

Coverage of Eastern Hills Mall Redevelopment Event at UB

(As of 3.14.19)



UB architecture students from left to right: Jeff Rehler, Kevin Turner, Sylvester Mallardi and Mustafa Ardalan, discuss their conceptual designs for the new town center planned for the Eastern Hills Mall. (Mark Mulville/Buffalo News)

UB students envision new Eastern Hills – without the mall

By [Samantha Christmann](#), The Buffalo News | March 13, 2019 | Link: <https://buffalonews.com/2019/03/13/ub-students-envision-a-new-eastern-hills-without-the-mall/>

No one knows yet what the town center will look like at Eastern Hills Mall, but some University at Buffalo graduate students have spent the past 14 weeks envisioning what they would like to see.

For their capstone project, 24 graduate students in UB's School of Architecture and Planning researched and created a concept, complete with a scale model of their design. Throughout the project, students had their work evaluated and

critiqued by key players on the real Eastern Hills Mall town center: Uniland Development Co., design firm Gensler and the Town of Clarence.

"Students learn best when they take what they learn in the classroom and apply it to the real world," said Mark Foerster, UB senior fellow in the school's real estate development program. "What better than to envision what to do with this amazing property that had a wonderful life and now is going to be born into something different?"

All of the mentors are UB graduates: Carl Montante, Jr., vice president of marketing at Uniland; Marc Bruffett, principal at architecture design firm Gensler; and Robert Lieb, Mountain Development chairman.

The students considered all the same elements that will be important to Uniland, Gensler and the town: demographics, character, and sustainable growth.

To draw people in, students suggested integrating art into the center's public spaces, creating a craftsman and artisanal atmosphere and creating a wellness component with biking and walking trails. They also suggested turning water runoff into an asset by incorporating boardwalks and fountains into retention ponds.

[*\[Related: Ohio's Crocker Park offers a glimpse at what Eastern Hills might become\]*](#)

To abate some of the sprawling development on Transit Road, students suggested setting a better example by creating more density in some areas of the center, while balancing it with breathable green spaces and other open areas.

While Uniland and Gensler said they were inspired by the students' work and liked a lot of what they saw, the students don't have formal input.

"We'd be delighted they adopted any of the ideas we came up with," Foerster said.

In reality, the town center will likely be built in phases over a period of seven to 10 years.



Some of the different concept designs created by UB architecture students for the Eastern Hills Mall. (Mark Mulville/Buffalo News)

"You'll see a cluster of development every couple of years or so driven by the market dynamics of the moment," Montante said. "It's a nice situation to be in depending on supply and demand and the community needs of the moment."

Each phase will be self-contained and able to work on its own until the other phases come along.

The Eastern Hills Mall has fallen victim to the same trends that have wrought havoc on other regional enclosed malls throughout the country: falling foot traffic, changing consumer behavior and competition from online retailers. To adapt, the mall will transform itself into a town center; basically a self-sustaining community with apartments, entertainment, restaurants, entertainment and community spaces.

Clarence Town Supervisor Patrick Casilio has been a supporter of the town center redevelopment. The town [approved rezoning](#) in August that made the project possible.

In January, Eastern Hills Mall owners Uniland and Mountain Development [chose Gensler](#) to design the redevelopment. Gensler expects to have a master plan and branding concept ready by fall. Throughout the year, it will be working on market research, a financial feasibility study and communicating with the town to make sure its plans are acceptable, Bruffett said.

Uniland is looking to incorporate ideas from the community as well. To share your thoughts, visit [Uniland.com/eastern-hills-mall-redevelopment](https://www.uniland.com/eastern-hills-mall-redevelopment).

##

'Palette of possibilities' for Eastern Hills Mall created by UB students



[Enlarge](#)

Rendering of a redesign for the Eastern Hills Mall. JFfotography

By [James Fink](#) – Reporter, Buffalo Business First
March 14, 2019

Link: <https://www.bizjournals.com/buffalo/news/2019/03/14/palette-of-possibilities-for-eastern-hills-mall.html>?

It may take until the end of this year before the official town center-like design for the Eastern Hills Mall is released, but a team of University at Buffalo students is offering their vision.

The designs all focus on replacing the mundane, cookie-cutter half-century old Clarence shopping center with a trendy look that fits in with the proposed \$250 million redevelopment being contemplated by Uniland Development Co. and Mountain Development Co.

“We want to develop a very urbanized environment, not in the city, but in Clarence,” said [Carl Montante Jr.](#), Uniland vice president.

Students in the UB School of Architecture and Planning spent 14 weeks studying and creating their Eastern Hills Mall town center designs. Four teams of six graduate-level students each offered their recommendations.

Both Montante and [Marc Bruffett](#), a principal with the national architecture and planning firm Gensler, said some of the design elements may make their way into the property’s future development blueprint.

“We asked the students to think big and aspirational,” said [Mark Forester](#), UB senior fellow. “We wanted bold visions but we also wanted the students to think practical. This was an ‘ideas’ project.”

