

ANALYZING THE BAILEY AVE STREETScape

URBAN DESIGN GRADUATE RESEARCH
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Bailey Avenue is the central corridor of the University Heights neighborhood. Bailey offers a tightly knit urban fabric that bustles with pedestrian activity and frequent vehicle traffic. But vacant lots and storefronts, sparse amenities for pedestrians, and limited green space present many opportunities to reimagine the corridor and maximize its potential.

Through a comprehensive on-the-ground visual inspection and analysis of the urban design of the corridor, three separate teams of students each made targeted proposals for the redesign of the streetscape and vacant lots along Bailey Avenue. These proposals are intended to inform current and future efforts to enhance Bailey Avenue and University Heights.

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UNDERSTANDING GOOD URBAN FORM

Mapping the Urban Form

Students used either hand-generated or digitally-generated maps, or a combination of both, to create their own custom-made maps to visually express the look and feel of the corridor from the pedestrian perspective.

Analyzing the Visual and Spatial Structure

Students developed a core skill in the discipline of urban design: and analysis of the visual and spatial structure of the street. While this involved basic planning exercises, like studying land use patterns, students focused on a cohesive visual and spatial investigation of the public realm of built environment along Bailey Avenue.

Envisioning Opportunities

Students applied the urban design skills and local understanding they acquired throughout the seminar to plan and design proposals for improvements along the street and at specific lots, producing ideas for the future of Bailey Avenue.

Students worked in three different segments of Bailey Avenue.

Study Area 1: Winspear Avenue to Dartmouth Avenue

Study Area 2: Dartmouth Avenue to East Amherst Street

Study Area 3: East Amherst Street to Kensington Avenue

MAPPING URBAN FORM

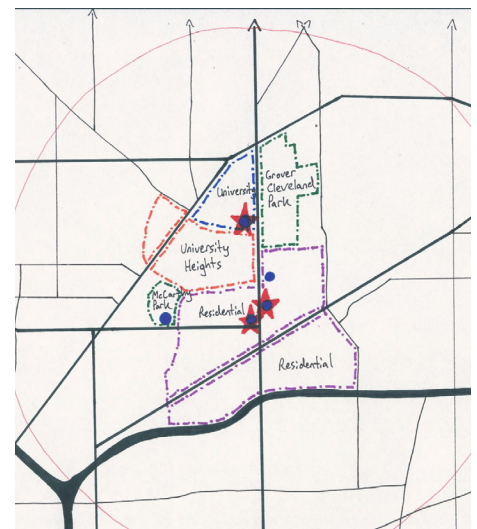
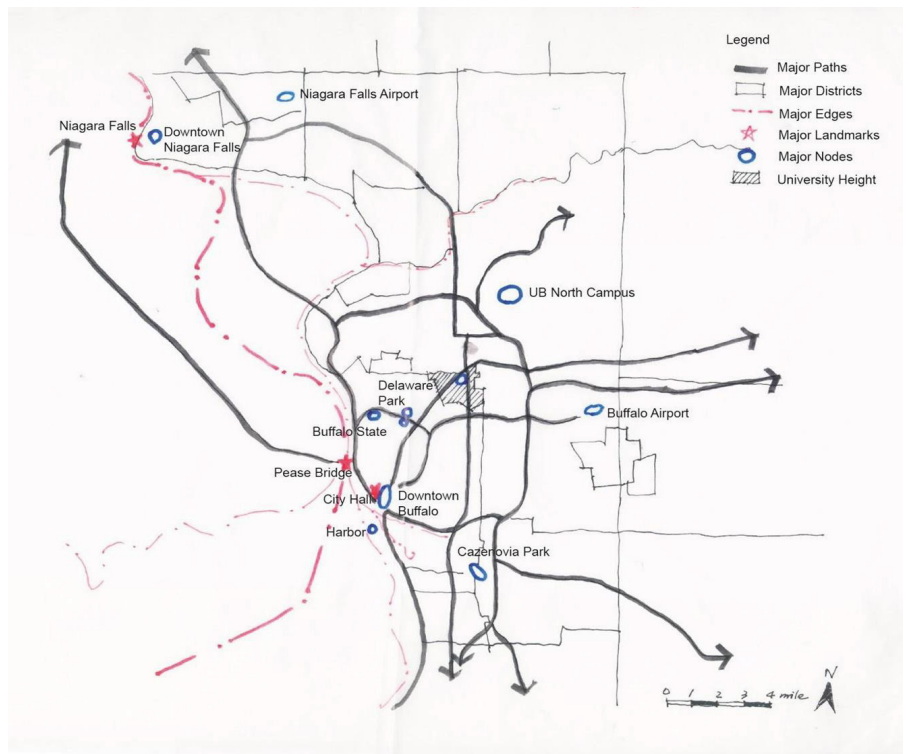
WHY MAP THE URBAN FORM?

