

CITY OF BINGHAMTON COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



Prepared By:

THE SARATOGA ASSOCIATES



LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS, ARCHITECTS, ENGINEERS, AND PLANNERS, P.C.
SARATOGA SPRINGS ■ NEW YORK CITY ■ BUFFALO ■ BOSTON

April 2002

CITY OF BINGHAMTON

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



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PREPARED BY:

THE SARATOGA ASSOCIATES



Landscape Architects, Architects, Engineers, and Planners, P.C.
Saratoga Springs ■ New York ■ Boston

This document was made possible with funds provided by:

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development



TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | | |
|------|--|----|
| I. | Introduction to the City of Binghamton Comprehensive Plan..... | 1 |
| | What is the Comprehensive Plan? | 1 |
| II. | Binghamton Today | 3 |
| | Rebuilding Fundamental Assets..... | 3 |
| | Responding to Changing Demographics | 4 |
| | A Population in Decline | 4 |
| | An Aging Population..... | 7 |
| | Residues of the Past: A Well-Educated, Professional Population | 8 |
| | Feeling the Effects of Economic Transition..... | 10 |
| | Changing Housing Setting | 11 |
| | Commercial Core in Need of Repair | 12 |
| | Binghamton Fiscal Impact Analysis | 14 |
| | Interpreting the Results | 14 |
| | Equalized Taxes and Taxable Value | 14 |
| | Summary | 18 |
| | Binghamton's Employment and Productivity..... | 18 |
| | Occupational Projections and Trends..... | 18 |
| | Employment Trends | 19 |
| | Industrial Structure and Productivity | 21 |
| | Key Employment Findings for Binghamton | 22 |
| | Making Neighborhoods Competitive..... | 23 |
| | Conclusion: Another New START for Binghamton | 25 |
| III. | Choosing the Strategic Direction: Plan Alternatives..... | 26 |
| | Binghamton's Alternative Plans | 26 |
| | Alternative 1: Patch & Mend | 26 |
| | Alternative 2: Restructuring for Regional Access..... | 27 |
| | Alternative 3: Restructuring to Create a Vital Place..... | 27 |
| IV. | Binghamton's Future: Vision and Approach | 30 |
| | The Plan Vision: Reestablish a Vibrant Regional Center..... | 30 |
| | The Plan Approach: Revitalize Vital Neighborhood Centers..... | 32 |

| | |
|--|----|
| V. Plan Response: Policies and Projects for a Vibrant Regional Center | 33 |
| First Ward Neighborhood Center District | 35 |
| Redevelop the Former Anitec Site as a First Ward Business Center | 35 |
| First Ward Neighborhood Square | 36 |
| First Ward Park Reprogramming | 36 |
| Charles Street Streetscape | 37 |
| Continue Antique Row Improvements..... | 37 |
| West Side Riverfront District | 39 |
| Promote a Self Empowerment Zone | 39 |
| Renew the Front Street/Main Street Intersection | 40 |
| Reduce Density to Protect the Integrity of Neighborhoods | 41 |
| Develop a Riverfront Trail that Connects with the Roberson Museum..... | 41 |
| North Riverfront District | 43 |
| Establish a New Neighborhood Center | 44 |
| Open Up & Expand Cheri Ann Lindsey Park..... | 45 |
| Neighborhood Reinvestment..... | 46 |
| Robinson Street District..... | 48 |
| Provide Improved Bike and Pedestrian Environment | 48 |
| Develop Neighborhood Calming Strategies and Buffers..... | 48 |
| Reinvest In and Market North Side Neighborhoods | 49 |
| Consider a New Park in the East Side Neighborhoods | 49 |
| Coordinate with DOT on Reconstruction of East End of Court Street | 50 |
| South Washington Street District | 52 |
| Coordinate District Parking - Develop a Municipal Parking Lot..... | 52 |
| Continue Investment to Enhance Streetscape Environment | 53 |
| Conklin/Tompkins Street Neighborhood Center | 55 |
| Create a Commercial Node of Activity..... | 55 |
| Investigate the Need for Home Ownership and Maintenance Programs | 55 |
| Downtown/In-Town District..... | 58 |
| Implement an Integrated Niche Market Framework for Downtown Revitalization . | 59 |
| Develop a Management Framework for Successful Downtown Revitalization | 65 |
| Continue to Develop a Strategic Planning Property Inventory | 69 |
| Develop Parking Inventory and Management Program..... | 70 |
| Create a Neighborhood Redevelopment Plan for Adjoining Neighborhoods..... | 72 |