The designs included a series of buildings that would house apartments, offices, retail and restaurants and hotels. None would be taller than five stories.

A premium was put on such amenities as public art, gathering space, trees every 30 feet and seating options every 15 feet.

“Communal gathering places is a must,” said Kevin Turner, one of the students.

Bruffert was encouraged by the students’ designs.

“They created a palette of possibilities,” Bruffert said.

Montante said any development will be done in phases, most likely during a seven-year to 10-year period. The first phase could get underway within the next 12 months to 18 months.

“There are both short- and long-term phases,” Montante said.

##

Architects redeveloping Eastern Hills Mall site get ideas and inspiration from UB students

By: [Kelsey Anderson](#), News 4 WIVB Buffalo

Mar 13, 2019

Link: <https://www.wivb.com/news/local-news/architects-redeveloping-eastern-hills-mall-site-get-ideas-and-inspiration-from-ub-students/1846323289>



Video

BUFFALO, N.Y. (WIVB) - Architects are spending most of 2019 working on a plan to redevelop the Eastern Hills Mall site, and they're getting some ideas and inspiration from students at UB.

Four graduate students in the UB School of Architecture and Urban Design unveiled their plans for the 100 acre plot of land to representatives from the owners of the site, the architecture firm in charge of designing plans for the site, and the town of Clarence.

Twenty-four students in all spent about 14 weeks putting together their designs for the Eastern Hills Mall land. They were split into four groups of six, and each group had a different focus. The first focused on public art, the second focused on health and wellness, the third on water and the fourth focused on parks. Each team said they considered using the existing structure on the land, but in the end, every group decided on a complete overhaul of the site.

All the models included mixed-use spaces. Many had large parks, summer and winter activities, retail spaces, etc.

So what did the owners of the land, and architecture firm think?

"We think they're onto some really great aspects there," said Gensler Principal, Marc Bruffett.

They were impressed by the student's designs, and depending on financial feasibility and market dynamics, some of the ideas could be used in the final plan.

"My hope is that over time, you're going to see certain elements of each project in the town center," said Carl Montante Jr., the vice president of Uniland.

Bruffett said Gensler will spend the majority of the year looking at what people in the town of Clarence want and need in that space, and come up with a design. Montante Jr. said it will take about seven to 10 years to see the entire plot of land re-developed.

##

Eastern Hills Mall development leaders provide first look at plans to turn space into "Town Center"

By: [Ala Errebhi](#), 7 Eyewitness News WKBW, Buffalo

Mar 13, 2019

Link: <https://www.wkbw.com/news/wny-development/eastern-hills-mall-development-leaders-provide-first-look-at-plans-to-turn-space-into-town-center>



A collaborative effort brings several partners together to create something different.

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[Uniland](#) , Gensler, and several University at Buffalo Architecture graduate students worked together to provide a first look at how they hope to transform the Eastern Hills Mall.

"One thing that I think we're envisioning here is what we might call a [town center](#) , mixed-use community," said Gensler Principal Marc Bruffett.

The new vision calls for big changes: converting 100 acres at the Eastern Hills Mall to feature out-door shopping, restaurants, entertainment and residential development.

"A development like this and looking at turning it into a lifestyle center or a town center, really brings that ownership aspect to it. So people are going to actually be living on the site now," said Architecture and Planning student Kevin Turner.

It's all part of redeveloping the traditional space to attract more than just shoppers.

"These once vibrant destinations have fallen into disuse. We think there's an extraordinary potential to revitalize this area," said Bruffett.

Turner grew up in Clarence, and has fond memories of the mall.

"I loved just going there and running around in the central atrium that's there. We always threw pennies into the fountains that were in there while my mom was off buying something I'm sure," he said.

And as someone who's playing a role in the project, he wants to make sure the fun times carry on.

"That kind of stuff we still want to maintain, to make sure that kind of fun destination place is carried through. Certainly in a different form and in a different way moving forward," he said.

The project is still in the master planning phase, which means it's still in the research stage. Redevelopment leaders are in the process of analyzing the cost and the economic impact of the project.

We're told this phase should be complete in the Fall of this year, and the entire project should take between five to seven years.

##

Eastern Hills Mall redevelopment update

On Wednesday, the mall's owners and development team provided an update for us on their planning. They also got some input from some future architects on how this complex could evolve.

Author: Ron Plants, WGRZ - Channel 2, Buffalo
March 13, 2019

Link: <https://www.wgrz.com/article/news/local/eastern-hills-mall-redevelopment-update/71-07ca469f-2a05-4680-9290-3e24611b2dde>



CLARENCE, N.Y. — The process to convert the struggling Eastern Hills Mall into a new mixed-use community concept will continue for years.

On Wednesday, the mall's owners and development team provided an update on their planning. They also got some input from some future architects on how this complex could evolve.

Co-development partners Uniland and Mountain Development are looking at a seven to ten-year buildout timetable.

