

Buffalo in a glance

A guide to living in Buffalo

(2006 – 2007) Edition
Volume I

By residents, for residents.

Welcome to Buffalo! The House staff at UB would like to welcome all new residents, fellows and their families to Buffalo. We can help make this move and new phase of your life a little easier.

Buffalo in a glance is a resource we hope you will find useful! It will help you get relocated to Buffalo and get you more familiar with the area once you're settled in your new home.

We were once in your shoes and have survived relocation! SO you can do it.

PLEASE NOTE: The information presented here is a compilation of information from past and current UB residents. We review it to the best of our ability for accuracy (last updated 5/06). However, it should not be considered an exhaustive listing, but simply a list of people and places that we are familiar with. Also, keep in mind that things frequently change between the publication date and when you are reading this. When in doubt, check it yourself. If you are aware of something that should be added to or removed from this publication, we would appreciate your input.

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WELCOME TO Buffalo!

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RELOCATING TO BUFFALO

FINDING A PLACE TO LIVE

Your first priority will probably be finding a place to live. Most people find the cost of both renting apartments and buying houses very affordable. Plan a visit to Buffalo in mid-April. A long weekend with at least one weekday is desirable. If you cannot get here until June, relax - you will still be able to find somewhere to live. Come prepared with a clear understanding of what you want, what you can afford, and what your priorities are.

The Greater Buffalo area

- **Amherst:** Statistically one of the safest towns in the US, this area is about as typically suburban as they come. Besides being known for the Boulevard Mall and UB North Campus, Amherst is also generally regarded as a more expensive area to live and shop in. But many apartments in this area are new. They tend to be cleaner, better furnished and have lower utility bills than apartments in the city. Some places to check out are: many apartment complexes on Chestnut Ridge, the Boulevard tower, apartments located at Millersport and Flint. Keep in mind Amherst provides virtually nothing in terms of public transportation.
- **University Heights:** Located adjacent to south campus. It is very close to the VA hospital. The houses are generally older in this area than the suburbs.
- **The West Side:** This historic area of town attracts a young and happening crowd. There is no other way to describe it but as “cool”. While Buffalo State College and the Albright-Knox Art Gallery are two major attractions in the area, the Buffalo Zoo and Delaware Park draw crowds in need of fresh air and nice scenery. In the summer, Delaware Park hosts “Shakespeare in the Park”, the country’s second most successful FREE outdoor Shakespeare festival, running every night but Mondays. What’s great about the shops up and down the Elmwood strip is that they can’t be found in every mall. They’re unique and you can find some pretty cool things. This area is close to Buffalo General Hospital. Buses are a major mean of transportation in this area.
- **Hertel Avenue/North Buffalo:** This area consists of older houses that are comparable in price but in better condition than those in the heights. Hertel Avenue is a strip similar to that of Main Street or Elmwood, but not as glorified. Vintage boutiques, unique shops and family owned restaurants can be found up and down the strip. The North Park Theater is located right on Hertel Avenue. Located within an old opera house, North Park is known for showing independent films. Even if you don’t live in the area you should check out a movie there sometime. This area is close to Millard Fillmore Gates Hospital.
- **Allentown:** It’s another cool area. Housing tends to be a little less expensive here than Elmwood or the Heights. Apartments are reasonable and in good condition. In the summer, it is host to the “Allentown Art Festival.” This festival ranks as one of the country’s largest and most respected art and craft festivals, and just celebrated it’s 49th anniversary. Using public transportation in this area is quite inconvenient.
- **Downtown:** Downtown Buffalo used to be a boomtown but, as more people entering the workforce leave for job opportunities elsewhere, the city has become a very lonely place. Houses can be very old, but you can also get a reasonable place to live in with a reasonable rent or mortgage. Living downtown gives you access to the baseball park, HSBC Arena, “Thursday at the Square” (a popular free outdoor summer music festival happening every Thursday night at Lafayette Square that is celebrating it’s 20th anniversary season this year), and the Chippewa bar scene.
- **Kenmore/Tonawanda:** The Village of Kenmore borders, and in some cases blends in with, North Buffalo. It is part of the larger town of Tonawanda, which borders Amherst and stretches pretty far. You can find apartments here for comparable prices to the heights, but the area is much

safer, cleaner, and a little newer. There is not as much action going on as the areas closer to downtown and the South Campus, but you might not have a lot of time for all the action there any way! Apartments that you can look at include Raintree/ Paradise Lane apartment complex.

