges could also apply to Kaisertown. They include goals such as: rebuild and revitalize local businesses to maintain vitality, improve coordination with the villages and other municipalities, and lastly to protect and build upon parks, green spaces, and the waterfront. The last point in particular made a big impact on our suggestions for Kaisertown's largest green space, Houghton Park.

Kaisertown is a neighborhood with a strong foundation given its existing assets and cultural values - walkable, compact, close-knit community. One of Kaisertown's greatest attributes is Houghton Park, the neighborhood's largest plot of green space which offers various amenities including: basketball courts, baseball fields, tennis court, swimming pool, and splash pad. During our first site visit in the neighborhood, we spoke to our client Susan Bradbury from the Kaisertown Friends Association and learned more about the neighborhood from a resident standpoint. Her feedback was important as it gave us a more personal insight to the community dynamic and the daily life of the people living in Kaisertown. They are people with a strong identity and sense of community that look out for each other and their neighborhood as if they were family. As of right now, the community church is the most popular gathering space for events or meetings that take place in Kaisertown. Therefore, with our suggestions, we hope to make Houghton Park a place that ultimately becomes a main gathering point for residents and visitors alike. While simultaneously highlighting our sustainable development principle of protecting and bolstering cultural and physical assets that make Kaisertown unique and creating a great sense of connectivity with surrounding regions.



Houghton Park Clinton street entrance - Visible, Accesible, Beautiful

Urban Environment



Given the close proximity between Houghton Park and the Buffalo River, prioritizing environmental action and protecting the natural habitats currently residing in this area, has to be a main focal point for future development plans in the area. Houghton Park is approximately 64 acres of open green space, located at the northwest corner of Kaisertown and currently part of the City of Buffalo's Local Waterfront Revitalization Program⁵. That being said, there could be more initiatives to help restore wildlife given the many benefits it can help bring to nearby ecosystems. Although maintenance is one of the biggest issues when it comes to planning for outdoor projects like this one, if a wildlife restoration program was to start in Houghton Park, it could be done in collaboration with nearby parks such as the Seneca Bluffs Natural Habitat Park and Tift Nature Preserve. The Seneca Bluffs Natural Habitat, for example, is home to one of the largest diversity of migratory birds, wading birds, and waterfowl along with beavers and muskrats. It is located at an urban core much like Houghton Park is and have received a \$1.34 million grant from the US Army Corps for an Ecological Restoration project. The Kaisertown Friends Association could apply for a grant just like Seneca Bluffs did to better provide river-land connectivity for wildlife; therefore increasing habitat quality and hopefully have Houghton Park be a part of this larger wildlife corridor and part of the future Buffalo River Greenway Plan.

farmer's market in the parking lot next to the entrance on Clinton Street, it could have the potential of becoming a big hit amongst the residents and nearby neighborhoods. There have been instances where large parking lots have been made multi use, meaning they serve not only as parking space for vehicles but also for other social events or gatherings that require an abundant amount of space, such as a farmer's market. The money gathered from the farmer's market could be used to as an emergency fund for any neighborhood future needs. A great way to start this all, in terms of funding, can be by applying for a grant called the United Fresh Start Foundation Community Innovation Grants Program⁶. It is a program that supports "visionary initiatives and research to increase children's access, selection, and consumption of fresh produce while they are outside of school" and are looking for projects "that work to address fresh produce access, selection, and consumption in retail and food service environments." A total of \$50,000 are available this year and this idea has the potential of winning.

Economic Development



Houghton Park's prime location, beside the Buffalo River and straight off of Clinton Street make it a viable asset to Kaisertown with the potential of becoming a major source of income for the neighborhood. Programming has proven to be an inexpensive method of helping attract people to a specific area with ideas like yoga night or hosting events like concerts and farmer's market. If the residents of Kaisertown along with members of the Kaisertown Friends Association were to collaboratively organize a once a week



The parking lot of Houghton park could serve as an ample space for a farmers market.



Accessibility for all is a guiding principle by which we hope to abide in all of our design suggestions. Which is why we decided that improving the conditions of the paths inside the park should be an important step to take so that navigating through Houghton Park could be easy for all. Pathway improvements would also help increase connectivity from the Clinton Street, through Houghton Park, all the way to the waterfront. According to the NYS DOT, sidewalk/walking path renovations can cost generally \$70 for every 300 feet. There is a Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) Stateside Program whose funds are intended for “target projects that would enhance urban parks and community green spaces, with a focus on developing blueways and public access to water resources and conserving large landscapes.” This grant program perfectly encompasses our suggestion of improving park visibility and accessibility for everyone, creating that sense of entry the park currently lacks, and also create an ADA accessible and comfortable path for wheelchair users or people with other types of physical disabilities, much like the elderly population.

Advocating for more use of public transportation is a big theme in all of future Buffalo Comprehensive plans and because connectivity is one of our main guiding principles, we would like to incorporate more bike lanes throughout the neighborhood itself and definitely some inside the park⁷. With the addition of bike racks, we hope to promote bike users to use this mode of transportation as an alternative to a car ride to the park and make use of the new amenities. We want people to comfortably walk and bike on the paths throughout Houghton Park; therefore, by properly paving the paths closests to the amenities the park holds would help us achieve our goal of easy access and navigation for all. Currently the paved path is really worn out and deteriorating while the path throughout the woods is mostly dirt and gravel. It would be a good idea for the paths in the woods to remain paved in their current material because it might be too difficult to pave through the woods and it is an area used mostly for walking only.

