



Buffalo Green Code FAQ

The City of Buffalo is moving forward with a 21st century approach to zoning that will make the city a better place to live, work, and invest.

What is the Green Code?

The Buffalo Green Code is a place-based economic development strategy designed to reinforce the mixed-use, walkable places that give Buffalo a competitive edge.

The project, announced by Mayor Byron W. Brown on Earth Day 2010, includes the first citywide land use plan since 1977 and the first comprehensive zoning rewrite since 1953. The zoning phase, now underway, includes a Unified Development Ordinance that will rewrite the city's development DNA.

What is the UDO?

A Unified Development Ordinance, or UDO, will establish rules on the form, use, and character of development in Buffalo. It will combine zoning, subdivision, and public realm standards into a single, user-friendly document that aligns approval procedures, eliminates conflicts between related codes, and encourages high quality development.

Simply put, the UDO will be the legal tool to implement the community's vision for the development of every neighborhood in the city.

Why is the UDO important?

The UDO should matter to anyone who is interested in the future of the city. All the elements of private and public development will be guided by it: the height and placement of buildings, how buildings relate to each other and to public spaces, how land and buildings are used, where parking can be located, how sites can be landscaped, the design of streets and civic spaces, and other elements.

Whether you want to improve property in Buffalo, walk or bike its streets, enjoy its parks, do business in the city, or visit occasionally, the Green Code is likely to impact the quality of experience you have. Is it important? Definitely.

How is the UDO different?

The new UDO will be a form-based code, which emphasizes neighborhood character, rather than use alone, as its basic organizing principle. This approach was chosen because of its unique capacity to help the city adapt to an evolving economy and realize the community's vision for walkable, green neighborhoods.

A form-based code will communicate the preferred development pattern of every section of the city, ensuring that neighbors have certainty about what can and cannot be built next door. Graphics, tables, and simple text will make the ordinance easy to understand and apply, bringing the clarity and predictability that investors and residents are looking for.

How will it make Buffalo a better place to live and work?

The UDO will respond to assets, challenges, and opportunities identified by neighborhood residents. These standards aim to:

- ▶ support walkable, mixed-use development;
- ▶ strengthen the city's economic centers;
- ▶ protect and enhance Buffalo's historic character; and
- ▶ help citizens drive fewer miles, use less energy, and improve environmental quality.

The new code will help build a Buffalo that's healthier, wealthier, and more beautiful for present and future generations.

Will it make Buffalo a better place to invest?

Because the standards of the UDO will be clear and objective, be based on community input, and reflect current development trends, the process to get applications through to the approval stage will be streamlined.

This will reduce the need to negotiate development applications that meet the letter of the ordinance, offer shortened approval time frames, and create a more predictable process for applicants. This will give Buffalo an advantage in attracting investment.

How will it affect my property?

The UDO will address property the same way the current zoning ordinance does, only it will be better. It will be more precise about design elements that are important to the community while removing regulations that make it difficult to put property to productive use.

Standards will be more specific about the form of buildings, while allowing more freedom on how they are used. For instance, the UDO will address how buildings line up with each other to frame public space, the placement of doors and windows to encourage safe and lively streets, and how parking is positioned and screened to protect property values.

Meanwhile, property owners will enjoy more freedom over how intensely a site can be developed. The unnecessary impediments to walkable, compact development will disappear and be replaced by standards that match existing and desired neighborhood character.

How does the Green Code relate to other plans?

The City of Buffalo is in its most active period for planning in decades. The Comprehensive Plan's smart growth and sustainability goals form the basis for these efforts. The Green Code is linked to peer efforts such as the Brownfield Opportunity Area Program, the Buffalo Building Reuse Project, and the Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan. Be sure to stay looped into these conversations about the city's future!

How do I stay involved?

Please visit buffalogreencode.com and share your input by writing the Mayor's Office of Strategic Planning, 920 City Hall, Buffalo, NY 14202, or info@buffalogreencode.com.