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Urban Land Institute  
Advisory Services Panel  
May 20 – May 25, 2007

**Advisory  
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May 20 – May 25  
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# **Richardson-Olmsted International Center Buffalo, New York**



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# The Panel

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## **Chair**

**Mike Higbee**

### **Market Potential**

- Abigail Ferretti
- Paula Konikoff

### **Development Strategies**

- Jack Crowley
- Charlie Johnson

### **Planning and Design**

- Jim Kienle
- Ralph Núñez

### **Implementation**

- Christine Saum
- Doug Wrenn

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# Acknowledgements

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- Richardson Architectural Board, Richardson Center Corporation
- The Office of Assemblyman Sam Hoyt
- The Office of Senator Charles Schumer
- Buffalo Psychiatric Center
- Empire State Development Corporation
- Albright-Knox Art Gallery
- Buffalo-Erie Historical Society
- Buffalo State College
- University at Buffalo School of Architecture
- City of Buffalo
- County of Erie
- State Historic Preservation Office
- Campaign for Greater Buffalo
- Residents of Buffalo, New York and
- **Dozens of other organizations**

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# Urban Land Institute

- Established in 1936
- Independent nonprofit education and research organization
- More than 37,000 members worldwide
- Representing the entire spectrum of land use and real estate development disciplines



[www.uli.org](http://www.uli.org)

***The mission of the Urban Land Institute is to provide leadership in the responsible use of land and in creating and sustaining thriving communities worldwide.***

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# ULI Advisory Services

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- Applies the finest expertise in real estate, market analysis, land planning and public policy to complex land use and development projects
- All volunteer, independent panel
- Over 400 ULI-member teams assembled worldwide since 1947 to assist sponsors find creative and practical solutions

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# The Panel Process

- Studied and discussed information provided by the sponsors
- Briefed by Sponsors
- Toured the project area
- Met with key stakeholders
- Heard a variety of perspectives from dozens of community members and discussed issues and concerns
- Debated the issues and framed recommendations



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# Introduction

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ULI Team quickly realized

Assignment went from

MAJOR CHALLENGE

TO

UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY



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Make no mistake challenges do exist

- Current buildings designed for specific use
- Magnitude, construction technique, disrepair = complex & costly reuse program
- Lack of reuse plan puts site and buildings in jeopardy



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Fortunately – Opportunities Trump Challenges

- Unique buildings and site = community treasure
- Buffalo's collective architectural assets represent economic development opportunity
- Engaged community on all levels = focus and persistence necessary to see job through
- Local leadership in securing initial state commitment makes future reuse more feasible

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- Buffalo State important resource with academic needs consistent with site reuse
- Surrounding neighborhoods offer opportunities for supporting historic and cultural elements of site
- Elmwood Avenue and Grant Street opportunity corridors in delivering users/customers to site



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Time currently the site's enemy

- Buildings and site's future forever changed when decision made that buildings no longer functional for original use – community response became mandatory
- Buildings continue to deteriorate
- Lack of land use plan encourages piecemeal approach taken over past 50 years

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Today Initial Framework will be presented

- Hopefully strong step in establishing informed preservation and reuse development program
- Identifies major elements that will need community deliberation and refinement
- Instills necessary sense of urgency that something needs to be done and can be done

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## Preservation and Reuse Development Program

- Will not achieve consensus - give and take is required. The process creating program must be trusted and credible
- Assumes that original Olmsted Plan never fully implemented and can not be retrieved
- Restores and maintains original Olmsted elements still present on site
- Assures that Olmsted influence and spirit clearly evident in future improvements

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## Preservation and Reuse Development Program

- Once in place encourages community to organize for short and long term success
- Results in identification of early catalyst projects designed to serve future reuse and development direction
- Results in the creation of a public community treasure available to local residents, national and international visitors

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## Key Principles - for Consideration

- Richardson and Olmsted offer immeasurable aesthetic and market appeal
- Important to make sure that future site improvements demonstrate Richardson-Olmsted relevance in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century
- Eight main buildings (flock of geese) critical structures which offer remarkable reuse opportunities

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## Key Principles – for Consideration

- The site should embrace and interact with the surrounding neighborhoods
- The site can serve as an anchor for an emerging and strong cultural tourism industry linking Buffalo's treasure trove of art, architecture and heritage venues



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# Introduction

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## Key Principles - for Consideration

- Scope and magnitude of site and buildings assumes major capital and organizational expense – **complex, multiple source financing**
- Must establish context that attracts both public and private investment. **Project will stall otherwise**
- Mixed-use development which responds to real need and demand essential (i.e. education, hospitality, housing, office, cultural, retail). **Only way to achieve sustainable results**

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# Market Potential

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**~ Paula Konikoff ~**

**~ Abigail Ferretti ~**

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# History

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FROM

- Queen City of the Great Lakes

TO

- Population decrease of 13 persons per day
- 1990 housing vacancy of 10.2%  
2000 housing vacancy of 15.7%
- 12/31/06 office vacancy of 18.8%

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# Today's Good News

- New businesses moving in
  - Labatt's US headquarters
- Darwin D. Martin House
- Waterfront development
- New condo projects
- Richardson/Olmsted International Center



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# Tourist Attractions

- Architecture
- Niagara Falls
- Museums
- Performing arts venues
- Parks and Gardens
- AAA Baseball
- NFL Football
- NHL Hockey



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# Existing Strengths/Assets

- Quality of project champions
- Variety of private development possibilities
- Site recognition
- Excellent Neighbors:
  - Museums
  - Buffalo State
  - Elmwood



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# Myths

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- “No completion here!”
- Private funding N/A
- The site is an urban island

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# Constraints

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- Dilapidation of grounds and buildings
- Design and location of Strozzi building



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# Tourism Market Potential

- Architecture and Visitors Center
- Hotel / Conference center
  - 200 rooms
  - 20,000 to 30,000 SF center
- Supported by:
  - Buffalo State College
  - Business & leisure community
  - Museum district



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# Residential Market Potential

- Evidence of movement back to Buffalo
- Homes for-sale > ten days on market
- Target audience for new resident
- Success of local projects and national examples



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# Residential Market Potential

- Mixed-income to regenerate the neighborhood
- Condos \$500,000 to \$700,000
- Luxury apartments - \$1,250 - \$3,000 monthly rent
- Live / work lofts
- Student housing