Existing



Proposed



The addition of a connected and new walking path within Houghton park will allow people to move more freely around the park and to the river



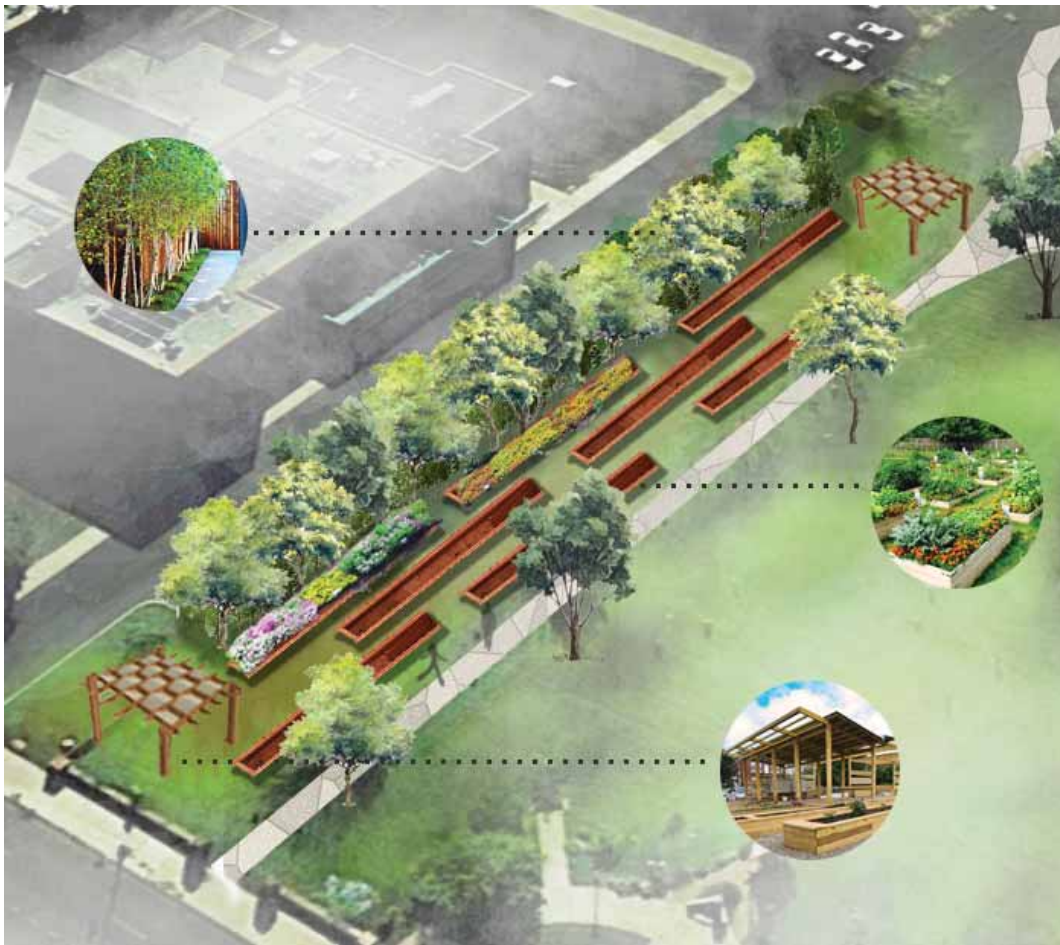
Our vision for this project prioritizes the notion of building upon the neighborhood's existing strengths. Some suggestions that could help bring out Houghton Park's full potential involve implementing new ideas for both summer and winter seasons alike. Being that Kaisertown's average population age is 40 years old, the relationship between health and the aging population is a main focus point for the overall future and well being of Kaisertown's residents. Design ideas like the addition of a green gym in Houghton Park can be a more affordable and accessible resource for the people of the community that might not be able to afford a gym membership or have the time to drive to the closest gym. Public green spaces that are not only accessible by various modes of transportation but also have good quality infrastructure, are a great way to increase both physical and mental health for people of all ages. We would like to suggest placing a green gym behind the community garden near the entrance of Houghton Park, similar to the one in Delaware Park⁸. The goal is to be able to do a workout routine that involves as many muscles of the body through the use of equipment such as a pull up bar, leg press machine, cardio walker, balance board, captain's chair and flat bench to do sit ups or push ups. With the addition of a green gym that includes something as simple as six pieces of equipment like those mentioned above, can be a great start for beginners and provide the basics for more advanced gym goers. The GameTime Playground Grants are currently looking to help "communities bring play to more children and families by setting aside significant playground grant funds toward the purchase of new play systems." After some research, we found out that the six equipment green gym we want to suggest comes out to approximately \$10,000; therefore, applying for this grant could be of great help if Kaisertown wants to implement this idea.



A green gym not only increases social participation between residents, but allows them to practice good exercise habits in their own hometown.

Another suggestion to help increase community engagement in Houghton Park is the addition of community gardens near the entrance of the park and playground area. Beautification of the park would be the first benefit of adding a community garden in Houghton Park. Increasing the strength of the community by offering them something they can take pride in is the second reason why a community garden can be a good idea. In the case that our suggestion for community gardens in Houghton Park is approved, Kaisertown Friends Association could look further into the Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo. They offer multiple grant opportunities such as The Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Legacy Funds which “supports enhancement of community access to spaces and programs that support healthy living” and “may include projects related to increasing the walkability and bikeability of local communities, and improving waterways, greenways and recreation corridors.

The addition of a green gym, community gardens, and farmer’s market for the summer time can be great ways to attract more people to the park and also generate revenue for the community. Yet, the same should be taken into consideration for Buffalo during the winter season. An ice skating rink, and snowshoe rental location within the premises of the park can be an incentive for Kaisertown residents and visitors alike to come spend time at the park during the colder months. The main purpose behind all these suggestions for Houghton Park is to make this location a destination spot within Kaisertown and by implementing ideas that are fun, feasible and adaptable to Buffalo’s year round weather conditions, we should be able to create a space where greater social interactions occur and help lead to an increase in community engagement.



A community garden allows residents to have a public place in their park that in effect, they own. The garden would be open to all residents with smaller separate plots for individuals and also community planted beds.

Revitalizing Kaisertown's Main Streets

Kaisertown has one major roadway (state route 354) that intersects the neighborhood through the center, this roadway is known locally as Clinton Street. Clinton Street is predominantly a commercial strip with shops, lounges, restaurants, and a number of other businesses along its length. According to the Buffalo Geographic Information System (GIS) Map, all of the buildings along Clinton Street are N-3C meaning they are all mixed-use centers. Previously, the buildings in this area were classified as C-1 or C-2 properties which meant they were primarily commercial zones that are predominantly residential in character.

