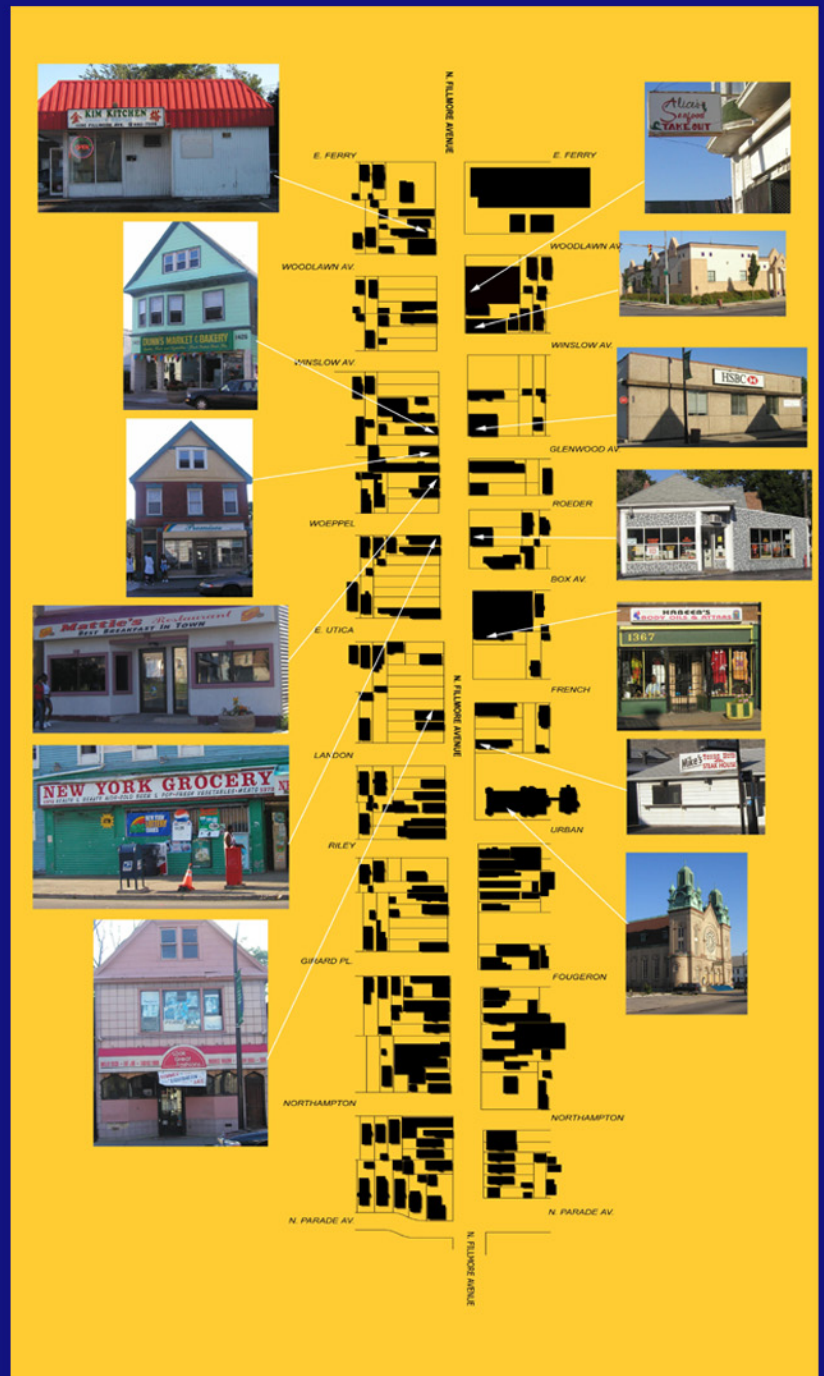


The Fillmore Avenue Commercial Redevelopment Project



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Executive Summary

THE VISION

The vision for the Fillmore Avenue commercial corridor is one of a vibrant, thriving passageway that serves as the *cultural commons* for the Martin Luther King, Jr. neighborhood and a Gateway to the Martin Luther King, Jr. Park. The Fillmore commercial corridor will be a symbol of the vibrancy of King's Dream and a place that brings people together from across the race and class divide to shop, play, and interact.

Retail and Marketing Potential in the Masten District

1. For all retail categories, except possibly home furnishings, expected demand well exceeds current sales by local outlets. In these statistical calculations, population and income data were assessed at current levels. Note that since the excess of demand over supply is quite substantial, modifying population or income to account for upward or downward shifts, does not alter the broad conclusions regarding the possibilities for new retail development.
2. In all catchment areas (Jefferson, Central Plaza, Delavan, and Fillmore) there appears to be the potential for additional local sales. One exception is the excess supply of dining facilities in the Fillmore District, which is offset by a roughly equal excess demand in Delavan. There is also an excess local supply of food and furnishings in Central Plaza, suggesting that the plaza in this area serves as a regional center to some extent (i.e. draws some customers from outside the Central catchment area, possibly also from outside the Masten District).
3. The market analysis indicates that the Fillmore Avenue commercial corridor is the least developed of the four commercial districts in Masten. Nonetheless, even under current circumstances, it can support a substantial increase in retail activity. However, it is believed that the Fillmore Avenue commercial corridor possesses a competitive advantage which, if exploited, could turn the corridor into a thriving retail center. That competitive advantage relates to its access to Route 33, the Buffalo Museum of Science, and nearby employment centers.

The Fillmore Avenue Commercial Corridor Redevelopment Plan

The Fillmore Avenue commercial corridor extends from East Ferry to the Martin Luther King, Jr. Park (MLK Park). It is both the Gateway to the Martin Luther King, Jr. Olmsted Park and the backbone that both services and holds together the Martin Luther King, Jr. neighborhood. The Martin Luther King, Jr. segment of Fillmore Avenue has the potential to become one of the most important commercial corridors in the City.

The redevelopment of the Fillmore Avenue commercial corridor is instrumental to the revitalization of the Martin Luther King, Jr. (MLK) neighborhood. Commercial thoroughfares are the windows through which people view everyday life and culture. If the corridor is attractive and vibrant, people will believe that the surrounding neighborhood is attractive and vibrant as well. Likewise, if the corridor is dilapidated and rundown, people will believe the surrounding neighborhood is also dilapidated and rundown.

Goal

The goal is to turn Fillmore Avenue into a thriving commercial corridor that services both the MLK neighborhood and a regional market niche; a commons that brings the neighborhood together, provides it with high quality goods and services, and serves as a symbol of pride, progress, and highlights the vibrancy of King's Dream in the Buffalo-Niagara region. As the Gateway to the Martin Luther King, Jr. Park, a revitalized Fillmore Avenue commercial corridor would accentuate the Olmsted Park and help turn the entire area into a major tourist venue.

The Site

The Fillmore Avenue commercial corridor is a mixed residential-commercial district that extends from East Ferry to Martin Luther King, Jr. Park. About one-mile long, land use in the corridor is characterized by an eclectic assemblage of structures with conditions that range from deteriorated to excellent. The hodge-podge of buildings includes one and two-story houses, live-near dwellings with a store on the first floor and an apartment above, storefront and traditional churches, vacant lots, and commercial structures. Many of the structures have nothing in common with the surrounding buildings, which is accentuated by differences in height, architectural design, purpose and theme. At the same, this great diversity gives Fillmore a distinctive, and potentially powerful, urban look and feel.

The redevelopment scenario has been a spontaneous, random, and haphazard one. Consequently, the corridor has no focus or theme. Faith-based institutions dominate land use. This stretch of Fillmore has ten faith-based institutions. One result of this proliferation is that many of the best commercial buildings have been converted into these types of institutions. The retail mix was assembled by chance, which has led to a jumble of dissimilar businesses located in the corridor. For example, there are seven restaurants, three delis, four automobile sales and repair companies, two beauty salons, a bank, a drycleaners, two barbershops, a carwash, a pharmacy, a consulting firm, a liquor store, a tavern, a fish market, and finally a bakery. One problem with this grouping of businesses is that they do not produce cumulative shopping—that is, people shopping at multiple stores before leaving the area.

