Fruit Belt Redevelopment Plan Preliminary Study

Center for Urban Studies
Department of Urban & Regional Planning
School of Architecture and Planning
University at Buffalo

November 2002

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Preliminary Study Report

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Friendly Fruit Belt Block Club Coalition
Neighborhood Advisory Council
Fruit Belt Task Force
Fruit Belt Governance Board
Futures Academy
First Centenniel Church
Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus

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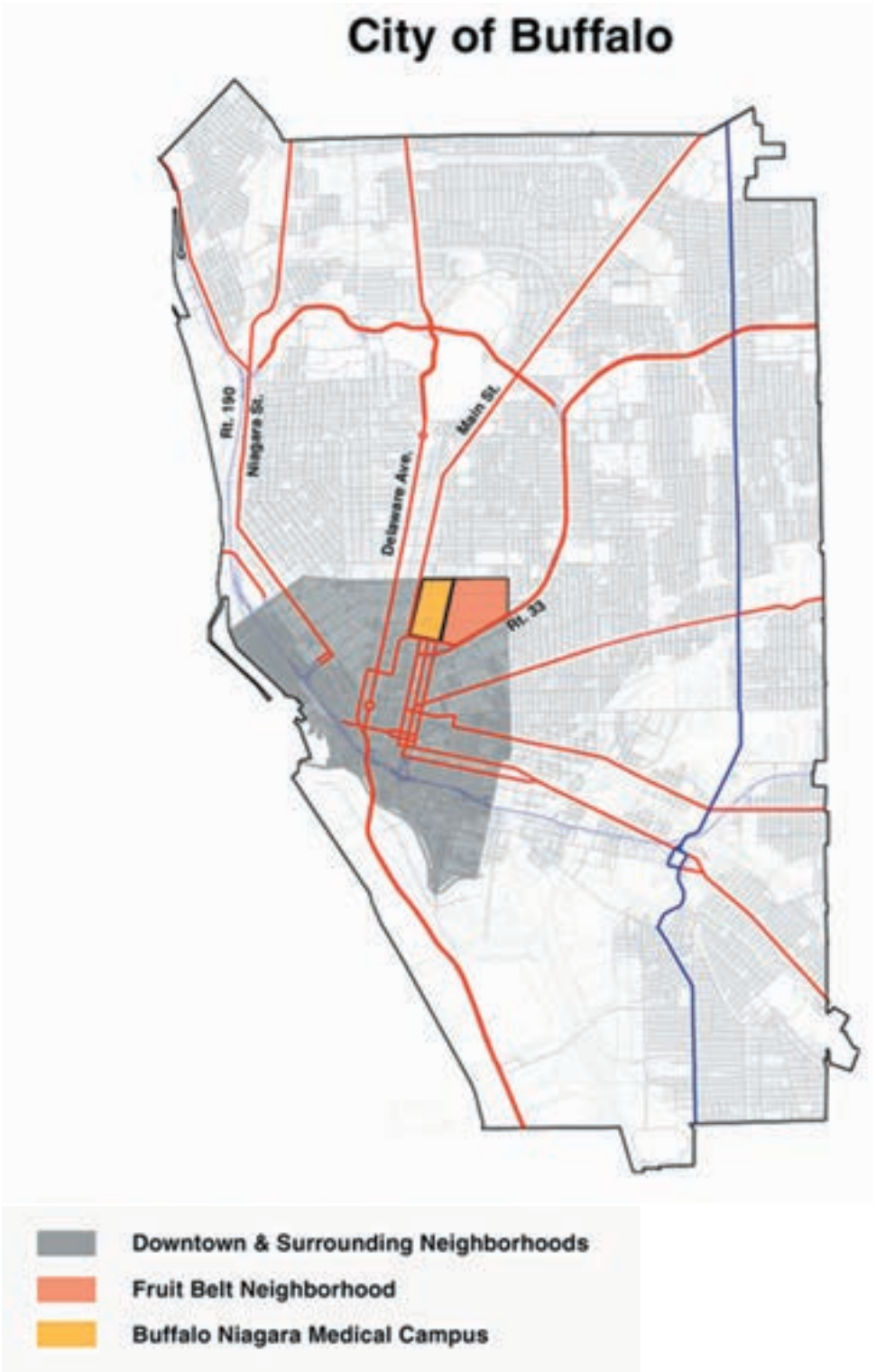

Figure 1
Fruit Belt Location

Introduction

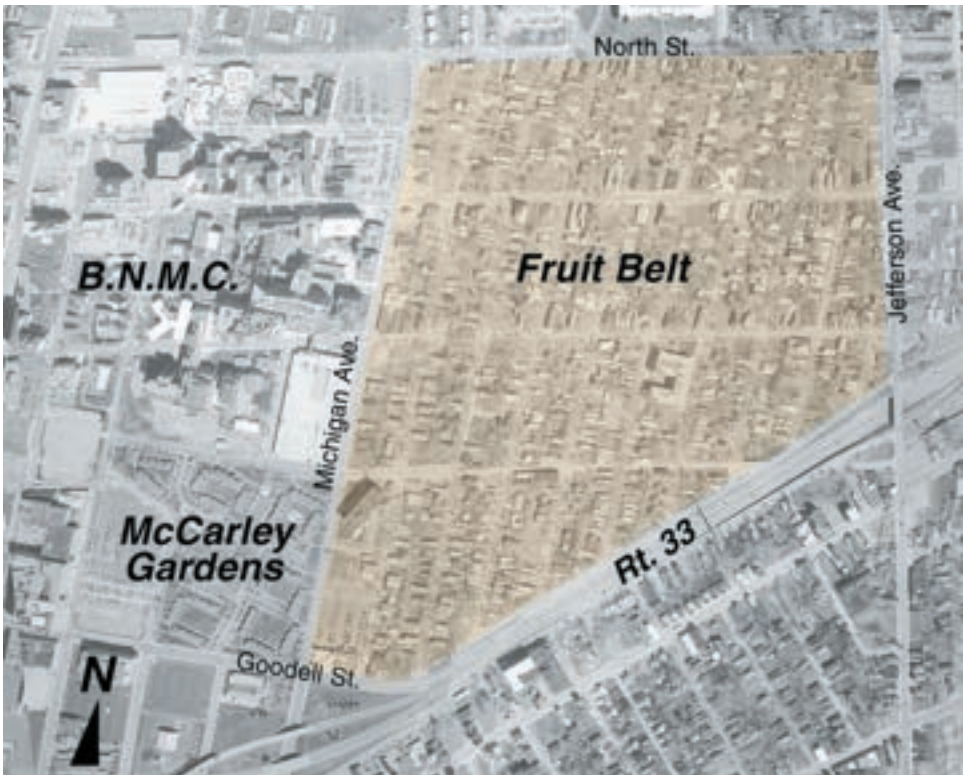

Figure 2
Fruit Belt residential neighborhood aerial photograph.

This study follows two earlier works published by the Center for Urban Studies, *The Turning Point: A Strategic Plan of Action for the Fruitbelt/ Medical Corridor* (March 27, 2001) and *Fruit Belt/Medical Corridor Tax Increment Financing District* (February 12, 2002). The original report argued that better social, economic and physical connections could be established between the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus (BNMC), a wealth generating district within the city, and the adjacent Fruit Belt residential area, one of the poorest neighborhoods in Buffalo.

The study documented in this report was the first attempt to visualize the physical potential of the residential neighborhood. The work took as proceeded under the assumptions stated in the earlier reports about the amount of residential and commercial / social amenity space that could be anticipated in this redevelopment. It was viewed as an opportunity for the existing community members to make initial suggestions about development they would like to see.

This is not intended to represent a final plan. If the redevelopment process envisioned in the two preceding reports goes forward, a broader general process of public consultation, and revisions to the plan, will be accommodated.

Figure 3
Fruit Belt residential neighborhood and medical campus existing plan.

Methods

Figure 4
UB students from the "Vacant Lots" studio discuss issues with the Friendly Fruit Belt Block Club Coalition

The bulk of the design work represented here was completed as a studio project for graduate students in the Department of Urban & Regional Planning at the University at Buffalo in the spring of 2002. Some of the preliminary work was carried out by students working on developing strategies for vacant lot development in the fall of 2001.

Both teams of students worked with community groups in developing the plan that is illustrated here. They used a variety of methods, including "feeling maps" and visual preference surveys to elicit local residents' concerns during workshop sessions. They also carried out a brief written survey with workshop participants. In addition, a subgroup of the design team worked with seventh and eighth grade students at Futures Academy to develop an understanding of their concerns. As part of that exercise, Futures students designed a community garden that is currently under construction on formerly vacant lots across from the school on Carlton Street.

In parallel activities, studies of five neighborhood elements were carried out. These were presented to interested residents at a "community fair" on May 4, 2002. As a result of feedback gathered from the community, a consolidated plan is illustrated at the end of this report.

Goals, Objectives and Strategies

Figure 5
UB Urban & Regional Planning student works with local residents during Vacant Lots project.

The following goals, objective and strategies were extracted from previous work in earlier phases of the Fruit Belt redevelopment project (see *The Turning Point*, 2001) and augmented with information gathered at various community meetings and interactions with residents of the neighborhood (see below). The four main goals of the design team were:

1. To encourage and facilitate the involvement of as many residents as possible in the development of a revitalization plan;
2. To design an aesthetically pleasing environment that is compatible with the historic characteristics of the neighborhood and the ideals of the present Fruit Belt community;
3. To design a neighborhood that would accommodate a cross-class multi-cultural community in the Fruit Belt neighborhood in the future; and
4. To design a multifunctional mixed-use neighborhood that will bring life and vitality back to the Fruit Belt.

Goals, Objectives and Strategies complied by Amber Lusk.

Based on discussions with community groups, each goal was explored further, and specific related objectives and strategies were assigned to each.

GOAL 1: To encourage and facilitate the involvement of as many residents as possible in the development of a plan for the revitalization of the Fruit Belt neighborhood.

OBJECTIVE:
Strengthen existing community-based organizations including the block clubs.

STRATEGIES:
- Open communication between existing organizations to prioritize goals; and
- Encourage participation through community outreach.

OBJECTIVE:
Encourage youth participation.

STRATEGIES:
- Hold open discussions to address issues that are important to local youth, especially those who will be most affected by changes to the neighborhood; and
- Work closely with Futures Academy to inform local students of changes that can be made in their neighborhood and to involve them in the planning process.

OBJECTIVE:
Open the planning process to all residents.

STRATEGIES:
- Hold open meetings in which residents are encouraged to identify issues, set priorities and make comments and suggestions as the work progresses.
- Facilitate meetings in different locations, at different times, and target a variety of groups to ensure a broad range of participation; and
- Keep residents aware of what is going on in their neighborhood through flyers and bulletins.

GOAL 2: To design an aesthetically pleasing safe environment that is compatible with the historic characteristics of the neighborhood and the ideals of the present Fruit Belt community

OBJECTIVE:
Enhance the public realm.