From a section view perspective, Clinton street is relatively wide. This means it has no significant trouble accommodating cars and other motor vehicles passing through while also affording space

to pedestrians on its sidewalks. Cars and trucks speed through the neighborhood because of this wide street. Street parking is available along this major commercial corridor, but there are also a number of parking lots in adjacent areas off Route 354.

Examining consideration for the pedestrian, Kaisertown is a walkable place but has only the bare necessities when it comes to assets for the individual who chooses to walk as a means of travel along Clinton street. This is not so much a problem, but more so an opportunity for Kaisertown's commercial corridor to reap the benefits that accompany transforming an area into a more pedestrian friendly environment. Adding more features to accommodate all travelers from the entire area will help increase overall connectivity in a physical, social, and economic sense.



A land use map of Kaisertown showing the breakdown of each land use category. Note the center strip of commercial zoning around Clinton street surrounded by a residential neighborhood in yellow





As mentioned, Kaisertown is a fairly walkable area. You can travel from point A to point B without much trouble. The problem we have identified is how focused Clinton Street is towards vehicular traffic as opposed to pedestrian travel. Clinton street has a fairly wide street section which is largely dominated by automobiles. While pedestrian walkways are more than wide enough to accommodate two even three people standing side by side with each other, cars receive a discernible preference along Clinton Street. Transitioning toward a complete street would help alleviate the stress of being car oriented. There is a notable lack of features that would encourage pedestrian transit besides the required basics of paved sidewalks and crosswalks at traffic lights, even then, they are at the bare minimum. To increase pedestrian comfort and elicit more pedestrian activity along Clinton Street, fully activating the streetscape would help bring about a beneficial cultural shift that prioritizes pedestrians over the automobile. Activating the streetscape, means utilizing the available space to its full potential to create the proper balance between pedestrian and vehicular traffic that contributes to a thriving commercial corridor. Examining a case study in Cedar Falls, Iowa we are able to quantify the positive effects such a shift can bring about along a community's commercial district.

CEDAR FALLS, IOWA

Cedar Falls, Iowa shares some similarities in background to Kaisertown. Both areas have waterways that run adjacent to them, both areas supported old industrial workers who were employed at nearby factories and plants, and both locations experienced a rise in vacancy along their main commercial corridors. In more ways than one both areas shared similar existing conditions, strengths, and weaknesses. Through the implementation of an initiative called the Main Street Iowa Program, which is focused on business district revitalization through four focus points (Economic Vitality, Design, Organization, and Promotion) that work to utilize the streetscape within a commercial district to its full potential, they were able to see some substantial returns on their program in Cedar Falls. The outcome of the program boasts a total revitalization of Cedar

Falls' commercial district, going from high levels of vacancy to almost full occupancy, a state claimed \$50 return on every dollar of state investment in the Main Street program, a restoration of nearly all buildings along Main street (Cedar Falls' commercial strip), an exponential increase in property value, and a net gain of hundreds of jobs and new businesses in the area as well. The application of the principles of this program which aims to improve the social and economic well-being of Iowa's communities by assisting selected communities to capitalize on the unique identity, assets and character of their historic commercial districts have the potential for a direct carryover when applied to Kaisertown. As such the possibility to bring about similar outcomes on a smaller scale in respects to the size difference of the two target areas is very much feasible.

To fully activate the streetscape along Clinton Street to better accommodate pedestrians we suggest the following recommendations. Utilizing the Main Street Iowa's design focus point of design, our first suggestion is the addition of street furniture along the length of Clinton street. focusing firstly on bus stops we would like to introduce shelter against the elements at every bus stop along and off of Clinton street. This simple addition shows consideration for pedestrians that brave the harsh climate of Buffalo's winter creating a more inclusive public environment within the community. This coupled with the introduction of public seating at bus stops and along Clinton street creates an atmosphere that is more accommodating of pedestrians, encouraging foot traffic by providing pedestrians with a place to rest in between the beginning of their walk and their destination.

In addition to sheltered bus stops and public seating we also suggest the addition of outdoor sidewalk seating for lounges and bars along Clinton street. This approach was one taken up in Cedar Falls, encouraging businesses to expand their seating onto the sidewalk or having seasonally open store-fronts creates an enticing pedestrian atmosphere that invites people in the neighborhood to explore community institutions without having to necessarily commit to fully immersing themselves within a private space. Instead of a sidewalk that caters only to people heading where they're going, this expansion takes the life and atmosphere that maybe trapped behind the few glass windows on the street side facades of restaurants along clinton street and brings it out into the public eye for everyone to engage both actively and passively. This inturn creates a more lively sidewalk, encouraging pedestrian traffic through the sheer presence of people enjoying themselves in public-private setting. Looking a little closer to Kaisertown we can examine the application of similar design principles that yielded fantastic results within the greater Buffalo area.

Looking just a few miles North of Kaisertown we have the north park Neighborhood which is home to arguably one of Buffalo's most successful revitalization efforts based upon a commercial corridor, Hertel Avenue. From end to end Hertel avenue is mixed use commercial corridor composed of both private residences as well as businesses such as bars, restaurants, supermarkets, barbershops, and other specialty/ miscellaneous storefronts. Hertel Avenue in comparison to Clinton street has a similar street section with a wide vehicular section and sidewalks more than sufficient enough to accommodate multiple pedestrians side by side. Both these commercial corridors are also home to buildings that date back almost 100 years into the past. At 1856 Clinton Street we have the have the former bank building that is unused and currently up for sale in the Kaisertown neighborhood, and on Hertel Avenue we have the iconic North Park Theater which coincidentally dates back to roughly the same era (1920) as the Kaisertown bank building. Both commercial corridors share a similar design, however after years of investment and revitalization efforts Hertel avenue has achieved notoriety as one

of the most vibrant places to do just about anything you can think of doing in a city. Walking down Hertel you see the ideal outcome of full on street scape activation. On a quick stroll you'll notice that most of the restaurants along Hertel have seasonally open storefronts like Lloyd's Tacos, which bridges the gap between the private business atmosphere and the public sidewalk creating a much more inviting and vibrant pedestrian atmosphere. Walking further down you'll notice the presence of the aforementioned sheltered bus stops, public as well as private outdoor seating, and clearly marked crosswalks with visible and audible pedestrian signage indicating when the pedestrian has the right of way. All of these factors put together have transformed Hertel Avenue into a vibrant and thriving street-scape that considers the pedestrian over the automobile the same way they were able to transform Cedar Falls in Iowa.