| | |
|---|-----|
| Citywide Policies & Projects to Strengthen Binghamton's Quality of Life | 74 |
| Maintain Progress Toward Community-Based Policing..... | 74 |
| Continue Responding to the Needs of Binghamton's Youth Population..... | 75 |
| Respond to the Needs of Binghamton's Senior Population | 77 |
| Continue Developing an Integrated Waterfront Trail | 78 |
| Continue Investment in a Citywide Bike & Pedestrian Network..... | 79 |
| Improve Safety of Pedestrian Connections Around Schools | 81 |
| Address Student Housing Needs and Concerns | 82 |
| Develop a Comprehensive Historic Preservation Strategy | 84 |
| Citywide Policies & Projects to Enhance Community Image | 87 |
| Promote Binghamton to Improve its Image | 87 |
| Improve the City Web Page with Interactive Features & Additional Public Services | 88 |
| Strengthen & Maintain the Integrity of Gateways | 91 |
| Citywide Policies & Projects to Promote Economic Vitality | 94 |
| Develop a Strategy for Foreclosed Properties..... | 94 |
| Improve Enforcement of Zoning Regulations..... | 95 |
| Develop Design Policies to Maintain and Improve Character of Development | 97 |
| Revise Zoning Ordinance | 99 |
| Coordinate Gateway Improvements with Business Development Efforts..... | 102 |
| Develop Model Public/Private Partnerships | 103 |
| Prepare Sites for Development..... | 106 |
| Support the Broome County Economic Development Strategy..... | 107 |
| Study the Need for a Downtown Convention/Meeting Facilities | 108 |
| Citywide Policies & Projects to Advance Neighborhood Stability | 110 |
| Make Use of Fannie Mae Programs to Further Community Development | 110 |
| Consider Tax Increment Financing for Challenged Neighborhoods | 111 |
| VI. Implementing Binghamton's Comprehensive Plan | 114 |
| Establish the Capacity to Implement..... | 115 |
| Building the Management Team | 116 |
| 1. Catalytic Action Team | 116 |
| 2. Neighborhood Reinvestment Committee | 117 |
| 3. Grants Strategy Committee | 120 |
| Develop an Organized and Complementary Capital Investment Strategy..... | 122 |
| Continue Working to Establish a Partnership with Binghamton University | 123 |



| | |
|--|-----|
| The Key to Implementation Success: Building Momentum Through Incrementalism..... | 132 |
| Building for the Future: A New START..... | 134 |
| Recommended Short-Term Action Items | 136 |
| External Sources for Financial, Technical and Marketing Assistance..... | 141 |

List of Figures

| | |
|---|----|
| Figure 1 City of Binghamton Population Trends | 4 |
| Figure 2 Comparative Population Change: 1990 – 2000 | 5 |
| Figure 3 City of Binghamton Housing Supply..... | 6 |
| Figure 4 City of Binghamton Households..... | 6 |
| Figure 5 City of Binghamton and Regional Age Distribution: 1990 & 2000..... | 7 |
| Figure 6 1990 Educational Attainment | 8 |
| Figure 7 1990 Occupational Composition | 9 |
| Figure 8 1990 Comparative Incomes | 10 |
| Figure 9 1990 Income Types..... | 11 |
| Figure 10 Binghamton Housing Tenure..... | 11 |
| Figure 11 Binghamton Housing Occupancy | 12 |
| Figure 12 Equalized Taxes | 15 |
| Figure 13 Taxable Value as a Proportion of Land and Population | 15 |
| Figure 14 School District Finances | 16 |
| Figure 15 County Finances | 16 |
| Figure 16 Local Finances | 17 |
| Figure 17 Tax Cost of Home Ownership | 17 |
| Figure 18 Distribution of Total Employment by Occupation %, U.S..... | 18 |
| Figure 19 Compensation Trends | 19 |
| Figure 20 Binghamton: Labor Force and Unemployment | 19 |
| Figure 21 Binghamton: Total Employment By Industry | 20 |
| Figure 22 Binghamton: Manufacturing Wages..... | 20 |
| Figure 23 Percent Share of Establishments, 1998..... | 21 |
| Figure 24 Manufacturing Sector Productivity..... | 22 |
| Figure 25 1999 Per Capita Income By Neighborhood..... | 23 |
| Figure 26 1999 Median Age By Neighborhood..... | 24 |
| Figure 27 Housing Ownership by Neighborhood | 24 |

