



CRT News

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Help us achieve the Transit Prime Directive:

Make Transit a competitive alternative to driving for everyone!



Figure 1. Waiting for the Bus

Question: What's rarer than a 4-leaf clover?

Answer: A Sunday bus! (OK, just kidding, Sunday buses do come eventually.)

Questions:

- Don't people need to get places on weekends too?
- Don't over 30% of Buffalo households not own cars and rely on transit?
- Are low-income families overrepresented on public transit?

Answers: Yes. Yes. Yes.

Question: Why are these people standing?

Answer: There's no shelter and nowhere to sit. Over 80% of NFTA stops lack shelters or benches. This is one reason the poor are overrepresented on transit. (Source: NFTA / GBNRTC 2024 Origin Destination Survey. Final Report. 10 February 2025.)

What can we do about it?

- Call our legislators (City, State, and Federal) to demand better service.
- Join Citizens for Regional Transit and tell your friends to join.
<http://citizenstransit.org/join>
- Sign our petitions. Individuals: <http://citizenstransit.org/form/individual-petition>. Organizations: <http://citizenstransit.org/form/organizational-petition>

President's Column

Open Letter – CRT to NFTA:

Let's Work Together to Build the Best Transit System in the US

By Douglas Funke, CRT President

We are at a critical juncture with Buffalo-Metro transit services. Many factors are driving the need for improving WNY transit services and facilities including new NYS environmental laws, local climate action plans, goals for reducing congestion and the need to serve those who can't afford cars. (References 1 – 4). Transit improvements will be critical for meeting these demands.

As regular transit users, we draw from our weekly bus and rail experience in making these judgments and recommendations. We also draw on our knowledge of public transit and national transit trends.

1.0 The Buffalo-Amherst Extension, the DL&W, and BRT on Bailey Avenue.

We are very pleased with the investments being made in Buffalo-Metro's high-capacity transit system, especially the Buffalo-Amherst extension, the DL&W Terminal improvements, and the Bailey Avenue Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system. Excellent progress is being made on these projects! We offer our full, enthusiastic support. We call on NFTA-Metro to keep up the bold leadership in moving beyond these initial steps, eventually completing the full light rail rapid transit (LRRT) system as originally designed, which is even more important today than when first planned in the 1970s and updated over the years (References 5 - 7)

Our past and current investments in Buffalo's high-capacity transit system establish a foundation for more comprehensive improvements. We must take advantage. This is critical for meeting the NFTA's mission and goals described below.

2.0 NFTA Documents Provide the Vision, Goals, and Requirements.

The many NFTA plans and documents provide the vision and direction to follow.

2.1 The NFTA 2023-2033 Roadmap. *The NFTA Strategic Roadmap 2023-2033* (Reference 8) identifies high-level goals and strategies for making NFTA-Metro successful. It calls for "environmental stewardship" to "reduce the environmental footprint of WNY," focusses on the customer experience and "improving all aspects of the customer's journey," and "to promote land use and transportation planning that encourages transit," and for "moving toward net zero environmental impact,". One strategic priority in the report is to "foster economic development through Light Rail Expansion." The current LRRT is 6 miles long and carries almost 20% of NFTA riders. LRRT attracts riders and has the capacity to achieve these goals.

The NFTA-Metro Surface Division mission is highlighted in the *Roadmap*. It is to ***“Enhance the quality of life of residents and visitors by providing the highest level of safe, clean, affordable, responsive, and reliable transportation through a coordinated and convenient bus and rail system.”*** Table 1 expands this NFTA-Metro mission with subjective

order of magnitude comparisons between: (1) the current transit with NFTA-Metro system with the 6-mile LRRT; (2) an NFTA-Metro System with an expanded LRRT as originally planned; and (3) a transportation system where many meet their transportation needs primarily by driving. These comparisons provide a starting point for further discussion and analysis.