Image Source: <https://buffalonews.com/2019/10/28/lloyd-taco-to-open-third-brick-and-mortar-location-in-elmwood-village/>

Along with activating the streetscape comes the addition of street trees. The addition of street trees has the purpose of calming traffic. As we know, cars and trucks speed through Clinton Street quite often. Through traffic counts, Clinton Street is found to have a high volume of traffic daily. The lack of street trees may encourage drivers to speed through Clinton Street ignoring the speed limit and possibly ignore pedestrians. Pedestrians have a 90% chance to survive a car accident at 19 mph and under. This chance drops to 50% at 28 mph and faster. The map indicates the average speed of driving is between 26 miles per hour to 45 miles per hour. Kaisertown currently has a neighborhood speed limit of 30mph.





Above: a map that shows the average traffic speeds in and around Kaisertown
 Below: A map created to show the locations of street trees along Clinton street`





Closely connected to activating the streetscape, transportation plays a role in how people use the street. We know Clinton Street is more accommodating to automobiles rather than pedestrians. We have found there is a lack of adequate comfort and safety for people who use methods of transportation other than cars. If we want pedestrian activity to increase on Clinton, we should aim to make sure everyone is able to travel. Currently, there are no dedicated bike lanes on Clinton Street. The only bike lanes in Kaisertown is located on South Ogden Street. Being Kaisertown's main and most connected street, we recommend that there should be bike lanes all along Clinton Street so that people who choose to use bikes can travel on Clinton Street without the worry of cars or people who walk.

Public transportation is another means of travel that is used in Kaisertown. This neighborhood has two bus lines that travel through. There are plenty of bus stops along Clinton Street but there are no sheltered stops. The climate in Buffalo changes a lot and can be harsh, especially in winters. Even though some riders will wait no matter the condition due to lack of options, lack of shelters might mean lack of ridership from others who do have options. The simple solution would be to add sheltered stops. One thing to keep in mind however is that the NFTA already has a plan in place to add 40 more bus shelters. They may be adding one in the neighborhood already but in Buffalo, there are around 4,500 bus stops. Around 250 are sheltered which is only 5% of all stops in the

area. If Kaisertown ends up not being chosen for one of these new stops, even simple accommodation would make all the difference. Investing in options that expand and activate the streetscape will even help people like bus users. Adding benches at most stops, or places to sit, will increase comfort. Kaisertown has an aging population. One of our guidelines is to make the neighborhood and main street accessible to all. Adding places to sit will go a long way for many people in Kaisertown.

One of the more important topics is pedestrians themselves. In high density pedestrian areas, the crosswalks may not be adequate enough for users to want to walk as much as they could. Every traffic light and/or intersection should have an obvious and clear crosswalk with yield signs. There are locations on Clinton Street where there are no places to cross or crosswalks are faded. We recommend that all crosswalks at traffic stops be updated or upgraded. Crosswalks should be clear and concise so that all users, regardless of age or impediment, should be able to cross in a safe manor. Grooved crosswalks will help achieve that goal. These types of crosswalks are highly visible to cars and pedestrians. For people with difficulty seeing, they will be able to feel the grooves on the crosswalks to help them cross. For higher density areas such as around the Houghton Park entrance and Houghton Academy, there should be the most effort spent here because of children who may need to cross the road. During the morning rush, it may be difficult for people to cross the road considering there is high traffic that travel through Clinton Street.



Kaisertown businesses cater largely to the people within the neighborhood itself. With many operational storefronts being long standing, locally owned establishments within the community that many people describe as capturing a little piece of the warm past that they associate with the mention of Kaisertown. Unfortunately, as time progresses we are beginning to see less of these businesses along Clinton Street and a gradually increasing vacancy rate. Tying closely into the activating the streetscape and pulling ideas from the Main Street Iowa Program we have an opportunity to yield similar results to those experienced in Cedar falls through a combination of multiple efforts.

As mentioned before many storefronts along Clinton Street have been at their respective locations for an extremely long time, Wichec's lounge for example has called Kaisertown home for a few decades now. Although these places have experienced some form of change through the years, many of their facades are somewhat dated. What we do not want to happen is for these buildings to be torn down and changed. The organization and promotion of the grants provided by the Buffalo Main Street Initiative & the Better Buffalo Fund will allow current business owners and potentially interested business

South Buffalo

In the past South Buffalo has not been fortunate enough to see the same kind of investment and development that other parts of Buffalo have such as Downtown Buffalo, Allentown, and North Park has. Looking more specifically to South Buffalo's commercial corridor, Seneca Street, that lack of investment was quite apparent. As development in these other commercial districts thrived, an accompanying rise in real estate prices began to deter future would be investors to look into the aforementioned communities. This led investors and community members alike to search for new locations where they would be able to yield the best bang for their buck in an investment based on property value in local areas. Turning their attention to more affordable parts of the city, investors, developers, and residents alike have taken interest in South Buffalo's Seneca Street commercial corridor and other neighborhoods as potential locations for their endeavors. Using both personal investments and government grants, interested parties began sprucing

owners to reimagine their storefronts in a way that is more conducive to the vision of a thriving "main street" along Clinton. Coupling these grants with a potential tax credit (similar to the Investment Tax Credit associated with solar panels), business owners who choose to "revamp" their building facades have the capability to breath new life into Kaisertown's commercial corridor. The subsequent improved visual aesthetic as a result of these intended improvements will further activate the streetscape, creating an environment where individuals are more inclined to walk through town as opposed to drive around in order to be able to immerse themselves in these environments, stopping in and contributing to the local economy. Restoring and improving upon what is already here is an important thing we want to keep in mind. Inspiration behind this comes from the Buffalo Land Use Plan and how a major goal is to create plans and ideas not for those who will live in Buffalo, but for those who already live here. We want to improve the buildings and businesses already in Kaisertown for the residents of the neighborhood who grew up with them. Creating opportunities such as live-work spaces will allow for this to happen. Taking note from another local example we can examine a similar revitalization effort currently underway in South Buffalo.

