

AGING IN PLACE: AN EXPLORATION OF BUILT ENVIRONMENT CHALLENGES IN THE RUST BELT

Beverly McLean

School of Architecture and Planning

University at Buffalo

Presentation Outline

- Research Context
- Why aging matters in post-industrial regions like Erie County
- Barriers to Healthy Aging in Older, Distressed Region
- Emerging Policy Approaches
- Summary

Research Context: national trends

- 1 out of 5 US residents to reach age 65
- No longer Ozzie and Harriet family--Estimates predict in future just 12 percent of US households will have children
- Challenge for policy makers, most vulnerable are not distributed evenly metropolitan region
- Majority of these adults prefer to age in place
- Mismatch often exist between the neighborhood in which older adults lives and needed support services

Common barriers for aging in place

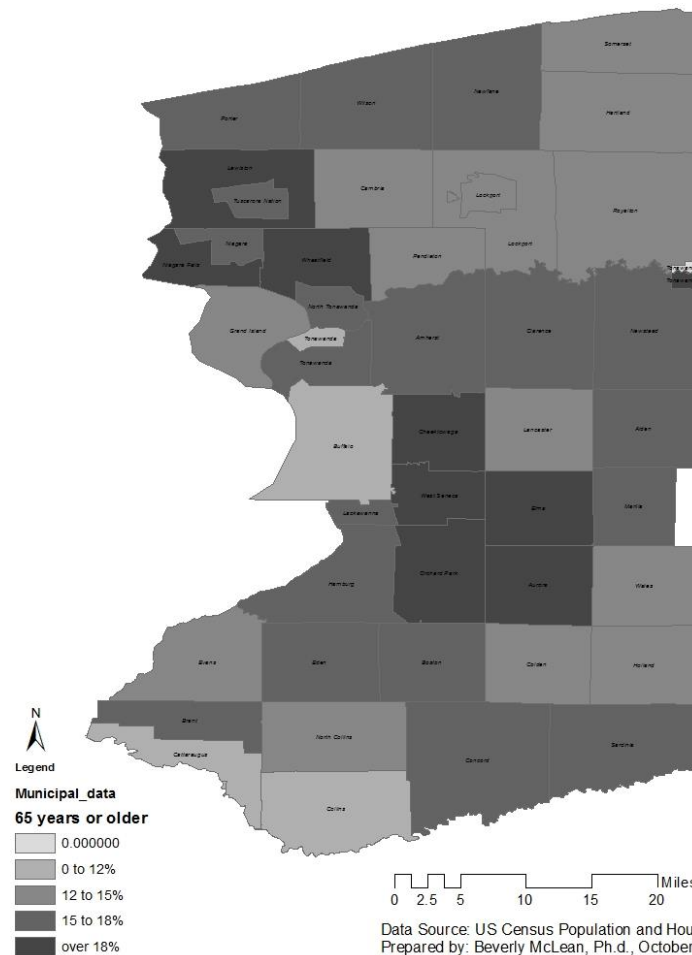
- Home environment features such as stairs and large yards
- Lack of nearby shopping opportunities and health care
- Dependency on automobile for mobility
- Alternative for public transportation may not be available or convenient
- Neighborhood environment features such as poorly maintained sidewalks
- More frail, disabled and limited in resources and dependent on services

Why aging matters in post-industrial regions like Erie County

- Aging housing stock, inner-city abandonment, white flight, sprawl
- Older on average with 15 percent of population over 65
- Proportion of frail adults (85 and over) 1.2 times national average
- Aging in first-ring suburbs approaching 20 percent
- But more elder adults live alone in inner-cities