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# Commercial Market Potential

- Fill unmet retail needs
  - Resident and student expenditures
- Professional neighborhood-serving office space
  - Locational advantage
  - Unique green opportunity
  - Adaptive reuse historic space
- Buffalo State classroom / lab space



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# Planning and Design

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**~ Ralph Núñez ~**

**~ Jim Kienle ~**

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# Site Visit

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# Study Area

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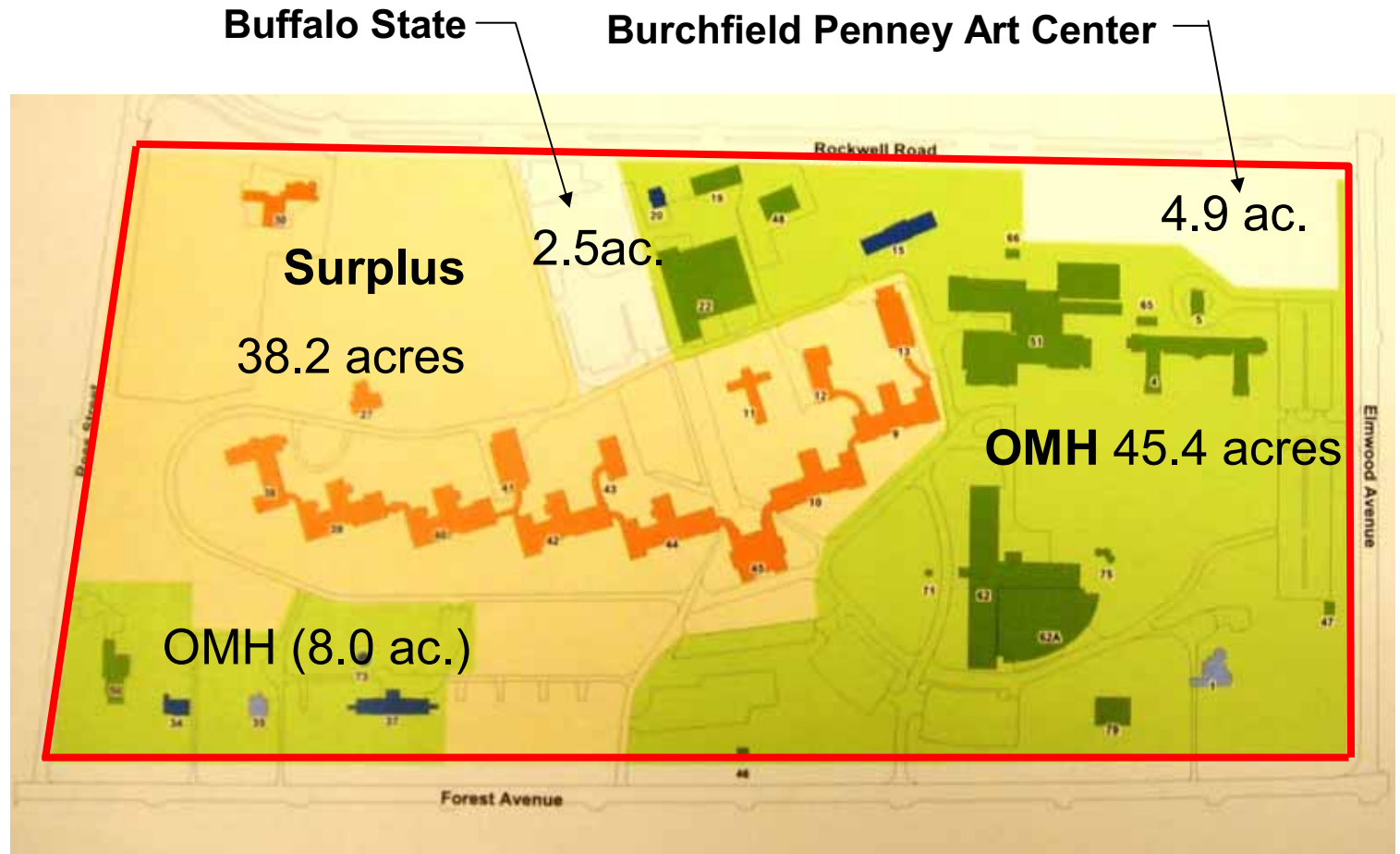
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# Study Area