Obstacles to Development

1. Development of the Fillmore Avenue commercial corridor is not connected to a market niche and/or theme.
2. Fillmore has a foreboding, dilapidated, and rundown appearance.
3. Fillmore needs to construct new shops and stores and rehabilitate existing structures in order to attract new businesses, create a sense of vibrancy, and benefit from its competitive advantage.
4. The Martin Luther King, Jr. neighborhood is a poor community on a rapidly descending trajectory that does not have the revenue to support a commercial corridor.
5. Business owners on Fillmore Avenue need greater access to loans, grants, and incentives to encourage business development and expansion.
6. Fillmore Avenue has a weak business and civic association.

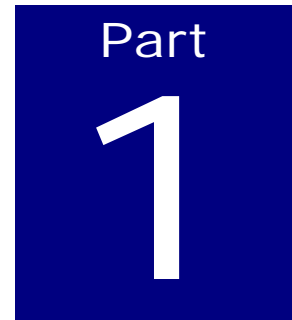
RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The name of the Fillmore Avenue commercial corridor should be officially changed to the Martin Luther King, Jr. Commercial District.
2. The Fillmore Avenue commercial corridor should become a regional center for vintage clothing, furniture, appliances, discount goods, and repair shops.
3. New shops and stores should be built in the commercial corridor and existing structures should be rehabilitated and modernized.
4. Many of the new buildings should be live-near structures with retail outlets on the first floor and apartments on the second and third.
5. Façade design guidelines must be established and codified for the commercial corridor.
6. A Business Improvement District (BID) organization should be established in the Fillmore Avenue Commercial Corridor.
7. Efforts should be made to beautify, promote, and market the Fillmore Avenue commercial corridor as the Gateway to Martin Luther King, Jr. Park.
8. An incubator without walls (IWW) should be established to provide a range of services for businesses in the corridor, including access to capital, insurance, and technical assistance.
9. The Fillmore Avenue commercial corridor must be made safe and secure.
10. A team consisting of the private, philanthropic, government, business and property owners in the corridor should be established to formulate ideas for financing the redevelopment of Fillmore Avenue.

Finance

Several strategies could be employed to finance the redevelopment of the Fillmore Avenue commercial corridor.

1. The establishment of a BID is one way to finance many of the small-scale improvements needed to transform the corridor. Working with business and property owners to obtain a BID should be a top priority.
2. The Erie County Industrial Development Agency should play a role in putting together the financing of the build out for the commercial corridor. They should work closely with the corridor business owners and the City to explore various funding possibilities.
3. The City should identify private developers who might be interested in playing a large role in the redevelopment of the corridor. The City owns significant tracts of land here. If enough land can be assembled, a developer might be interested in a redevelopment activity similar to a retail plaza.
4. A major effort should be made to attract national investors to the area. Firms such as UrbanAmerican, L.P., based in New York City, the Coca Cola Foundation, based in Atlanta and the Beverly Hills based Johnson Development Corporation, have a long standing interests in inner city retail development. Discussions with these firms should be initiated to attract them to the region.
5. Given the potential for redevelopment, tax increment financing should also be explored.
6. Grants should be pursued to secure funding for many of the smaller scaled projects.



The Vision

The redevelopment of the Fillmore Avenue Commercial Corridor is inseparable from the redevelopment of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Neighborhood. As the window through which neighborhood life and culture in the MLK community is seen, the place cannot be revitalized without the transformation of its commercial corridor into a vibrant and thriving place.

THE
VISION

The vision for the Fillmore Avenue commercial corridor is one of a vibrant, thriving passageway that serves as the cultural commons for the Martin Luther King, Jr. neighborhood and a Gateway to the Martin Luther King, Jr. Park. The Fillmore commercial corridor will be a symbol of the vibrancy of King's Dream and a place that brings people together from across the race and class divide to shop, play, and interact.

The Context: Retailing Potential in the Masten District

The Masten District has several concentrations of economic activity, with the four most important ones being Jefferson Avenue, Fillmore Avenue, East Delavan, and the Central Park Plaza. Although this section deals with redevelopment of the Fillmore commercial corridor, it is important to place the Fillmore commercial corridor in context and to understand how its development is related to the overall development of the Masten District. Consequently, to place Fillmore Avenue in context, the market study analyzed the retailing potential in the entire district.

The following provides an estimate of the potential for new local general retailing for foodstuffs, clothing, furnishings, and associated business such as dining and auto service in the Masten District. In assessing the potential and location of new activities the aim is to balance supply and demand for each type of retail activity, taking account of existing provision (to avoid unnecessary closure of existing stores) at the local (catchments) level or, where appropriate, at the district level.

Current Situation

Map 1 shows the location of residential demand in the Masten district (bounded by the green lines). To provide an indication of the variation in household income (and hence demand), dwellings are shaded by their assessed value (red is high, green is low). With the exception of the area north of the Central Plaza, the district is mainly low income. Nonetheless, at present - as the analysis below based on a comparison of supply and demand shows - in the district as a whole, and in its major sub-divisions, there is excess demand for retail goods, dining, and personal service. This suggests that new retailing capacity in the area would find a ready market based on local demand, if the new stores are of comparable quality to those serving other areas of the City.

The only dedicated shopping area is Central Plaza, which includes a variety of stores and requires a facelift. There are potential locations for retail districts along Jefferson, Delavan, and Fillmore with some relatively new outlets – primarily fast food, general pharmacies, and gas stations, plus on major new supermarket. The Tops market on Jefferson is a much needed addition to the retail mix, but the analysis suggest the locale could support an additional store. Much of the existing retail activity is located in stores needing repair. These are typically small shops that are interspersed with dwellings and vacant lots, and which sell a variety of goods.

Supply and Demand by Catchment Area

For purposes of local-area retailing analysis the district is sub-divided into four catchments – Jefferson, Fillmore, Delavan, and Central (indicated by the blue lines in Map 1). These form “natural” localized catchments in that they are separated and bounded by major thoroughfares and visual barriers (such as the Expressway, industrial parks, and rail lines). Typically, given adequate retailing, residents prefer to use outlets within these catchments for a high proportion of their purchases of goods, such as foodstuffs, and day-to-day items. This is especially the case in communities, such as Masten, where the ownership of automobiles is relatively low. Residents also purchase a variable proportion of their less regular comparative-shopping goods, such as furnishings, clothing, etc in the neighborhood. The catchments also have a sizable daytime population of workers in local industries, hospitals, and education. The location and approximate size of the employment at each business is indicated (by the circles). Again, given attractive retailing, service, and dining opportunities, it is likely that visitors would make increased, albeit, limited use of local opportunities. It is also possible, that more affluent residents in neighboring districts would use new retailing outlets, although this is likely to occur only when the new facilities have become established.

Current Retail Profile

Number of businesses	Jefferson	Fillmore	Delavan	Central
Home improvement stores	2	2	1	2
General merchandise stores	9	6	6	8
Food stores	9	2	5	4
Auto dealers, gas stations	2		5	2
Apparel, accessory stores	2	4	2	3
Furniture, home furnishings	2		2	9
Eating & drinking places	19	8	10	14
Miscellaneous retail stores	4	2	3	3

Source: Center for Urban Studies

The analysis is carried out using Claritas business and demographic data supplemented by additional data from the Center for Urban Studies archives and the City of Buffalo Downtown Workers survey. The Claritas data set provides information on the number, employment, and sales of local retail establishments by type, and of the roughly corresponding categories of household expenditure.¹ These data are compared for the Masten district as a whole and for the separate catchments. Because the catchments indicated above do not coincide with either the Buffalo districts or census tracts, some allowance has been made for this as shown in Map 2.