Impact of sprawl on older adult distribution

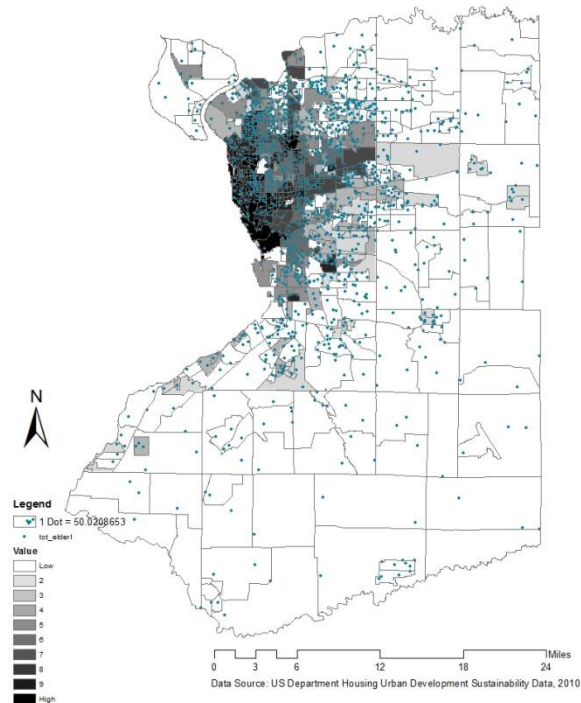
Distribution of Population over 65 years, 2010



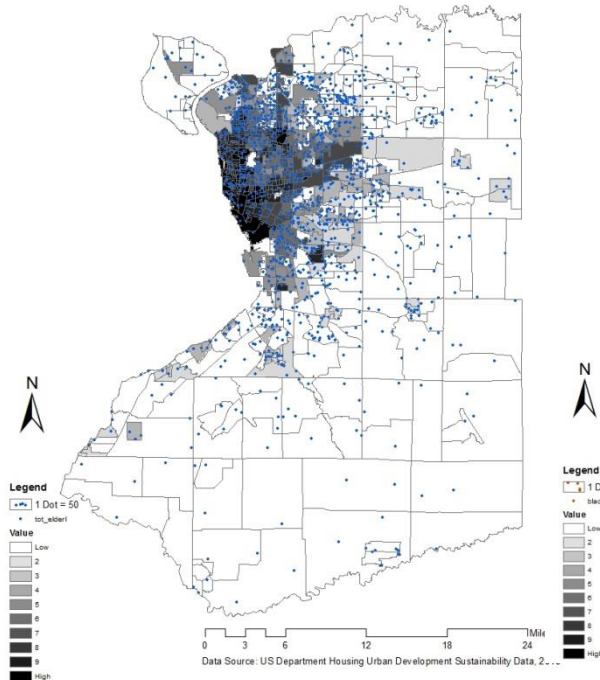
Barriers to Healthy Aging in Erie County

- Older adults live in suburbs, auto-dependent

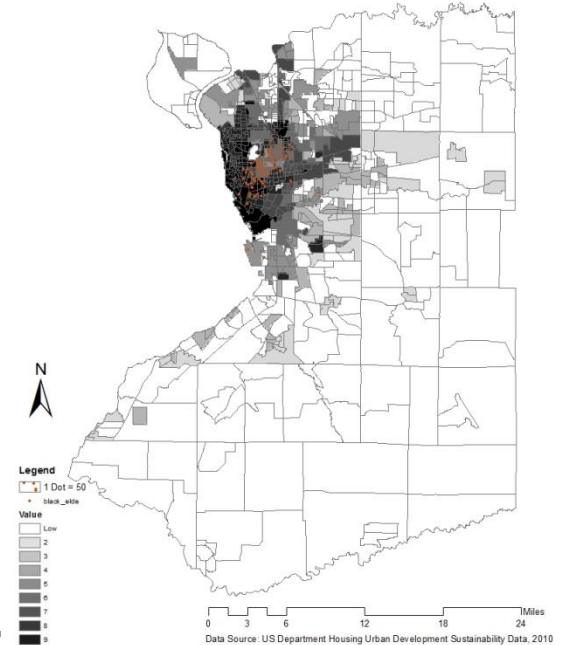
Transit Access and
Distribution of Elderly Population, 2010