- **Williamsville:** One of the nicest suburbs of Buffalo. Apartments tend to be more expensive, newer and more upscale. It is close to the shopping area on Main Street and to Eastern Hills Mall. Some of the apartment complexes that you can look at in this area include Country Club Manor and Windsong apartments.
- **Cheektowaga:** Located to the southeast of Buffalo. Another nice suburb that is close to the ever busy Galleria Mall and Walden Avenue. Apartments in this area are more affordable. Two complexes to check out are the Idylwood complex and Edgebrook complex.
- **South Buffalo:** Including Lackawana and West Seneca. Houses are older and cheaper and provide easy access to South Buffalo-Mercy Hospital. The drive to other hospitals is significant and can be challenging during the winter months.

More information about Buffalo neighborhoods can be found online at <http://ublib.buffalo.edu/libraries/units/sel/collections/maps/buffmap.html>. This site contains a map outlining Buffalo neighborhoods, plus links to descriptions of each one.

For listings of apartments available, pick up a leaflet outside any supermarket, check the Buffalo News classifieds at buffalo.com or buffalonews.com, or go to UB's off-Campus Housing Office website at www.subboard.com. The nice thing about the UB's Off-Campus Housing site are that the site allows you to not only look for apartments but to look for roommates as well, if you are interested! An Independent website that proved to be helpful is www.therentersguide.com which provides a complete listing of the area's apartments. Check both the Buffalo News and the Artvoice for apartment information. Artvoice is a bi-weekly Buffalo arts newspaper that includes city apartments that are often not elsewhere advertised. A limited online version of their classifieds section is available at <http://artvoice.com> and is planned to be expanded.

Many of the best bargains are in individual homes, rather than complexes; and many of the best apartments are not advertised in the paper, they have signs outside the building listing a phone number to call.

THINGS TO CONSIDER IF YOU ARE RENTING

- You need to decide what you want. Write a "Must have list" Do you want a garage versus off street parking? Do you want to have your own washer and drier or is it OK to use the building one? Would you prefer to live in a complex or a duplex? Would you like the upper or lower flat? Do you have a desired street or neighborhood? Once you answer these questions, you can save some time by narrowing down your choices. You should consider the differences between a single person and a married person, people who have or don't have kids, do you have pets, etc.
- When looking at an apartment, walk around in every room, including the attic the basement, paying special attention to electrical sockets, windows and doors. Some of the older homes might not be able to accommodate all the electrical equipments you need. Also make sure that the windows and doors have sturdy locks and deadbolts and are without cracks and gaps, you'll be surprised at how much cold air those cracks and gaps will let in during the winter.
- Covered parking may save you 15 minutes each day in winter with not having to get snow off your car.
- Try to find out about your neighbors so you'll have a quiet place to get much needed sleep.
- Sharing a home with a fellow resident may save money and offer support.
- Finding a place to live near the hospitals or a major freeway will save you travel time.
- Keep in mind that while apartments in the suburbs may cost a little more in rent than those in the city, they tend to be much better insulated which can save you hundreds of dollars on your utility

bills in the winter. Also keep in mind, that some apartment complexes cover you utilities including heat in the winter! This can also save you a lot of money.