STRATEGIES:
- Repair and enhance the infrastructure, including roads, sidewalks and verges and generally enhance streetscape design;
- Improve street lighting with new light fixtures and daylighting by trimming trees;
- Identify problem areas through public input and visual assessments;
- Address safety issues that are identified by residents;
- Identify organizations that assist with short-term projects: e.g. Brush Up Buffalo, church organizations, community organizations, school classes; and
- Ensure that buildings front on streets, provide opportunities for oversight, and help generate pedestrian activity.

OBJECTIVE:
Design with intentions of preserving and enhancing the qualities of the neighborhood that are valued by the local residents, and those of historical importance.

STRATEGIES:
- Research historic features and identify all community assets and land marks that still exist;
- Research housing and building prototypes that both enhance the neighborhood image and fill gaps in the existing urban fabric; and
- Conduct workshops with residents to determine which features of the neighborhood that they value.

GOAL 3: To design a neighborhood that will accommodate a cross-class multi-cultural community in the Fruit Belt neighborhood in the future;

OBJECTIVE:
Provide housing and uses within the Fruit Belt neighborhood that target the needs and aspirations of people of diverse backgrounds and with diverse incomes.

STRATEGIES:
- Research current demographics to understand the housing needs of the current Fruit Belt residents;
- Identify cultural values that exist, support current cultural structures and promote those that are weak;
- Identify ways in which other cultures and income groups can be attracted to the neighborhood; and
- Provide housing in various price ranges and sizes, and allow for a mix of tenures.

OBJECTIVE:
Increase the value and improve the image of the Fruit Belt Neighborhood.

STRATEGIES:
- Develop projects to improve the appearance of the Fruit Belt to outside observers;
- Research the desires and aspirations of communities identified as possible future residents of the Fruit Belt e.g. downtown workers, medical campus employees;
- Develop funding mechanisms to rehabilitate existing Fruit Belt structures, enhancing their historical character and value; and
- Integrate streetscape design with adjacent Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus.

GOAL 4: To design a multifunctional mixed-use neighborhood that will bring life and vitality back to the Fruit Belt.

OBJECTIVE:
Devise a redevelopment plan that facilitates a walkable community

STRATEGIES:
- Strategically plan to develop various amenities in locations that can be reached by residents who choose to walk or who do not have access to a vehicle;
- Concentrate new development within easy access of bus routes; and
- Enhance possible pedestrian routes to other neighborhoods and parts of the city.

OBJECTIVE:
Supply a wide variety of land uses catering to the everyday needs of the people that live and work in the neighborhood.

STRATEGIES:
- Survey the residents and workers to find out what types of businesses are needed in the neighborhood;
- Identify commercial uses that will be economically sound;
- Research uses that could be beneficial to the residents of the Fruit Belt and neighboring communities; and
- Plan for social amenities based on needs identified by local residents.

OBJECTIVE:
Introduce mixed-use buildings and dense clusters of commercial uses

STRATEGIES:
- Identify nodes of high traffic and available space that can sustain clusters of development; and
- Propose mixed-use structures that will increase density and add life and value to the once vibrant neighborhood.

Community Meetings

Figure 6
Community Fair, May 4, 2002. Residents view plan ideas and provide feedback.

Meeting Dates

Fruit Belt Governance Board St. John Tower, Michigan Street	March 13th, April 11th
Friendly Fruit Belt Block Club Coalition BFNC Neighborhood House, Orange Street	March 16th, April 6th & 20th
Fruit Belt Task Force Town Plaza	April 16th
Faith-based Focus Group Langston Hughes Center, High Street	April 23rd
Neighborhood Advisory Council Community Action Organization, High Street	March 12th, April 9th
Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus Public Meeting Langston Hughes Center, High Street	March 19th
Community Fair Vacant Lots, Peach and Carlton Streets	May 4th

Neighborhood Elements

Figure 7
Neighborhood elements identified by design team for detailed study.

Throughout the community process, the design team developed a series of studies regarding key elements of the Fruit Belt neighborhood for discussion with local residents, stakeholders, focus groups of potential residents, and local planners. These studies focused on five areas:

- *Michigan Street* – identified as important because it currently acts as a boundary between the residential neighborhood and the medial campus. One of the stated goals of The *Turning Point* project is to break down this barrier.

- *Cross Streets* – in particular, the team looked at the Carlton and High Streets. These are the major east-west streets that go through both the residential neighborhood and the medical campus again providing important connections between the campus and the rest of the neighborhood (two of the major hospital facilities, Buffalo General and Roswell Park, also front on these streets). Historically, High Street was the commercial center of the Fruit Belt, and it is still a major bus route through the neighborhood. Futures Academy fronts on Carlton Street and the street provides access to the Allen/Hospital MetroRail Station.

- *Residential Streets* - the team looked at the typical character of north - south residential streets within the neighborhood. As noted in *The Turning Point*, a "fronting block" (a block length section of street and the lots on both sides of it) is being considered as the basic unit of redevelopment in the neighborhood. Orange Street, between Carlton and High Streets was selected as a model for development because it was relatively intact (few vacancies) and was thought to best illustrate the potential character of the neighborhood.

- *Nodes /Focus Areas* – within the neighborhood, a number of important nodes were identified as possible activity generators. These included: Mulberry and BFNC Road (pedestrian bridge across Highway 33); Virginia and Mulberry (vacant lots available for infill housing); Orange and Carlton (Futures Academy); Orange and High (social amenities and churches); North and Michigan (intersection of major streets). Other important nodes were addressed by the Michigan and Cross Street studies.

- *Highway 33 / BFNC Road* – This southern edge of the neighborhood is one of the most visible aspects of the neighborhood, especially to suburbanites commuting into work on the 33. Block Club neighborhood clean-up activities are often focused on this strip. The design team thought that the image of the neighborhood needed to be addressed on this highly visible side.

Conceptual plans were developed as vehicles for further discussion. Since they each took a fairly narrow physical focus, they do not necessarily dovetail into one neat proposal. The major features that received the most positive feedback have been amalgamated into a preliminary plan that is illustrated later in this report.

Michigan Street

Figure 8
Michigan Street - existing conditions do little to encourage pedestrian activity.

Michigan Street is generally identified as the boundary between the residential neighborhood and the Buffalo/Niagara Medical Campus (BNMC). It is commonly observed that the facilities in the medical campus turn their backs on the residential neighborhood. None of the major buildings open onto Michigan and, in fact, the elevations that dominate the west side of the street are predominantly blank. Many of the campus functions along Michigan are of a service nature including large heating and cooling plants – functions that do not generate much pedestrian activity. This unfriendly presentation has been exacerbated in recent years by the construction of a parking structure between Carlton and Virginia to serve the Roswell Park complex. The purchase of lots on the east side of Michigan by medical campus bodies – with an eye toward future expansion – has assisted in the deterioration of Michigan as a pedestrian friendly street. Most of these lots are currently vacant or are being used as surface parking lots.

Retail Development

The Turning Point suggested that the focus of development on Michigan should be a "medium-sized neighborhood-shopping plaza" including a supermarket anchor. Given the larger goals of the redevelopment project

Figure 9
Michigan and High
- existing conditions and potential for commercial development.

to develop neighborhood with charm and character, the design team was concerned that the term "plaza" implied a suburban type of development (strip of shops with parking in front) that was not conducive to the creation of a pedestrian friendly environment. Using instead the model of Elmwood or Hertel Avenues, the proposals here show development built out to the to the sidewalk and enhancements to the pedestrian environment.

A supermarket is still suggested at the corner of High Street, but parking is masked by the building. Given that Tops Markets isplanning to build a 30,000 sq. ft. supermarket on Jefferson at Utica (about 1.25 miles away), the team suggested a store following the model of the B-Kwik located on Hertel (approx. 12,000 sq. ft.). This would provide a wide range of products that would serve the local residents, but would also attract convenience shopping from workers and visitors to the medical campus. Given the nature of corporate supermarket templates in the Buffalo region, and the necessity of structures with fairly wide clear spans, it is unlikely that other functions could be provided over the supermarket. This study proposes that the supermarket be located on the northeast corner of Michigan and High, corresponding with the residents' desires to see neighborhood commercial focused on High Street.

Mixed Use Development

Figure 10
Michigan Street - existing conditions and possible small scale mixed-use development.

This study also suggests small mixed-use developments along the east side of Michigan between Carlton and High. The structures erected could follow a number of prototypes, including retail/residential mixed use with residential on the second and third stories. This could be accomplished on a lot by lot basis, or at a larger scale. DEvelopment might also include more flexible live/work building types that allow residential, commercial/ retail or studio spaces on the ground floor. (See for example, housing in Emeryville, California designed to permit home businesses, designed by Pyatok Architects http://www.pyatok.com/gateway.html).

Seniors' Housing

Many comments from the residents suggested that the block between Maple and Michigan was an ideal location for seniors' housing (a reflection of the aging population of the neighborhood). This study shows a seniors apartment complex bordered by Michigan, Maple and North Streets. This location would allow seniors to stay in the neighborhood, have easy access to the medical facilities on the other side of Michigan, proximity to the proposed supermarket in the same block, and good

connections to transit (busses on Michigan and High). The complex suggests about 60 units of housing with a common facility on the south end of the development.

Intersections

This study suggests that the two key intersections in the area be treated differently. The High/Michigan intersection is designed here as the center of a neighborhood commercial district serving both sides of Michigan. The intersection of Michigan and Carlton is considered part of a greenway connecting the residential neighborhood with Main Street and the Allen/ Hospital MetroRail station (see more details in "Cross Streets").

Street Calming

This proposal also attempts to enhance the pedestrian environment by calming traffic on Michigan. To this end, "bulb outs" are proposed on the east side of Michigan to perceptually narrow the street at intersections and other key locations. This street width is narrowed at these points to 24 feet. A parking lane 8 feet in width is provided between "bulb outs." Since the existing road width on Michigan is 35 feet, the pedestrian realm is allocated an additional 3 feet in this scenario.

Role for BNMC

To make Michigan into a good pedestrian environment, both sides of the street must be addressed. This study suggests that new parking structures that BNMC may construct should include ground floor commercial/retail space, and that infill commercial/retail spaces be provided in the block between Carlton and High. Smaller scale development along the eastern side of Michigan would serve to mask the unfriendly mass and facades of the existing medical facilities. The scheme also suggests that the façade of the parking structure between Virginia and Carlton be addresses. Discussions with the medical campus planners have lead to suggestions that include the provision of a canopy that might shelter temporary functions (farmers'/flea markets, for example), or using the façade to support community-based public art projects.

Figure 11
Michigan Street - existing conditions and suggested medical corridor development to enhance the pedestrian environment.

