



# Affordable Housing Initiative

 University at Buffalo  
School of Architecture and Planning

**B/a+p**

# WHY address Affordable Housing?

## Affordable housing is a global and national challenge

Access to adequate, affordable housing is fundamental to thriving urban areas, with far-reaching consequences for people's health, quality of life, and access to opportunities. Yet around the world cities struggle with the challenges of housing their poorest citizens and providing housing at a reasonable cost for low- and middle-income populations.

In the United States, the pervasiveness of affordability problems among low-income renters is primarily due to the shortage of appropriately priced housing and the low and decreasing incomes of renters. While renters are becoming poorer, the supply of housing that is affordable and available is shrinking.

## Buffalo's housing market is not meeting the needs of everyone

Buffalo's housing market has begun to stabilize after decades of population loss at a scale experienced by few other cities. However, the recovery is largely concentrated in a handful of neighborhoods, and housing developments typically require public subsidies to overcome high development costs and market limitations.

Furthermore, many of the city's residents lack access to adequate and affordable housing. Even as new housing is constructed, many residents face challenges as rents rise but the poverty rate remains high. Additionally, many neighborhoods throughout the city have been caught in a downward spiral of disinvestment fueled by high rates of vacancy and abandonment and an older housing stock.

## The Opportunity

There is an increased demand for design-build and service-learning opportunities among Architecture, Urban Planning and Real Estate Development students and Buffalo is the perfect place to test innovative solutions to housing challenges. Additionally, the city has ample infill opportunities for new affordable housing options and a culture of grassroots problem solving.

By addressing new ways to lower the cost of design and development, this initiative aims to change the way housing is made affordable and accessible to all. In turn, this will lessen the reliance on subsidies, increase positive health outcomes for occupants, and develop a body of knowledge that will help make proper housing attainable for everyone.



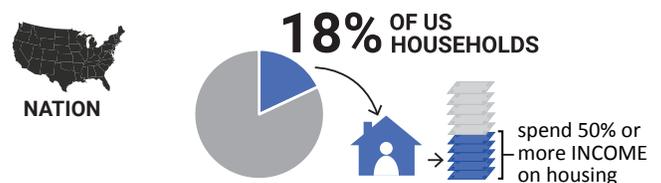
## MILLIONS OF HOUSEHOLDS STRUGGLE TO FIND ADEQUATE AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Globally, the number of urban households without access to adequate, affordable housing is projected to grow by 2025.



Source: McKinsey Global Institute, "A Blueprint for Addressing the Global Affordable Housing Challenge," October 2014.

In the United States, high housing costs place a heavy burden on lower-income households.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Housing Survey, 2015.

In Buffalo, high poverty rates and older homes create additional barriers to accessing adequate, affordable housing.



Source: City of Buffalo, "Buffalo Housing Opportunity Strategy," Prepared by czb LLC, December 2017.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2012-2016.

# WHY UB?

The School of Architecture and Planning is uniquely positioned to lead research and applied project work that advances innovation in affordable housing. For nearly 50 years, the School has made working with communities in Buffalo a central experience in the education of student architects, planners, urban designers, and now, real estate professionals. In 2017, the School launched this initiative through the essential financial support of more than \$125,000 from alumni and friends and an additional \$25,000 from the UB President's Circle.

# WHAT do we want to accomplish?

## This initiative will...

- 1 Drive the development of new, innovative and affordable alternatives for housing
- 2 Make the School a thought leader on housing policy and the design, construction and financing of affordable housing
- 3 Train the next generation of housing professionals by tackling today's real-world problems
- 4 Provide service to the City of Buffalo, local housing organizations, developers and community leaders
- 5 Make affordable housing an integral component of healthy neighborhoods

# HOW will we accomplish it?

## Prototyping

The School will **design, build, and evaluate** housing through a cyclical prototyping model. Designs, materials and construction techniques will be refined each year by Architecture students and faculty. Real Estate Development and Urban Planning students and faculty will evaluate and propose strategies that address public policy, site development, community engagement and financing. New ideas will be explored through studio work, workshops, symposia and independent studies.

## Research and Analysis

Students and faculty will perform critical research that will drive innovation in architecture, housing policy and finance.