Present Residential Demand

Residential Demand \$m	Jefferson	Fillmore	Delavan	Central	Total
Retail Trade	\$79.1	\$24.0	\$68.6	\$42.2	\$213.9
Home Improvement Stores	\$3.1	\$0.8	\$2.8	\$1.6	\$8.4
General merchandise stores	\$16.9	\$5.3	\$14.8	\$9.0	\$46.1
Food stores	\$21.8	\$7.5	\$18.8	\$11.4	\$59.6
Auto dealers, gas stations	\$16.6	\$4.6	\$14.6	\$9.4	\$45.1
Apparel, accessory stores	\$16.5	\$5.0	\$14.6	\$9.0	\$45.1
Furniture, home furnishings	\$4.5	\$1.2	\$4.1	\$2.5	\$12.3
Eating & drinking places	\$21.7	\$6.8	\$18.8	\$12.3	\$59.7
Miscellaneous Retail Stores	\$8.1	\$2.3	\$6.5	\$3.9	\$20.8
Total	\$109.3	\$33.6	\$95.1	\$59.0	\$297.0

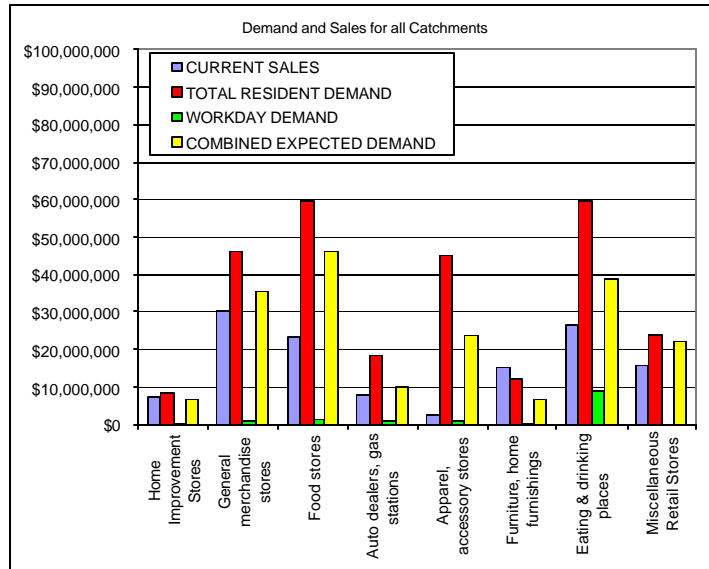
Source: Center for Urban Studies

Chart 1 shows the current provision of retailing, dining, and personal services in the district as a whole (shown in blue). It also gives the total demand of residents for these same categories (shown in red) and the expected demand from daytime workers. Total expected demand is calculated as the sum of workday demand (about 5%, except dining) and the proportion of purchases that residents are expected to make locally, about 70% of total, depending on the category (shown in yellow). *The actual extent of these*

¹ There are some ambiguities in matching expenditures and sales because many of the stores sell a variety of goods (i.e. general merchandize) but are not categorized as such. Some adjustment has been made.

purchases will depend largely on the extent to which the any new outlets and the retailing districts overall can be made attractive to resident and workday customers. The apparent success of some newer ventures in the area (such as the new super market, coffee shops, etc) and possibilities for creative marketing (such as workplace delivery of lunches, cleaning, etc.) indicate that this is quite possible.

Chart 1: Supply and Demand for Masten District



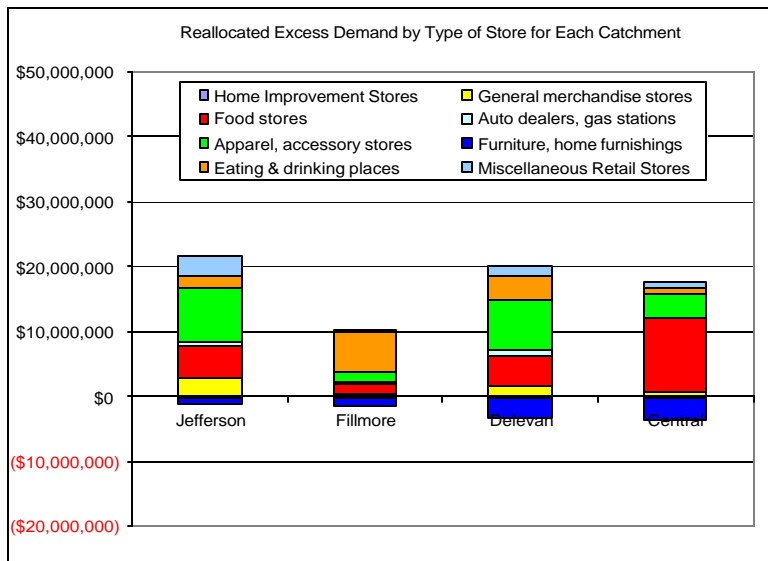
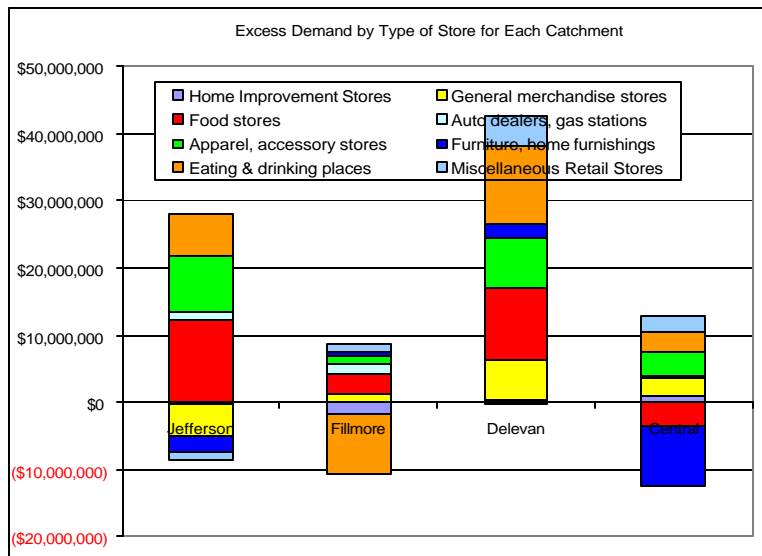
Source: Center for Urban Studies

For all categories, except possibly home furnishing, expected demand well exceeds current sales by local outlets. For the calculations, population and income levels are expected to remain at current levels. Note that since the excess of demand over supply is quite substantial, modifying population or income to account for upward or downward shifts will not change the broad conclusions as to the possibilities for new retail developments.

Estimated Retail Potential (Sales Area, Employment, and Investment Requirement)