Visualizing the urban form of a street—including its major landmarks, activity centers, connecting paths, open spaces and visual barriers—offers a way of understanding the experience pedestrians have when walking through a corridor. Urban planner Kevin Lynch developed a break-through visual survey mapping technique that offers a simple way to visualize the mental map people use to orient themselves in a city, reducing the great complexity of the city to a “mappable” graphic representation. Lynch’s maps are made of five city elements: paths, edges, districts, nodes and landmarks. These are mapped from the neighborhood scale through an on-the-ground visual survey, and at the regional scale for context. Lynch’s maps provide an effective way to visualize any place and express the urban form of the complex city without being overwhelmed.

KEY FINDINGS

Students looked at Bailey Avenue in context of the region, city and neighborhood to map the paths, edges, districts, nodes and landmarks that form one’s mental map of the neighborhood. Part of NYS route 62, a prime north-south connector for the entire Buffalo Niagara region, Bailey Avenue is a central pathway for pedestrians and vehicles in the University Heights neighborhood. At intersections with other major pathways, like Main Street, Bailey forms key nodes for pedestrians. Nearby paths create edges for the urban form, either by restricting pedestrian activity, like the Kensington Expressway, or by limiting vehicle traffic, like the multi-use recreational path in Linear Park. Defining landmarks, like churches, area parks, and the University Campus, help pedestrians navigate the neighborhood and delineate nearby commercial and residential districts.

Selected Examples



ANALYZING THE VISUAL AND SPATIAL STRUCTURE

WHY CONDUCT A VISUAL AND SPATIAL ANALYSIS?

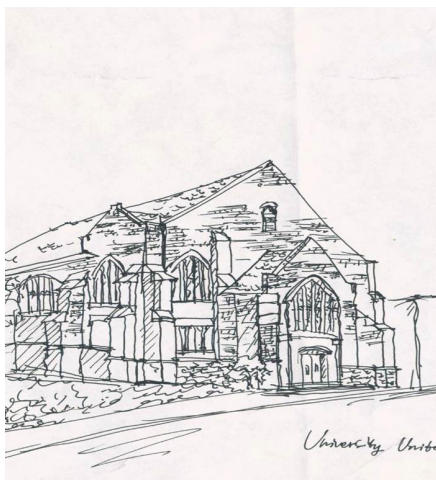
Building off the last exercise, students conducted a deeper analysis of the visual dynamics and spatial structure of the street to fully understand the pedestrian experience on Bailey Avenue. This involved looking at the mix of building styles, land uses, cultural assets, pedestrian amenities, traffic patterns, and environmental conditions along the street.

The analysis reveals strengths of the street to build on, such as architectural assets and transportation access, as well as opportunities to enhance the street in the form of vacant lots, inadequate amenities, and adverse environmental conditions. Pairing a visual survey with a spatial analysis connects the pedestrian perceptions of the street to its socioeconomic conditions, completing a story of how the street exists today that is critical in planning future improvements.

KEY FINDINGS

Students found that simple interventions, like cleaning up refuse and providing trash and recycling amenities along sidewalks, could greatly improve the streetscape. Other steps, like improved landscaping along sidewalks, tree plantings, benches, or public art, could also enhance aesthetics along the corridor. Clearly delineated crosswalks, traffic lanes, and parking spots could calm traffic and significantly improve safety for both pedestrians and vehicles. Promoting cohesive design standards, including transparent storefronts and landscaped parking lots, would make the corridor more welcoming to pedestrians. Fortunately, the neighborhood has many assets, like a community garden, to create a more welcoming environment for neighborhood residents and visitors.