- Above all make sure the place is located in a safe environment and is owned by an honest landlord. Talk to current tenants, as they are the best source of information about the landlord, the property and the neighborhood.
- If the place looks decent and you are interested in renting, make sure you get those questions answered:
 1. Who shovels the driveway in the winter, picks up the trash, and mows the lawn?
 2. How early in the morning and how frequently do they shovel the snow? Remember there are days when you leave very early to go to your work.
 3. When is rent due?
 4. Can you paint the walls, or can you hang pictures, frames, or other things on the walls?
 5. Can you put a satellite dish anywhere in the complex? If yes, you need to know what direction is the dish you are interested in?
 6. Are utilities included? if yes: which ones are, ask about heat specifically?
 7. If you are renting a house that is not in an apartment complex ask: How is the house heated? Is there a split meter? Can you utilize the garage, attic, and basement?
 8. If you have kids, ask about the school district. Is there a playground in the complex or close by?
 9. If you have animals, or want to get them, make sure pets are allowed in the place you like.

SIGNING THE LEASE:

If you decide to rent the place, read over the lease carefully, twice. Never sign a document that you have not read over. At the time of signing, the landlord will definitely demand a security deposit (generally equal to one month rent) in addition to your first month rent in advance.

Rent is usually collected in the first day of the month, and there is a late fee charge in most of the places for being late. So pay on time, you are going to pay it anyway!

Keep in mind, as a tenant you might have more rights than you realize. For a complete guide to your rights as a tenant contact New York State Attorney General Elliot Spitzer's office.

The Buffalo office is located at: Statler Towers, 7 Delaware Avenue, Buffalo, NY 14202-3473

Phone (716) 853-8400. They will gladly send you a booklet for free which you should keep and reference easily as you need.

Apartment Complexes

These are some of the contacts used by residents. This list is by no means exhaustive.

Kenmore Development http://www.kendev.com	(716) 874-7700	Various locations around Buffalo, Scott Hunt Scott Hunt e-mail: info@kendev.com
Boulevard Tower Apartments http://www.boulevardtowersapts.com	(716) 836-6861	Meyer Road, Amherst, Patty
Carriage House Apartments	(716) 634-3381	6 Spring, Williamsville
Dannybrook Apartments	(716) 634-1499	293 Palmdale Drive, Williamsville
Delta Garden Apartments	(716) 831-7097	406 Delta Road, Amherst
Ellicott Development www.ellicottdevelopment.com	(716) 854-0060	295 Main Street, Buffalo
Garden Village	(716) 668-1636	70 Garden Village Drive, Cheektowaga
Idylwoods Apartments	(716) 668-6616	101 Slate Creek Drive, Cheektowaga
Kensington Village Apartments	(716) 833-3727	105 Kenville Road, Buffalo

Realtor:

Carrie A. Brancato, Realty USA (716)725-9270 6000 Sheridan Drive, Amherst/Clarence
She is able to guide incoming residents to areas in Buffalo that are centrally located to consortium hospitals, And is aware of the financial framework of residents.

THINGS TO CONSIDER IF YOU ARE BUYING

- First live in the area for at least few months before buying, to be more familiar with what and where you like to live.
- Remember that the cost of buying a house is not only the mortgage, there are many other costs that come through when buying a house like: maintenance, snow cleaning, lawn mowing, property taxes, etc.
- When purchasing your new home and before closing the deal, you'll want to get a general home inspection. A home inspector will provide a professional opinion of the overall condition of the dwelling and will identify major defects. Both the interior and exterior of the property will be inspected. Buyers are advised to accompany the inspector to ask questions but it's not required. You will receive an impartial objective report of the property. General home inspections help you avoid "surprises" later on. Any items found by inspectors that warrant repair must be fixed. Be sure to understand this and review it with your real estate agent. Ask questions before you buy or you could get stuck with costly repairs.
- You need to pay more attention to school district if you are buying a house, you can't just change the area as flexible if it is your own house compared to a rented one.

MOVING COMPANIES/SERVICES

Whether you choose to move with a professional moving company or do-it-yourself, our best advice is to plan ahead as early as possible (check your city of origin's phone book for telephone numbers).

WHERE TO STAY WHEN HOUSE HUNTING

The best way to go around this is to stay in a hotel in the same area you are planning to live in. Websites like www.priceline.com are very helpful since it divides the city/suburbs into separate area that correlate geographically with the major population centers.