List of Plan Graphics

| | |
|---|-----|
| Comprehensive Plan Neighborhood District Locations..... | 34 |
| First Ward Neighborhood Center..... | 38 |
| West Side Riverfront | 42 |
| North Riverfront District..... | 47 |
| Robinson Street District | 51 |
| South Washington Street District..... | 54 |
| Conklin/Tompkins Street Neighborhood Center..... | 57 |
| Downtown/Intown District..... | 73 |
| Proposed Zoning Map | 105 |



I. INTRODUCTION TO THE CITY OF BINGHAMTON COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The City of Binghamton is located in the Southern Tier of New York State. The region has a rich history of innovation that began with IBM and continues today with establishments such as the Integrated Electronics Engineering Center (part of the NYS Centers for Advanced Technology and the only one devoted to electronics packaging). Binghamton's linkages with major metropolitan areas, and its potential to offer a high quality of life in attractive, affordable neighborhoods, will be the foundation for the City to position itself as the preferred place to live and work in the region.

Binghamton lies at the junction of the Susquehanna and Chenango Rivers, and has always been central to the regional economy. Originally called Chenango Point, Binghamton's present name was given in honor of William Bingham, who purchased a large tract of land lying on both sides of the Susquehanna. The first boat arrived over the Chenango Canal in 1837, and the first train arrived on the Erie Railroad in 1848. The City of Binghamton was incorporated in 1867, and grew



at a rapid and steady pace over the next century. It developed into a convenient and happening place that people came to meet their civic, financial, cultural and recreational needs.

People still meet many of these needs today in the heart of Binghamton, at the Broome County Court House, Post Office, the new County Library, the Forum, Veterans Memorial Arena, and NYSEG Stadium. Indeed, Binghamton's name is so popular that it was used as the defining geographic reference for the State University in the neighboring Town of Vestal.

The commitment, vision, and perseverance of Binghamton's community have laid the foundation of a truly great place to live and work. The strong sense of community identity by both residents and merchants that existed in the beginning of the City's history is still in evidence today. Preserving and enhancing

this sense of community identity, and building upon Binghamton's image in the eyes of both residents and outsiders, are crucial aspects of the Comprehensive Plan.

WHAT IS THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN?

What will it be like living in Binghamton five years from now? Ten years from now? What steps does the community need to take to make life in Binghamton the best it can possibly be? The Comprehensive Plan is a vehicle through which a community can respond to these questions. It enables residents to set a vision for their community's future, and then outline the policies and projects required to achieve that



vision. It includes any and all aspects of community life. Through its policy recommendations, it can foster new ways of making a living, protect open space, and revitalize neighborhoods.

Work on the City of Binghamton Comprehensive Plan began in 2000 with an inventory analysis of the City and its surroundings. Information was gathered regarding land use patterns, economic and demographic trends, environmental features, and transportation networks. In order to develop a Plan that reflected the voice of the community, the planning process drew upon focus group meetings, nine neighborhood meetings (one in each Council District), and interviews with City and business leaders. Additionally, a survey of over a thousand (randomly sampled) residents was carried out in order to identify citizen preferences and concerns.

District plans were then developed for seven areas in the City of Binghamton. These areas were selected on the basis of their potential to catalyze surrounding neighborhoods, and act as steppingstones for the redevelopment of the entire City. The District plans were presented to the City's department heads, and then to the Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee. Finally, a detailed implementation schedule has been developed to help the City leaders organize projects and formulate annual improvement plans. The recommendations embrace both short-term and long-term projects that will together lead to an improved quality of life for Binghamton's residents, both present and future.

*"Vision without action is merely a dream.
Action without vision is just passing time.
Vision with action can change the world."*

- Joel Barker



II. BINGHAMTON TODAY

In order to plan for the future, there is a need to understand the capacities, circumstances, and needs of the community today. Providing the services and amenities expected by both existing and new residents will be critical to the success of this plan. As the following analysis indicates, the challenge for Binghamton is to capitalize on existing assets to keep current residents, and to create an environment that is appealing to new businesses as well as new and returning residents.

REBUILDING FUNDAMENTAL ASSETS

From its beginnings as a small village in the “heart of one of America’s scenic show places,” Binghamton grew over the years into the cultural, retail, office, and entertainment hub for a burgeoning regional population. In 1848, Binghamton became the western terminus of the Erie railroad. Operation of the Delaware, Lackawanna and Western Railroad began in 1850. As the transportation network advanced, so too did opportunities for new business and industry, which in turn brought new employment and income for the local community. In 1886, Binghamton inaugurated one of the first electrically motivated street railroads in New York State. Stagecoach companies were formed and turnpikes were laid out as early as 1900.