Transit Access and
Distribution of White Elderly Population, 2010

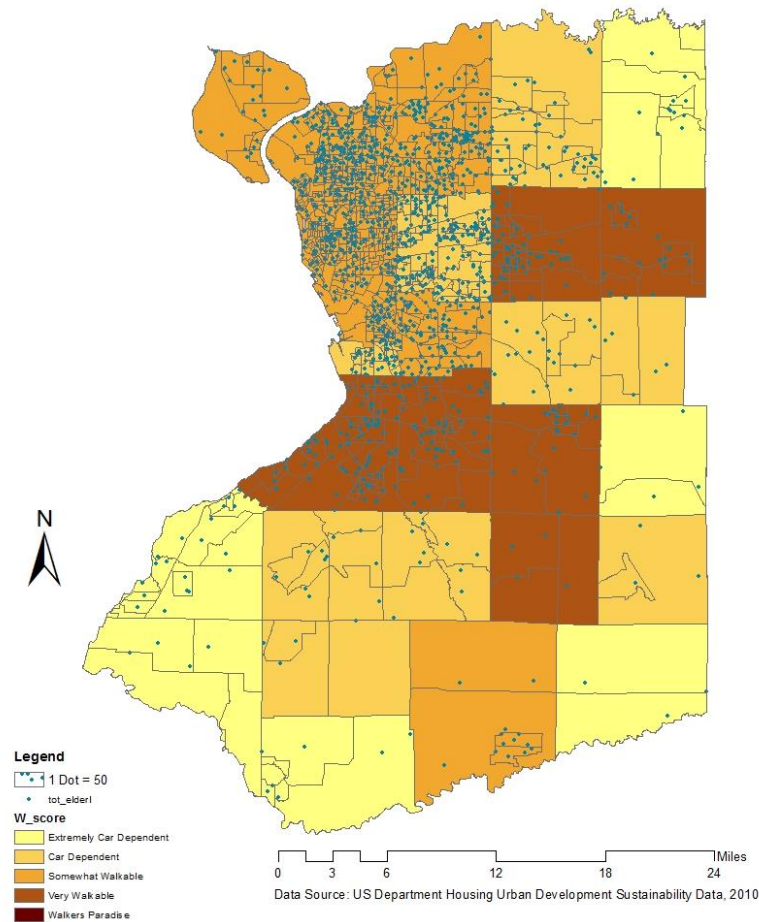


Transit Access and
Distribution of Black Elderly Population, 2010



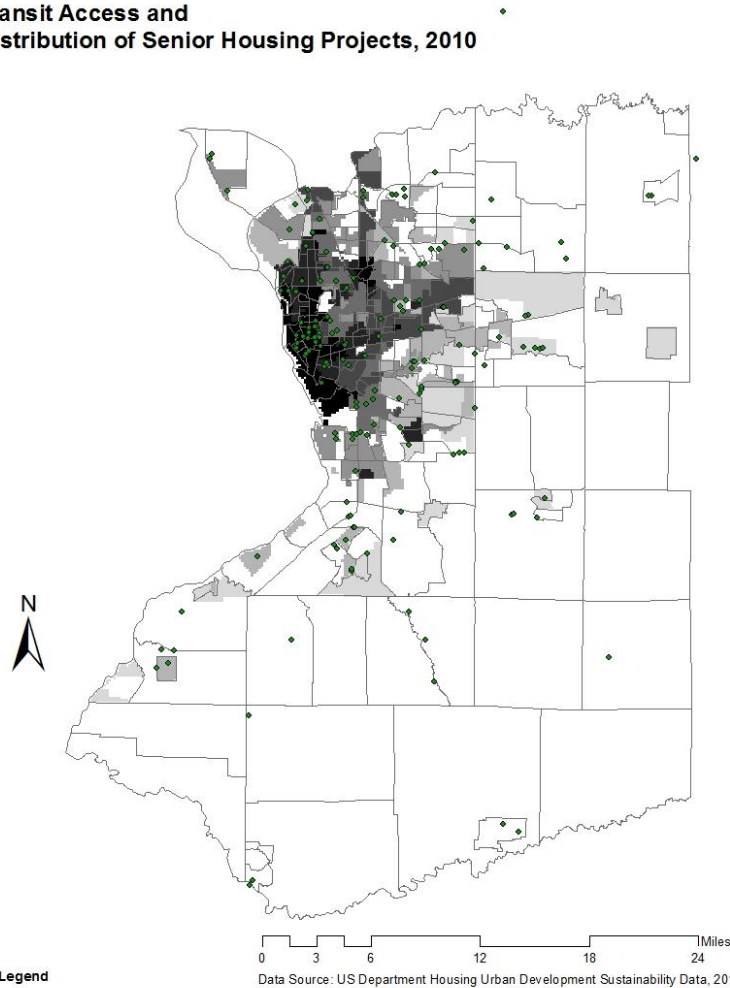
Walkability and access to services

Walk Scores and
Distribution of Elderly Population, 2010



Senior housing complexes and transit access

Transit Access and
Distribution of Senior Housing Projects, 2010



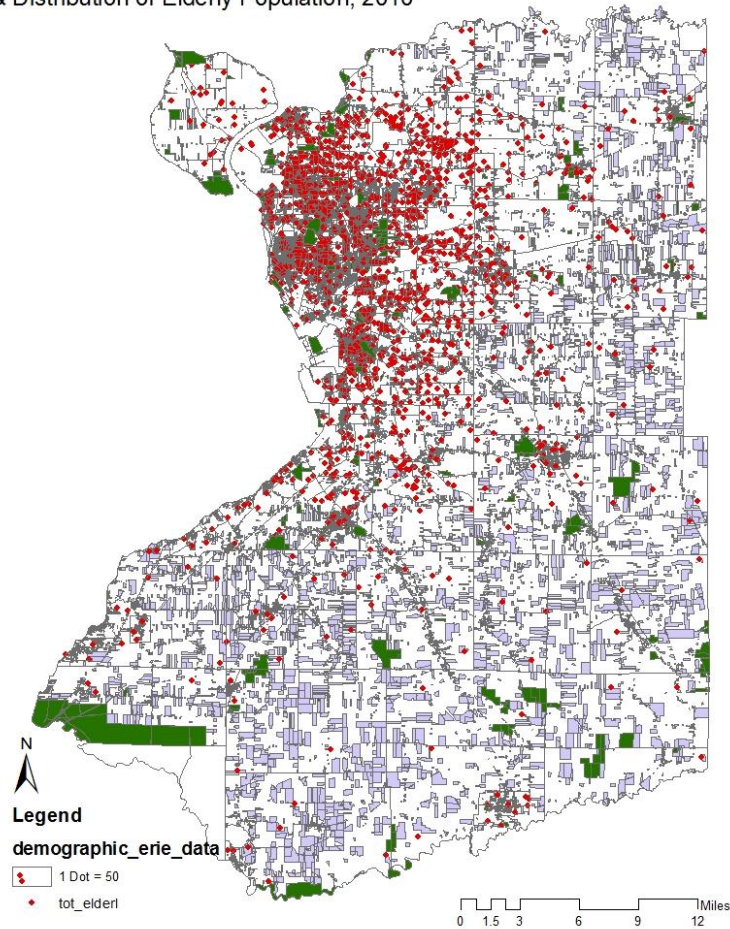
Legend

◆ erie-senior-housing

0 3 6 12 18 24 Miles
Data Source: US Department Housing Urban Development Sustainability Data, 2010

Housing built pre-1940

Erie County pre-1940 residential structures
& Distribution of Elderly Population, 2010



Examples of regional housing stock

City of Buffalo--Westside



- City of Buffalo—Eastside



Local response to aging/accessibility needs

Habitat Humanity Project



- *Buffalo Municipal Housing, Jefferson Avenue*



Suburban examples

- First-ring suburbs, post-war



- Outer-ring suburbs



Infrastructure issues

City of Buffalo—abandoned businesses, boarded-up houses, vacant lots, cracked, broken sidewalks