SCHOOL INFORMATION

Before you start your housing search, it is worthwhile to compare the performance of each school district and evaluate individual schools within a district. The starting age for children varies, but in general, a child must turn 5 by September 30th of the year he/she starts school. Some school districts allow underage children to start school after satisfactory completion of ability and preparedness tests. The school year runs from early September to late May; however, the typical enrollment month is January, so look into schools as soon as possible as there are occasionally waiting lists for some schools. School hours vary greatly. Some schools provide orientation sessions for parents and children in August. Contact the Board in your area as soon as possible for specific information.

NOTE: Call the *NAEYC- National Association for the Education of Young Children* to obtain a list of accredited schools in your area. (800) 424-2460 or www.naeyc.org.

Specific registration procedures vary, but in general, the following are necessary:

- Birth Certificate or Baptismal Certificate
- Current medical certificate from physician
- Complete medical history and documentation of all U.S. required immunizations
- Proof of residence (utility bill, driver's license, etc.)
- Legal custody papers, in case of divorce
- School records for secondary levels, report cards, and unofficial school transcripts

Education for grades kindergarten through twelve is free in the Buffalo Public School System. You may have to pay for full-time kindergarten if your school offers only a half-day program.

CHILDCARE - PRE-SCHOOLS / NURSERIES

For those with young children, finding and choosing childcare is likely to be one of the most stressful parts of your move. We suggest you start your search as early as possible. Many centers fill fast and have very long waiting lists. Consider a preliminary search by telephone months before arriving in Buffalo and submit applications to the waiting list of centers you like. Many of us have children and are happy to answer questions to help you narrow your search. Here are some places suggested by residents, but as always, you can check with other residents about their childcare arrangements.

Roswell Park Cancer Institute (716) 845-3526

- Convenient for residents at RPCI and BGH
- Sliding fee scale based on income may apply

Buffalo General Hospital (716) 859-2566

- Convenient for residents at BGH and RPCI
- Employee discount may apply as well as sliding fee scale based on income

Children's Hospital of Buffalo (Small Wonders Daycare) (716) 878-7895

- Convenient for residents at CHOB, RPCI, and BGH
- Employee discount applies

Veterans' Administration Medical Center (716) 862-6562

- Convenient for residents at the VA and ECMC
- Employee discount applies

Grow With Us Daycare (716) 877-2775

- Convenient for Kenmore, North Buffalo, and Black Rock residents

Amherst Community Church Child Care Center (716) 834-9701

- Convenient for Amherst and Williamsville residents

UB Child Care Center – South Campus (716) 829-2226

- Convenient for residents at the VA and ECMC
- Sliding fee scale based on income

Audubon at College Park Daycare (716) 631-1993

- Convenient for Amherst and Williamsville residents

Doodle bugs childcare center

- 5 different locations in Buffalo

Aunt Pat's daycare

Child Care Coalition of the Niagara Frontier, Inc.

For further information on education and referral services to parents/guardians looking for child care options, please visit the web at <http://www.wnychildren.org>. The Child Care Coalition of the Niagara Frontier, Inc. is a not-for-profit organization committed to the development of quality early care and education in Buffalo and Erie County. The Coalition brings together parents, early care and education professionals, community members, business leaders and government agencies to help develop and support accessible, affordable quality child care for children and families in our community. This collaboration values, respects, and nurtures cultural and individual differences.

CAR REGISTRATION/DRIVER'S LICENSE INFORMATION

Registering your vehicle and obtaining a driver's license can be time consuming process. There are a few locations around the city that house both a Department of motor and vehicle. To obtain the details of the application process for driver's license and registration in addition to the locations of the DMV offices around the city, you can check the official website www.nysdmv.com. Specifically, the website <http://www.nydmv.state.ny.us/license.htm> answers common questions

Safety laws:

New York State law requires all children who are under the age of 7 to be restrained in an approved child restraint system. This generally means a car seat for children who are under 4 and weigh less than 40 pounds (88 kilos), and a booster seat for children 4-6 years old. Drivers and front seat passengers must wear safety belts.