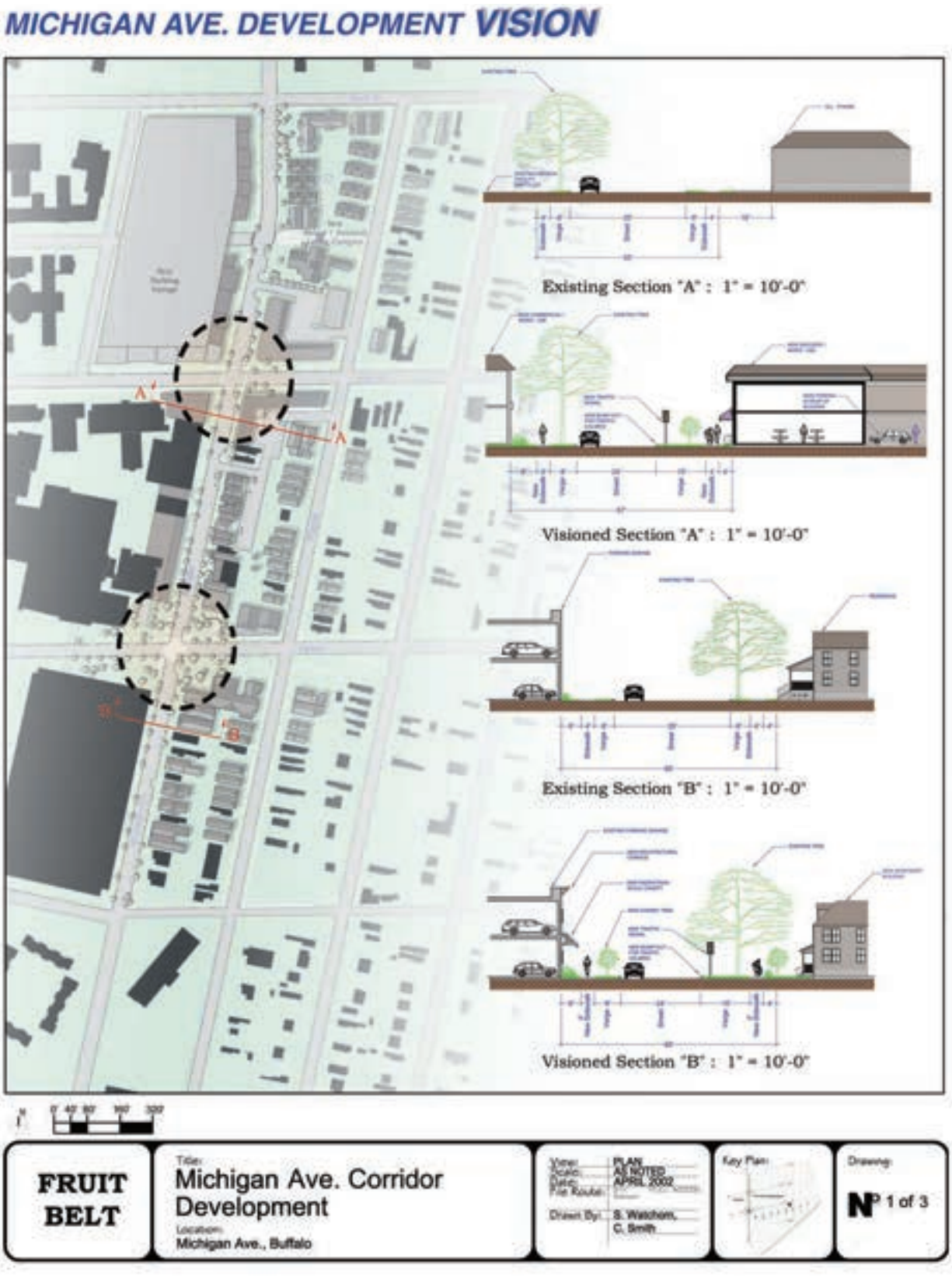
MICHIGAN AVE. DEVELOPMENT VISION
Existing Section "A" : 1" = 10'-0"
Visioned Section "A" : 1" = 10'-0"
Existing Section "B" : 1" = 10'-0"
Visioned Section "B" : 1" = 10'-0"
A
A'
B
B'
FRUIT BELT
Title:
Michigan Ave. Corridor Development
Location:
Michigan Ave., Buffalo
View: PLAN
Scale: AS NOTED
Date: APRIL 2002
File Route:
Drawn By: S. Watchorn, C. Smith
Key Plan:
Drawing:
N° 1 of 3

Figure 12.

Ω

Figure 13.
Michigan Street Drawing #2

Figure 14.
Michigan Street Drawing #3

Figure 15.
Michigan Street Before and After Photos

Cross Streets

Figure 16
Carlton Street - existing conditions

The “Cross Streets” study intersects with the Michigan Street study and makes many of the same assumptions about the type of development anticipated on the western edge of the residential neighborhood (although they are illustrated with different building forms). High Street and Carlton Street were both identified as important existing circulation routes, and the local residents valued High Street as the historical location of their neighborhood commercial activity. Although most of this has disappeared, the street remains important as the location of a number of churches and social services.

High Street
This study suggests returning commercial activity to High Street and enhancing the social components that already exist. Like the Michigan scheme, the suggestion here is to focus commercial and retail activity at the intersection with Michigan, but to extend this activity east along High into the neighborhood. With the cooperation of the BNMC planners, there is also a suggestion that retail commercial activity could be provided on the north side of High in the medical campus.

Residents have also identified the need for a better community center

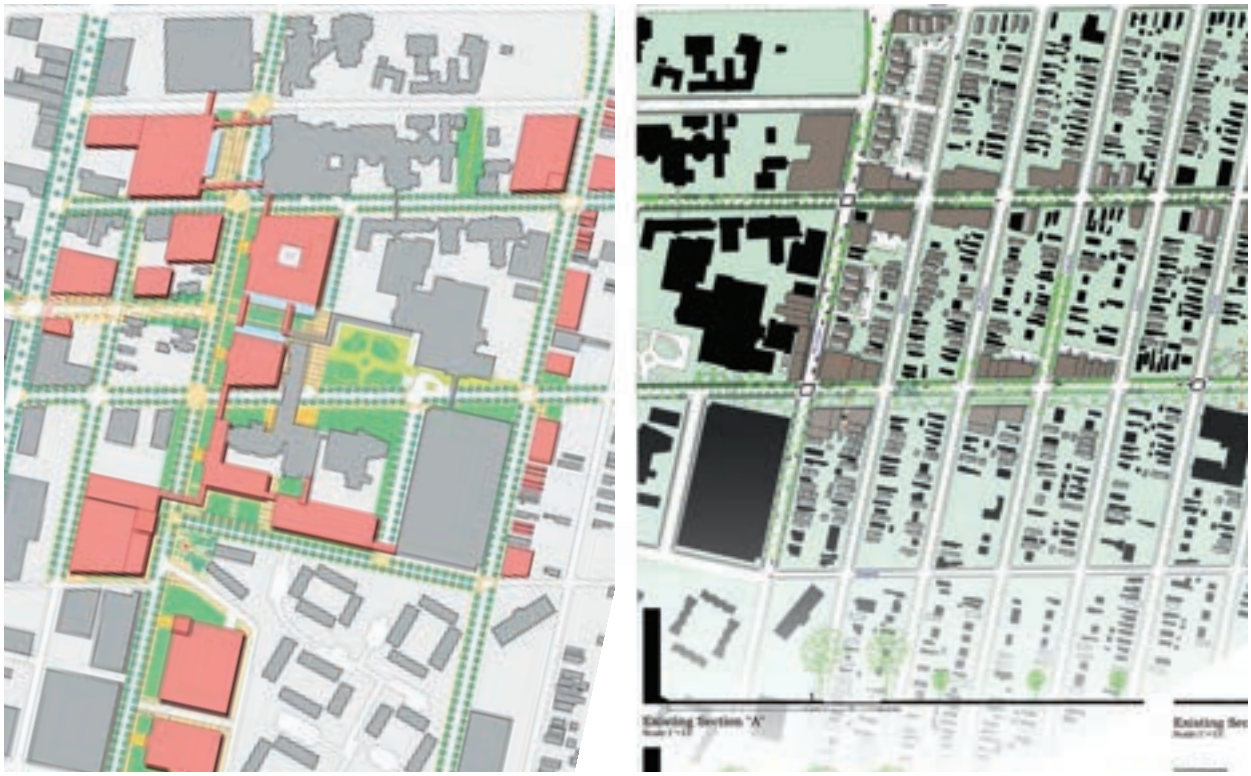

Figure 17
Coordination of plan with BNMC Master Plan.

Left: Illustration from BMNC Master Plan Scoping Study (Chan Krieger Associates, 2001).

Right: Cross Streets study plan.

in the Fruit Belt. Although many use the BFNC Neighborhood House at Virginia and Orange as a meeting place, many of the sports facilities including the basketball hoops, were removed some years ago. Amenities for youth are generally not present. The large lots on the north side of High, between Maple and Locust were identified as possible sites for a newer facility. This location would also take advantage of the existing bus routes on High and Michigan.

Infill sites further east on High Street are suggested as locations for row house construction, or small multi-family structures (3 or more units).

Carlton Street

The BNMC master plan is proposing a greenway link between Michigan and Carlton, and the Allen/Hospital MetroRail station. Since most of the lots along the south side of Carlton are vacant, this scheme suggests taking advantage of those vacancies to extend the greenway into the residential neighborhood. Row houses are suggested for the infill sites on the north side of the street, taking advantage of the value added to the street by the linear park. The greenway proposal also takes advantage of the community garden space designed by the Futures Academy students.

Figure 18.
ArtWalk Route.
Source: The Erie County Physcial Activity Coalition, ArtWalk brochure, 2002.

ArtWalk

The unique development patterns proposed for each of these cross streets complements the goals of "ArtWalk." ArtWalk proposes tours of the district that might be taken by medical campus employees, visitors to the medical campus, or other interested persons. The routes suggested loop through the Campus and the residential neighborhood.

Figure 19.
Cross Streets Drawing #1

Figure 20
Cross Streets Drawing #2

Residential Streets

Figure 21
Existing historic rsidential structures, Orange Street.

Years of neglect, disinvestment and Buffalo's aggressive policy of vacant building demolition have decimated the residential structures of the Fruit Belt. The general poverty of the residents and the lack of concern of some absentee landlords has also prevented full maintenance of many of the buildings. However, the neighborhood is the location of many of Buffalo's oldest houses (The Turning Point, 2001), many of which were originally constructed at the end of the nineteenth century. At its peak, the neighborhoods residential structures spread over the land now occupied by the medical campus. Even in 1950, when the medical facilities were starting to displace residential land uses, the population density between Michigan and Jefferson remained high. The last half of the twenthieth century, however, saw a significant reduction in density, and in demolition of hundred year old houses. In many cities, these would have been considered valuable assets.