Suburban Issues

Suburbs—outside of villages and towns—more a problem of absence of sidewalks

Northtown & University Boulevard
Plaza



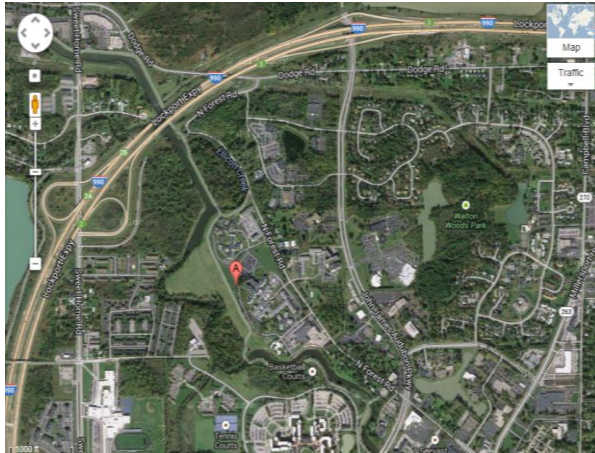
Walden Galleria



Senior housing site—existing & proposed

Weinberg campus, Amherst, NY

Site Location



Entrance



Proposed-Youngs Rd Site



In region facing a lot of challenges for livable communities

- Region scores high in variety of housing options
- Older housing stock, however, typically two to three stories, even ranches lack barrier-free entry
- Newer projects meet minimal ADA requirements, few single family homes are accessible, visitible
- Public transit access high along major West Side and East Side corridors in City of Buffalo, weak in suburbs
- Retail like population moved out to suburbs, hard to access by public transit; inner-city corridors outside East Side—neglected, sidewalks crumbling
- Support for walkability easier in West Side Buffalo and older town/village centers, better quality sidewalks, street furniture than East Side Buffalo and outer suburbs

Public Policy efforts to meet aging boom

- Statewide
- Age Friendly New York: promote public awareness of the necessity and desirability of U.S. towns and cities to become friendlier to all ages.
- Eight age-friendly principles:
 - 1. Outdoor spaces and buildings—accessibility and availability
 - 2. Transportation—safe and affordable modes of private and public transportation.
 - 3. Housing—range of options; aging in place; home modification programs.
 - 4. Social participation—access to leisure and cultural activities; opportunities for older residents to participate in social and civic engagement with their peers and younger people.
 - 5. Respect and social inclusion—ethnic and cultural diversity, multigenerational interaction and dialogue.
 - 6. Civic participation and employment—promotion of paid work and volunteer activities for older residents
 - 7. Communication and information—use of technology to keep older residents connected to their community and friends and family, both near and far.
 - 8. Community support and health services—access to home care services, clinics, and programs to promote wellness and active aging.

AARP: Inclusive Community Design.

- NY AARP calling for the legislation to include the following features:
- At least one step-free dwelling unit entrance
- Accessible interior doors and doorways
- Full bathroom on the entrance level
- Reinforcement in the bathroom walls to allow for later installation of grab bars around the toilet, bathtub, or shower stall and shower seat.

Complete Streets

- Street design concepts that ensures that all users are safely accommodated, regardless of how they travel or what their special needs may be
- NYS passed legislation, 2011, signed by Governor
- Buffalo in 2008:
 - “The Commissioner of Public Works, Parks and Streets shall include pedestrian and bicycle facilities in all new street construction, street reconstruction, street maintenance, public works and park projects undertaken by the City of Buffalo...”
- Erie County, New York:
 - “...[T]he Erie County Commissioner of Public Works shall include pedestrian and bicycle facilities in all new street construction, street reconstruction and park projects undertaken by the County of Erie, where feasible.”

Changing planning and zoning

- City of Buffalo in process of redoing zoning and land use policies
- Reinforce walkable neighborhoods
- Build on existing strengths
- Capitalize on neighborhood assets
- Improve transportation options
- Encourage walking and cycling

One region forward

- Toward more sustainable Buffalo Niagara Region
- HUD funded
- Focus on livable Buffalo-Niagara Region
- Initial phase looking at land use, food accessibility, transportation and mobility, housing and neighborhoods, climate change
- Housing working group recognizes importance of cradle to grave neighborhoods

Locally focused initiatives

- Neighborhood Wellness Institute, BeActive pilot project, Fillmore District
- City of Buffalo, Senior Wellness Project

Summary

- Growing recognition of the changes in demography, and no longer being dominated by Ozzie and Harriet families
- Recognize barriers to livability, slow to recognize age friendly communities are inclusive, friendly to all age groups
- But still lack of explicit recognition of the impact of aging baby boomers