

HOME PAGE TODAY'S PAPER VIDEO MOST POPULAR TIMES TOPICS

Subscribe to The Times | Log In | Register Now | Help

The New York Times

N.Y. / Region

Search All NYTimes.com

Orange Home Loans As low as 3.05% APR

WORLD U.S. N.Y. / REGION BUSINESS TECHNOLOGY SCIENCE HEALTH SPORTS OPINION ARTS STYLE TRAVEL JOBS REAL ESTATE AUTOS

Save \$538 a year. 165+ HD channels, Internet & Phone. TV + INTERNET + PHONE \$99 Time Warner Cable Get It Now

In Buffalo, Visions, Perhaps Illusions, of a University-Fueled Revitalization



Doug Benz for The New York Times

Satish K. Tripathi, the university president.

By THOMAS KAPLAN Published: May 8, 2011

BUFFALO — This city has lost more than one-tenth of its residents in the last decade, and it shows.



Enlarge This Image

Doug Benz for The New York Times Robert G. Shibley, the architecture school's dean, pointing to areas where the university could expand.

Entire neighborhoods are all but abandoned. Stretches of boarded-up bungalows with peeling paint and sagging roofs are interrupted only by grassy lots where decrepit houses have been demolished by the city.

And the highest-profile urban renewal effort in recent years — a proposed Bass Pro Shops outdoors superstore that would have anchored a revitalization of the historic waterfront where millions of bushels of grain once began their trip down the Erie Canal — has produced nothing but a muddy crater the size of a city block.

Now, Buffalo, a struggling emblem of the Rust Belt, is trying a new approach: recasting itself as a college town.

Where a drab low-income housing project now sits, leaders of the University at Buffalo, part of the State University of New York system, envision glass-and-steel biomedical buildings. They propose hiring hundreds of new professors and thousands of staff members. They imagine young researchers living in restored lofts, dining at street-side bistros and walking to work.

RECOMMEND

TWITTER

SIGN IN TO E-MAIL

PRINT

REPRINTS

SHARE

FROM THE DIRECTOR OF THE JOY LUCK CLUB

Log in to see what your friends are sharing on nytimes.com. Privacy Policy | What's This?

Log In With Facebook

What's Popular Now

The Unwisdom of Elites



Viewing Postwar Germany in a Fresh Historical Light



Ads by Google

what's this?

Security University

Start Your Security Guard Career Today and Don't Wait Any Longer. Choose!CDCcollege.com/SecurityGuard

ITT Tech - Official Site

Visit Our Getzville Area Campuses Request a Free brochure today! www.ITT-Tech.edu/NewYork

Western Governors Univ.

Challenging Online Degree Programs Business, IT, Teaching & Nursing. www.WGU.edu

Public Policy & JD Degree

We Develop Well Rounded Attorneys Learn More About Us Today. Law.Liberty.edu

Nursing School Applicants

Traditional BSN Program 95% NCLEX Pass Rate, Modern Campus www.iuon.org

Hiring Tax Incentives

National Leaders In Federal & State Hiring Tax Credits. Proven Results! www.alliantgroup.com

Advertise on NYTimes.com

MOST E-MAILED

RECOMMENDED FOR YOU

1. Research Uncovers Raised Rate of Autism

2. N.F.L. Considers Forcing New Testing Standards

3. Lost in the School Choice Maze



PRESENTED BY

Log in to discover more articles based on what you've read.



Log In

Register Now

Log In

What's This? | Don't Show

[The \\$5 billion expansion plan](#), given the name UB 2020, has captivated business leaders and local politicians, who dream of a new economic base.

But cash-short state officials in Albany have not been keen on what would amount to the SUNY system's biggest expansion since its creation six decades ago. Skeptics see the plan as a fantasy that, at best, would enrich wealthy developers while making the university too expensive for poor students. A version of UB 2020 [failed to win approval in the Legislature](#) last year, and two state senators from the Buffalo area lost re-election bids last year partly as a consequence.

Yet there is no denying that the hope — that Buffalo could someday be a New York version of Berkeley, Calif. — is a tantalizing one.

"For the community, it means economic development," said Satish K. Tripathi, the [University at Buffalo's](#) president, [who took office last month](#) after nearly seven years as provost. "For the students, it means a better education here. For the construction industry, it means really a lot more jobs."

This is a place that could use a lift. Propelled by its grain mills and the growth of the railroad, Buffalo stood in 1900 [as the country's eighth-largest city](#). It is now the 70th, and nearly 30 percent of its 261,000 residents are in poverty.

The UB 2020 proposal would move the university's medical school from the outskirts of the city to downtown, near Buffalo General Hospital and the Roswell Park Cancer Institute. Eventually, the university would move its dental, nursing, pharmacy and public health schools downtown, too, and spend hundreds of millions for construction on its other two campuses.

Officials with the university say the expansion would more than double its yearly regional economic impact, which they put at more than \$1.7 billion. Business leaders describe it as the top economic development priority for all of western New York.