The most striking physical result of this reduction in density and loss of wealth, is an increase in the number of poorly maintained vacant lots. The City of Buffalo initiated a program in the 1990s to build new houses on some of these lots and about 60 were actually constructed. Unfortunately, the design of these new structures made no attempt to fit with the historic character of the neighborhood. While the older houses were narrow and

Figure 22
Fruit Belt Houses

Top: Traditional houses, Grape Street.

Bottom: Suburban infill, Carlton Street

deep, with front porches or stoops close to the sidewalks, the newer units followed the templates of suburban houses – wide and shallow structures setback from the sidewalks by relatively large lawns (see Fig. 22). No attempt was made to integrate the two design generations to create a coherent neighborhood image.

The residential area of the Fruit Belt is currently zoned "R2." This designation allows for a variety of housing types, including doubles and row housing. With the exception of one row housing structure of four units (on Maple), only single-family detached houses have been built in the last couple of decades. Lot sizes for these houses all seem to conform to the restrictions in the zoning code for new R2 developments – with minimum lot sizes of 4000 sq. ft. (as opposed to the typical inner-city lots size in Buffalo of between 2500 and 3000 sq. ft.). Most often this increase in area has been accomplished by creating two new lots out of three.

One of the goals in building new housing in a neighborhood like the Fruit Belt is to make whole the streets that have been scarred by poorly maintained vacant lots. In a city with little market for new housing, this lower density of development fits well with general goals of creating ownership and control over as much property as possible in the neighborhood. To increase this sense of ownership, the City has also allowed existing local residents to buy vacant properties adjacent to their own to increase their lot size, and has created "homesteading" programs that allow the use of adjacent properties which are still under the City's ownership.

Despite these effortd, there remain many vacant lots that are not maintained, and a nisconception in the neighborhood that single lots cannot be developed for houses because of the R2 site area requirements. In reality, the City's zoning code permits exceptions for development on existing lots. It must be noted that while this regulation permits development on small lots, it unfortunaltely requires structures to conform to setback requirements that do not respect the historic urban fabric of the neighborhood.

Current residents who spoke with the design team frequently commented on the mismatch between the two types of houses, and also about the poor quality of the newer house construction. Although they saw a need to increase the population of the area, and therefore, to build more houses, they were not enthusiastic about returning to the densities of the past (some idea of which can still be seen on the lower reaches of Orange

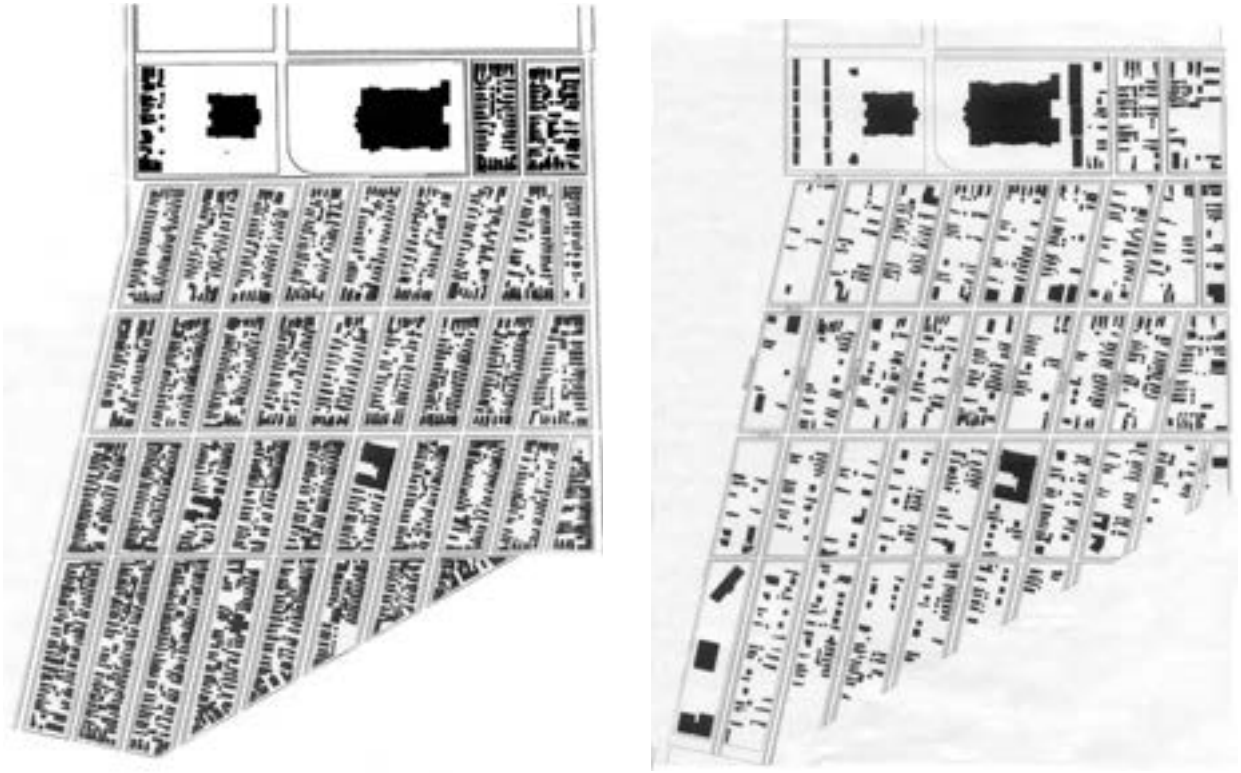

Figure 23
Building Densities.

Left: c. 1950

Right: c. 2001

Street, for example - see cover photograph). They were, however, open to exploring different housing models, and many thought that strategies should be developed to better integrate the now disparate housing form.

Orange Street Fronting Block Proposal

The design team prepared a proposal in March/April 2002 for $400,000 in Community Development Block Grant money to address improvements to the public realm on one fronting block. Had this grant been obtained, the work whould have served as a model for the potential aesthetic improvements proposed for the neighborhood as a whole.

The team selected the block of Orange Street between Carlton and High as the location for this study. This site was chosen because, at the time, the building stock was relatively intact, obviating the need for major private investment to build new houses. Improvement of that block would also provide a connection between the social services facilities at Orange and High, and Futures Academy and the community garden at Orange and Carlton.

The proposal called for new streets, curbs, sidewalks and verges, as well

as planting new trees. New street lighting was also proposed – the fixtures chosen provided pedestrian level lighting. This addressed safety concerns raised by residents who noted that the streets were very dark. This was attributed, at least in part, to the density of the tree canopy that kept light out during the day, and blocked light from the standard street lights that are currently provided throughout the neighborhood.

Traffic Calming:

The design team explored two possible road layouts. Currently, most of the north-south residential streets in the Fruit Belt are one way. This allows for alternative side parking in the winter to facilitate street clearing, but does little to deter high speed driving. Team members also observed that many people driving through the neighborhood did not heed stop signs.

Street calming was discussed as a possible strategy to increase safety. Two schemes were illustrated. One suggested the use of bulb-outs at the intersections with the cross streets and assumed that the one-way system would be maintained. The bulb-outs, however, suggest that parking is always on the same side of the street which is not the case during snow clearing months. The second assumed no bulb-outs, but that the roads would become two-way.