up business facades and reimagining storefronts along Seneca street, completely revitalizing one of South Buffalo's most prominent commercial corridors. These redevelopment efforts lead largely in part by the Hook & Ladder Development company (composed of 3 firefighters who grew up with in the South Buffalo Community) have taken initiative in investing back in their community. Focusing on revitalizing the neighborhood they call home, they have been successful in restoring centuries old buildings, gathering and organizing resources for the community, and fortifying the place of long standing community institutions such as a barber shop that had been in the community for decades. The key point here being that the majority of the redevelopment along Seneca street was birthed from residents within the community, a concept that can prove to have the same positive effects in Kaisertown. The effects of these incentivized revitalization efforts are quite apparent and provide a stark contrast to the previous state of the Seneca Street Commercial Corridor.



Image Source: <https://buffalonews.com/2018/07/20/seneca-street-redevelopment-gains-steam>

Above: a redesigned facade from Seneca street

Below: A before and after of a building located on Clinton street with small facade upgrades. Simply adding color can revolutionize the streetscape



Image Sources: Google Street View



Coming full circle with our revitalization efforts for Clinton Street we have one facet that is deeply intertwined with the recommendations we have made thus far. That is the level of social participation present within the community, and how we can increase that level of social participation on a year round basis along Clinton Street.

To begin, Kaisertown as a whole exhibits levels of social participation around what one would expect of such a culturally rich community of its size. Celebrating two big events that are both foundational holidays within the neighborhood, active and passive participation ranges from grade school children to adults approaching retirement. Holidays like 'Dyngus day' celebrated the Monday following Easter highlight the rich Polish culture present within the community established by its founding Polish immigrants. Encompassing adults and children alike from all cultural backgrounds, almost all members of the community partake in festivities such as the "battle" between boys with squirt guns and girls with pussy willow branches. In addition to Dyngus day, we have a holiday which is currently celebrated solely in Kaisertown. This holiday, which is a spin on the traditional Halloween that takes place on the 30th of October. 'Beggars night' although being a holiday that is largely a local tradition draws participants from the communities surrounding Kaisertown and further. Hundreds of children flood the streets of Kaisertown for a night where the neighborhood comes together to celebrate the merriment togetherness, going door to door dressed up "begging" for candy.

Although these two major holidays within the community clearly demonstrate that social participation is anything but lacking in Kaisertown, they're limited to two very specific times of the year as well as limiting in the audience each holiday respectively aims to engage. Kaisertown is in need of a unique way to spark social participation from people in the neighborhood of all backgrounds and demographics, to address this need we suggest the following recommendation.

Our recommendation draws inspiration from one of the Buffalo community's most influential institutions the University at Buffalo. On UB's North Campus just outside of the Student Union building is a statue of a bull known to students as the Paint-A-Bull. Students within the UB community are open

to freely express their thoughts however they see fit by painting this bull with messages, designs, or logos. This blank canvas is completely open to the whim of the student's creativity with the limitations being the bull may only be painted between the hours of sunset and sunrise, only one group at a time is allowed to paint it (whoever gets there first), and designs must show respect to the Buffalo community.



source: <http://engineering.buffalo.edu>

UB Paint-A-Bull located in front of the Student Union

The implementation of such a sculpture along the length of Clinton Street would give the community an outlet to voice their opinions and ideas however they see fit. It would provide an outlet for social participation that holds no specific target audience, one that is open to people within the community of all age groups and from all demographic backgrounds. Aside from creating an outlet for creative expression in addition to an open forum where community members can freely voice their opinions, the installation of such a sculpture within the community has the opportunity to become a much needed landmark within the neighborhood. An installation of this nature has the capability to attract visitors who wish to display their artistic capacity, advocate for a cause, or advertise something available within the neighborhood or bordering neighborhoods. Further elaborating upon this capacity to attract visitors besides drawing individuals who wish to participate in the physical design of this sculpture, an installation of this kind can attract individuals who see this sculpture as a unique social media opportunity in a similar capacity to that of the "shark girl" sculpture on along the buffalo river. The versatility of such an installation in such varying capacities has the ability to elicit social participation from both within the community as well as outside the community bringing an influx of visitors to experience the unique culture Kaisertown has to offer to the greater Buffalo area.

Neighborhood Wide Improvements

Neighborhood wide improvements are those that are made to keep in mind the benefit of the neighborhood of Kaisertown as a whole. Not only are these goals useful in Kaisertown, but they have a universal aspect that can benefit other areas in Buffalo as well. Making suggestions for the improvement of individual focus areas serves to tackle target needs, where as focusing on the entire neighborhood will target overall positive progression looking toward the future. The future of Kaisertown is where many of our recommendations are focused because making an area age gracefully should be any planners top priority.

Clean Energy Communities Program Certification

The first improvement we would like to propose is to generate cleaner energy in the neighborhood. This can be achieved through participation in the NYS Clean Energy Communities Program Certification. With participation from the local government of Kaisertown, the goal is to complete 4 of the 10 “high impact action items” that NYSEERDA deems fit to be considered a clean energy community⁹. For example, an easy implementation that would qualify is to install LED lighting for streetlights. Kaisertown could easily make this change as they have many streetlights along Clinton Street. Also, adopting a policy to document the energy uses of businesses/buildings could be utilized to improve energy consumption in the neighborhood. After submitting documentation of the energy conserving policy implementations, the local government of Kaisertown would be designated as a Clean Energy Community and eligible for grants to implement more clean energy actions. An example could be a unified solar permit which would be beneficial for Kaisertown to use clean energy, and would satisfy an impact action.