To help pay for the expansion, the university proposes raising tuition and entering into public-private partnerships, like developing state-owned land for commercial uses. Both proposals would require approval from the Legislature.

But Democrats in the State Assembly have been deeply skeptical. Many question whether allowing the University at Buffalo to charge higher tuition than other SUNY campuses would put it out of reach for poor students. Others worry that the university wants to be a real estate developer more than a university — or wiggle free from oversight by the SUNY system and the Legislature.

"We think we have a role," said Assemblywoman [Deborah J. Glick](#), a Manhattan Democrat and chairwoman of the higher education committee. "And their response is, 'We want to do what we want to do.'"

Western New York lawmakers sought to include UB 2020 in the state budget this year but were rebuffed. And although Gov. [Andrew M. Cuomo](#) has said he supports UB 2020 and has promised to hold a summit meeting in the coming weeks to discuss the proposal, he has also suggested concerns about its scale.

"I don't think anyone would ever say to the State of New York, 'We want a \$5 billion economic development grant,' " Mr. Cuomo told reporters last week, flashing a look of incredulity. "Five billion dollars is like all the money in the world. Twice."

This year, in apparent recognition of lawmakers' doubts about the proposal, Buffalo officials are sounding far less ambitious.

The original UB 2020 proposal called for adding 10,000 students to the university's enrollment of 29,000; in an interview last week, Dr. Tripathi said he no longer planned to pursue an expansion of the student body, at least at the moment. "The goal hasn't changed," he said. "The reality has changed, in terms of funding."



New apps to share videos

ALSO IN TECH »

Take your iPhone to the next level
Docking your laptop, wirelessly

nytimes.com

TECH

ADVERTISEMENTS



Answer to win tickets to a Broadway show.



An Important Change at NYTimes.com
Now there are two ways to access our content — as a visitor or as a subscriber.

nytimes.com TO LEARN MORE, CLICK HERE >>

Ads by Google

what's this?

Munro Bathroom Remodeling

Remodeling WNY bathrooms since 1972

Visit Our Showroom Today!

www.munroproducts.com

And he emphasized that the university was content pursuing expansion in phases. Its first projects would be paid for in part through Buffalo's share of [\\$140 million that Mr. Cuomo set aside](#) last week for construction at the four SUNY research campuses.

INSIDE NYTIMES.COM



But in Buffalo, there is no shortage of enthusiasm about the university plan. "You can walk downtown on Saturday or Sunday, and there's nothing — no one, nothing," said James Purcell, 67, a retired schoolteacher, as he sipped a bowl of chicken chipotle soup with rice at Ulrich's, the city's oldest tavern. "It's like a ghost town."

A block away, university officials promise that could change. Robert G. Shibley, the dean of Buffalo's architecture school, stood in a sleek conference room [in a restored garment factory](#) that now houses university offices, peered out one of the big steel sash windows, and looked at the site where the medical school would be built. "It would take 'Boy, it's dead,' " he said, "to 24-7 and alive."

A version of this article appeared in print on May 9, 2011, on page A18 of the New York edition with the headline: In Buffalo, Visions, or Perhaps Illusions, of a University-Fueled Revival.

SIGN IN TO E-MAIL

PRINT

REPRINTS

Get 50% Off The New York Times & Free All Digital Access.

More Headlines From Around the Web

Sponsored Links

HEALTH.COM

[15 Things Not to Say to Someone With RA](#)

HEALTH.COM

[Scientists Discover Substance That Causes Pain](#)

PARENTDISH

[Boy Genius, 12, Has Higher IQ Than Einstein, Developing His Own Theory of Relativity](#)

AOL JOBS

[Military Service Earns Educational Perks](#)

Get Free E-mail Alerts on These Topics

[Buffalo \(NY\)](#)

[State University of New York at Buffalo](#)

[Economic Conditions and Trends](#)

[Area Planning and Renewal](#)

Ads by Google

[what's this?](#)

[Heartburn Triggering Food](#)

Learn Which Foods Trigger Heartburn

& How To Avoid Them.

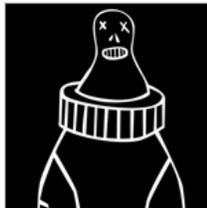
[Prevacid24HR.com/food](#)

ARTS »



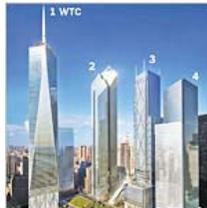
A Crusher of Cars, a Molder of Metal

OPINION »



Op-Ed: Hitting the Bottle

WEEK IN REVIEW »



A World Trade Center Progress Report

N.Y. / REGION »



Joined at Hip, and, to Some Pupils, by a Hyphen

OPINION »

Disunion: Family Feuds
In the Appalachians, the Civil War was often literally brother against brother.

BUSINESS »



For Niches, Less Reality and More Original Shows