Selected Examples



ENVISIONING OPPORTUNITIES

WHY ENVISION OPPORTUNITIES?

After performing the visual-spatial analysis, students applied their findings to design targeted proposals to enhance the streetscape and key sites along the corridor. Taken together, these proposals present a sound vision for the corridor, grounded by a thorough assessment.

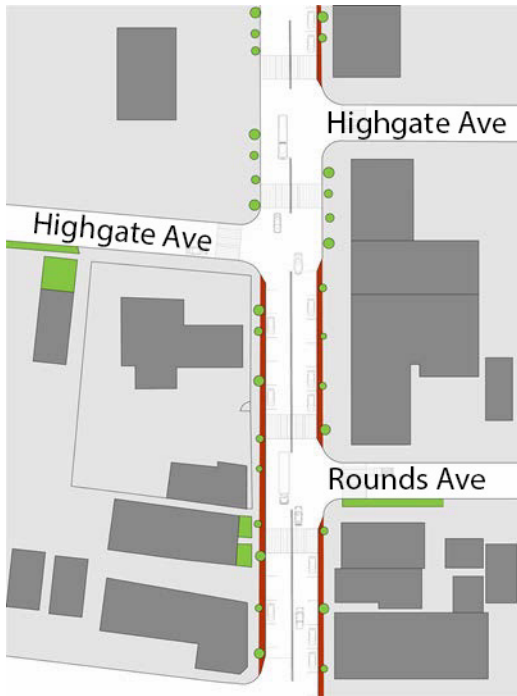
Without a cohesive vision, piecemeal proposals can create a chaotic urban form of dissimilar buildings, untapped vacant sites and streets clogged with traffic. These visions for Bailey Avenue are sound, but would require community involvement and extensive public input to bring to reality. This process was excluded due to the constraints in time and scope of the semester-long seminar. The student work offers a constructive starting point to begin a community conversation on improving the urban form of Bailey Avenue that can spur additional enhancements across the neighborhood.

Bailey Ave Study Areas



STUDY AREA 1 WINSPEAR AVENUE TO DARTMOUTH AVENUE

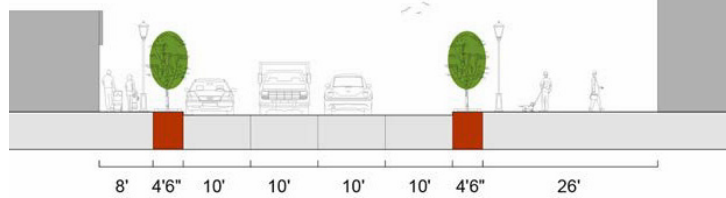
Streetscape Improvements



Proposals for this portion of Bailey Avenue aim to maximize traffic safety and beautify the corridor. To calm traffic and make the street safer for pedestrians and drivers, the width of the street would be reduced and street markings, like crosswalks, would be repainted.

Parking spaces would also be made more visible and clearly delineated, while sidewalks would be widened to welcome pedestrians. The formerly narrow sidewalk would extend further into the street and streetlights would be upgraded to enhance aesthetics and safety. Additional landscape features, including street trees lining both sides of the street, would also be planted to contribute to the pleasant pedestrian experience. These proposals are meant to be refined and enhanced with community input and consultation with applicable governmental agencies.

Street Section



Parcel Improvements



The selected site is a large, vacant lot on Bailey between Dartmouth Avenue and Shirley Avenue. The parcel offers abundant green space that, if enhanced, could provide pedestrians respite from busy Bailey Avenue and restore urban fabric.

The redesigned parcel would be a multi-purpose recreational space intended to accommodate family outings and group/community events. Features such as a pavilion, picnic tables, grilling equipment, playground, sports court and/or food and refreshment stalls could provide opportunities for recreation, socialization or community programs. A rain garden or ecological landscaping could create an aesthetically pleasing connection to the community garden across the street. Proposed uses and amenities would be refined and enhanced with community input and consultation with applicable governmental agencies.



