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Rural village emerges as Western New York's next development hotspot



Wetzel Development is building a senior apartment community in Alden.

BUFFALO BUSINESS FIRST



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STORY HIGHLIGHTS

- Alden is experiencing significant development projects and growth.
- A deliberate slowing of growth in neighboring communities is contributing to that.

- \$44 million worth of projects are completed or in the works right now.
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A flurry of development projects has made the Village of Alden the next Western New York suburb to watch.

Some of Alden's neighbors are starting to pump the brakes on new construction projects after decades of rapid growth. The Town of Lancaster, for example, in 2024 passed a [temporary moratorium](#) on most residential development. That has developers looking east for their next projects.

"I do believe we're the next outskirts of suburbs to be developed," said Alden Village Mayor Michael Retzlaff. "In this village we're very responsive to developers. We're very pro-development, as long as it's done responsibly."

Here's a look at projects that are planned or underway in the Village of Alden:

- Wetzl Development recently finished construction of a \$6.6 million, 30-unit, market-rate apartment complex on Slade Drive and is nearing completion of an \$8.4 million, 56-unit senior apartment community next door.
- The Arc Erie County is planning to break ground on the first phase of a \$26 million plan to turn 152 acres adjoining Wetzl's projects into a multipurpose campus to support people with disabilities.
- Marzec Homes recently received approval for Alden Estates, a 100-unit subdivision on a private road off of Exchange Street.
- Manufacturer Pfannenberger is building a [new headquarters](#) at 13595 Broadway in the village at a cost of \$11.5 million.

The Town of Alden is getting attention as well. Buffalo Solar is planning a new headquarters for its commercial solar operation on Broadway Street.

Paul Marzec has already been building homes in the Town of Alden with his ongoing Two Rod Estates project, consisting of several one-acre lots on Two Rod Road. With Alden Estates in the village, he plans to take his efforts to the next level.

"I knew we needed to scale strategically," Marzec said. "Land is oxygen for builders."

A closer look at development in Alden

Alden is the new frontier for people who like a mix of rural living and suburban conveniences, if you ask Marzec.

"People like the conveniences, but they don't like the traffic of Lancaster," he said. "I think the moratoriums in Lancaster and other towns have certainly helped bring developers into Alden."

Glenn Wetzl, who builds and operates apartment communities in several Erie

County suburbs, has a history in Alden. His first development project was an 80-unit apartment community on Park Street in the village.

"I've always liked the village," he said.

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Wetzel and his wife, Cynthia, bought 170 acres of vacant land in the village in 2020 for \$205,000. Though he's developed multifamily housing on a portion of that land, the purchase was made with the intention of donating most of the land to the Arc.

"I've been driving by this property I purchased for years," he said.

The Wetzels have two autistic sons, and Glenn sits on the board of the Arc.

He donated more than 150 acres of the land.

The Arc plans to build Black Water Acres, a site offering farming, workforce training and outdoor recreation for people with disabilities. Construction of the main building, which includes a program space and commercial teaching kitchen, is set to begin soon.

"We've been aggressively raising funds, collaborating with different foundations to bring the project to fruition," said Arc CEO Douglas DiGesare.

Long-term plans include several other buildings, including potential commercial spaces that could help bring in steady revenue for Arc.

"The idea is that it would become many things to many people," DiGesare said.

The estimated cost of the total project is \$26 million, with room to grow beyond that if needed.

Retzlaff said Alden could use an injection of development, as long as it is done responsibly. He said he wants to minimize red tape for developers and to encourage a range of different developments, particularly an array of housing options.

"We want to see controlled and planned growth," he said.