Red Outline = 91 acres Net Area = 83.6 acres



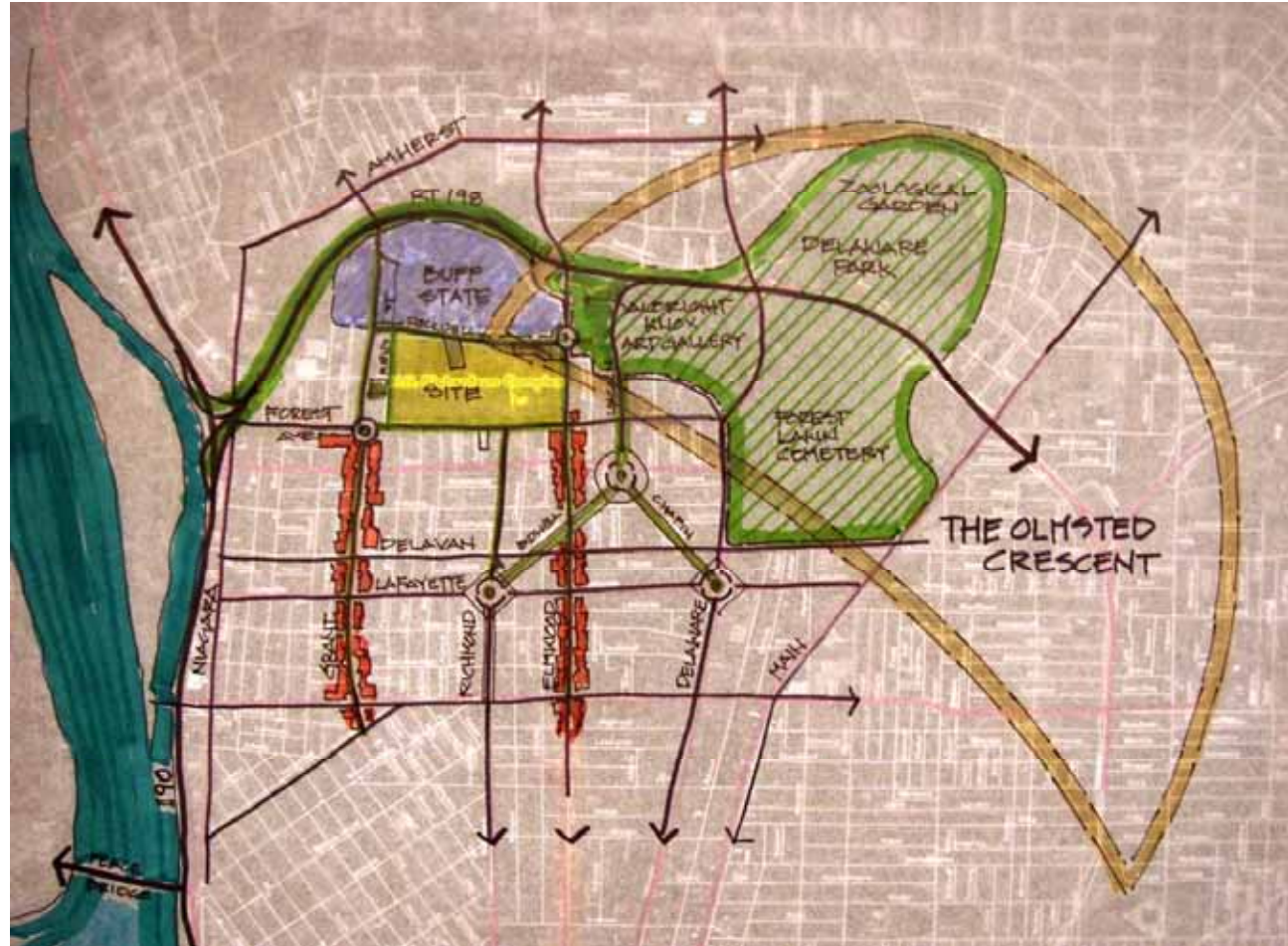
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# Overview

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# Adjacent Impacts

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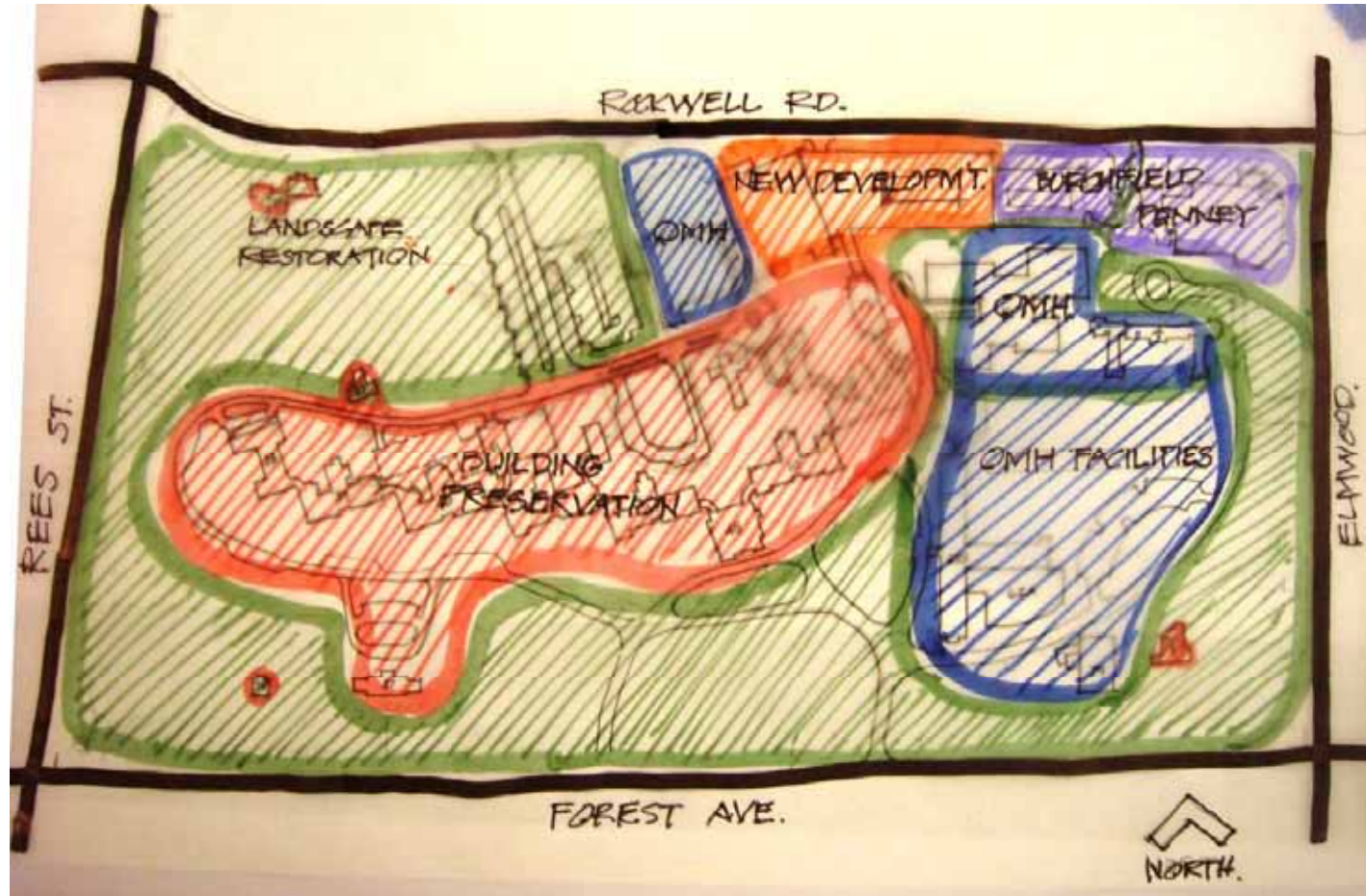
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# Concept Plan