Table 1. Subjective Scoring of NFTA Mission Elements

CRT expansions of NFTA-Metro Mission Elements	NFTA- Metro Today with 6- mile LRRT	NFTA- Metro with Full LRRT Network	Driving
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <u>Safe:</u> <i>Personal safety.</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Safe from injury / death o Safe from crime - <u>Clean:</u> <i>Minimize pollution.</i> Avoid congestion, combat climate change and pollution from cars (including from the millions of tires.) - <u>Affordable:</u> <i>Minimize travel costs.</i> Cost of using transit is about \$900/yr. vs. over \$10,000 per year to own a car. - <u>Responsive:</u> <i>Travel when desired and needed.</i> Transit riders must conform to bus and train schedules. Worse on weekends. LRRT is every 10 minutes, can combine with park & rides. - <u>Reliable:</u> <i>Can rely on it for meeting travel needs.</i> NFTA data indicates transit has over 80% schedule reliability. However, infrequent schedules (especially on weekends) make appointments difficult to get to. - <u>Coordinated / Convenient:</u> <i>Meets personal origin – destination needs.</i> Transfers add significant time penalty to transit trips, weekend service is less frequent, current LRRT is fast with high frequency but isolated. 	<p>High High</p> <p>Medium</p> <p>High</p> <p><u>Low</u></p> <p><u>Low</u></p> <p><u>Low</u></p>	<p>High High</p> <p>High</p> <p>High</p> <p>Medium</p> <p>Medium</p> <p>Medium</p>	<p><u>Low</u> High</p> <p><u>Low</u></p> <p><u>Low</u></p> <p>High / Low*</p> <p>High / Low*</p> <p>High / Low*</p>
Meets NFTA Mission of <i>enhancing quality of life for residents and visitors?</i>	<u>Poorly</u>	Yes	<u>Poorly</u>
* In evaluating the driving solution, we must recognize that cars don't work for those who can't afford them or can't drive. 30% of Buffalo families don't own cars.			

2.2 The NFTA Annual Budget and Five-Year Capital Plan. (Reference 9) states that the NFTA-Metro’s “**goal is to achieve a reputation as the best transit system in the United States.**” It will be hard to achieve this goal without a fully deployed light rail network using our publicly owned rights-of-way (ROWs) to connect to the airport and other high priority destinations, like other cities are doing. Table 2 breaks this down. Like above, this expands this NFTA-Metro goal with subjective order of magnitude comparisons between: (1) the current transit with NFTA-Metro system with the 6-mile LRRT; and (2) an NFTA-Metro System with an expanded LRRT as originally planned. These comparisons provide a starting point for further discussion and analysis.

The ROWs in the original NFTA LRRT plans are still in place and available. And the DL&W improvements provide the foundation for accessing them. CRT has some ideas for improvements and look forward to working with the NFTA when these plans are studied.

2.3 The NFTA-Metro Transit Development Plans. The Annual NFTA-Metro Transit Development Plans (TDP) track progress on current and planned future projects (Reference 10.) The 2025 TDP is an improvement over the 2024 version because it explicitly includes a Light Rail Corridor Feasibility Study to begin in 2028 when the Buffalo-Amherst extension construction begins. This could be improved by explicitly citing the Southern/Eastern Light Rail Extensions like the 2019 version did. Figure 2 shows a map of the planned LRRT system based on the original and updated NFTA plans with CRT improvements.

2.4 The NFTA Public Participation Plan. Community support is critical for the success of all NFTA Programs. The NFTA Public Participation Plan (Reference 11) lays out guidelines that define the approach. It states that the steps are to be **proactive, inclusive, flexible, collaborative, and responsive**. Even early conceptual studies should involve public input, perhaps at NFTA Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) meetings or at larger public meetings. The identification of long-range projects defines generational transportation decisions that demand public input. CRT has strong positions and innovative ideas that we can share. Allowing public comments to NFTA Board of Commissioner Meetings would also help and should be done.

2.5. Public and Political Support. Longstanding expressions of support call for extending Buffalo Metro Rail. Thousands of individuals have signed CRT petitions over the years, and over 60 organizations (e.g., Kaleida Health, Douglas Development Corporation, Ciminelli Real Estate, the Buffalo Urban League...) and many Mayors and executive leaders have signed our Organization’s Petition (e.g., Tonawanda Supervisor Joseph Emminger and County Executive Mark Poloncarz.) These petitions call for a “Transit Revolution.” In 2015 The Buffalo Common Council unanimously passed a resolution in favor of expanding Buffalo Metro Rail to Amherst, the airport, and Southtowns. Also, the GBNRTC / UB Regional Institute’s One Region Forward project found community consensus for improved public transit including expanding Buffalo’s LRRT. (Reference 12.)