Economic growth and prosperity abounded. An improving network of high speed and efficient roadways developed, bringing the towns and villages closer together. Growing employment opportunities and a diversified industrial base, together with the open and pastoral setting of the region, attracted a growing number of people, contributing to the vibrancy of the community. Sadly, some of these factors were the beginning of the decline for the City of Binghamton. Even in the late 1960s and the 1970s, when the region was experiencing significant growth and development, the City itself was losing population, and its employment base was already on the decline. Increasing use of automobiles resulted in new activities oriented to highways and the large open spaces available in the surrounding communities.

The well-intended Urban Renewal era of the 1960’s had devastating effects on many urban centers across the country, and Binghamton was no exception. Under the pretext of growth and development, many buildings and roadway networks were removed. The general intent was to create efficiencies for long-term success and revitalization. These “renewal” efforts, as well as the changing employment and housing opportunities resulting from transportation improvements, forever changed the face of Binghamton. Binghamton’s decline was also exacerbated by the State University’s decision to locate so far from the urban core.

These events, coupled with long-term de-industrialization, resulted in the wearing out of Binghamton’s urban fabric. Today the City is paying the price for this lack of consideration as many “destination” activities are far removed from its core, and there is little sense of place. When renewal efforts removed old buildings, little attention was paid to architectural standards for new buildings. Likewise, as roadways were reconfigured for “automobile efficiency,” little attention was paid to the impact on



pedestrian connections and the visual attractiveness of “renewal” fitting within the context of the “old.” These facts help explain why the gateways do not “work” for the City of Binghamton, and why it appears to be out-of-scale and disconnected. As demonstrated below, the City of Binghamton is still trying to recover from the long-term effects of Urban Renewal. And yet, despite this, there is evidence (through neighborhood meetings) that the residents have a deep belief in the future of their City, although they do say that Binghamton needs help to rebuild neighborhoods, fight poverty, increase jobs and enhance the overall quality of life.

RESPONDING TO CHANGING DEMOGRAPHICS

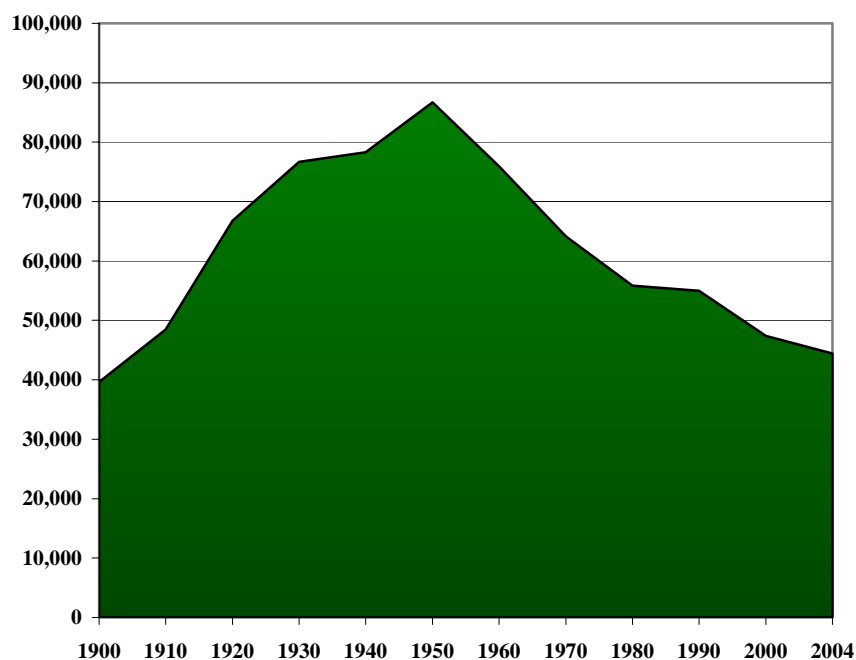
Since the mid-1950s, the population in the City of Binghamton has progressively decreased; principally the result of continuing technological advancements, urban renewal policies and the downsizing and restructuring of major corporations such as IBM, Raytheon, and Endicott-Johnson. Many of today’s demographics still reflect these changes.