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# Forest Ave and Elmwood

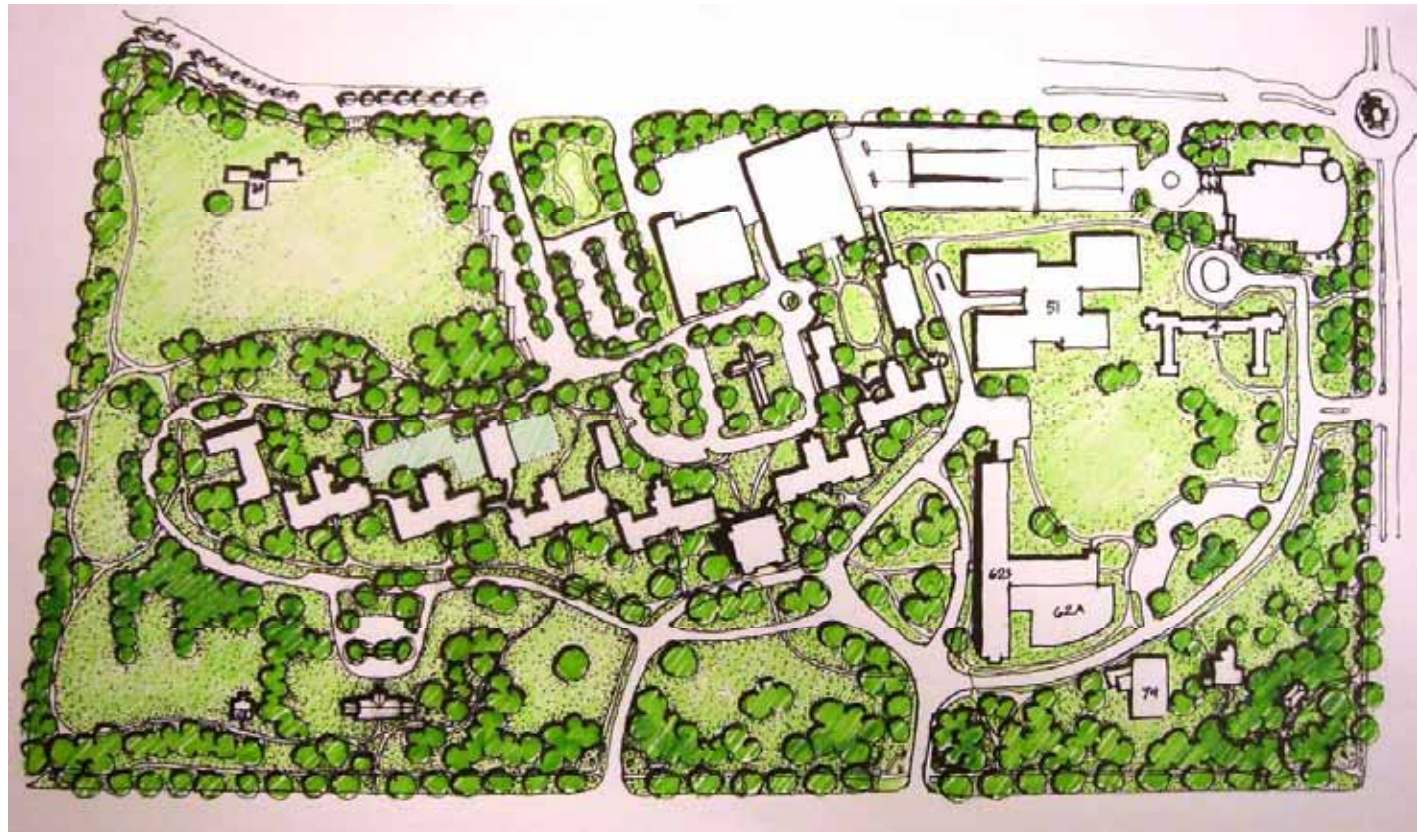


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# Landscape Plan: With OMH

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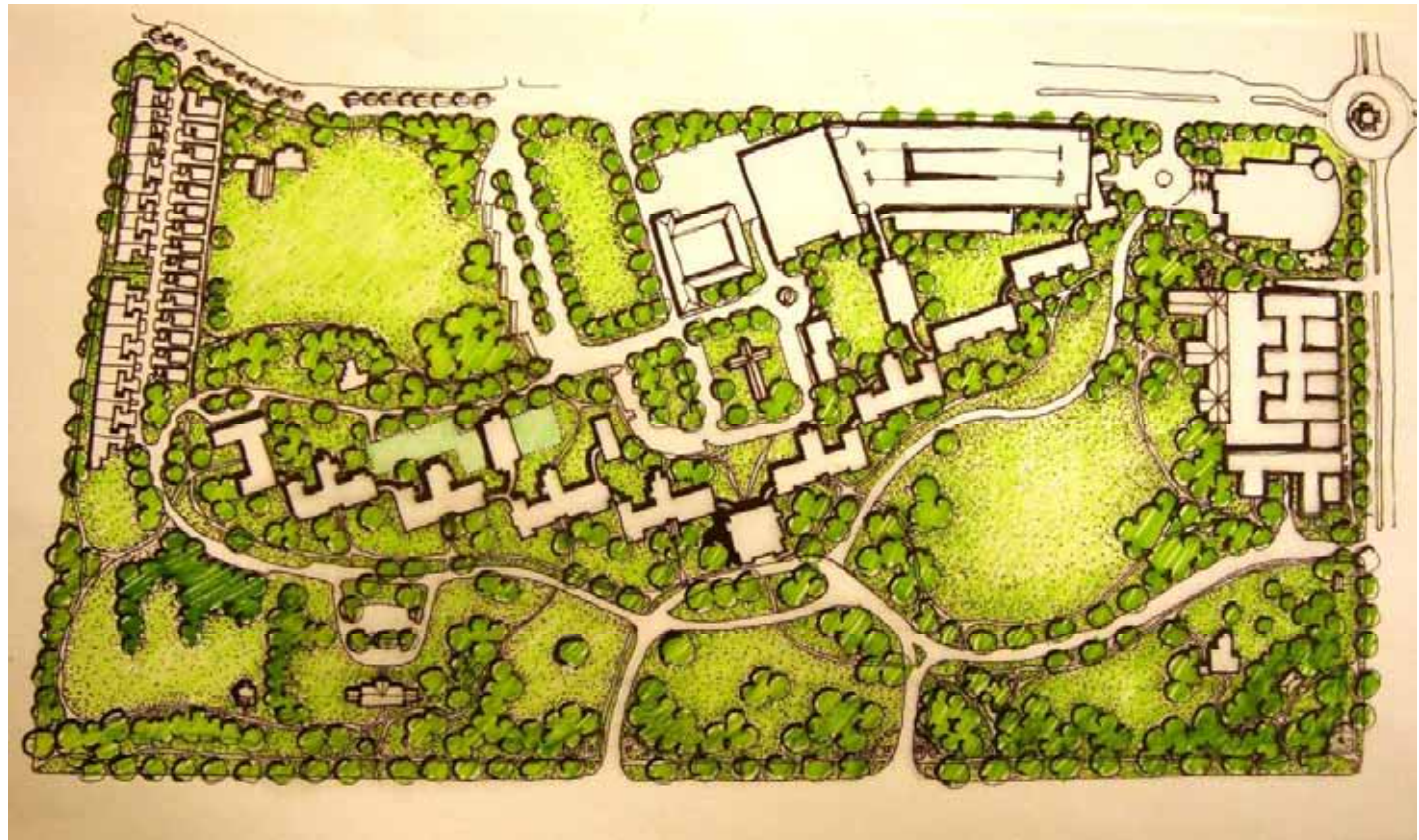
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## Plan 2: Without OMH