Figure 24
Residential Proposal Drawing #1

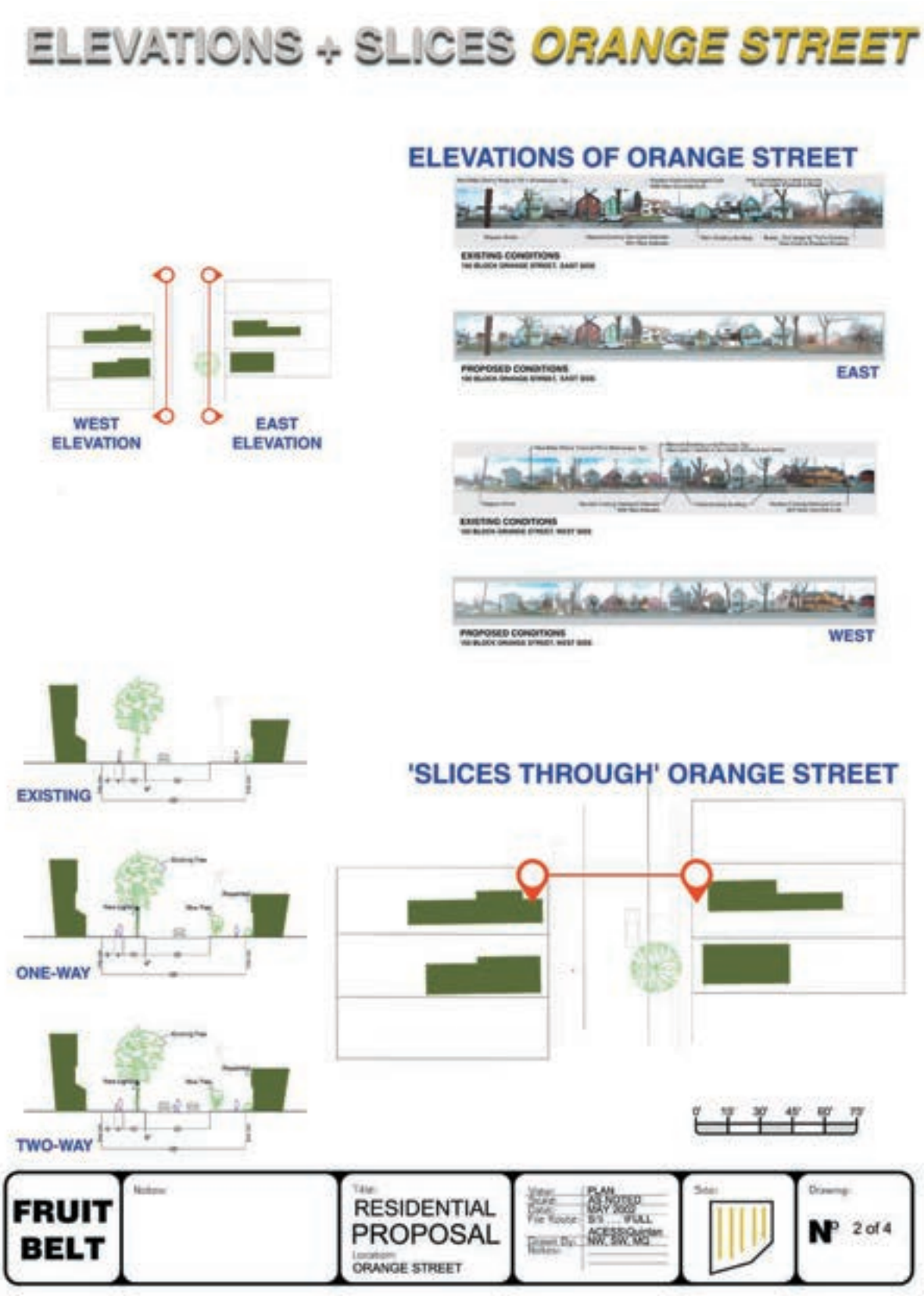

Figure 25
Residential Proposal Drawing #2

Figure 26
Residential Proposal Drawing #3

Figure 27
Residential Proposal Drawing #4

Nodes / Focus Areas

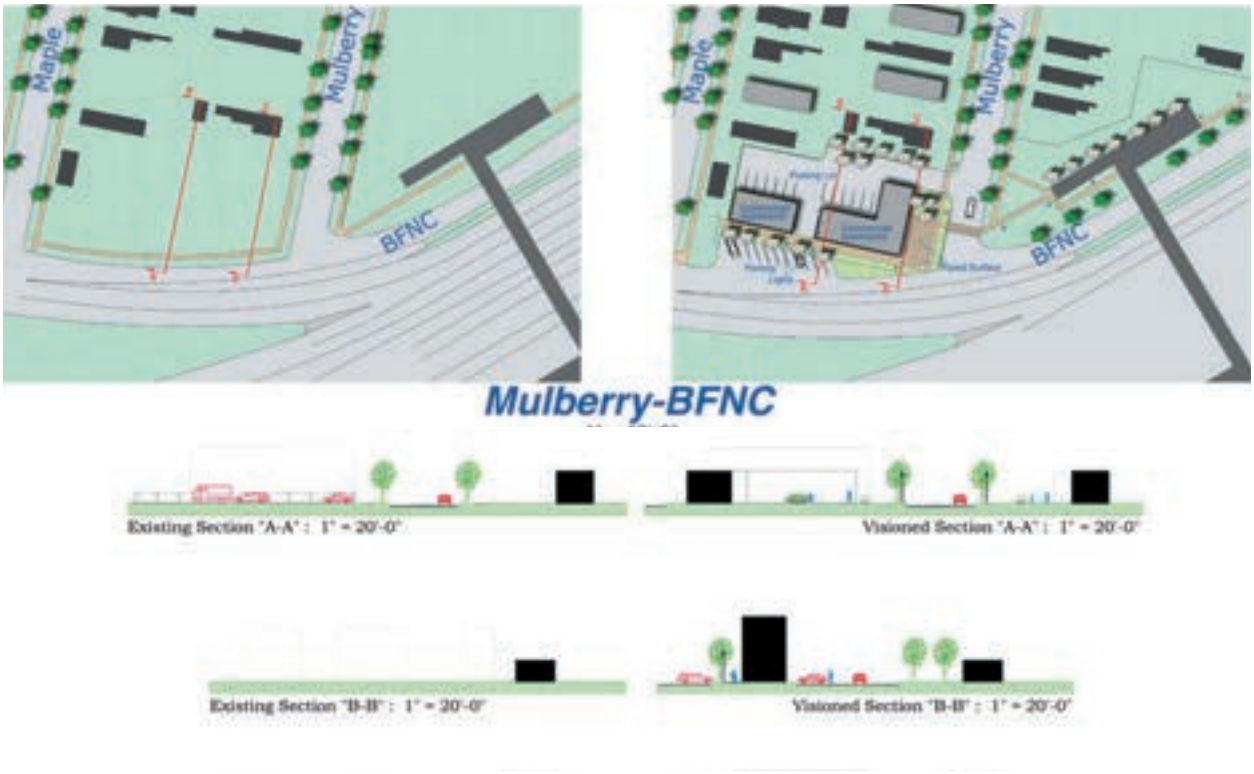

Figure 28
Mulberry- BFNC Node

Left: existing plan.

Right: proposed plan.

Below: existing and proposed sections.

The design team developed schemes for five nodes / focus areas within the residential neighborhood. Two other important nodes (the intersections of Michigan and High, and Michigan and Carlton) were addressed within the Michigan and Cross Streets Studies (see above).

Mulberry - BFNC Road

This was identified as an important location because it provided access to the pedestrian bridge that crosses Highway 33, and was also close to the Locust Street exit from the 33. The proposal showed a small mixed-use development, accommodating convenience shopping and apartments over the top. There were some initial thoughts that this might encourage some cross highway interconnections, and that it might also attract business of drivers coming off the highway. Ultimately, however, the idea was thought impractical for a couple of reasons. First, there was a desire to concentrate commercial activity along High and Michigan. The market for commercial in this neighborhood is already limited and the viability of these other locations was the first priority. The second reason was resident complaints about the use of the Locust Street exit from the "33." This exit was used primarily by people taking shortcuts through the neighborhood to get to the hospitals, a use that was seen as undesirable and sometimes

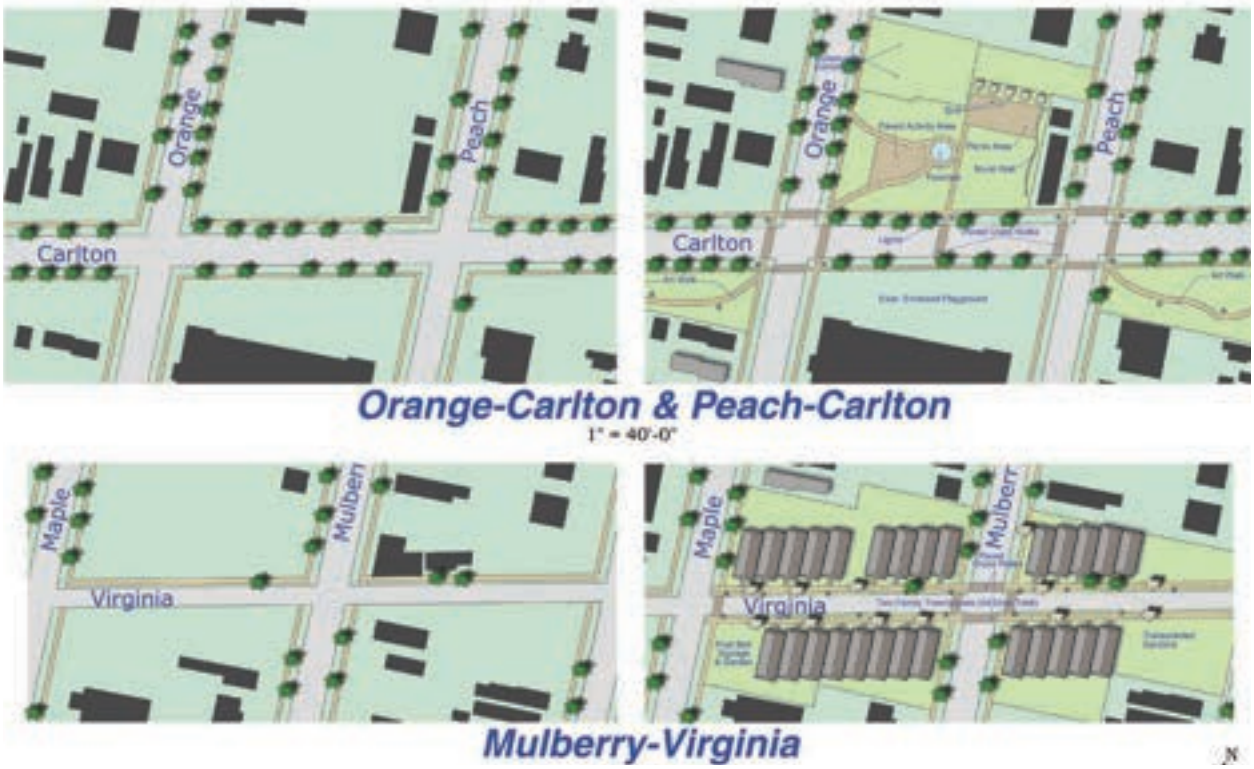

Figure 29

Top: Orange - Carlton Node, existing and proposed plans.

Bottom: Virginia -

Mulberry Node, existing

dangerous.

Orange and Carlton

This node is already important within the neighborhood as the location of Futures Academy. Approximately one third of the students attending this magnet school are residents of the Fruit Belt neighborhood, and the school is playing an active role in attempts to rejuvenate the area. Seven members of the design team worked with students from Futures to develop a design for a community garden on the vacant lots across Carlton from the school. Construction of the garden was started in the summer of 2002.

Virginia and Mulberry

The vacant lots at the intersection of Mulberry and Virginia presented an opportunity for infill housing. The site was used to illustrate the potential for row house development on the cross streets.

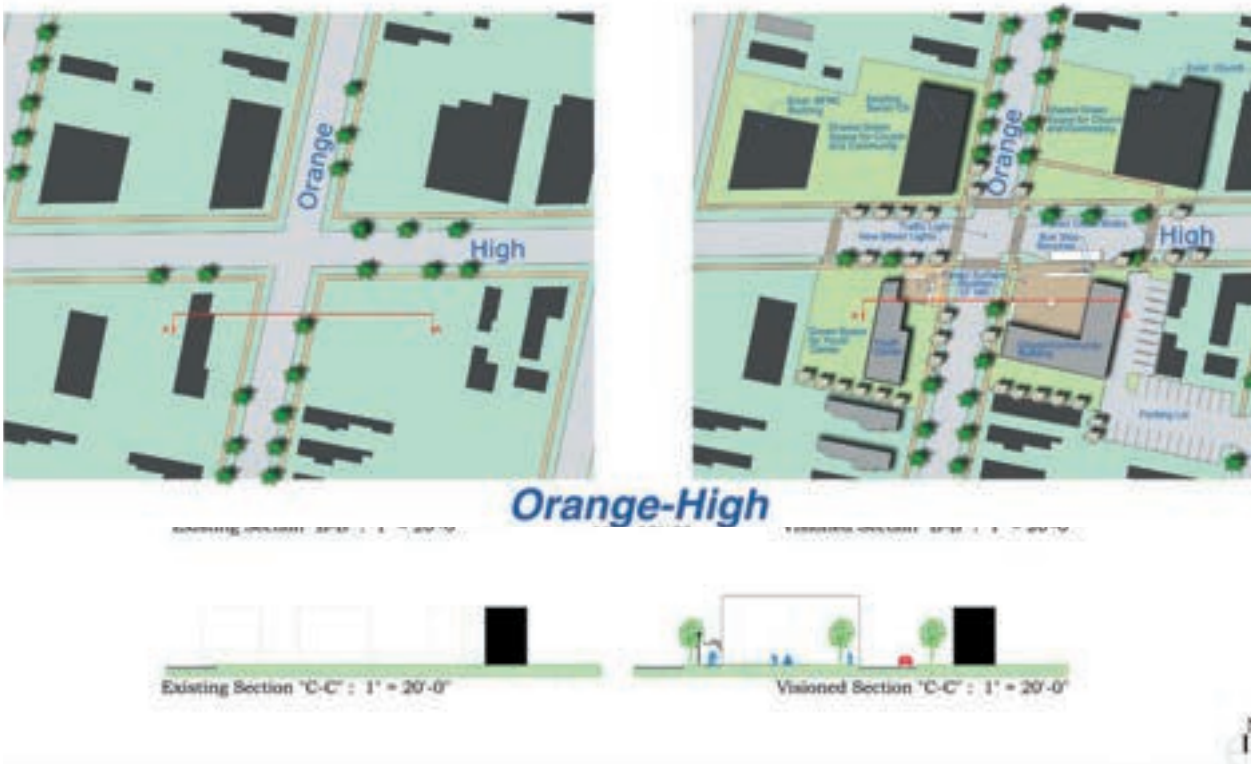

Figure 30

Orange High Node, existing and proposed plans.