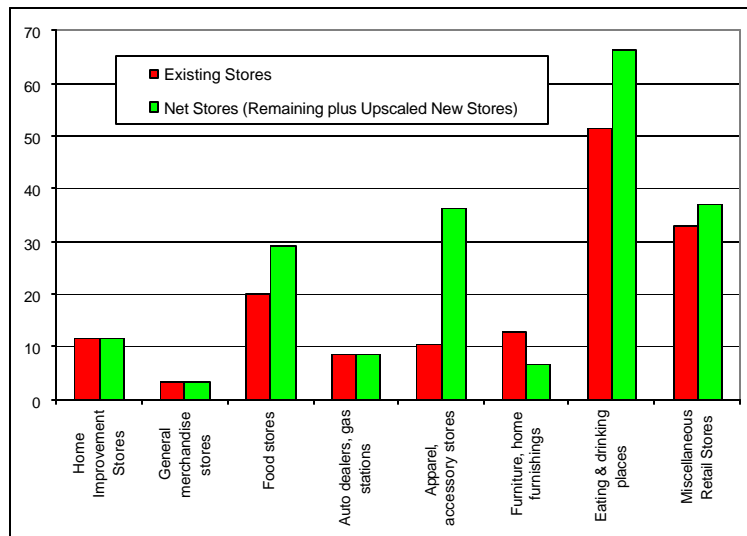
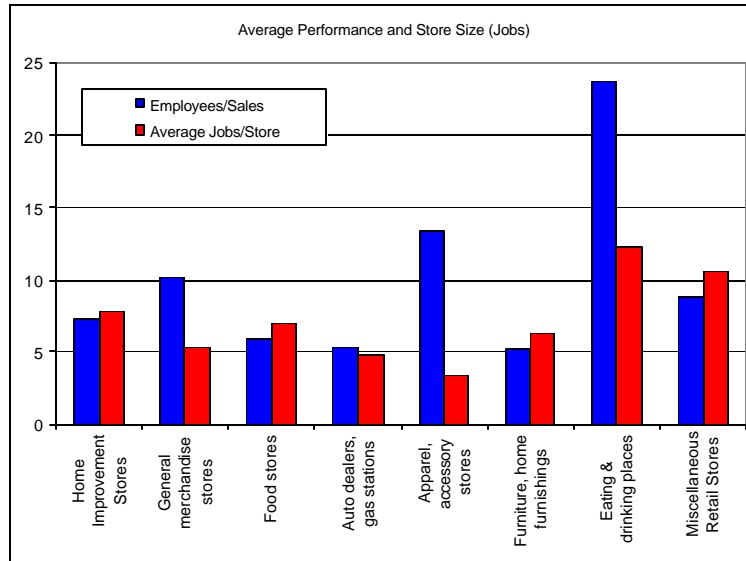
Chart 2 shows the excess demand for each retail category in each of the four catchments. Again, in all catchments there appears to be the potential for additional local sales. The exceptions are the excess supply of dining facilities in the Fillmore, which is offset by a roughly equal excess demand in Delevan.

Charts 2 and 3: Supply and Demand Imbalance for Catchments



Source: Center for Urban Studies

Charts 4 and 5: Average Performance and Number of New Stores



Source: Center for Urban Studies

Although no additional home improvement and furnishing stores are indicated to serve the local community, it is possible that existing furnishing stores might draw customers from beyond the Masten district, with the prospect for further agglomeration of these stores and additional custom for other new stores.

Summary of Retail Potential

Approximate Sales Area (SQFT)	Jefferson	Fillmore	Delevan	Central
Home Improvement Stores				
General merchandise stores	31,279	3,789	19,138	8,352
Food stores	62,217	16,212	53,678	132,107
Auto dealers, gas stations	5,090	5,730	13,201	2,381
Apparel, accessory stores	97,898	16,883	89,745	41,923
Furniture, home furnishings				
Eating & drinking places	22,165	72,455	40,385	9,906
Miscellaneous Retail Stores	37,489	4,942	20,728	11,820
Total	256,136	120,011	236,874	206,488

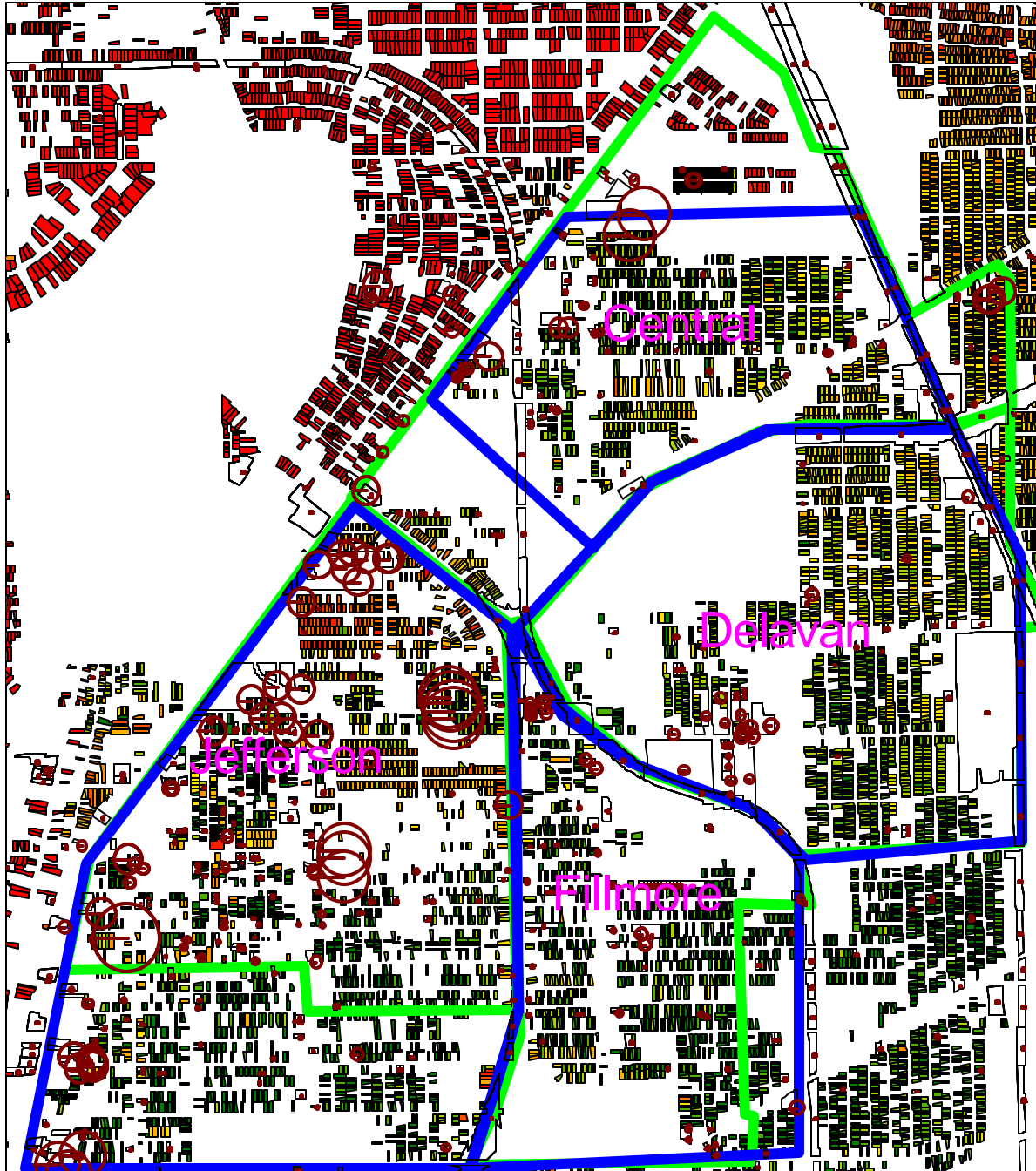
Suggested Stores	Jefferson	Fillmore	Delevan	Central
Home Improvement Stores				
General merchandise stores	1			
Food stores	2	1	2	4
Auto dealers, gas stations			1	
Apparel, accessory stores	10	2	10	4
Furniture, home furnishings				
Eating & drinking places	2	8	4	1
Miscellaneous Retail Stores	2		1	1
Total	16	10	16	8

Source: Center for Urban Studies

There is also excess local supply of food and furnishings in Central, suggesting that this plaza serves as a regional center to some extent (i.e. draws some custom from outside the Central catchment area, possibly also from outside the Masten district). Given the proximity of catchments, it is appropriate to consolidate excess demand as necessary across the district in order to minimize closedown of existing stores. The reallocated excess demands are shown in Chart 3.