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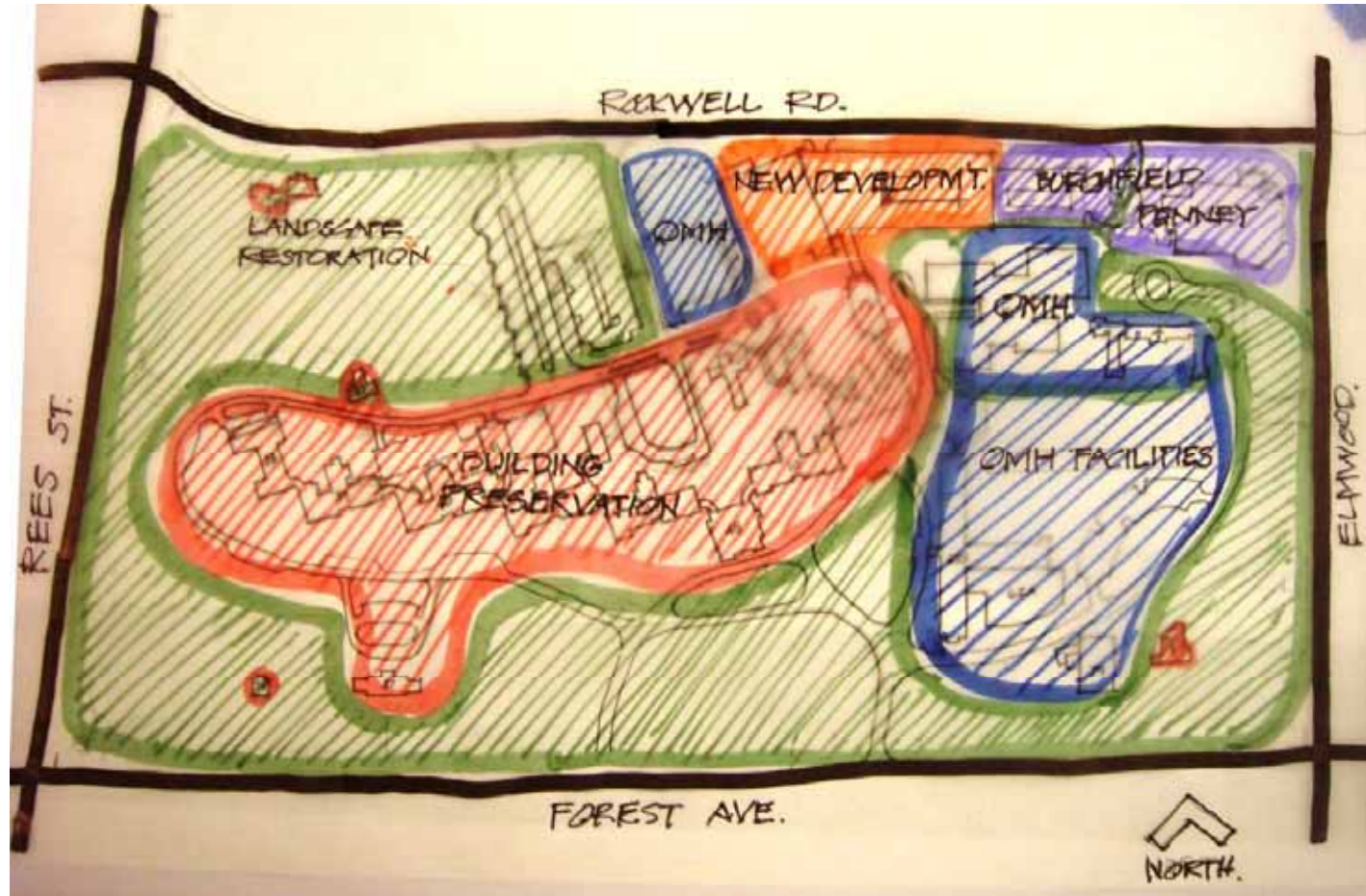