Bottom: existing and proposed sections.

Orange and High

High Street was the traditional commercial street of the Fruit Belt. Although little of this remains, the street is still a focus for neighborhood activities with a high concentration of churches and social services. High and Orange is a central location in this regard. The northwest corner is the site of the Moot Center, a seniors center run by BFNC. The northeast includes a church and the facilities of the Community Action Organization (CAO). The southeast is also a church. The building on the southwest corner has recently been demolished and this proposal shows the development of a youth center on the site. It also suggests that some common design strategies be developed that would create a public space that is framed by the ensemble of buildings.

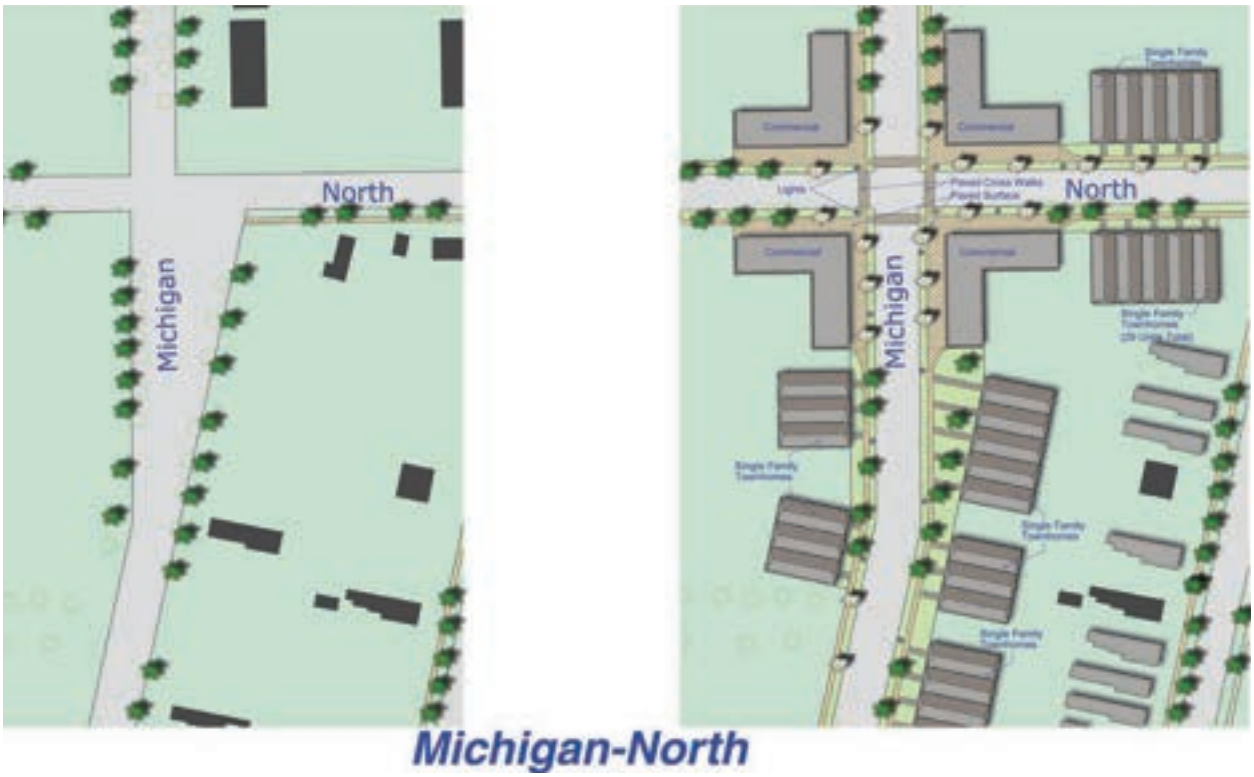

Figure 31

Michigan - North Node, existing and proposed plans.

North and Michigan

North Street was not identified as a significant street by most of the residents engaged in this process. However, this corner is an important link between the Fruit Belt residential neighborhood and the Pilgrim Village and BMHA housing complexes to the north and northwest. This proposal suggested some mixed-use developmjent on all four corners, and a narrowing of Michigan south of North Street to create a right-angle intersection.

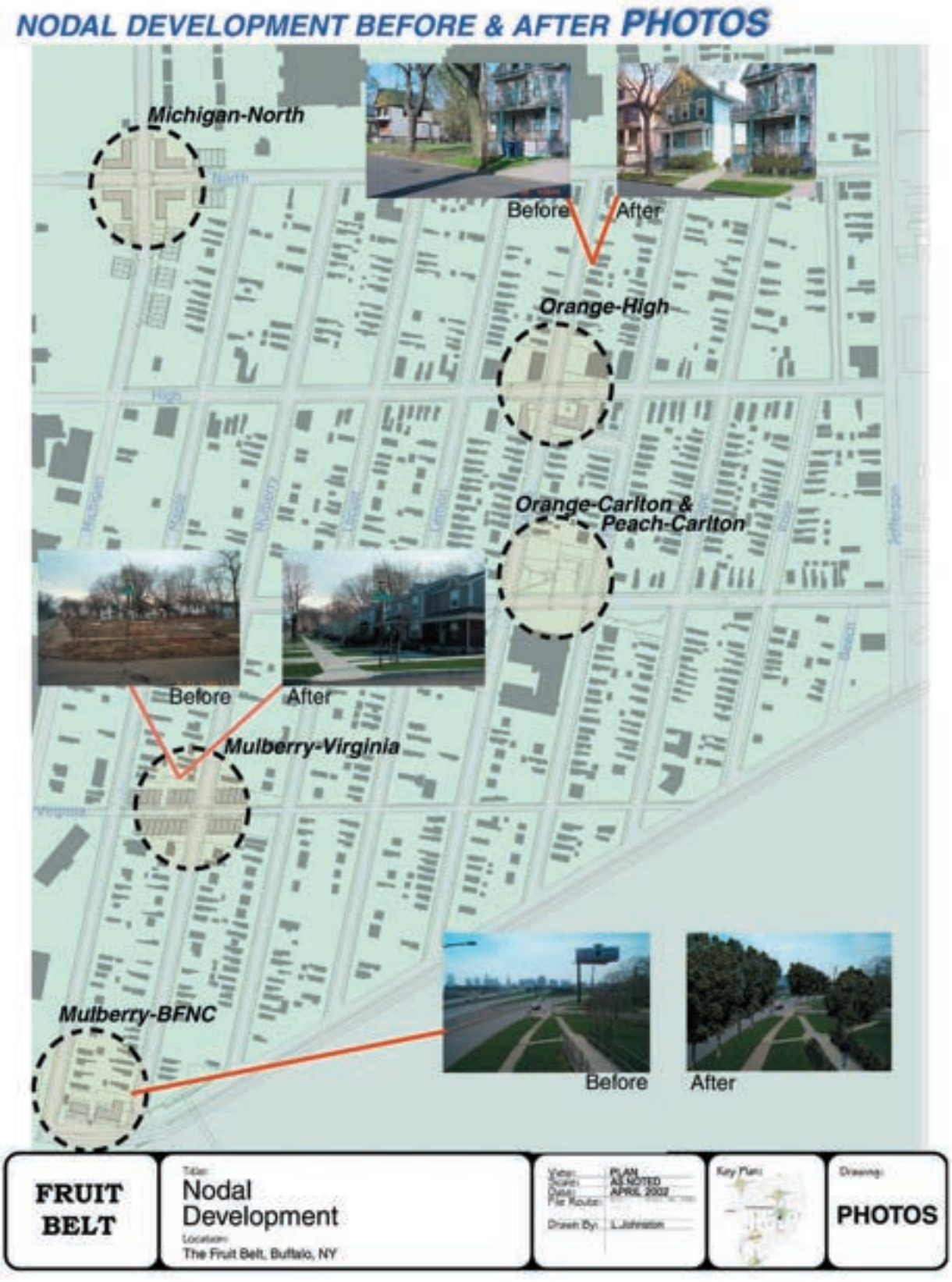

Figure 32
Nodal Development Before and After Photographs

BFNC Road / Highway 33

Figure 33.

BFNC/ Highway 33 before and after images.

The southern edge of the Fruit Belt neighborhood is bordered by BFNC Road (sometimes referred to as the "service road") and State Highway 33. The construction of the highway in the 1960s cut off parts of the original residential neighborhood - Cherry Street is now on the south side of the highway, connected only by two pedestrian bridges.

This edge of the neighborhood is important to the residents because it is the most public and visible edge. Commuters coming into the city every weekday get a good look at the conditions that the residents endure. The importance of this face can be seen in the block club's activities - whenever they have a "clean-up" day, much of their effort is focussed on this stretch of road.

These proposals call for the beautification of the southern edge of the neighborhood, reintroducing cherry trees and landscaping in place of the current chainlink fence and concrete. Both suggest a narrowing of BFNC Road to accommodate just one lane of traffic. The "greenway" proposal goes further in suggesting that the Locust Street exit from the 33 be closed and that a bicycle path be developed. This greenway would provide non-motorized access to the city center.