We thank NFTA-Metro for their leadership on transit issues and making improvements. We look forward to working together as we build the future and make NFTA-Metro the best transit system in the US.

**Table 2. Subjective Scoring of the NFTA-Metro's Goal for Achieving
a Reputation as the Best Transit System in the US**

CRT-Suggested Components for Meeting the Goal of Being the Best Transit System in the US	NFTA- Metro Today with 6-mile LRRT	NFTA- Metro with Full LRRT Network
- <u>Connects Major Points of Interest with fast high-capacity transit:</u> Fast, high-capacity connections to the airport, multimodal centers, schools, shopping, medical centers, public attractions, etc.	<u>Poorly</u>	Yes
<u>Attracts businesses and population to Buffalo.</u>	<u>No</u>	Yes
- <u>Supports a clean environment.</u> Climate and traffic calming goals supported by transit. Provides a clean, competitive alternative to driving for everyone.	<u>Poorly</u>	Yes
- <u>Provides high-capacity alternative for tens of thousands now traveling by car:</u> LRRT capacity is 600 people every 10 minutes (same as a 6-lane expressway) vs. 40 per bus. Can even serve high attendance events (e.g., sports events, concerts)	<u>No</u>	Yes
- <u>Fast:</u> Competitive with or faster than driving.	<u>No</u>	Yes
- <u>High frequency:</u> Provides high frequency travel services.	<u>No</u>	Yes
- <u>Extended span of service:</u> Broad span of service can be accomplished even on weekends.	<u>No</u>	Yes
- <u>Comfortable to access:</u> comfortable / ubiquitous shelters throughout the system.	<u>No</u>	Yes
<u>Offers equal transportation access for all.</u> Provides a competitive alternative to driving for everyone including disadvantaged communities.	<u>No</u>	Yes
<u>Best in the US?</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Yes, when fully completed</u>



Figure 2. Meeting the NFTA Mission and striving to be the best in the US means connecting all major destinations, as originally planned and being accomplished by peer transit agencies. Shown here: (1) Niagara Falls, (2) UB, (3) Canalside, (4) Buffalo-Niagara Airport, (5) Central Terminal, (6) Botanical Gardens, (7) Highmark Stadium, and (8) Erie County Fairgrounds.

3.0 References.

1. NYS Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA). 26 June 2019. (<https://climate.ny.gov/Resources/Scoping-Plan>)
2. NYS Climate Action Council. Scoping Plan, Full Report, 27 December 2022. (file:///Users/douglasfunke/Downloads/NYS-Climate-Action-Council-Final-Scoping-Plan-2022%20(8).pdf).
3. New York State Constitution's "Green Amendment." Each person shall have a right to clean air and water, and a healthful environment.
4. Erie County Climate Action Plan. 27 December 2023. <https://www3.erie.gov/climateaction/>
5. Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority. *Preliminary Design Report. Buffalo-Amherst Metro Line*. Prepared by Bechtel Associates. June 1974.
6. Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority. *Strategic Assessment: working Paper*. Prepared by Parsons Brinkerhoff. August 2001

7. NFTA-Metro. *Erie County Transit Service Restructuring and Fare Study – Strategic Assessment*. Final Report. August 2010
8. *The NFTA Strategic Roadmap 2023-2033*. <https://www.nfta.com/about/public-information-center/nfta-strategic-roadmap-2023-2033>
9. *The Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority Annual Budget and Five-Year Capital Plan*. Final March 28, 2024. chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://www.nfta.com/sites/default/files/2024-09/Budget_FYE_2025.pdf
10. *NFTA METRO Transit Development Plan*. February 2025. chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/<https://nfta.com/sites/default/files/2024-05/TDP%202024%20FINAL.pdf>
11. *NFTA-METRO Public Participation Plan*. 2018 Revision. chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/<https://metro.nfta.com/media/2978/ppp.pdf>
12. GBNRTC, UB Regional Institute, and Buffalo Niagara Partnership. *One Region Forward. A New Way to Plan for Buffalo Niagara*. February 2015 with subsequent report series. <https://regional-institute.buffalo.edu/work/one-region-forward/>.