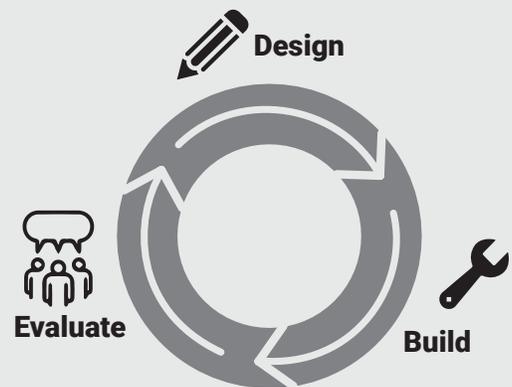
## Other Collaborative Work

Potential partnerships with other UB schools (Law, Management, Social Work, Public Health), community based organizations and public and private developers will help solve multi-faceted problems.

## Annual Report

An annual report will celebrate the collective accomplishments of the School's effort, inform housing professionals and supports the dissemination of new ideas.

## A foundational component of the initiative is a housing prototyping model



### Initial steps:

*Students and faculty will work throughout the spring and fall semesters to refine existing plans for the first full-scale test model.*

*Additional classes will explore financing models, market conditions and optimum locations for new housing in Buffalo.*

*School faculty and staff will pursue new funding and build partnerships that will ensure successful outcomes.*

# WHAT have we already done?

## Housing Coursework

Professor Stephanie Cramer is leading a studio that is refining existing prototypical home designs and producing new ones.

A design studio led by Professor Edward Steinfeld produced an array of potential housing prototypes.

Graduate student, Alexa Russo, refined a potential home design through an independent study.

Thirty students crisscrossed the boroughs of New York City on a two-day field trip that included site visits to several high-profile affordable housing and mixed-use developments.

A joint colloquium of Urban and Regional Planning and Real Estate Development featured an extensive series of guest talks by a range of experts in the housing field.

A project led by Professor Brad Wales is engaging local developers and contractors to help manage and potentially build three different prototype small affordable houses.

For the past 30 years, students and faculty from the School have worked with Habitat for Humanity to build homes for Buffalo families.



## Public Events

A symposium on affordable housing took place at UB on April 10, 2018. The symposium featured nationally and regionally recognized speakers and panelists, and was attended by 160 people, including UB faculty, students and a combination of public and private sector housing professionals from across the region.



## Other Related Design and Planning Efforts

Students, faculty, and professional research staff have begun working hands-on in the University Heights neighborhood, looking at key sites and issues to identify potential design and planning solutions through research and coursework.

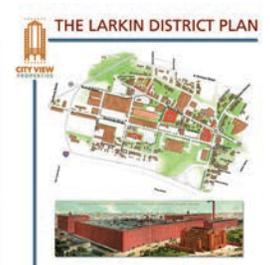
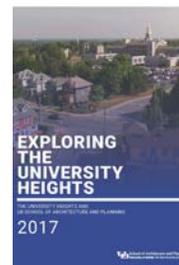
Professor Hiro Hata led the development of an award-winning master plan that lays the groundwork to revitalize the Bailey Green neighborhood on the East Side of Buffalo.

The *Larkin District Master Plan* developed by the Urban Design Project set the foundation for a series of investments, including two large mixed-use developments that have added commercial, retail and residential space to the district, mostly through the adaptive reuse of historic buildings.

The Center for Inclusive Design and Environmental Access published *Inclusive Housing: A Pattern Book*, a resource for designing communities to accommodate social diversity and provide equitable opportunities for all residents.

Professor Robert Silverman has worked on a number of studies examining fair and affordable housing, including the *Neighborhood Housing Services Structural Definitions Report* and the *Erie County Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice*.

Professor Henry Taylor, Professor Robert Silverman and Associate Professor Li Yin from the Center for Urban Studies are working on the *Turning the Corner* project which is funded by the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation. The study examines transitioning neighborhoods in Buffalo that are at risk of residential displacement.



## What's next?

Continued work on affordable housing requires philanthropic investments. We need to build meaningful partnerships with public, private and not-for-profit organizations and acquire financial support for studios, faculty development and recruitment, symposia, scholarships and student travel. **Our goal is to raise \$250,000 for the 2018-2019 academic year and additional amounts in future years.**

For more information contact Dean Robert Shibley at the School of Architecture and Planning at [rshibley@buffalo.edu](mailto:rshibley@buffalo.edu).