A Population in Decline

Located near the southwestern portion of Broome County, the City of Binghamton covers approximately 10.5 square miles and has a population of 47,380 (2000 Census). Binghamton accounts for nearly 24 percent of Broome County’s population, though it has been steadily decreasing in population since the 1950s. The largest population loss occurred between 1960 and 1970. More importantly, this population loss continued late into the century, and the City was hit with its second largest population loss between 1990 and 2000. Population projections provided by Binghamton University suggest that this decline will continue through 2004.

Figure 1 illustrates Binghamton’s population from 1900 with 2004 projections (provided by Binghamton University¹). Figure 1 shows that Binghamton’s population increased by nearly 119

Figure 1 City of Binghamton Population Trends



Source: Bureau of the Census, except 2004 population projection from Binghamton University

¹ Binghamton University, Department of Geography estimates are based on 1990 U.S. Census figures. While these projections are useful for illustrative purposes, it is important to note that data projected for smaller areas, like Binghamton, are subject to larger margins of error.

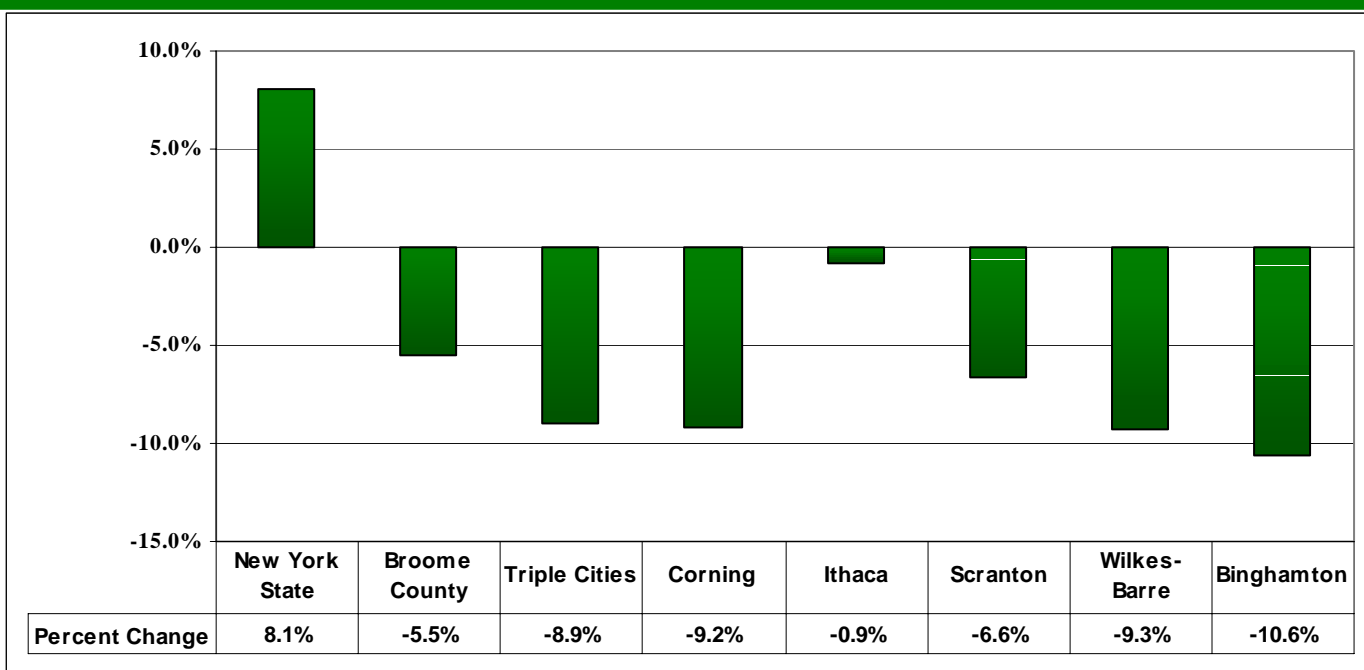


percent for the first half of the 20th Century (1900 to 1950). However, the second half of the 20th Century saw a complete reversal of this trend; the population decreased by over 45 percent (1950 to 2000) to drop to nearly the same population level as was there in 1900.