To Purchase a Vehicle:

A vehicle may be purchased from a car dealer (see Yellow Pages or local newspapers) or directly from the previous owner (see the "Classified" section of a local newspaper, the *Automart*, which is published weekly, or the *Buffalo cars, two free magazines that can be found at local grocery stores and other retail locations*. If purchasing a car, remember to always negotiate prices. A good aid is <http://kbb.com> which could save you money. Also, remember that your car should be able to withstand weather conditions. Call the AAA (see below) for recommended garages to check your second-hand vehicle for mechanical defects before you purchase it.

REMINDER: When driving, don't leave home without:

- Your vehicle's original title (see above for instructions on how to obtain the original title if you are still making payments on/do not own your vehicle) A notarized Power of Attorney if the actual owner of the vehicle cannot be there in person (Must use Bureau's form)
- One picture ID (a current driver's license or passport)

Car Insurance:

Under New York State law, you are required to carry adequate car insurance. It may be challenging for international residents to obtain car insurance initially and you will have to try different companies. Some of the big insurance companies include State Farm and Geico. Other smaller companies may be more affordable without compromising service, an example is Amica. A website that deserves mentioning is www.esurance.com. Consider joining the **American Automobile Association - AAA**. They provide emergency roadside assistance as well as maps, tour guides, travel shop and travel agency services.

INTERNATIONAL SECTION - TIPS FOR THOSE ARRIVING FROM ABROAD

Yes, you can do it! You can arrive here jet-lagged, tired, upset children in tow, only a few days before you start work, and organize a house, car, schools and furniture. But, if you can avoid it, your life will run much more smoothly. Find out if your visa allows you to arrive a few days to a few weeks early to get settled. If you have any problems or questions before or after you arrive, please do not hesitate to contact the GME office to get a list of residents who are willing to help. We know how difficult and frustrating it can be. From our experience, the first month is the worst, so, don't give up!

1. Applying for a Social Security Number

Without your social security number, you can do nothing. You need it to open a bank account (and hence to be paid), to get a driver's license and to buy a car. The Social Security Administration Offices are listed in the U.S. Government section of the phone book under Health and Human Services. The office is on NORTH TOWN BUSINESS CTR, 3131 SHERIDAN DR. AMHERST, NY 14226. Take with you to the office your passport and ID photos. Two days after you have applied, you can go back to the office (with your passport) and get an official printout so you can do all of the things mentioned above. The official Social Security card takes about 2 weeks to arrive.

2. Car

You will find it very difficult to achieve anything without a car, including traveling to some of your rotations /clinics, so we recommend that you rent one until you can buy one. Leasing a car is not an option, as you do not have a credit rating in the U.S. You will have to rent a car from one of the big companies because the smaller (cheaper) companies will not rent you a car if you do not have your own insurance. Beware of hidden costs when renting. Most rental companies will try to sell you full comprehensive insurance, which may be costly and not be required.

After you have bought your car and gone through the torture of getting the title transferred, the car registered and getting a driver's license, you will need to get automobile insurance. Your driving history in your country of origin may be relevant, so have a copy of your *No Claims Bonus* from your previous

insurer available. Be sure to shop around for the lowest insurance rates. Companies can vary by hundreds of dollars. **Law in New York State requires auto insurance.**

Canadians: Cars brought into the US require a letter from the car's manufacturer to cross the border. This letter must verify that your vehicle meets US Environmental Protection and Vehicle Safety Standards. Without this letter, you cannot bring your car across the border.

3. Credit Cards

Once you have established a local bank account, you should be eligible to receive a credit card. However, we suggest that you bring your Visa/Master card with you from your country of origin and arrange to have the bills paid at home until you receive your new cards.

Companies that will provide you with a credit card include MBNA and most of the major companies.

Tip for International residents:

Your application for credit card will probably be rejected multiple times initially. Don't apply haphazardly and to every bank as the number of credit inquiries affect your rating in the future. Try to check with other residents, in similar situation, about the banks or companies they had luck with. An example of those includes MBNA and ACP credit card.

4. English Lessons

You can find free English classes in some locations for your spouse or kids.