Local Solar Network

A goal for Kaisertown specific to solar energy is Solar-powered roofing. A website called Solar for All shows suitable buildings for solar rooftops in neighborhoods across the United States and can be utilized to easily show prime buildings in Kaisertown that can have solar roofing. The NYS REV program has initiatives for solar energy that Kaisertown could participate in. For example, the K-Solar initiative helps to support one of the goals of the program, renewable

energy. K-Solar encourages schools to use affordable solar energy without impacting school district budgets. More than 1/3 of NY schools have joined the program. Services are no cost to the school, and K-Solar assists the school to organize the solar installation and “operation vendors”¹⁰. K-Solar also offers teacher workshops and STEM curricula related to solar power for students in the districts. Thinking specific to Kaisertown, Houghton School could benefit from becoming involved in this program, especially since it is at no cost to the school. NY-Sun, a public-private partnership also is an incentive to make solar power affordable and accessible to businesses, homes, and schools. Buildings such as the East Clinton Branch Library, The Peter Machnica Community Center, and Autumnwood Senior Center are both examples of buildings with larger roofs that have adequate space for solar panels. All of these buildings fall under the Buffalo municipal boundary of Kaisertown. However, solar panels should be able to be utilized throughout all of Kaisertown, meaning the Cheektowaga and West Seneca sections as well. Intermunicipal coordination plays a big role in the implementation of these recommendations. We recognize that Kaisertown is divided into three municipalities: Buffalo, Cheektowaga, and West Seneca. Thus, it is important to ensure that the developments are consistent across these boundaries to enhance the connectivity of all residents no matter the municipality they fall under.

The Buffalo zoning requirements for solar panels/energy are: to not obscure architectural features, a high voltage warning sign, and if grid-tied, proof of notification to the utility company to install a customer-owned generator. Solar panels can be placed flat against building facades not projecting more than 3 feet, or mounted on the roof not projecting more than 12 feet above the building and set inwards at least 18 inches from the edge of the roof. Solar panels on a sloped roof must be set back at least 6 inches from the roof edge. Solar panels can be mounted on the ground, but their lines must run underground and they cannot exceed 12 feet high. When searching for Cheektowaga information, there was no zoning requirements to be found on the subject. Contacting the town for a special use permit would be advised. West Seneca specifies in their zoning that approval must be granted from the Town Board.

Stormwater Management

In order to get approval for stormwater management practices in Buffalo, any land disturbance involving one quarter-acre or more of soil, it requires submission to the Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPP) prepared in conjunction with the requirements of the Buffalo Sewer Authority. If the soil disturbance amount falls below the amount specified, applicants must manage the construction and post construction of stormwater management. The project must also have erosion and sediment control measures in accordance with NYS standards. Stormwater discharge must be first directed to available stormwater only sewers, and secondly storm overflow sewers. Green infrastructure BMP's (Best Management Practices) should be utilized whenever possible.

One strategy used to reduce runoff is increasing soluble surfaces and curb cuts and street trees to increase drainage. There are enough street trees and lawns in the neighborhood of Kaisertown, which provide enough soluble surface to deal with heavy rainfall and possible flooding due to the proximity to Buffalo River. Curb cuts can channel water flow and thus make a great volume of water entering a specific location. It is important to design the curb cuts along Clinton Street to be spaced as frequently as possible to distribute the water flow evenly. Street trees are one of the most effective techniques for Clinton Street, where the storms are relatively smaller and more frequent. Moreover, tree roots and leaves promote the infiltration of rainwater into the soil and the soil can store the water temporarily, which eventually decreases flooding in the future. Additional development techniques will be needed to improve stormwater management, such as the implementation of green roofs, flow-through planters, disconnected downspout and maybe stormwater art. There are several possible spots along Clinton Street to implement green roofs, such as Casimir Social Center Food Pantry, where the rooftop provides a lot of space for vegetation, and it is also visually accessible by pedestrians. The green roofs absorb, store and evaporate water. The maintenance of green roofs needs good cooperation among students or residents as volunteers, the Church committee and other organizations and associations. Possible locations for implementing flow-through planters are the area near parking lots, along with the sidewalks. The planters are visually pleasant and release the water into the

soil. Downspouts are normally connected to the sewer system and collect the rain from rooftops and release into underground. By disconnecting downspouts and release the rain directly into the permeable surface, there will be less cumulative water volume entering the sewer, which will eventually decrease possible flood. The overall rainwater collection system will have a positive impact on decreasing stormwater runoff and future flooding. The system is also designed for irrigation, thus, the gardens are self-sustaining.

Wild Life Program

The Buffalo River and Houghton park in Kaisertown can potentially provide ideal habitats for wildlife. To further expand the conservation program and link to the community, a wildlife habitat garden program can be brought to the community. By planting native plants and adding natural habitat resources such as nesting boxes, water, and food at backyards will invite small wildlife living there. It helps to restore the local ecosystem as well as adding pleasantness and liveliness into the neighborhood. Therefore, we introduce the Community Wildlife Habitat program, which has been successfully implemented in many neighborhoods in the states. The program aims at re-establishing native plant communities and protecting the local watershed with sustainable gardening practices. There is a checklist that requires residents' backyards habits have specific food, water, cover and places to raise young. The maintenance is required to take care habits throughout four seasons. Residents in Kaisertown take good care of their backyard, the program can encourage them to plant native plants that can attract bees and monarch butterflies to help restore the number of them. By implementing the program, house owners who voluntarily sign up for the program will attract more wild animals to their property, increasing biodiversity and creating a healthy ecosystem.

In terms of zoning, The backyard wildlife habitats program is aimed at improving the local ecosystem and protecting native species within residents' own properties, which will not be restricted by specific zoning code restrictions. However, it is critical to make sure the introduced species are not listed by the New York Invasive Species Council as an invasive species or defined by any New York State statutes as non-native species¹¹.