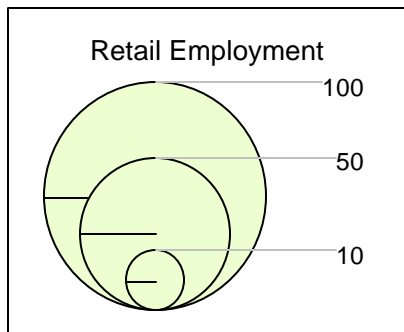
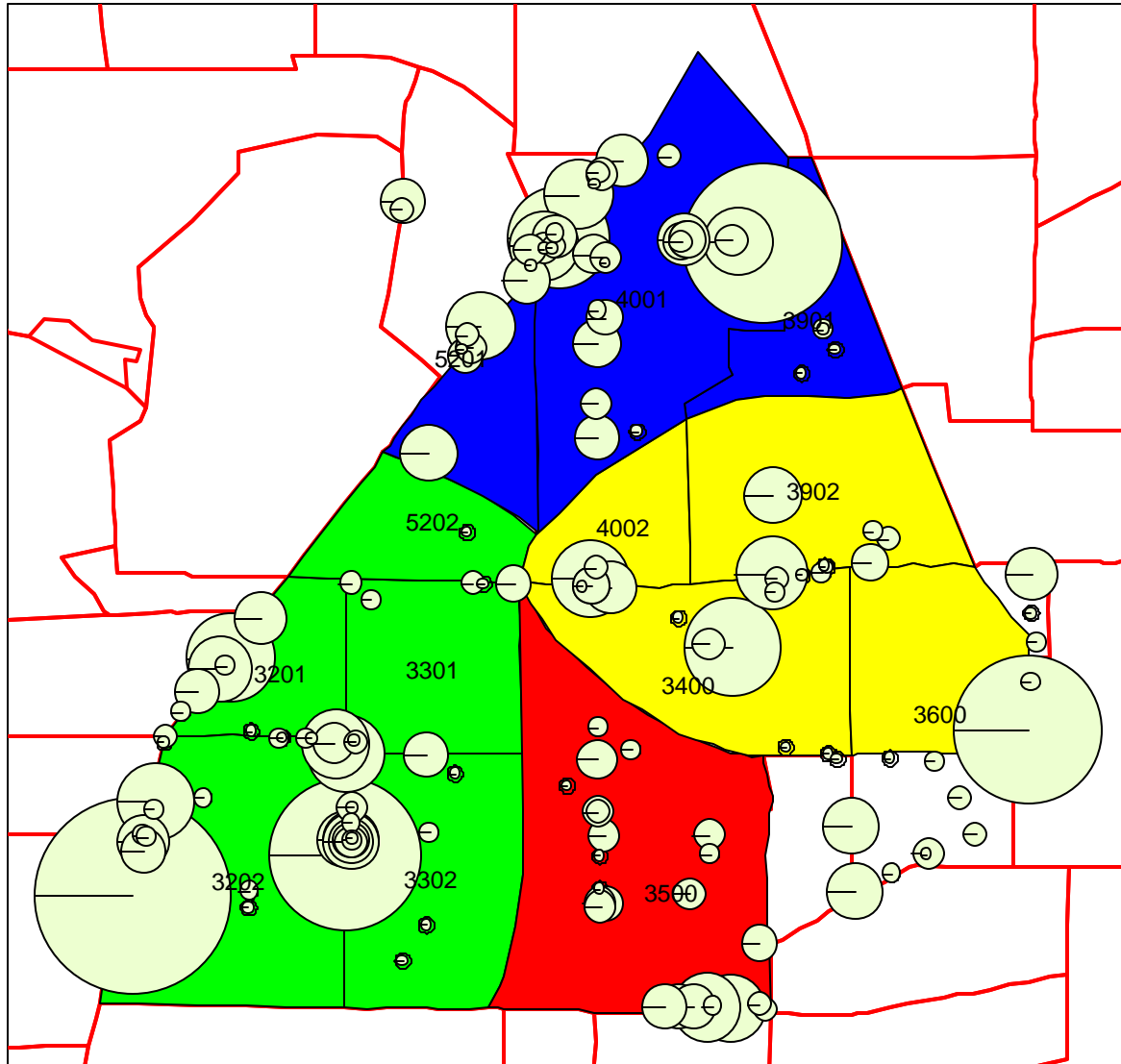
The estimates of excess demand given in Chart 3 are used to calculate the potential number of stores, their approximate construction costs, and the number of retail jobs provided. It is assumed that, to be competitive with others outside the district, new stores will be somewhat larger (measured as sales area or number of employees) than those currently serving the area and will have higher productivity (measured as sales/employee). New stores are taken to be twice as large as the average for Buffalo stores of each type in order to capture scale economies in construction, service, and the variety of good sold. The size of stores should be such as to balance scale economies, variety, and local competitiveness. Productivity-related levels are given in Chart 4. In several cases, the demand is considered to be insufficient to support these larger stores. The resulting suggested numbers of stores or each type in each catchment based on these considerations are shown in Chart 5, together with the current number of stores. Although the number of new stores is relatively small, their sales would be amount to one third of the expected total sales. The estimated retail potential and suggested number of stores is summarized below. Charts 6 and 7 show the sales area, and investment requirement for new stores and Chart 8 gives the approximate number of (direct) jobs that would be created.

Map 1: Location of Residential and Workday Demand



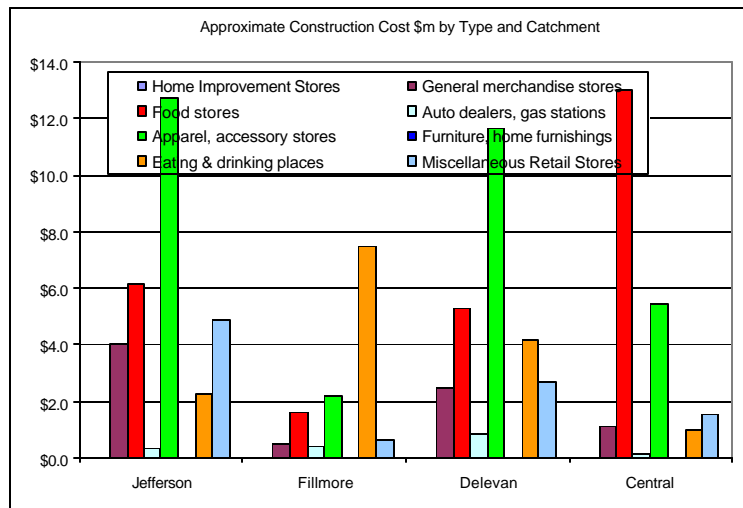
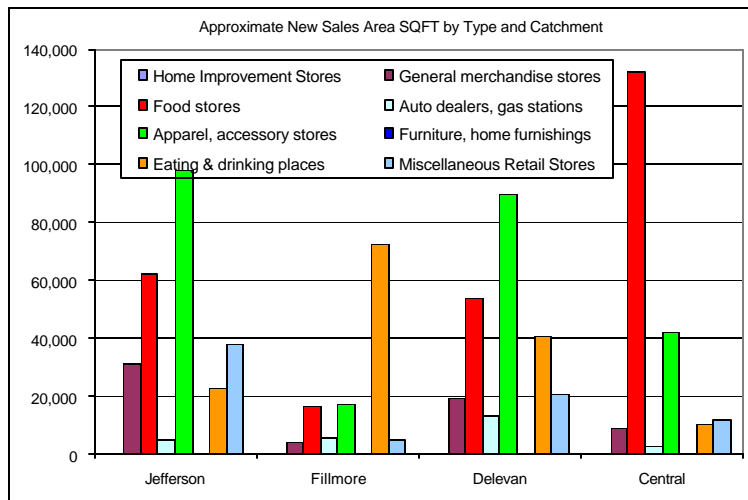
Source: Center for Urban Studies