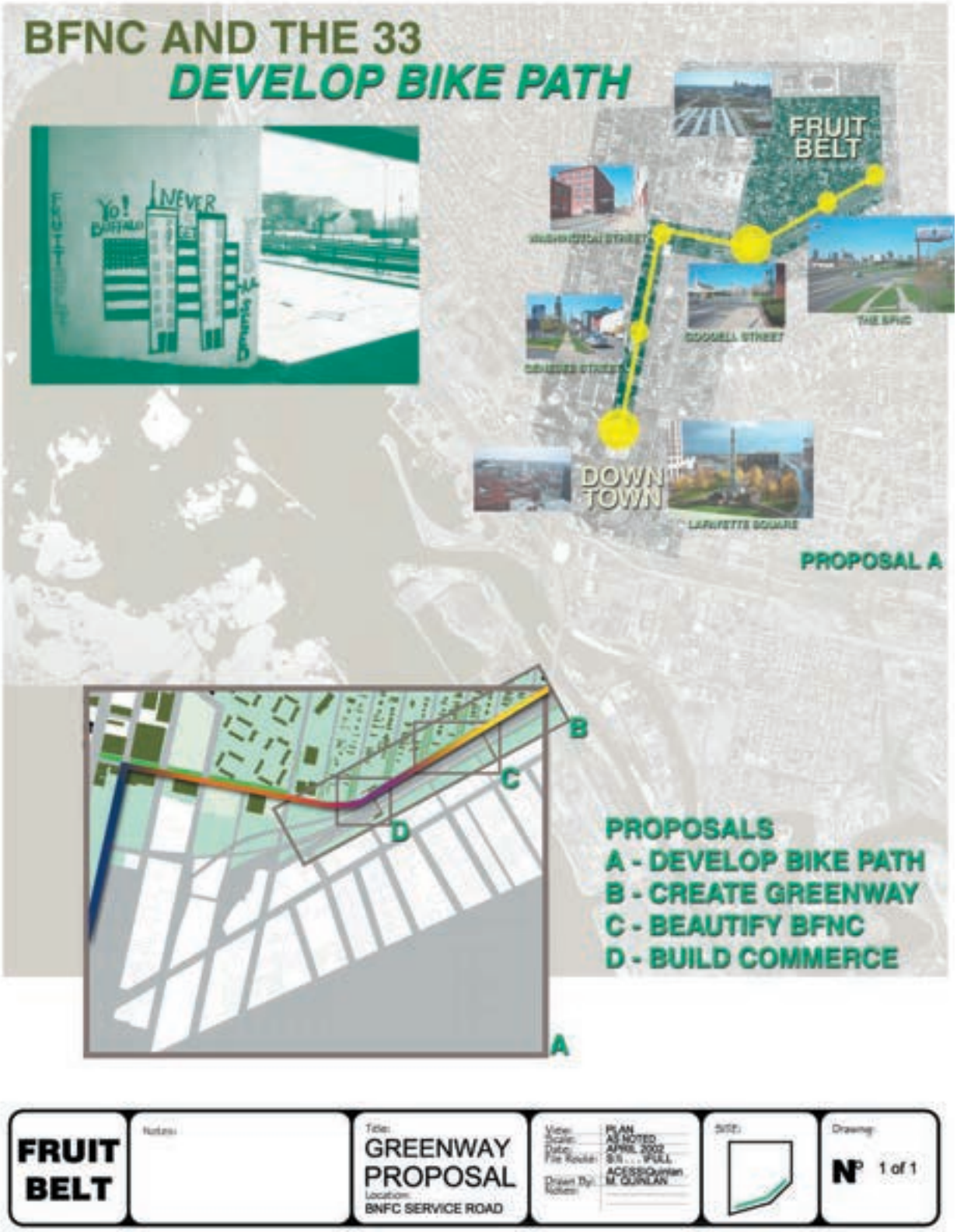

Figure 34.
Greenway Proposal Drawing #1

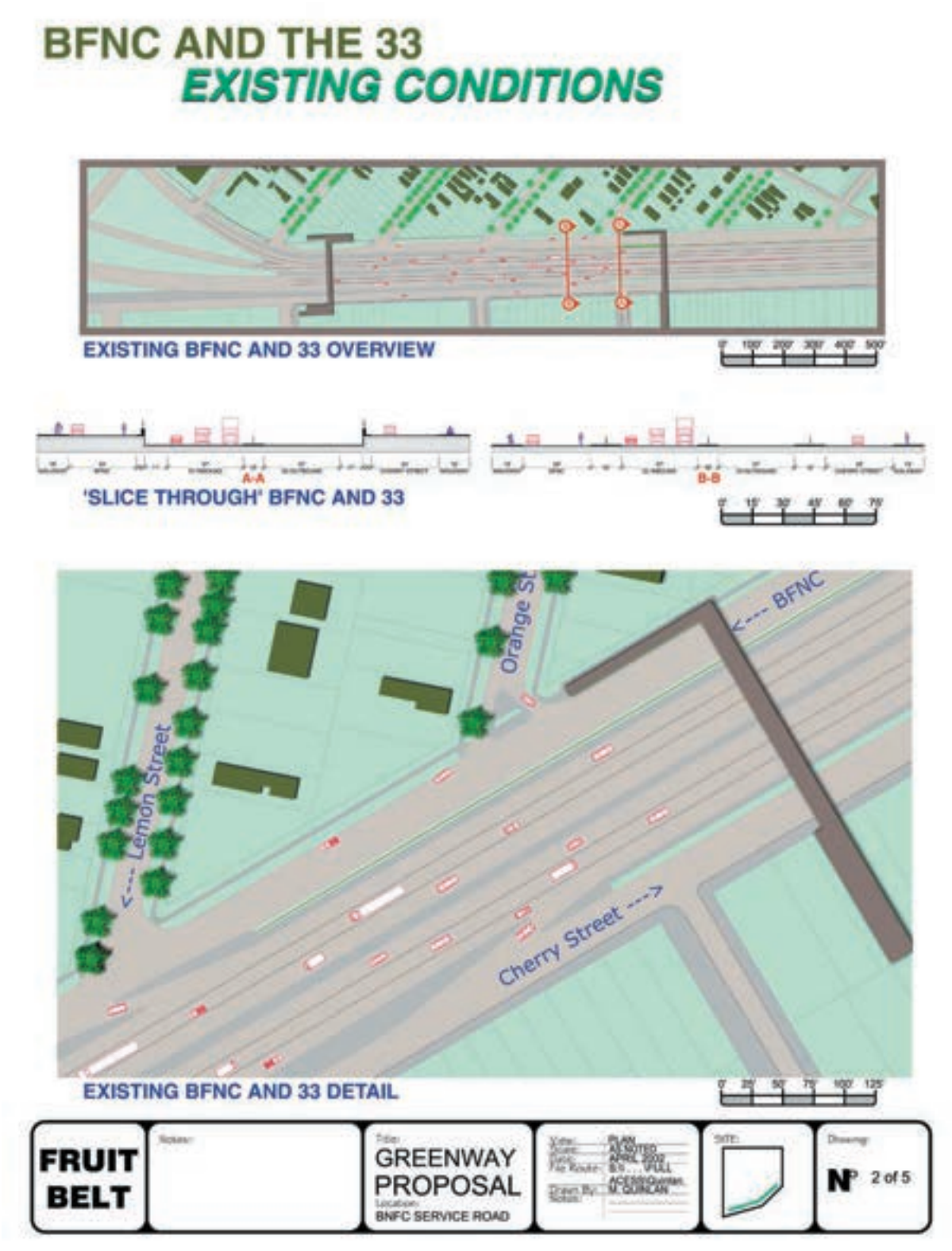

Figure 35.
Greenway Proposal Drawing #2

Figure 36.
Greenway Proposal Drawing #3

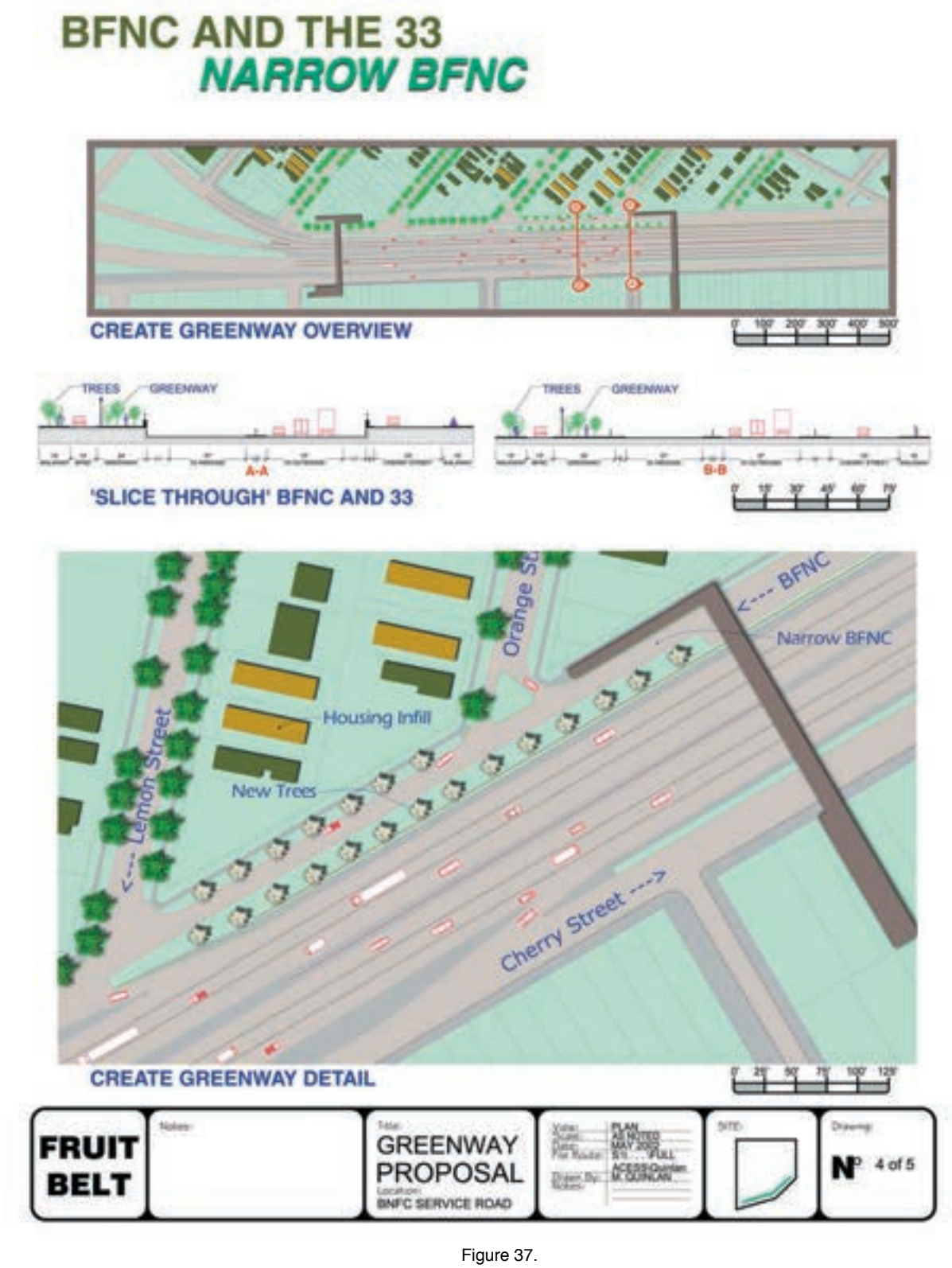

Figure 37.
Greenway Proposal Drawing #4

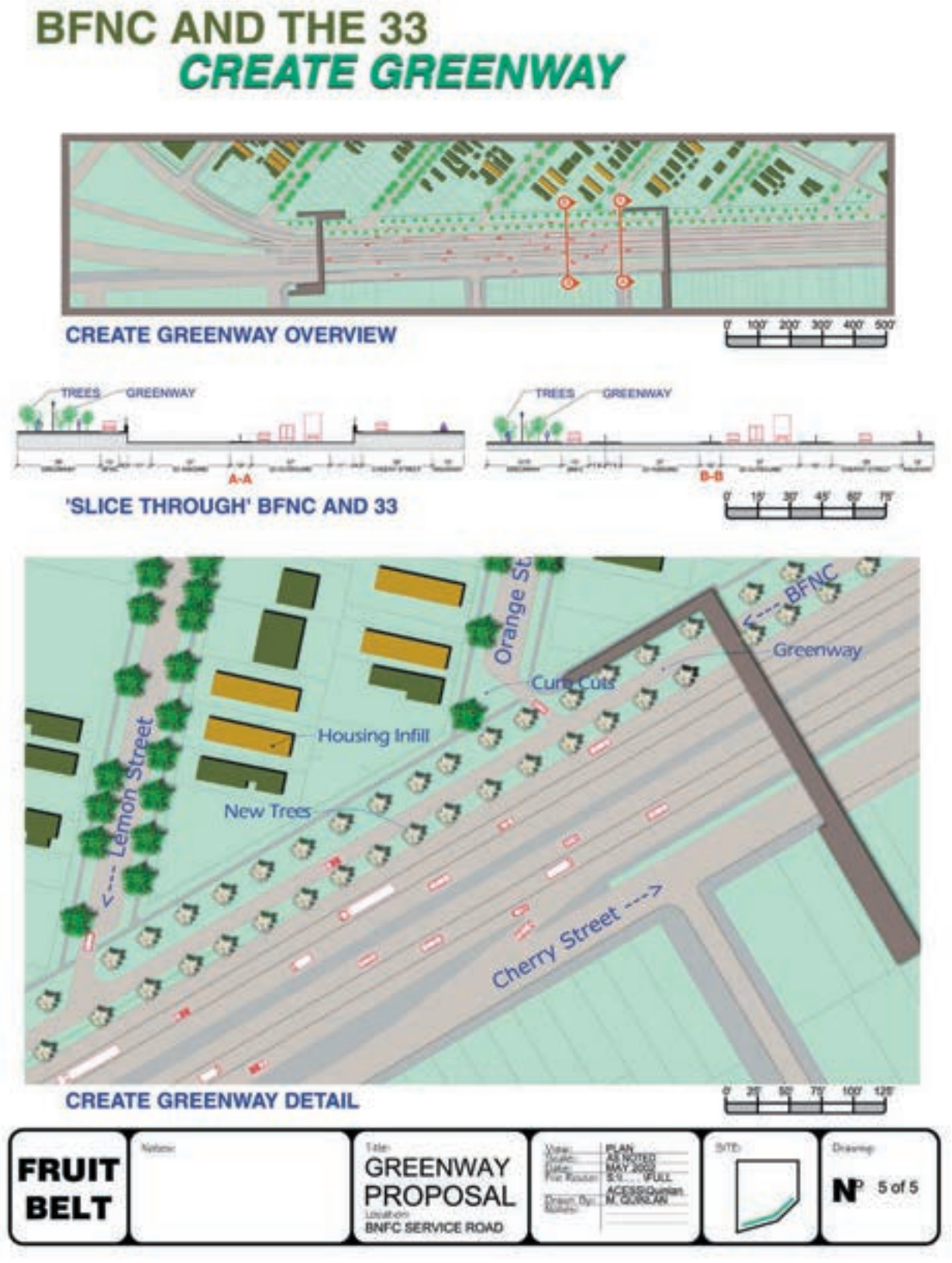

Figure 38.
Greenway Proposal Drawing #5

Consolidated Plan

Figure 39.

City of Buffalo council member Davis (left) speaks with members of the design team at the Commuinity Fair.

The work that was undertaken in each of the neighborhood element studies was independently developed. There were, therefore, some conflicts between the proposals. Based on feedback that the design team received at community events, especially the May 4 Community Fair, a preliminary consolidated plan was developed that encompassed those elements of the work that were best received.

The drawing on the following pages illustrates this plan. Again, it is important to emphasize that continued public process is anticipated, this work will form the basis for future discussion and further modifications can be expected.

Following the development of this design, a preliminary land use map was also prepared. This suggests the range of land use and building types that might be expected in the neighborhood as it is redeveloped. Some additional research was necessary in preparing this map since the City of Buffalo's data regarding vacancies does not appear to match conditions in the neighborhood.

Figure 40.
Fruit Belt residential neighborhood and Medical Campus preliminary proposed plan.

Land Use Plan

Figure 41
Fruit Belt residential neighborhood and Medical Campus proposed land use plan.

Preparation of this map required some further research about vacancies. Grey areas that do not show a structure are those that are fenced or used by adjoining residents. For purposes of this plan, it was assumed that land that was cared for by the local community, or individual residents, was not to be developed in the short term (even if the city owned it). Red structures are abandoned houses that the team assumed will eventually be demolished.

The light yellow represents areas designated for detached building footprints - these might be single family houses or duplexes. The specific lot lines represent the existing lots, and do not have to remain. However, since the emphasis is on improving the quality and safety of the public realm, the houses need to be built out to the street line to match the traditional, rather than recent, patterns of development. The plan recommends continuing the traditional Buffalo lot widths of 25-30 feet accepted as a minimum - allowing off street parking. If all housing is placed at that density, there will be about 235 footprints in that zone.

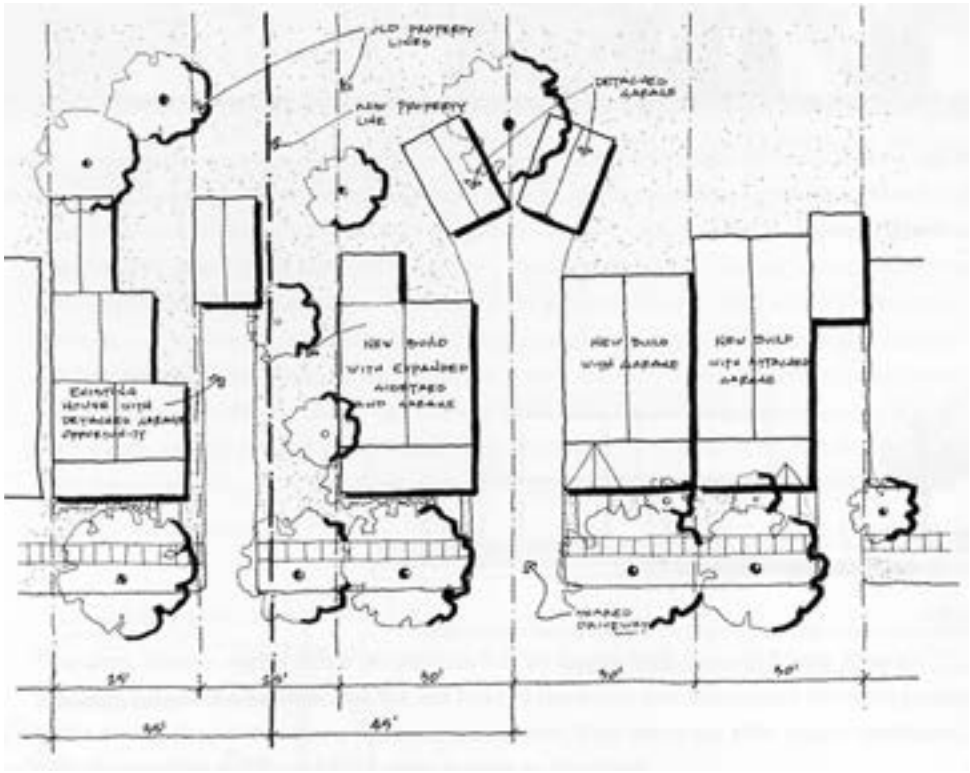

Figure 42.
Lot Divisions based on The Lower West Side Stabilization Demonstration project.

In light of typical Buffalo development practices, and preferences at the City Hall for wider lots, it is likely that lower density of development will be applied. When building in these old neighborhoods, the City commonly works to create larger lots for each house. Typically, three 30 foot lots that are adjacent are redivided into two 45 foot lots. This has already been done in the Fruit Belt, and is also being followed as a model in the West Side (see Figure 42). This approach has the advantage of making streets whole again more quickly since it does not require the sale of as many units. If this model is followed, there is space for approximately 160 footprints in the light yellow zone.

The dark yellow lots represent slightly higher density, presumably row-houses. These sites can accommodate approximately 100 units or even more if the market allow by creating "stacked townhouses" (i.e. duplex row houses).