Cc. NFTA Executive Managers, Officers and Commissioners.

Update on the GBNRTC Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP)

By Thomas DeSantis, CRT Board Member

This past month Citizens for Regional Transit (CRT) President Doug Funke and Board Member Thomas DeSantis attended the GBNRTC Planning and Coordinating Committee (PCC) meeting. CRT reminded the Committee that they have repeatedly failed in advancing a single intercity railway project which could benefit WNY and that this failure was entirely of their own neglect. Doug submitted his usual pointed commentary in opposition to moving the ‘Region Central Project’ from WNY’s draft Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) list of “Active Projects” to the unfunded list of “Illustrative Projects.” Doug also re-iterated that the two most significant WNY projects, Regional Central, aka Route-198, and Kensington Expressway Reconstruction, aka Route-33, should, in good faith, be dealt with simultaneously as well as comprehensively through a forthcoming Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process.

At the June meeting and because of earlier objections, CRT expected the GBNRTC members would, at a minimum discuss NYSDOT’s request to remove the Regional Central Project from the TIP but that was not the case. Unfortunately, there was no discussion by the members about this change.

The proposed new WNY TIP, for fiscal years 2026 through 2030, will be voted on in July. If you are interested, you can download the draft TIP in PDF format from the GBNRTC.org website, or via this link:

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/56ccbffd3c44d8670dbd1d84/t/6813d3eb77917868360ec235/1746129913251/DRAFT+26-30+TIP+-+Public+Review+-+Website+Version.pdf>

You will find that the Region Central Project was moved onto a wish list of future projects. The Kensington Expressway Reconstruction project is listed as only “on hold.” It is now clear that Region Central does not have status as an active project at least until 2031. Remember, this includes the preliminary engineering and environmental analyses that would likely be the first phases of actual work.

For GBNRTC to move Region Central back into this pending ‘2026-2030 Transportation Improvement Program’ an additional action would need to be taken. NYSDOT could ask that an amendment be made to the draft TIP (before it is finalized by the Policy Committee) or NYSDOT could wait until the draft TIP is approved and then put forth an amendment when they are more comfortable moving Region Central forward.

Another disconcerting move by the GBNRTC is that the “ENGINEERING & FEASIBILITY STUDY FOR PHASE 2 OF KENSINGTON & SCAJAQUADA EXPRESSWAYS” is NOT “on hold” but is included without the funding level identified. “THIS PROJECT WILL STUDY ALTERNATIVES FOR PHASE 2 OF THE KENSINGTON AND SCAJAQUADA CORRIDORS IN THE CITY OF BUFFALO, ERIE COUNTY” More disconcerting is that this official description leaves it unclear what this might portend for meaningfully advancing either of these projects in a way that the public expects at this point. Unfortunately, at this point, it looks more like subterfuge on the part of NYSDOT.

As Scajaquada Corridor Coalition and many others have noted, by moving Region Central out of the TIP, NYSDOT’s action will seriously delay (if not kill) the Region Central Project. It also seems to undermine the yet to be completed phase-2 feasibility study. Is NYSDOT maneuvering to avoid doing a legitimate scoping process and the required environmental studies under SEQRA (State Environmental Quality Review Act), something which NYSDOT has already been found guilty of doing?

Any proposal to advance a Region Central Plan is merely illustrative. The \$100+ million funding commitment for this project is missing. To bring it back into this pending TIP will require it to be amended at some point. With no amendment, none of the funding can be used before 2031. A lot can happen between now and then. NYSDOT did say at the meeting that they are considering restoring the \$100M. We hope that they do.

Right now, it seems that NYSDOT wants nothing to do with change; for example, nothing to do with disconnecting Rt 198 from I-190 or the Kensington as called for by the Region Central Plan, and; it certainly does not want anything to do with changing the expressway character of either of these roadways.