Map 2. Catchment Areas, Retail Outlets, and Census Tracts



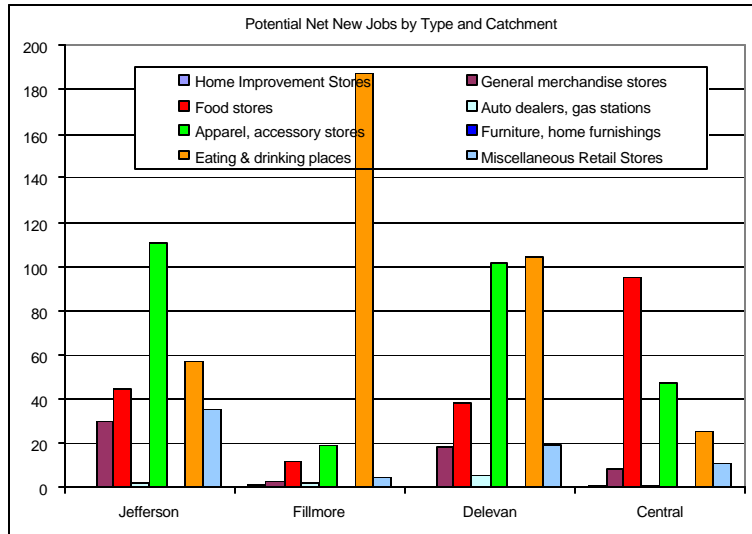
Source: Center for Urban Studies

Charts 6 and 7: Sales Area, and Investment Requirement for New Stores



Source: Center for Urban Studies

Chart 8: Employment at New Stores



Source: Center for Urban Studies

The market analysis indicates that the Fillmore Avenue commercial corridor is the least developed of the four commercial districts in Masten. Nonetheless, even under current circumstances it can support substantial increases in retail activities. However, it is believed that the Fillmore Avenue commercial corridor possess competitive advantages, which if exploited, could turn the corridor into a thriving retail center.



The Fillmore Avenue Commercial Corridor Redevelopment Plan

The Fillmore Avenue Commercial Corridor extends from East Ferry to the Martin Luther King, Jr. Park (MLK Park). It is both the Gateway to the Martin Luther King, Jr. Olmsted Park and the spine that services and holds together the Martin Luther King, Jr. (MLK) neighborhood. The Martin Luther King, Jr. segment of Fillmore Avenue, because it services the Martin Luther King, Jr. neighborhood, has the potential to become one of the most important commercial corridors in Buffalo.

The MLK neighborhood is the cultural center of Black Buffalo. MLK Park is the most important social space in the African American community. This Olmsted Park is the site of Juneteenth, which celebrates the abolition of slavery, family reunions, and other gatherings. It is home to the Buffalo Science Museum, which also functions as Black Buffalo's Town Center. Whenever the African American community needs to be informed about important civic issues, the resultant meetings are most often held in the Science Museum.

The transformation of Fillmore Avenue into a vibrant commercial corridor is instrumental to the revitalization of the Martin Luther King, Jr. neighborhood. Commercial thoroughfares are the windows through which people view everyday life and culture. If the corridor is attractive and vibrant, people will believe the surrounding commercial corridor is also attractive and vibrant. Likewise, if the corridor is dilapidated and rundown, people will believe the surrounding neighborhood is also dilapidated and rundown.

The Redevelopment Plan

The Site and Setting

The Fillmore Avenue Commercial Corridor is a mixed residential-commercial district that extends from East Ferry to Martin Luther King, Jr. Park. About one-mile long, land use in the corridor is characterized by an eclectic assemblage of structures with conditions that range from deteriorated to excellent. The hodge-podge of buildings include one and two-story houses, live-near dwellings with a store on the first floor and apartment above, storefront and traditional churches, vacant lots, and commercial structures. Many of the structures have nothing in common with the surrounding buildings, which is accentuated by differences in height, architectural design, purpose and theme. At the same, this great diversity gives Fillmore a distinctive, and potentially powerful, urban look and feel.

The existing redevelopment scenario has been a spontaneous, random, and haphazard one. Consequently, the corridor has no focus or theme. Faith-based institutions dominate the landscape. This stretch of Fillmore has ten faith-based institutions. One result of this proliferation is that the many of the best commercial buildings have been converted into faith-based institutions. The retail mix is a hodgepodge of dissimilar businesses. For example, there are seven restaurants, three delis, four automobile sales and repair companies, two beauty salons, a bank, cleaners, two barbershops, carwash, pharmacy, a consulting firm, liquor store, and tavern, a fish market, and bakery. A major problem with this jumble of businesses is they do not produce cumulative shopping—that is, people shopping at multiple stores before leaving the area.

While most of these firms do have neighborhood customers, they are nonetheless heavily reliant on customers living outside the neighborhood. In essence, most businesses in the corridor are oriented toward a regional rather than neighborhood market.

Obstacles to Development

1. **The Fillmore Avenue commercial corridor does not have a market niche or development theme.** Neighborhood commercial corridors must be developed in the same way as small retail centers. They must have a specific market niche, a retail mix that encourages cumulative shopping and that creates a vibrancy that attracts new businesses to the area. Without identifying a market niche to drive its development, the Fillmore Avenue commercial corridor will not benefit or profit from its competitive advantage.
2. **Fillmore has a foreboding, dilapidated, and rundown appearance.** The corridor is characterized by unkept structures, omnipresent trash, blighted vacant lots, and boarded-up buildings. This condition gives the corridor a menacing, unsafe appearance that makes people want to avoid the area. Changing the appearance of the corridor is critical to its development.
3. **The shops and stores need to be built in the corridor and existing build should be renovated and modernized in order to attract new businesses and create a sense of vibrancy.** Site demolitions have destroyed a number of commercial establishments along Fillmore Avenue, while many other commercial spaces have serious code violations. Faith-based institutions occupy other commercial structures. The shortage of suitable commercial establishments is a huge obstacle to the redevelopment of the Fillmore Avenue commercial corridor.
4. **The Martin Luther King, Jr. neighborhood is a poor community on a rapidly descending trajectory, with residents that cannot support a thriving commercial corridor.** At the same time, this community has great potential for redevelopment. Consequently, the revitalization of the Martin Luther King, Jr. neighborhoods is inseparable from the redevelopment of the Fillmore Avenue commercial corridor.

5. **Business owners on Fillmore Avenue need greater access to loans, grants, and incentives to encourage business development and expansion.** Business owners on inner city commercial corridors face numerous obstacles building their businesses. Not only are they hampered by a poorly maintained physical environment, but also they have trouble accessing loans, grants, and insurance.
6. **Fillmore Avenue has a weak business and civic association.** One of the keys to redeveloping commercial corridors is the development of a strong business and civic association to guide the developmental process. Such associations bring together both business and community leaders and create a venue for identifying developmental targets and outlining the activities needed to bring about the successful revitalization of the corridor.

The Competitive Advantage

The marketing study shows there is an excess demand for retail goods, dining, and personal service in the Masten District to support the development of four commercial districts, including Fillmore Avenue. This suggests there is sufficient demand in the Fillmore Avenue commercial corridor market area to support the establishment of new retail outlets, providing those new stores are of comparable quality to those serving other areas of the City.

Fillmore Avenue also has the capacity to strengthen its share of the regional market if it identifies a right niche. The corridor's strategic location near several major employment centers—Tri-Main Center, ECMC, American Axle, Sisters Hospital, and Canisius College—proximity to Route 33, and the location of the two major regional assets in the community—Martin Luther King, Jr. Olmsted Park and the Buffalo Science Museum—gives the corridor a competitive edge in increasing its share of the regional market.

Three interrelated objectives must be reached before the commercial corridor can reach its potential.

1. **The corridor must be transformed into an attractive and delightful place.** Only by creating an environment that provides visitors with pleasant and charming retailing, service, and dining opportunities will the visitors, workday, and neighborhood shoppers to the area increase.
2. **The corridor must attract a cluster of retail outlets that cater to the needs of neighborhood residents and identify a market niche that allows it to capture a larger share of the regional market.** Currently, the corridor does not adequately service the Martin Luther King, Jr. neighborhood and environs. This significant economic leakage hampers the development of the corridor. At the same time, given the low-incomes of residents in the MLK neighborhood, only by developing a share of the regional market will the corridor be able to thrive.
3. **The corridor must become a place where the perception of safety and security is high.** Neighborhood residents, workday customers, and regional visitors will frequent a revitalized commercial corridor if it is an attractive and safe place.