5. Housing

See page 3 for information on renting apartments/houses or buying a house. Remember that you need to call at least 2 weeks before you arrive to schedule appointments to view the housing.

6. Furniture

You can try to buy a house load of furniture from a previous resident or student, you can attend garage/house sales and buy what you need (tedious and time-consuming), or you can go to a large second-hand or consignment furniture store. You can buy some of the things in less expensive stores such as K-Mart, Target, and Wal-Mart. If you can, wait until the stores you want to buy from have sales. Furniture can also be rented, but this may not be the most cost effective method – See Furniture Renting in the Yellow Pages.

7. Mail Order Catalogs

Many people shop through mail order catalogs for clothing, toys, linen, furniture, etc. The reputable companies have good, quality items and they are easily returnable if not suitable. The advantages to this method of ordering are that you have access to a wide range of goods from your home, and you can place your order over the phone with helpful, knowledgeable operators or on-line when you or your spouse are free.

8. Television

The system here is not PAL, the one you probably have in your country of origin. It is possible to buy dual televisions and videos, which will play and display both systems; but most people buy a local television and video player and have tapes from home converted.

9. Tipping

In general, people in the service industry are paid at or below minimum wage. Tipping is customary and the usual tip is 18% to 20% for anyone who does a service for you (waitress, hairdresser, etc.) and \$1 per bag for anyone who carries your luggage.

10. Travelers' Cheques

Travelers' cheques are not always the easiest way to bring money with you from outside the country. Although they are accepted in most large department stores, and banks will accept them to open an account, it is often difficult to cash more than \$100 at a time at a bank (and it takes about 30 minutes of waiting time). So, we suggest either bring more cash or from a wiser perspective, deposit your travelers'

cheques immediately in a bank account. Remember that it will take at least 2 working days to Telegraphic Transfer money from outside the U.S.

11. Medication Prescriptions

Prescriptions from outside the US cannot be transferred to a pharmacy within the US. Bring enough medication to last until you are able to see a physician in Buffalo.

12. Other Helpful Information

- A good thing to do when you arrive is to buy a map of Greater Buffalo. You can find these maps in any drugstore and you will use it a lot while you are here.
- To change from Fahrenheit to Centigrade, diminish 32 and then divide by 9/5.

Centigrade	Fahrenheit
-18	0
0	32
20	68
37 (body temperature)	98.6

- One mile is a little over two kilometers; multiply kilometers by .6 to get the miles.
- One pound is approximately one-half kilogram; a kilogram is actually 2.2 pounds.
- One yard is just short of a meter, which is 11/10 of a yard. The U.S. yard is 91 centimeters.
- One U.S. foot is 12 inches, which is 30.4 centimeters.
- One inch is about 3 centimeters (a centimeter is 3/10 of an inch). One U.S. yard is 91 centimeters.
- One quart is almost the size of a liter (the liter is 1 1/10 of a quart). Gasoline is sold by the gallon which is four quarts.
- An ounce is approximately 30 grams. There are 16 ounces in a pound. For measures smaller than an ounce you can divide the ounce: 1/2 ounce, 1/4 ounce, etc.

LOCAL INFORMATION

Check out the **Buffalo Niagara Convention & Visitors Bureau** for updated information about the Western New York area. <http://www.visitbuffaloniagara.com/> Information can be found in the following categories:

Architecture, includes sites of interest & tours

Attractions, includes sites of interest & tours

Entertainment

Events, includes local festivals & a calendar

Restaurants

Shopping, includes shops, shopping districts, shopping malls, & farmers markets

Special items of note: At grocery stores, be sure to apply for a Preferred Customer Card!

Coupons for groceries can be found in the Sunday Buffalo News.

Sports & Recreation

Everything Buffalo <http://buffalo.com> features local news as well as links to the Apartment Finder and Car Finder

Western New York Information Center <http://bfn.org/WNY> features information on work and play in the eight counties of Western New York.

Super Pages <http://phonebook.superpages.com/yellowpages/C-Apartments/S-NY/T-Bufferalo> features apartments and information targeted towards people moving to the Buffalo area.