CRT must note that at June’s GBNRTC meeting it was stated that a high volume of public comments on Region Central were received by GBNRTC and that responses to all the comments would be forthcoming. We shall see.

It seems that WNY cannot progress and be afraid of changing at the same time. It cannot achieve its own lofty goals as a community and a region if it consistently chooses to replay past mistakes.

CRT is ever hopeful that leaders will emerge who understand that the path forward is not the same as the one we have been on. If we want to be better, we must do better, and that means we must think differently and act differently. We shall see.



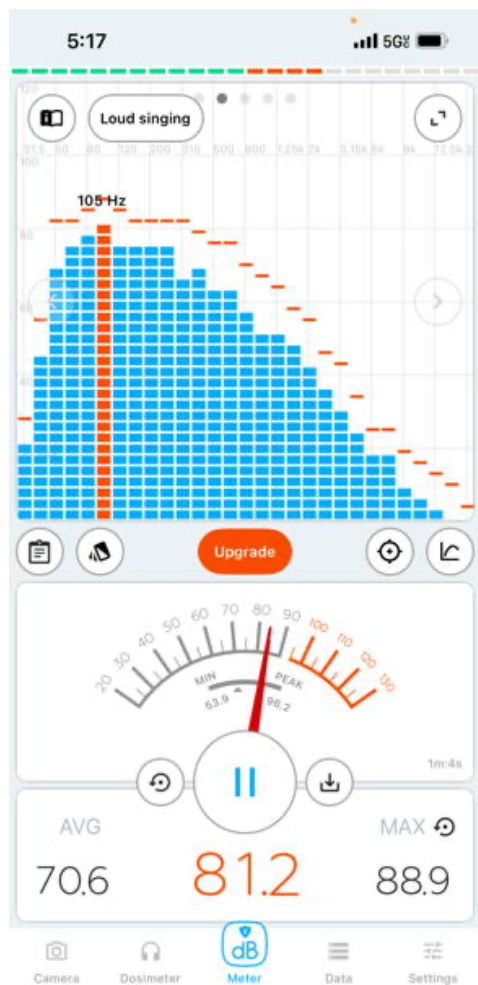
Figure 3. Concept for restoring Scajaquada creek made possible by the Region Central Plan. (Facing East on Scajaquada Expressway, between Wegmans and Buffalo State College. (Picture source: from Scajaquada Corridor Coalition website. SCCoalition.net.)

How loud are cars and trains?

By Jim Gordon, Treasurer

Environmental noise is a concern of “No Metro” people opposing Metro extension into Amherst.” I used a decibel meter app on my phone to measure loudness of Metro Rail trains compared to regular traffic and compared with my subjective experience. Sound levels are not constant. 3 Lanes of traffic is noisier than 2 lanes. Trucks, cars without mufflers, and motorcycles are the loudest vehicles I’ve encountered. About 70 decibels is normal conversation.

The decibel scale is logarithmic. 50 is *much* quieter than 70. At 90 decibels sound power is dangerously loud with potential for ear damage.



Sound is loudest closest to the source and quickly dissipates as distance increases.

Here I present sound levels at 3 locations:

- Metro Rail portal downtown
- NY 384 Delaware Ave in North Buffalo
- Niagara Falls Blvd at Treadwell Road

Metro Rail Portal

Because “No Metro” is concerned about the sound level when Metro Rail sounds its horn exiting the tunnel, I chose a location in front of the AMC movie theater and stood on the sidewalk and waited for trains to emerge from the portal downtown. There is one lane of car and truck traffic. I measured several train horn soundings, and they were consistent at about 70, which is about the same as normal conversation. The amount of noise the train itself makes as it travels is also about 70 decibels.

Car traffic at the portal was about 60 decibels. In the lobby of the AMC movie theatre there was no measurable increase in sound level when a train passed. I would expect the same for Shea’s and other theaters nearby.

NY 384 Delaware Ave by Marshall’s Plaza

The road is 2 lanes each direction here and is very busy. Car traffic averages between 70 and 75 decibels, but when a truck, loud car or motorcycle goes by loudness jumps above 90 decibels.