Signage

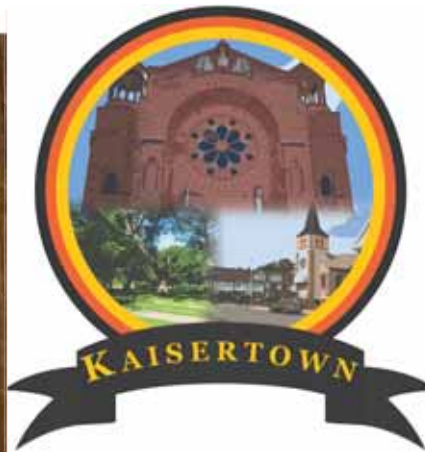
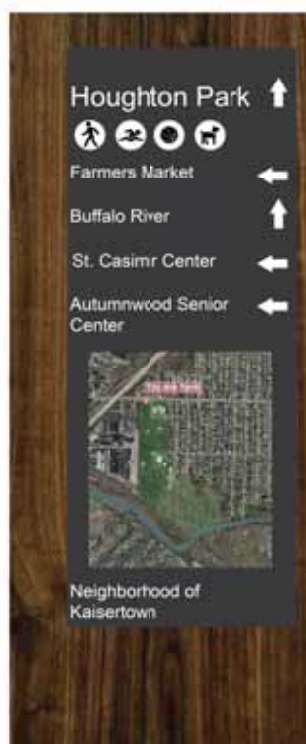
In order to better coordinate with the rest of the improvements in Kaisertown, a set of the updated wayfinding system needs to be implemented within Kaisertown. The wayfinders will be located in Houghton Park, the several entrances of Kaisertown, along Clinton Street, and the important intersection within the residential area. The design of wayfinders will keep the same style, which can show the community identity and make Kaisertown a more welcoming area. Following the same style, the wayfinders will be designed differently in order to serve various purposes. For example, the wayfinders in Houghton park will include a map showing the areas for different activities and also its connection to the river; along Clinton Street, the wayfinders will show different stores and restaurants, and the directions of each important location, such as St. Casimir Church, Houghton Park, etc; near each entrance, there will be a welcome signage and the direction to each important location; within in the neighborhood, the signage will include the directions and an information board that can be used by residents. The up-to-date signage will help people who are new to Kaisertown better navigate in the area. Meanwhile, residents in Kaisertown can use

the signages to further explore their neighborhood.

In order to help Kaisertown establish a better image of a welcome and friendly neighborhood, we have created several brands that are associated with Kaisertown. These logos could be put on the wayfinders, signages, etc. Visualized branding has a good effect on drawing attention to amenities. By placing these logos throughout the neighborhood, the neighborhood identity can be shown more significantly. Logos can also be used on the website of Kaisertown and promotional products.

The overall improvement will have a better impact on making Kaisertown a better place for people to move and invest.

The recommended signage system needs to follow the zoning code of each municipal district. The city of Buffalo requires the sign must not exceed 12 square feet in area. The signs in the Town of Cheektowaga have to meet the requirements of the Town. For the recommended signs in Kaisertown, there should be no signs that are illuminated. More information and requesting a permit will need to contact the office of Building Inspector. A permit for the wayfinding system signage in the Town of West Seneca zoning restrictions will need to contact Code Enforcement Officer.



Pictured above: Ideas to create a recognizable brand in Kaisertown, to distinguish it within the region

Pictured Left: A sample of a wayfinding sign for Kaisertown, highlighting major points of interest



Developing Underutilized Spaces: St. Casimir Center

The St Casimir Food Pantry is located at 1833 Clinton Street on the corner of Gorski and Weiss Street. The facade resembles the historic elements of its neighboring storefronts and is open only once a month. However, its indoor capacity of 21,000 square feet gives the space the potential to serve the neighborhood in many additional ways. The total size of the St. Casimir's Food Pantry along with its two large parking lots is 47760 square

feet. It is currently used to distribute food for those who have difficulty purchasing it. This service along with hospitality is available on the last Monday of every month from six to eight pm. The building is also home to the St. Casimir Social Center which does not have a specific time for operation. Although this building makes up a large portion of Clinton Street, its lack of impact and low hours of performance currently make the building a lost asset to the neighborhood.

Recommendation One: Affordable/Senior Housing

Repurposing the St. Casimir Food Pantry as a multi use community space is a practical solution to improving the economic development and community engagement in Kaisertown. According to the Buffalo Green Code, the property is a N-3C which means it is meant for multi-use purposes. That being said, one option could be to turn the complex into senior housing. A senior housing complex can accommodate Kaisertown's large aging population as well as attract newcomers. This can be a great alternative to reuse and revitalize Clinton Street because it will bring residents closer to Clinton street allowing them to walk to places like the Clinton Mini Mart and other commercial properties, which will not only

boost Kaisertown's economy but promote physical health as well. Additionally, The Autumnwood Senior Center is located between Krakow street and Kopernik street and sits across from St. Casimir Social Center. It's a two story building that serves as a space for senior activities and interactions. Having residents live across from the Senior Center will allow them to visit more often and engage with other members of the community. Therefore, mixed use properties will be able to bring people closer to the main commercial corridors in Kaisertown, promoting walkability, social participation, and economic development.

Precedent Study: School 77

School 77 was built in 1927 and is located on the Westside of Buffalo. Due to the 80,000 square foot building no longer serving as a school, private developers were eager to repurpose the space. However, the Westside Community pushed the City of Buffalo to place a one year moratorium on the sale of the building. And with the input of more than 800 community residents, PUSH and the community transformed the abandoned school into solar powered affordable senior apartments and a community center. The renovation includes 30 energy efficient apartments affordable for seniors. The property has become the home base of PUSH Buffalo. PUSH is a

membership-based community organization dedicated to affordable housing, equitable jobs and ecological sustainability for the Westside of Buffalo. The upgraded building also features a black box theatre with a shared gymnasium. Community meetings are frequently held in the space as well as other programming and amenities which are open to all community members. With the 64 Kw community solar array, the panels provide energy for the building and the senior tenants. Additionally, there is a green roof which absorbs rainwater and curbs combined sewage overflows. The eco landscaping also hinders the combined sewage overflows. This transformation was made possible by City of Buffalo funding¹².



Image Source: <https://www.pushbuffalo.org/school-77/>

Pictured left: PUSH Buffalo's public school 77 redevelopment project, now an example of affordable housing combined with sustainability and community integration.

