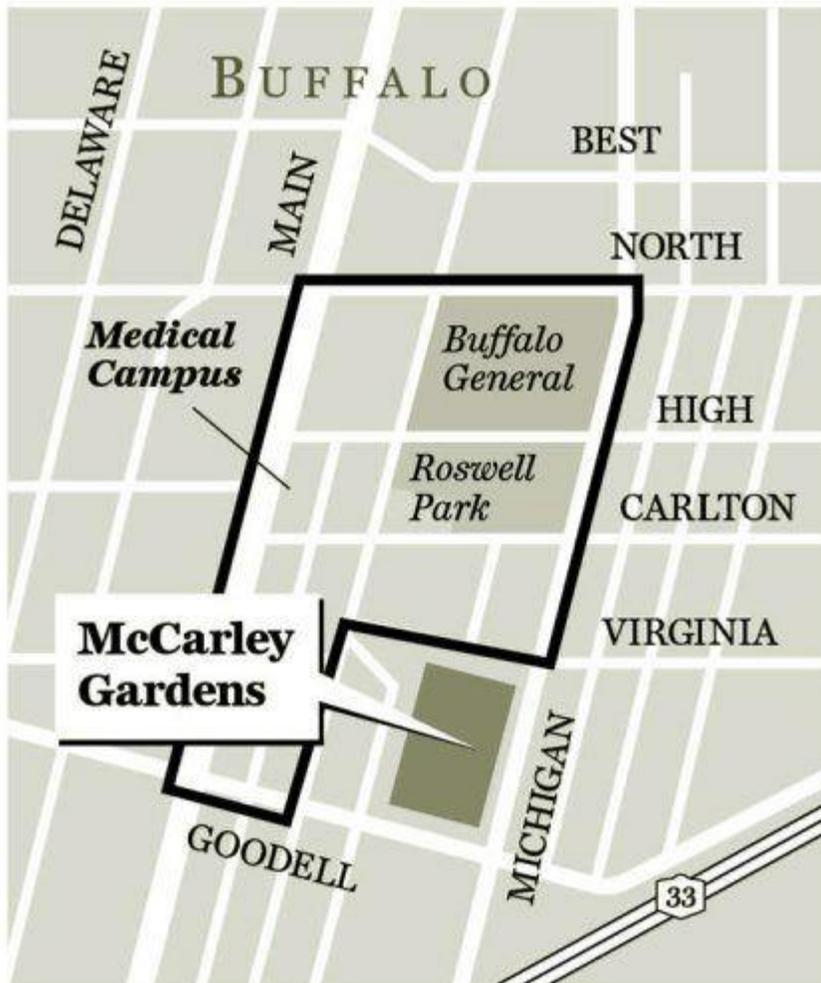


<http://www.buffalonews.com/city-region/medical/ub-wont-buy-mccarley-gardens-20140925>

UB won't buy McCarley Gardens

Residents were fearful of being forced to move



graphic map for McCarley Gardens

By **Jill Terreri** | News Staff Reporter | [@jillterreri](#)
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The University at Buffalo's planned **purchase** of low-income housing near the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus won't happen, according to UB and Oak-Michigan Housing Development Corp. officials.

UB President Satish K. Tripathi called Common Council President Darius G. Pridgen on Thursday to inform him the university would no longer pursue the acquisition of McCarley Gardens, Pridgen said.

The university felt pressure against the sale, coming from Pridgen, former Council President George K. Arthur and others who said the residential community there should not be disturbed.

The UB Foundation sought to buy the property on behalf of the university but UB never spelled out its plans for the 15-acre site. The university and St. John Baptist Church were criticized for the secrecy surrounding the negotiations. Thursday's announcement means the Medical Campus will not expand southward.

"After carefully considering UB's master physical plan and our goal to expand in concert with the community, the university has decided not to purchase the property," Tripathi said in a written statement.

"UB's long-term vision for its downtown campus, including the formation of an academic health center, remains intact," Tripathi said. "The university will continue to evaluate properties downtown, as its long-term planning evolves and as Buffalo's life sciences economy continues to grow and thrive."

The Rev. Michael Chapman, president of Oak-Michigan Housing Development Corporation and pastor of St. John Baptist Church, said he remains committed to revitalizing Buffalo's East Side.

"The St. John Baptist Fruit Belt Development Corp. is continuing with its development of the Sweet Pea Market, residential housing for the Medical Campus, 23-hour day care, which is operational and expanding from 3- and 4-year-olds to infants from 6 weeks to 18 months," Chapman said. "The church development corporations have an additional \$20 million in community development initiatives for 2014-15."

The pending sale upset residents, who were concerned about where they would live if the complex was sold. It became a key issue when Pridgen ran for Common Council in 2010.

"I never thought it was the right thing to do," Pridgen said. "I think it's a good day for the residents of McCarley Gardens."

The decision came during a meeting Thursday between UB representatives and Chapman, whose large and prominent church controls a development corporation that owns the housing complex.

Neither side revealed the reasons that ended the deal. The Buffalo News previously reported that Chapman made additional demands regarding how the property would be developed and other terms of the sale.

McCarley Gardens, built in 1978 by St. John Baptist Church, is a well-kept housing development with about 150 units spread over 15 acres just south of the Medical Campus.

Four years ago, the church offered to sell the land to the University at Buffalo Foundation for \$1 million an acre.

“They’ve heard the people,” Pridgen said. “I think that bodes well for Buffalo and the type of town we are.”

The UB Foundation wanted the land to be shovel-ready for academic or research purposes, which would have required relocation of the residents and demolition of the buildings on the site, bounded by Route 33, Michigan Avenue, Virginia Street and Oak Street.

The Oak-Michigan Development Corp., affiliated with the church and led by Chapman, would have had to devise a federally approved relocation plan for residents, providing them with equal or better housing, as required by laws that govern low-income housing.

A UB Foundation representative told the Common Council last year that residents wouldn’t have been moved before 2017, but residents felt that they lacked information during discussions about the sale.

Arthur had been an advocate for residents of McCarley Gardens, who felt powerless in the face of two powerful institutions, he said.

“It’s great news,” Arthur said. “The residents and the people there can go on and plan their life and make other plans for the active participation of a tenants’ council so they can become a vital part of the medical corridor.”

Arthur said he hoped that medical corridor employers would follow through with commitments to hire residents.

“That would really demonstrate the neighborliness of the corridor and the hospital groups,” he said. “Those residents of McCarley Gardens need jobs.”

The university has based its long-term strategy for a UB downtown campus on relocating its medical school to downtown Buffalo to help form the region’s first academic health center.

“The university’s commitment to establishing an academic health center in Western New York and expanding our presence on the BNMC has never been stronger,” Tripathi said. “This is demonstrated by the construction of our new medical school – the largest medical education building under construction in the country and the largest project in Western New York.”

UB’s expansion on and near the Medical Campus over the past five years also has included construction of a new Educational Opportunity Center (2013), construction of a Clinical and Translational Research Center (2012), creation of the Institute of Healthcare Informatics (2010) and relocation of the university’s community outreach programs to the renovated UB Downtown Gateway building (2009). UB’s other downtown properties include the Research

Institute on Addictions, the New York State Center of Excellence in Bioinformatics and Life Sciences, Ira G. Ross Eye Institute and the Jacobs Executive Development Center.

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