"We're talking about shopping, dining, entertainment, a mix of housing types. Recreation" said, Carl Montante Jr., Uniland Development.

Now they're also looking for inspiration. UB architecture students were invited to present their ideas for a 100-acre site with the size as challenge in itself.

"Understanding how to design for something and phased development over that course of time and make sure it's all interconnected really became a big focus," said Kevin Turner who is a UB graduate architecture student.

And, the professional planners agree. With comparisons to Ohio's Crocker Park, they feel it will be a convenient stay at home kind of place. But will it work?

"It's gonna be walkable, very pedestrian friendly. All kinds of events and programming throughout the year. It should be feasible," according to Montante Jr.

Town officials appreciate that unlike other troubled mall properties in the area, there are no complicated mortgage issues and it's a much more attractive taxable property valued at \$200 million or more.

"I'm looking at the very little impact to the town because most residents there will be either very young or in their senior years," said Town of Clarence Supervisor, Patrick Casilio.

Developers say their emphasis on housing over retail allows them to look for smaller businesses in their mix and restaurants. Mall officials are putting together a marketing plan which should be done by the fall with more details to come at that point.

##



UB Grad Students Present Their Visions For Eastern Hills Mall

By Alex Halght, Spectrum News Buffalo

Mar. 13, 2019

Link: <https://spectrumlocalnews.com/nys/buffalo/news/2019/03/13/ub-grad-students-present-their-visions-for-eastern-hills-mall#>

Sylvester Mallardi is still a graduate student at the University at Buffalo but has some big plans for the Eastern Hills Mall.

He's one of 24 students who put together 3D models for the future of the site. His design includes a large park that he said could be influenced by the types of shops that make up the development.

"There are part shop, part retail-oriented, part residential and office spaces all interdispersed around the periphery of the park," Mallardi said.

Developers and other Eastern Hills Mall stakeholders discussed the future of the 106-acre site Wednesday afternoon.

Representatives from Uniland Development and Gensler said they are conducting a market analysis and a feasibility study before a master plan is released later this year.

Gensler Principal and UB grad, Marc Bruffett, says they got some great ideas from the students' presentations.

"We were, in conjunction with Uniland, evaluators of student work. And that work was inspiring. It came full circle to me to see these student practitioners, if you will, tackling the same problems that we're tackling as professionals," Bruffett said.

Clarence Town Supervisor Patrick Casilio says he was inspired by a lecture he heard 3 years ago on urban planning, and was intrigued by a town center concept like Crocker Park in Ohio, which includes retail, offices and residential space.

By having a dense design, and not a space dominated by big box stores and parking lots, more money will be generated for the town.

"Eastern Hills Mall is the most valuable address in the Town of Clarence. It used to be the biggest taxpayer in the 80s," Casilio said.

Uniland Vice President Carl Montante Jr. says there's a lot of desire for a walkable, mixed-use, urbanized environment in a suburb, and Clarence is the perfect spot.

As far as the building timeline goes, he says it will gradual.

"We're envisioning about a 7-10 year build-out timeline, so you may see a cluster of development every couple of years or so," Montante said.

##

Planned redevelopment of Eastern Hills Mall

Behind-the-scenes look at development process scheduled for Wednesday

By Mike Baggerman, WBEN 930 Buffalo

Link: <https://wben.radio.com/articles/planned-redevelopment-eastern-hills-mall>

CLARENCE, N.Y. (WBEN) - With malls on the decline nationwide, we're expecting to learn more about the future of the Eastern Hills Mall on Wednesday.

There will be a behind-the-scenes look at the pre-development process with students from the University at Buffalo School of Architecture and Planning, who came up with some designs for the Eastern Hills Mall.

The 100-acre complex will turn into a building that features more than just retail and restaurants. It will also feature a mix of affordable and luxury-style homes as part of an open-air center.

"Everybody knows that retail has been going away for years," Town of Clarence Supervisor Patrick Casilio told WBEN. "The mall is in excellent shape for redevelopment. They have control of the leases and control of the funding. We expect in a couple of years to build residential units on the housing."

Town of Clarence Supervisor Patrick Casilio talks future of Eastern Hills Mall

In recent years, the Town of Clarence adjusted its zoning code to allow a living where the Eastern Hills Mall. Casilio said that it will primarily be up to the mall's developer, Uniland Development and Mountain Development, hired Gensler, a design firm, to create a master plan for the site.

Casilio said Gensler is the biggest architecture firm in the world and that a major attraction would need to be there.

"They're working on a development like this is that there has to be an attraction," he said. "For example, a 40,000 square foot lego store would be an attraction and a reason for people to come there. They're researching all different avenues for people and businesses who will be part of the mall's redevelopment."

Some shoppers we spoke with lamented over the decline of retail and were skeptical over the housing component. Casilio said the mall is free from large debt and is in control of its future.

"Everything is in place to go forward with a successful project for the Town of Clarence and for Erie County," he said.

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