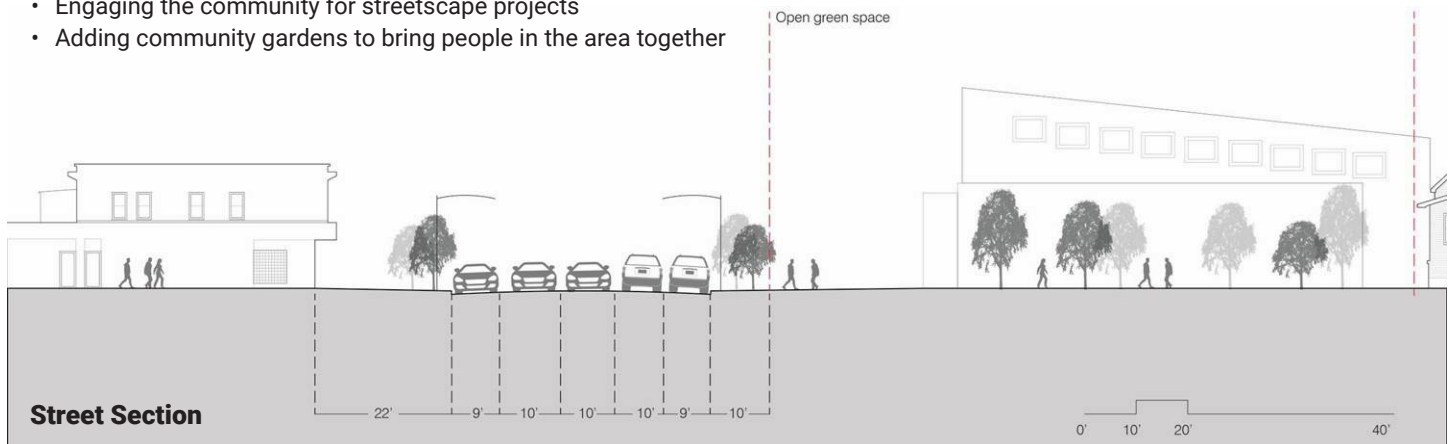
STUDY AREA 2

DARTMOUTH AVENUE TO EAST AMHERST STREET

Streetscape Improvements

Proposals for this section of Bailey Avenue were framed by overarching goals of traffic calming, neighborhood identity, public engagement, and reactivating vacant lots. Specific suggestions include:

- Painting parking spots and crosswalks to help slow down traffic
- Repaving dilapidated parking and sidewalks
- Engaging the community for streetscape projects
- Adding community gardens to bring people in the area together



Parcel Improvements

Students generated several development options for a selected vacant lot at the southwest corner of Bailey Avenue and Dartmouth Avenue. Opportunities include a business incubator space, community garden, public plaza, and community center. Additional recommendations for the options shown here include:

- **Public plaza** space acts as a landmark for the area.
 - Allows for green infrastructure and storm water management to be brought to the area.
 - Gives people of the area a place to latch onto and maintain so that it keeps the idea of a beautiful streetscape in mind.
- **Community center** that brings people together to engage in public events.
 - Combines previous interventions to make one complete space.
 - Gives the surrounding residents and students at the University a place to interact and formulate new ideas about the street and its identity.



STUDY AREA 3 EAST AMHERST STREET TO KENSINGTON AVENUE

Streetscape Improvements

This portion of Bailey Ave is envisioned as a complete and green street that forms a more welcoming pedestrian environment. Key elements include:

- Reclaiming corner surface parking lots
- Planting trees in vacant tree beds, with rain gardens in between
- Adding high-visibility crosswalks
- Adding a two-way bike lane protected by a 5' tree barrier
- Adding 9' parking on the east side of the street.



Parcel Improvements

The selected vacant lot is located at the corner of Thornton Avenue and Bailey Avenue. Currently, the lot is composed entirely of impermeable surface, and contains no surrounding vegetation.

The proposed use for the vacant parcel is to create a simple park that applies some of the same improvements suggested for the streetscape, like street trees and rain gardens. This park could enhance the streetscape in the interim while leaving open the possibility of redevelopment that would be determined by direct community input, to let citizens decide the best way this land can be used for the future of their neighborhood.