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# Concept Plan

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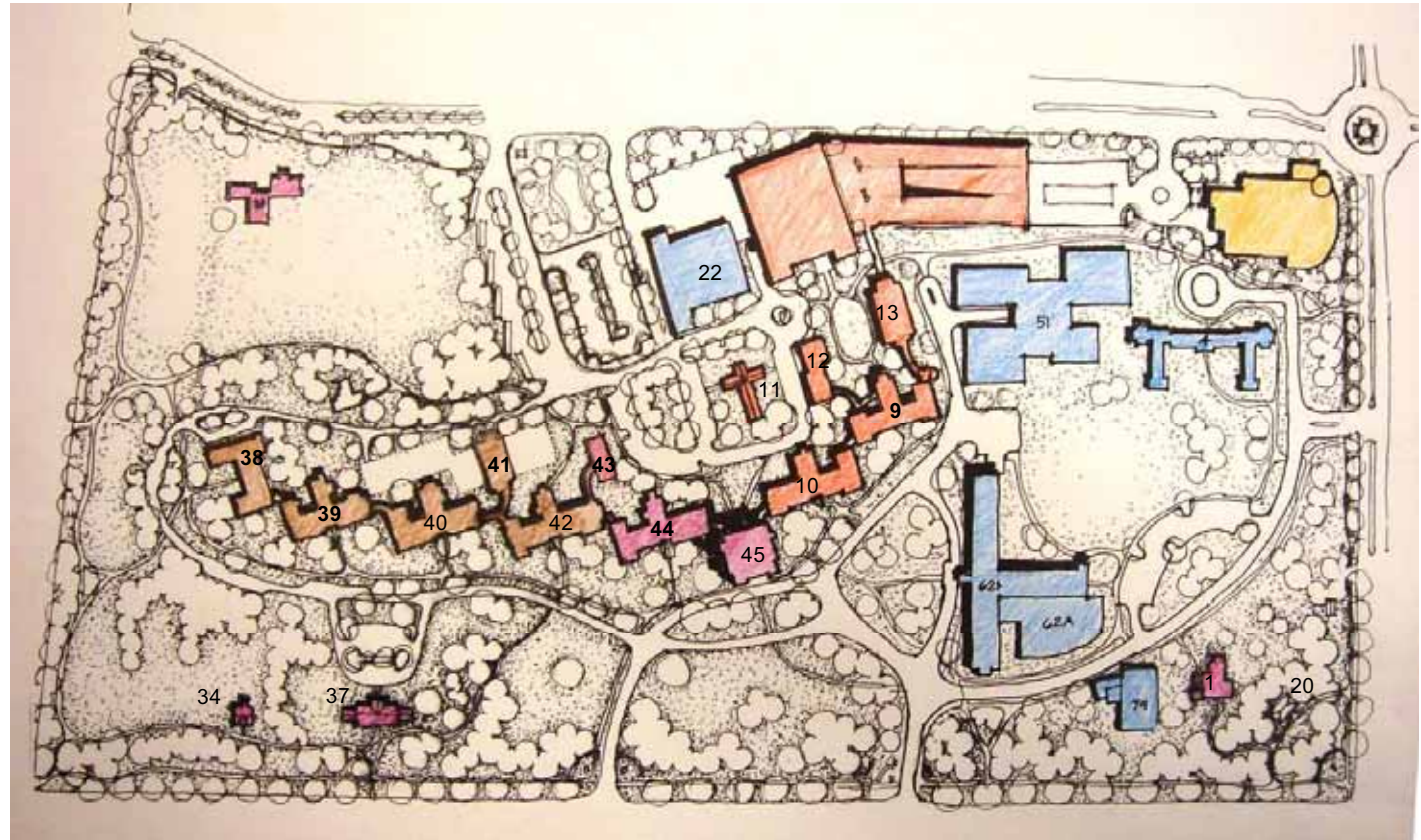
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# Plan 1: With OMH

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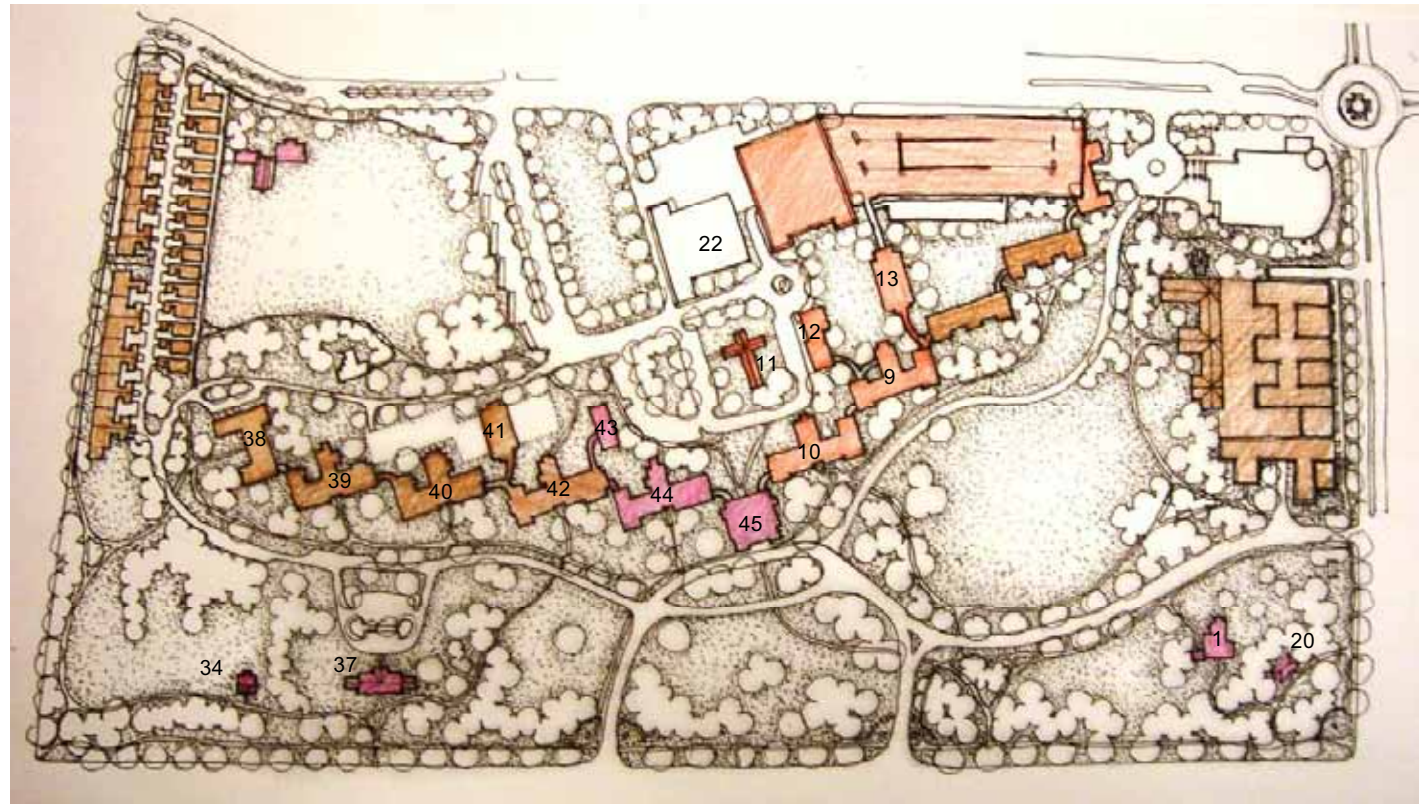
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## Plan 2: With OMH