Recommendations

1. THE FILLMORE AVENUE COMMERCIAL CORRIDOR SHOULD BECOME A REGIONAL CENTER FOR VINTAGE CLOTHES, FURNITURE, APPLIANCES, DISCOUNT GOODS, AND REPAIR SHOPS.

There exists a huge market for these services. These types of shops and stores exist, but they are scattered across the region. Allen Street and Hertel Avenue use to be the center for these types of goods, but they graduated to antiques, leaving a market void that Fillmore Avenue could fill. It is anticipated that these shops and stores could attract customers from across the region. Specifically, the retail outlets would attract low-to moderate-income groups, college students, the elderly, others on fixed incomes, and bargain hunters of all types.

Additionally, the corridor could establish a year-round indoor flea market. An indoor flea market, which might be billed as the *Fillmore Avenue Garage Sale*, could be held on weekends throughout the year. People from across the region will be encouraged to come to the *Garage Sale*, set up a table, and sell items. A small fee will be set to rent space.

The vacant lot behind the Police Station C on Ferry could become an *Auction Yard*. During the spring and summer, weekly *car trunk sales* could be held. People would simply drive to the *Auction Yard*, and then sell items directly out of the trunk of their cars. Vendors selling food and drinks, and other *non-car trunk items* would pay a fee to operate at the *Auction Yard*. On alternate days, an outdoor flea market could be held at the *Auction Yard*. Efforts could even be made to hold *police auctions* at the *Auction Yard*.

The plan is to use to flea market and the truck sales to bolster the corridor's reputation in the region as a major discount center and to bring pedestrian traffic into the area. Once there, there is a strong possibility that they will purchase other items or stop at Mattie's to have lunch or dinner. The goal is for the specialty shops and retail activities to generate a multiplier effect that stimulates other business activity in the corridor.

In the second phase of development, to augment the vintage shops, discount stores and repair shops, efforts would be made to attract a few nationally known enterprises to the area, such as Tim Horton, Radio Shack, and maybe even a highly successfully local company such as Inner City Gear. As these stores proliferate, it is anticipated that shops and stores targeting convenient goods and services to local residents will also seek locations in the area.

To tap this market niche the following objectives must be achieved:

- a. The City must develop a set of incentives to encourage businesses in the vintage furniture, clothes, appliance, discount and repair sectors to relocate in the Fillmore Avenue commercial corridor.** These businesses are scattered across the region. So, their relocation to Fillmore should not negatively impact any one area. On the other hand, by creating an economic agglomeration of vintage furniture, clothes, appliance, discount, and repair sectors, a multiplier will be created that bolsters the development of all firms located in the cluster. The City, County, Erie County Industrial Development Agency, the Masten District council member, and the Fillmore Avenue project director should work closely to develop incentive package that will encourage businesses to relocate.
- b. Commercial space must be designed and developed that caters to businesses in this sector.** The development of a physical infrastructure to support these businesses must be carried out in partnership with the city and county's economic development agencies. This build out should be part of the strategy to physically reconstruct the Fillmore commercial district.
- c. An aggressive marketing campaign must be developed to promote the Fillmore Avenue commercial corridor as a center for vintage furniture, clothes, appliances, discount, and repair stores.** The campaign should be designed to make business owners and perspective entrepreneurs aware of the advantages of locating their businesses in the Fillmore Avenue commercial corridor.

2. NEW SHOPS AND STORES SHOULD BE BUILT IN THE COMMERCIAL CORRIDOR AND EXISTING STRUCTURES REHABILITATED AND MODERNIZED.

The Fillmore Avenue commercial corridor should be developed in the same manner as retail plazas. Not only should the area be built out, but a manager should be hired to market the corridor and secure tenants for the shops and stores.

3. THE FILLMORE COMMERCIAL CORRIDOR CANNOT BE DEVELOPED UNLESS IT IS PHYSICALLY TRANSFORMED.

This must be the highest priority. The strategy should be to build on the eclectic nature of the buildings and structures in the corridor and add beauty to it through landscaping, streetscaping and the use of public art (Figures 1-3).

4. MANY OF THE NEW BUILDS SHOULD BE LIVE-NEAR STRUCTURES WITH RETAIL OUTLETS ON THE FIRST FLOOR AND APARTMENTS ON THE SECOND AND THIRD.

The idea is to create apartments above commercial establishments as part of the plan to increase density and activity on the corridor. People bring life to any locality. The increased density will also help attract businesses to the area by increasing pedestrian traffic. The apartments along the Fillmore Avenue corridor should be designed to attract young, upwardly mobile empty nesters from across the racial landscape, along with immigrant groups.

Part
4

Proposed Redevelopment Scenario for the Fillmore Avenue Commercial Corridor

Before and After Scenarios

Martin Luther King Jr. Park Neighborhood

The Radical Reconstruction of Fillmore Avenue

Before **After** E. FERRY to BULLWAIN AV.

Before **After** E. JERRY to WOODLAWN AV.

Before **After** WOODLAWN AV. to WM. C. BROWN AV.

Before **After** WOODLAWN AV. to WM. C. BROWN AV.

Before **After** WM. C. BROWN AV. to W. C. BROWN AV.

Before **After** WM. C. BROWN AV. to W. C. BROWN AV.

Masten Neighborhood Master Plan
"A Community on the Move"

The Office of Urban Initiatives and
The LED Center for Urban Studies
Department of Urban and Regional Planning
School of Architecture and Planning

Poster no.
9/1

Martin Luther King Jr. Park Neighborhood

The Radical Reconstruction of Fillmore Avenue



Masten Neighborhood Master Plan

"A Community on the Move"



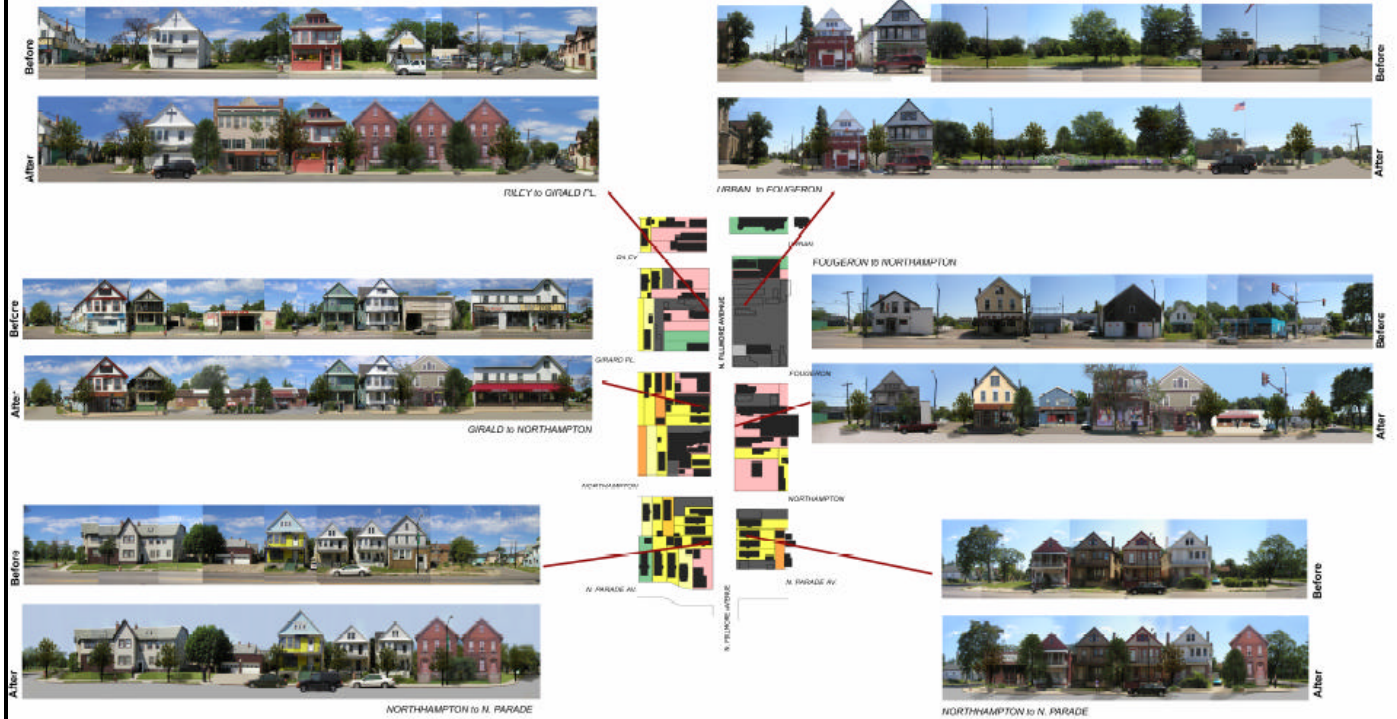
The Office of Urban Initiatives
and
The UB Center for Urban Studies
Department of Urban and Regional Planning
School of Architecture and Planning