Niagara Falls Blvd in front of M&T Bank at Treadwell Road

This road is 3 lanes each direction and is also busy. Car traffic is louder than on Delaware Avenue averaging between 75 and 80 decibels. As with Delaware Ave, when a truck, loud car or motorcycle goes by, loudness jumps above 90 decibels.

Observations and conclusions:

While the sample size is not statistically significant, there is a trend. More lanes means more noise. Fewer lanes results in less noise. Because Metro Rail on Niagara Falls Blvd will reduce the number of travel lanes, it seems likely that when Metro Rail is installed noise will be significantly reduced from today’s levels. However, the loudest vehicles: trucks, loud cars, and motorcycles will continue to dominate the noise spectrum. Metro Rail itself is about the same loudness as typical speaking, which means the contribution of Metro Rail to overall noise will be negligible.

WNY Transit News

Amherst Extension EIS Expected in August 2025. The updated draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) that was supposed to be released in early fall is now expected to be released for public review in August or September of 2025. Come to our public meeting in the fall when it gets scheduled to see a preview.

Get your yard Extend Metro sign!



Donate and get a free yard sign!

<http://www.citizenstransit.org/YES.Extend>

If you're near the Amherst corridor, we'll drop your sign(s) off. We can supply any quantity desired.

CRT Work Highlights

May - July 2024

Community Outreach and Education.

- Attended Mixed Bag: New Transit Starts & Fiscal Cliff Service Cuts Seminar by the Rail Users Network on 16 May.
- Continued support to UB's Small Built Works Program that is designing potential Buffalo Metro stations along Buffalo's "Belt Line" and airport extensions. Participated in final project public presentation on 13 May.
- Served on Scjajaquada Community Coalition advocating for optimal Region Central implementation.
- Tabled at Juneteenth Festival on June 14th top 15th at MLK Park.

CRT Public Meeting

- Held CRT Public Meeting on held on 21 May 2025.

Legislator Outreach

- Met with Buffalo Mayor Scanlon to promote transit issues and seek resigning of Common Council transit petition. 28 May 2025.

Continued Working with the East Side Parkways (ESP) Coalition to advocate for restoration of Humboldt Parkway and oppose NYSDOT's plans to partially tunnel the 6-lane expressway.

- Submitted appeals to Lawsuits with ESP and others against NYS DOT. Appeals are on associated lawsuits that NYSDOT improperly took Humboldt parkland and violated the NYS Constitution's Green Amendment.

- NYSDOT is not planning to appeal Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) lawsuit that they lost. Press event to be held on 8 July.
- Public information session planned for 17 July 2025.

Supported Buffalo Metro Amherst extension.

- Continued distributing “YES, EXTEND METRO” yard signs.
- If you would like a yard sign, contact us at our email: crtc@citizenstransit.org. We are requesting a \$10 donation so we can purchase more signs.

Regional Rail Promotion

- No update. Waiting for GBNRTC to reinstate Regional Rail Committee meetings.

Communication

- Published CRT May Quarterly newsletter.
- Sent extensive comments to GBNRTC on the proposed TIP modifications relating to transit and Kensington Project expenditures. (chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/http://citizenstransit.org/sites/default/files/6.2%20TIP%20Comments%20-%20FINAL.pdf)

Ongoing Activities and Meetings. Continued to attend meetings of local public organizations, including the NFTA, GBNRTC, and Buffalo Place. Also served on the Erie County Climate Change Task Force (ECCTF) representing transit issues and on NFTA’s Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC). Also, served on SCC committee advocating Region Central next steps and as a supporting member organization of NYRenews advocating for implementation of CLCPA cap & invest legislation, not currently in the 2025/26 State Budget.

Opportunities and Upcoming Events

Keep CRT On Track. To join as a new member, renew your membership, or make a donation please click on: <http://citizenstransit.org/join>. Thanks.

Can You Help Us? We are looking for volunteers to help us be more effective. Can you help us plan and staff tabling events? Can you help us update and prepare outreach material? Can you help us with data entry tasks (e.g., maintaining our email lists)? Can you help us write grant applications? Please contact us at CRTC@citizenstrnsit.org if you want to help.

Upcoming Events

- 17 July. Restore Humboldt Parkway Information Session. At the Delavan Grider Community Center.