Precedent Study: People Inc. Highland School Apartments

People Inc. has started construction on a \$10 million apartment complex in Tonawanda. This is the first affordable housing project done by People Inc. that is not dedicated for seniors and people with disabilities. People Inc. with a revenue over \$140 million, is the largest non-profit social service agency around the Western New York Region serving people with needs from the Buffalo and Rochester areas. The project is to renovate Highland Elementary School which is a building from the 1920's and was shutdown in 2009. People Inc. started the renovation project in 2011 after purchasing the property at an auction for \$152,000. With zoning and other variances, the project was delayed for several years. The building is designed with 38 units of affordable housing. There are 15 units designated for developmental disabilities and traumatic brain damage. The renting price will be between \$450-\$650 monthly, with one and two bedroom units. The apartments opened in May of 2017. Funding the project comes from a variety of sources. Designed by Carmina Wood Morris PC, the adaptive reuse project financed \$4.6 million in loans from First Niagara Financial Group, now KeyBank. The project received \$1.9 million from Homeless Housing and Assistance Corp, \$1.4 million from the state, and \$76,000 from the NYS Energy Research and Development Authority. The new two story complex on 105 Highland Avenue will include a community room and safety features such as a 24 hour on call service for emergencies¹³.

Pictured Right:
A rendering of People Inc's Highland School Apartments, now open



Image Source: <https://buffalonews.com/2017/02/27/people-inc-prepares-open-highland-school-apartments/>

Recommendation Two: Private Modern Apartments

Another potential options to increase economic development and awareness in Kaisertown can be a complex of modern apartments with support services for residents. This can bring help from private investors and developers that can help re-establish the community. Having private developers come in to reutilize the space will be able to strengthen the community of Buffalo. This can be done with using outside sources that can eventually connect Kaisertown to the rest of Buffalo and potentially the Buffalo-Niagara region. Buildings such as these may qualify for historic tax credits so this can be an incentive for developers to come in and invest. Using public funding to help those that are in need, private apartments can open up a certain percentage of homes in the complex for those that need government assistance.

Precedent Study: School 44 Apartments

Stuart Alexander and Associates, SCG Development, and Dr. Rhonda Ricks had pitched in and redeveloped School 44 into private modern apartments. School 44 is a former public school that sat vacant since the Buffalo public school program moved to its alternative academy program out of the

building. The plans are to change the 55,000 square foot space to 82 units. There will be 55 single bedrooms, 16 double bedrooms, and 11 three bedrooms. There will be 10 units that are dedicated to homeless people. The project is located on 1349 Broadway that intersects Person Street. The complex will be a \$26.8 million project. The project looks to inject new life into the particular section of Broadway. There is the Broadway Fillmore Alive movement which wants to help promote the historic Broadway Fillmore neighborhood. With the housing stock around there deteriorating, the addition of apartments can bring new life. The complex will include a gym space, auditorium, community room, computer room, laundry facilities for both residents and people within the neighborhood. There will be an outdoor playground and patio with 80 spaces of secured parking. The funding for the apartments and budget have to be approved by the Buffalo planning board. The funding will come from New York State Homes and Community Renewal, with a four percent of low income housing tax credit. There will also be funding from the city of Buffalo and the Buffalo Urban renewal agency¹⁴.

Recommendation Three: Market Place

Another alternative space that the St. Casimir's Food Pantry can transform into would be a marketplace. This space would be occupied by a variety of commercial and retail stores. Ideally these retail stores would sell products that reflect the culture of the history of Kaisertown. Kaisertown was known as a blue collar neighborhood occupied by polish immigrants thus implementing retail stores that sell authentic polish meats, alcohols, etc. would allow the outside visitors to better understand the instilled culture of Kaisertown. Kaisertown also a history with Hungarian and German settlers as well. The food pantry can redevelop into a marketplace that promotes all these cultures as well as the American culture. Because the building used to seem to serve as a school, it can potentially have a commercial kitchen. With the commercial kitchen, the building can be repurposed to serve as restaurants, bars or other places that can serve food. Bringing local owned vendors to the property can help re-establish the economy along Clinton Street, and drive out any forms of gentrification. This can boost the business along the main street and maintain the heritage

which makes Kaisertown the neighborhood that it is.

Precedent Study: Salem Market Block

The city of Salem, Oregon proposed to repurpose a major city block to large retail spaces with both private and public parking space. The primary groups involved in this development plan are a real estate development company called RCG and the city of Salem. This plan looks to build three 6-story retail spaces along with one 5-story retail space with a central market space. These developers proposed to create 43,000-59,000 sq. feet of retail space and 200,000-217,000 sq. feet of housing. Although this amount of open space is not available in the St. Casimir's Food Pantry, having a vibrant market space within the main commercial strip of Kaisertown to celebrate its rich historical culture will prove to be prominent. One main problem with the idea of a marketplace implementation is that it might harm the local businesses that are already within Clinton Street such as the Clinton Street Farmers Market and other local bars¹⁵.

Precedent Study: The Broadway Market

The Broadway Market is located right at the Broadway-Fillmore district in Buffalo. It has 40 vendors and it is one of the largest and oldest public markets in the United States. The market serves the Broadway-Fillmore neighborhood with a 100,000 square foot market. Serving the neighborhood for 111 years, the market has provided the neighborhood with food, culture, entertainment and most of all, a place where the community can congregate. The Broadway Market is one of the only remaining indoor market spaces left in the City of Buffalo¹⁶.

Conclusion: A New Complex

As of today, the St. Casimir food pantry is an underused commodity in Kaisertown. It's lack of usage and the large space it encompasses negatively impact a commercial strip like Clinton Street. Instead of removing this space it will be advantageous to build upon its existing infrastructure and repurpose this building. Providing affordable housing units and a center for activities and social interactions for the large aging population will greatly benefit the residents of Kaisertown. We look to transform this underused and underappreciated area in Kaisertown to a lively attraction that will contribute to the struggling commercial strip in Clinton Street. We will want to provide services for residents within Kaisertown and even visitors of Kaisertown.



Endnotes

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