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# Plan 2: Without OMH

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**Live Work & Single Family**



**Mixed Use Development**

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# Development Strategies

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**~ Charlie Johnson ~  
~ Jack Crowley ~**

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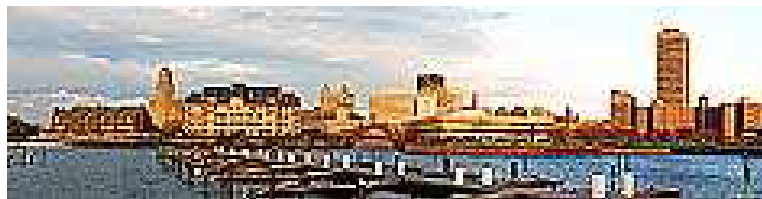
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# Development Strategies

- Buffalo- A Community of Paradoxes  
– Treasures vs. Efforts



Staffed by 15 people, Indianapolis Downtown, Inc. exists to continually improve Downtown. IDI is action-oriented and empowered to address, in partnership with the public and private sectors, IDI's focus is on three areas: development, management and marketing.

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# Development Strategies

- Buffalo- A Community of Paradoxes
  - Needs vs. tools

Former industrial and distribution economy created huge projects and areas needing attention:

- Outer Harbor
- New Convention Center
- Projects like Richardson- Olmsted International Center
- Waterfront expressways

New York's Job Targeted Incentives		vs.	Real Estate Redevelopment Oriented Programs	
Zone Incentives	Sales Tax exemption/real property and business tax credits		Indianapolis	Consolidated Governments; 1 % tax on Restaurant sales; CREeD
QEZE sales tax exemptions	10 year exemption, from state sales tax on purchases of goods and services		Oklahoma City	1% local option sales tax
QEZE Credit for real property taxes	Refundable credit against business tax		Kentucky, West Virginia	Sales tax rebate of up to 25% of capital budget
Real property tax abatement	Empire zones <u>may</u> offer tax abatements from increased assessment		Washington State	.02% sales tax rebate for facilities
QEZE tax reduction Credit	Credit against tax equal to percentage of taxes attributable to the zone enterprise		Kansas	Sales TIF STAR Bonds
Wage Tax Credit	Credit for up to five consecutive years for companies hiring full time employees		Iowa	Vision Iowa Tourism Grant Program
Ez investment tax and employment incentives credit	Property & equipment <u>may</u> qualify for tax credits up 19% of companies eligible investment		Tucson	7 mile Sales and hotel tax TIF
New Business Refund	Businesses new to New York are entitled to a 50% cash refund of unused EZ-WTC and ITC amounts		Florida Counties	<u>Dedicated</u> Hotel Tax for Tourism, Arts, sports
Utility rate savings	Special reduced electric and gas rates <u>may</u> be available		Louisville	Consolidated Governments; Sales Tax TIF, KTDA
Zone Capital Credit	25% tax credit against personal or corporate income			
Project specific grants	As politics and resources provide			

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# Development Strategies

- Buffalo- A Community of Paradoxes  
“We have not given up on traditional industries,  
but tourism is part of our new economy focus.”

Competitive City Analysis: 2007 CVB BUDGETS			
Louisville	\$12,800,000	Cleveland	\$7,500,000
Philadelphia	\$12,000,000	Columbus	\$6,900,000
Pittsburgh	\$10,950,000	Milwaukee	\$6,565,000
Indianapolis	\$10,700,000	Cincinnati	\$5,142,000
Nashville	\$9,500,000	Lexington	\$4,400,000
Baltimore	\$8,500,000	Rochester	\$3,200,000
Charlotte	\$8,200,000	<b>Buffalo</b>	<b>\$2,500,000</b>
Memphis	\$7,800,000		



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# Development Strategies

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- Huge Advantage
  - \$76 million in seed money
  - \$20 million committed to Architecture and Visitors Center
  - Project Champions and Strong Interim Board

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# Development Strategies

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- **Principal and Short Term Tasks**
  - Create an inclusive not-for-profit Development Authority
  - Open and staff on-site office and incubator space for The Architecture and Visitors Center
  - Develop and formally adopt a clear preservation and reuse development program
  - Stabilize and renovate exterior shell of all structures to be retained
  - Address storm damaged trees and begin to restore the grounds
  - Light the buildings – The Richardson Buildings are back!

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# Development Strategies

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- **Next Tasks**
  1. Define, plan, design and implement The Architecture and Visitors Center
  2. Develop a multidimensional Marketing Plan and brand the project
  3. Identify and select a hotel / conference center developer (Income stream #1)
  4. Develop the parking deck
  5. Identify and select a developer for the west wing (Buildings #38 through #42 – Income stream #2)
  6. Identify and select a developer for Building #37 (Income stream #3)
  7. Identify and select a developer for the residential infill for the Northwest corner of the site (Income stream #4)

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# Development Strategies

- Architecture and Visitors Center- Immediate space to incubate notion
  - Hall of Fame?
  - Institute?
  - Exhibits?

## Chicago Architectural Foundation



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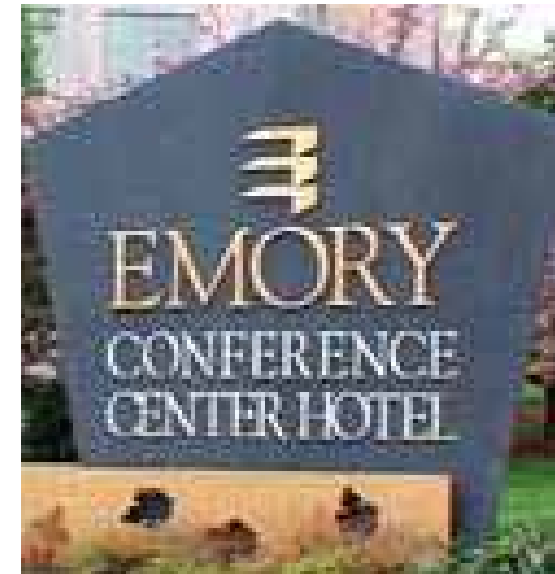
# Development Strategies

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Hotel Conference Center (200 keys, 25,000 square feet of net meeting space)

- Traditional University Conference Center?
- Louisville's "21c Museum Hotel"?
- Hybrid?