Poster III

9/2

Martin Luther King Jr. Park Neighborhood

The Radical Reconstruction of Fillmore Avenue



Masten Neighborhood Master Plan

"A Community on the Move"



The Office of Urban Initiatives
and
The UB Center for Urban Studies
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School of Architecture and Planning

Poster 110

7/3

1. **Façade design guideline must be established and codified for the commercial corridor.** The standards should provide all businesses with a range of choices, which meet specific standards. A series of focus groups with residents and business owners should be used to develop and select the standards. Then, the council members should introduce the appropriate legislature to have them codified. Because existing businesses will be grandfathered, every effort should be made to secure voluntary compliance.

The design guidelines and options should be user friendly and offer specific information about each building, with guidelines on how accentuate its particular attribute in a cost effective manner.

2. **Establish a Business Improvement District (BID) in the Fillmore Avenue Commercial Corridor.** BIDs are an important business development strategy, which has been successfully used in many cities. The BID is used to finance and manage improvements in a commercial district. It is designed to

provide supplemental services such as business retention and recruitment, enhanced maintenance, safety and security, business services, promotion and marketing, and physical improvements.

The BID is financed by property owners within the district who agree to an additional assessment to their real property taxes, which is then exclusively dedicated to improvements that will benefit the entire district. The municipality collects the assessed funds and provides them to the BID. The funds from a BID can only be used to supplement municipal services and are not permitted to replace them.

There are three primary advantages of a BID. The first is the ability to provide additional and enhanced services to improve the business environment. The second is the ability to professionally manage retail and commercial services, much like those offered in retail plazas and malls, which will strengthen the BID's economic capacity. The third advantage is the predictable and reliable source of funding that a BID offers. The actual structure and focus of the BID depends on the locality and the desires of business and property owners in the corridor. The key to a successful business improvement district is careful planning and determination of the specific focus and activities of the BID.

Significantly, the establishment of a BID sends a message to City Hall and potential investors that the business and property owners along the corridor are serious about the redevelopment of their locality. This will attract additional resources and investments in the corridor.

3. **Beautify, Promote, and Market the Fillmore Avenue commercial corridor as the Gateway to Martin Luther King, Jr. Park.** These activities are based on the simple notion that business and property owners and residents must tackle and solve all problems within their reach, while working with government to solve those problems beyond their capacity.

BEAUTIFICATION FOCUS

The beautification program should focus on a range of activities, such as:

- Keeping the commercial corridor clean
- Placing decorative trash containers throughout the corridor
- Increasing the number of decorative flower pots in the corridor
- Developing a public arts program. Work with Langston Hughes Center and the arts community to make this happen. Augment the Martin Luther King, Jr. banners with other banners that celebrate the history of the Fillmore Avenue and the African American community
- Transform every vacant lot in the district into low maintenance passive garden
- Develop a spectacular entrance to the Fillmore Avenue commercial corridor at East Ferry and Fillmore Avenue. The entrance should be situated on the northern side of the street.
- Removal of boards on the windows. This effort should center on replacing plywood window covers with decorative window covers. Even though a building is abandoned or vacant it does not have to be an eyesore. The owners of properties should be identified and made a part of this effort.

CULTURAL FOCUS

- Create a series of community events for the year. There should be a minimum of three. These activities could include concerts, a soul food fest (similar to a Taste of Buffalo), and a black arts festival (similar to the Allen Town Art festival).
- Cultural programming should be established for the corridor. Establish poetry readings, arts discussions, black history month celebrations, and other activities that bring people into the area for special occasions. Sponsor a radio program that deals with issues affecting Black Buffalo, which is sponsored by the Fillmore Avenue commercial corridor. Highlight the activities and human-interest stories of area business people and have them published in the black press.
- Faith based focused activities. Meet with faith based leaders and develop a series of programs relating to the activities of their churches. For example, each year the faith-based institutions could have a gospel fest featuring the choirs—Battle of the Gospel Choirs could be the theme.

MARKET FOCUS

- Develop a brochure around *the theme of The Fillmore Avenue commercial corridor: The Regional Discount Center*. The idea is to get business and property owners to think about the value of opening a business on Fillmore Avenue.
- Merchant Discount tickets should be distributed to encourage use of businesses in the corridor. The goal of the discount tickets will be to get increased numbers of patrons to use the facilities in the corridor.
- Establish an incubator without walls (IWW) that is responsible for providing a range of services for business in the corridor, including access to capital, insurance, and technical assistance job training and job training and development for their workforce. The IWW will also be responsible for creating a structural link between the corridor and City Hall. The goal is to work with City leaders to ensure that business and property owners in the corridor have access to all programs and benefits offered by government.
- The Fillmore Avenue commercial corridor must be made safe and secure. Efforts should be made to work with the City to get foot patrols in the area and to developing a crime mapping program that enables residents and business and property owners to work closely with the police department to track problem areas in the corridor and surrounding neighborhood.
- A team consisting of the private, philanthropic, government and business and property owners in the corridor should be established to formulate ideas for financing the redevelopment of Fillmore Avenue.
- Develop a portfolio on the Fillmore Avenue commercial corridor and neighborhood to attract investors to the area.

TIME TABLE

The plan is a ten-year plan that includes small incremental goals and major objectives. It will be divided into two-year, five-year, and ten-year segments. Activities and benchmarks will be established for each of these segments, which will provide a clear pathway to chart movement toward the long-range goals.

Finance

Several strategies will be employed to finance the redevelopment of the Fillmore Avenue commercial corridor.

- The establishment of a BID is one way to finance many of the small-scale improvements needed to transform the corridor. Working with business and property owners to obtain a BID should be a top priority.
- The Erie County Industrial Development Agency should play a role in putting together the financing of the build out for the commercial corridor. They should work closely with the corridor business owners and the City to explore various funding possibilities.
- The City should identify private developers who might be interested in playing a large role in the redevelopment of the corridor. The City owns significant tracts of land in the corridor. If enough land can be assembled, a developer might be interested in approaching the redevelopment activity similar to a retail plaza.
- A major effort should be made to attract national investors to the area. Firms such as UrbanAmerican, L.P., based in New York City, the Coca Cola Foundation, based in Atlanta and Beverly Hills based Johnson Development Corporation have a long standing interest in inner city retail development. Discussions with these firms should be initiated to attract them to the region.
- Given the potential for redevelopment, tax increment financing should also be explored.
- Grants should be pursued to secure funding for many of the smaller scaled projects

