



# Laurel Street

## Artspace Buffalo

### Parcel Inventory

Address	Type	Condition	Comments	Recommendations
16 Laurel	Commercial	Poor/Fair	Gemini Automotive prop, unsealed, broken windows	code enforcement/rehab
18 Laurel	Double	Fair/Good		
20 Laurel	Double	Good		
22 Laurel	Double	Fair/Good		
23 Laurel	Double	Good/Exc		
24 Laurel	Double	Poor/Fair	undermines well-maintained street	code enforcement
25 Laurel	VACANT	Good/Exc	privately owned by 23 Laurel	
26 Laurel	Double	Good/Exc		
27 Laurel	Double	Good		
28 Laurel	Double	Good		
29 Laurel	Double	Good/Exc		
30 Laurel	Double	Good/Exc		
33 Laurel	Double	Good		
34 Laurel	Double	Good		
35 Laurel	Double	Fair/Good		
36 Laurel	Double	Good/Exc		
37 Laurel	Double	Good/Exc		
38 Laurel	Double	Fair/Good		
39 Laurel	Double	Excellent		
40 Laurel	Double	Poor/Fair	needs rehab, unified streetscape crucial	code enforcement/rehab
41 Laurel	Double	Good		
42 Laurel	Double	Good		
43 Laurel	Double	Good		
44 Laurel	Double	Fair/Good		
45 Laurel	Double	Good		
46 Laurel	Double	Fair/Good		
47 Laurel	Double	Good/Exc		
48 Laurel	Double	Good		
49 Laurel	Double	Good/Exc		
50 Laurel	Double	Good		
53/55 Laurel	Multifamily	Fair/Good	gorgeous brick apartment building	rehab focus
57 Laurel	Double	Good	brick character Tudor	
59/61 Laurel	VACANT	Fair/Good	privately owned	

## Laurel Street

### Observations, Conditions, Opportunities

Laurel Street is the healthiest, most stable block in all of Midtown. It is a model for the way things ought to be very for every street in the neighborhood, with its dense urban fabric, complete tree wall, and vital, lively community atmosphere. It is almost entirely composed of tightly-packed double houses in excellent states of upkeep. Kids play on sidewalks in large numbers, teenagers toss footballs in the street, men work on their cars, people tend to their gardens, and elderly citizens sit on their porches, taking in the whole scene. It is the very picture of the vibrant, functioning urban neighborhood.

The most conspicuous quality of the street is its near total lack of vacant lots. Only one exists in the very heart of the neighborhood, now a private garden tended by the owners of 23 Laurel. The vacant parcels at 59 and 61 Laurel conclude the street near Michigan, a discouraging scene that is however typical to corner lots near Michigan. The interior of the block is entirely intact, an image that contradicts so many nearby blocks whose built environment has certainly ebbed over the years. Laurel Street probably looks much as it did when the houses on the street were first constructed, a window into the Midtown that existed before its relative fall from grace.

The street has great architectural character as well, only enhanced by its complete street wall. The multifamily apartment block at 53/55 Laurel frames a striking conclusion to the block and is paired with the equally arresting Tudor-style double next door at 57 Laurel. With the highest proportion of excellently maintained houses of any street in Midtown, it should be no surprise that only two of its more than 30 properties are in less-than-ideal condition. It will be crucial, however, to reclaim these properties before their blight affects everything nearby.



*Laurel Street contains a higher proportion of excellently maintained homes than any other street in the study area.*

## Recommendations, Strategies, Suggested Improvements

### Install Playwalk demonstration project

The sidewalk has always been a staging ground for children's play. In fact, planning and sociological studies have long established that children play most often close to home, rarely more than 100 feet away from the house. In contrast to common wisdom, playgrounds are not the most frequently used playspaces in cities, and children do not necessarily need play equipment to keep themselves entertained. Children need a common gathering space where kids from the block feel invited to meet up with one another in spontaneous, unplanned circumstances. The sidewalk has always the most appropriate place for these unplanned gatherings, but planners have not always recognized it as such. (In fact, Le Corbusier made constant overtures on the need for vast, open spaces in place of the street as a gathering area for children.) This plan hopes to take Laurel Street's already healthy assimilation of children's play to the next level by:

- Creating a magnet for children that could become a demonstration project for their implementation in other parts of the city
- Installing a Playwalk which is 12-foot wide, between 60 and 75 feet long, to cover one side of the center of the street between Main and Michigan. The Playwalk would be flanked on either side with two benches, trees would be retained, and only a few on-street parking spaces would be sacrificed.

### Attack the few problem properties early

It is said that the decline of a good street always starts with one or two problem properties. It would be a tragedy if this downward spiral were allowed to commence on such a valuable street. Immediate action should be taken to rescue:

- The houses at 24 Laurel and 40 Laurel these two properties from further decline, with renovation solutions found as early as possible



*Laurel Street's collection of double houses also includes a few brick-clad gems, one of which is a multifamily apartment building pictured here.*