The orange lots represent areas designated for commercial buildings, apartments over commercial, and possibly small "multi-family" structures (more than 2 units in the terms of the Buffalo Zoning Code). They are along the corridors (Jefferson and Michigan) and along the western end of High Street.

Conclusions and Next Steps

The work that is illustrated in this report is the beginning of a process. It was developed to generate reactions from local residents, city officials, potential developers, and the people that they might target as future residents. If the redevelopment plan for the Fruit Belt neighborhood progresses, more detail work, and more public meetings will be necessary to refine the plan.

Although the work here has generally followed up on the conclusions reach in the previous reports, there are a few significant deviations. All involved agreed that the Michigan edge had to be addressed in order to break down the segregation between the two elements of the neighborhood. *The Turning Point* identifies Michigan as a place to develop commercial activity, specifically a plaza. Following consultation with local residents, the design team suggested that this integration might be better achieved by initially targeting the cross streets, specifically High and Carlton. This conformed to local resident preferences, but also suggested that development within the medical campus might be harmonize with the residential district. The campus planners are now suggesting retail on the North side of High Street, while this report suggests extending a linear park along Carlton in response to a similar campus plan initiative. While Michigan may well provide good opportunities for commercial development, these might be delayed until a later phase of development and may respond more directly to the development of new facilities in the medical campus.

The specifics of this design exercise have also allowed a more detailed understanding of the opportunities available for open space. Rather than scattered around the neighborhood these have now been consolidated and vary in configuration depending on their contexts. As the nodal development illustrations show, open spaces along High Street are envisioned here as hard landscaped urban open space and the design team worked to suggest how buildings might define “squares.” Green space is concentrated along the less busy Carlton Street, working in concert with efforts of the local block club and Futures Academy to create community gardens. Soft landscaping is also used to protect the neighborhood from Highway 33 by providing a greenway that suggests an alternative pedestrian/cycle route towards downtown.

In terms of residential development, the plan provides a range of opportunities with a flexibility of densities that can be adapted to market demand as the project progresses. Higher densities are located around the periphery and on the cross streets. It is suggested here that the north/south

residential streets that are in the interior of neighborhood be developed in a manner that enhances the historic character of the existing structures.

The framework represented here is deliberately flexible. The land use plan suggests a range of uses that may be adapted overtime as connections between the medical campus and the residential neighborhood are improved.

In order to refine the design more consultation is necessary. If the tax increment financing (TIF) plan is developed further, this will involve public meetings. However, regardless of how the redevelopment is funded, a broader section of the local resident community should be permitted to comment on the work carried out to date. It is also important that future potential residents of the neighborhood are addressed, perhaps through focus groups in the medical campus. Developers should also be permitted to enter this discussion so that their knowledge of the local markets can be tapped, but also to engage in a discussion of how to better integrate houses of varying age.