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# Development Strategies

- Connectivity
  - Influence Site Edges That Need Help
    - West Side & Forest Avenue
      - Buffalo State Sports Complex as a park for the West Side
      - Grant Street Corridor Improvements
      - Grant/ Forest Traffic Circle
      - Revolving fund for residential improvement
      - Designation as an Historic District

University of Central  
Florida Sports Complex



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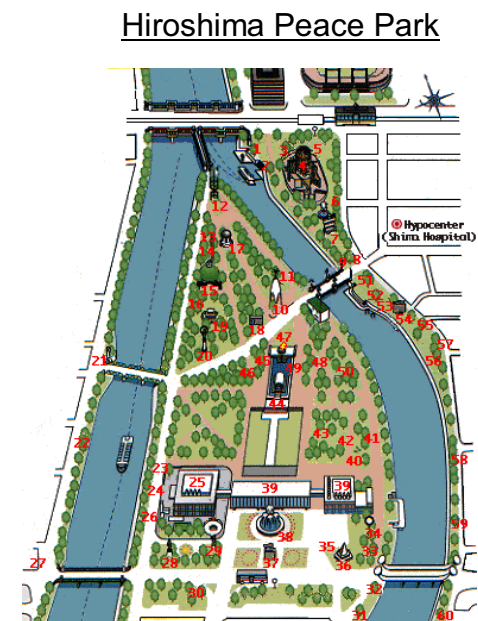
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# Development Strategies

- Connectivity
  - Link site to:
    - Delaware Park and Museum Campus
    - Downtown venues
    - Other Olmsted elements\*
    - River
  - Linkage tools
    - Information center
    - Trolleys and Tours
    - Web page and collateral

\*Could a Peace Park  
Designation add to the  
Brand?



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# Implementation

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**~ Doug Wrenn ~  
~ Christine Saum ~**

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# Implementation

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- Successful implementation will require:
  - entrepreneurial skill
  - public leadership
  - market support
- Bring a sense of urgency without expediency to every aspect of implementation
- Progress should be measured in terms of achieving the goals and objectives of the reuse plan. In other words, hurry but do not rush the implementation process.

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# Implementation

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- Establish the Richardson-Olmsted Development Authority (RODA)
- *Mission – To engage and represent the Buffalo community in the reactivation and re-use of the Richardson Complex and grounds, and targeted redevelopment opportunities in near-by neighborhoods.*
- May require enabling legislation

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# Implementation

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## **Organizational Structure**

- A not-for-profit corporation
- Possibly create subsidiary to support cultural heritage and arts promotion and operations of architecture center
- Representative-diverse Board of Directors
- Chief Executive Officer and Staff
  - Development skills
  - Financial skills
  - Neighborhood liason
  - Project management skills
  - Grant writing and fund raising
  - Support staff

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# Roles and Responsibilities

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- Engage key stakeholders in ongoing participatory process
- Finalize preservation and reuse development program for site and surrounding area
- Conduct and complete search for development company to partner with RODA
- Strategic land acquisition adjacent to site
- Solicit and secure public funding
- Identify and solicit foundation support
- Work with development partner to establish project pro-forma
- Negotiate development agreements
- Assure on-going property management and maintenance on site

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# Fundamental Constructs

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- RODA hold title to site and all transactions on land lease
- RODA conduit for all public monies
- RODA active participant in all development on the site
- RODA participates in percentage of net cash flow from development projects

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# Architecture and Visitors Center

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- Opportunities:
  - Architecture-based tourism
  - Local interest in city's architectural heritage
  - Base of support for design excellence
- Strategies for Success:
  - Build capacity on grassroots level
  - Develop design-savvy citizenry
  - Build enthusiasm for the Richardson-Olmsted International Center

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# Architecture and Visitors Center

- Potential Model (Large)
  - Chicago Architectural Foundation
    - Mission: to advance public interest and education in architecture and design
    - Activities: Exhibits, lectures, classes, tours



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# Architecture and Visitors Center

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- Potential Model (Small)
  - Nashville Civic Design Center
    - Mission: elevate the quality of the built environment and promote public participation in the creation of a more beautiful city
    - Activities: educational programs, design consultation, research



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# Architecture and Visitors Center

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- Schedule trips to visit other architecture centers
- Create a task force to work with Board to develop outreach activities including:
  - Create and maintain project web site
  - Schedule public meetings and exhibits
  - Provide hard hat tours
  - Develop partnerships with the architecture school and other interested organizations



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# Implementation

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## **Statement of Guiding Principles**

- Produce a world-class environment
- Encourage economic development
- Allow flexibility for the long term
- Clearly define priorities
- Create an inclusive, open, and transparent process of decision-making

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# Implementation

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## **Comprehensive Approach to Implementation**

- Redevelopment/reuse projects
- Economic investment incentives
- Clean and green program
- Special events and community outreach

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## **Long Range Plan**

- Avoid disjointed incrementalism
- Unify the Richardson-Olmsted International Center with Buffalo State's growth expansion plan and the nearby neighborhood redevelopment plans

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# Conclusion

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CREATION OF A

RICHARDSON-OLMSTED INTERNATIONAL  
CENTER

A DEFINING MOMENT IN BUFFALO'S FUTURE

MUCH LIKE THE ORIGINAL DEVELOPMENT

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# Conclusion

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Opportunity and Significance Bigger Than

- Any of the legitimate interest groups engaged in saving this community treasure
- Decisions impacting the site should easily demonstrate how the community will benefit

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# Conclusion

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## Framework

- Does not answer all the questions
- Does not serve any one group's agenda
- Does not reduce the amount of work required to successfully reclaim/reactivate the site

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# Conclusion

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## Framework

- Does provide the first draft of a workable roadmap for the community to follow
- Does demonstrate an ability to create a private-public mix in the historic buildings
- Does protect the site as an important public place to be enjoyed by all that appreciate the best of the Richardson-Olmsted collaboration

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# Conclusion

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## Thank-You

The ULI Team thanks all of those that made it possible for us to participate and perform our work on this important endeavor. It was a true privilege.