Why did this happen? About 26 percent (or 22,551) of the population was lost in the two decades between 1950 and 1970. In the immediate postwar era, rising automobile ownership enabled many employers and urban residents to relocate to suburban areas, like Vestal and Johnson City, where the American dream of owning a suburban home was delivered in the marketplace. The very factor that was crucial to the growth of the City – its livability – may have proved increasingly inadequate in comparison to the lifestyle afforded by the suburbs. Urban Renewal also had a significant impact on Binghamton's population in the post-1970 era, and did nothing to improve the livability of the City. It reduced population densities with the removal of “blighted” areas, which included some downtown housing units. More recently, the restructuring of major corporations has also contributed to many residents moving out of the region in search of new employment opportunities.

A comparison of Binghamton to the State, County, and similar cities (Figure 2) indicates that Binghamton has lost a significantly larger share of its population between 1990 and 2000. While the state as a whole has experienced an increased population of 8.1 percent, the County and comparison communities have all lost population. Even the City of Corning, home of Corning Incorporated, experienced a population decline in the last decade. This trend of population loss is consistent with most Southern Tier population centers. But Binghamton is experiencing some of the largest population losses and is projected to continue losing residents. This decline is occurring despite good initiatives by the City in recent years, which indicates that the problem is a foundational one. It will require more than mere infusions to keep

Figure 2 Comparative Population Change: 1990 - 2000

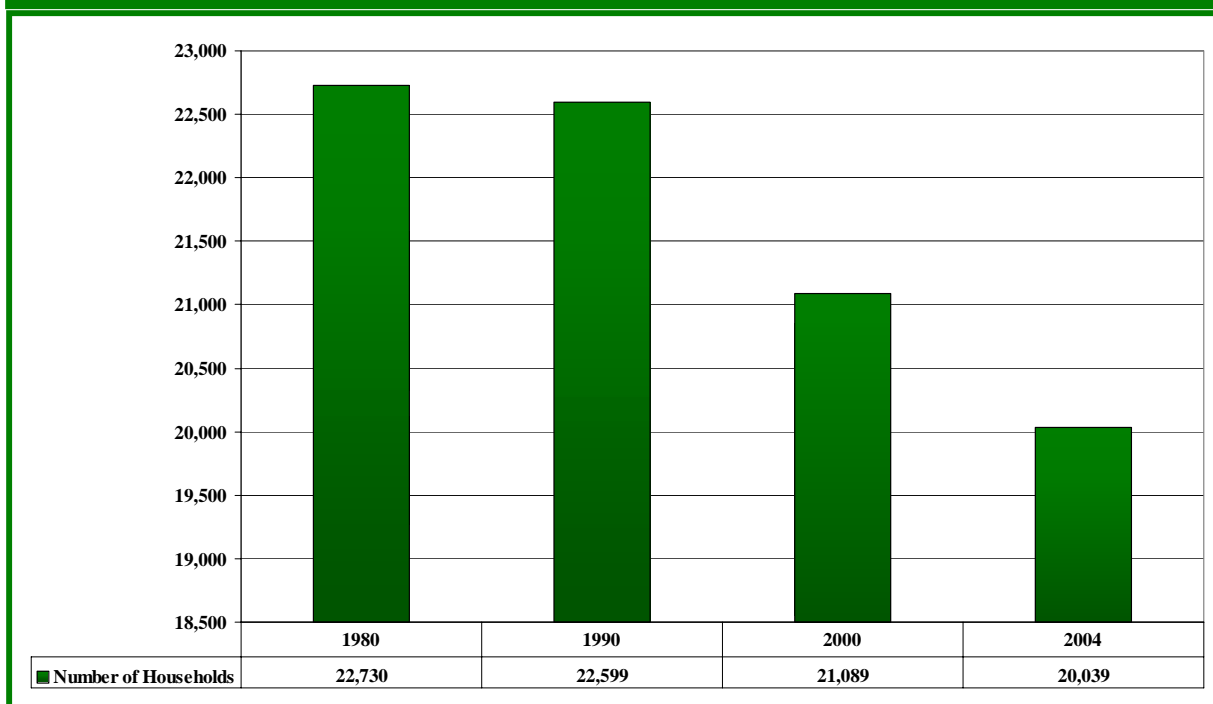


Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census and The Saratoga Associates calculations

the heart of the City beating: it will require a restructuring of the infrastructure and connections within the City, and a focused approach to dealing with neighborhood-specific problems.

Along with population, the number and size of households in Binghamton has been steadily decreasing. Binghamton University projections suggest a continued decrease in housing supply (Figures 3 and 4). Binghamton's trend of shrinking household size is consistent with national trends. In large measure, the shrinking family size is the result of an aging population, lower birth rates, and social changes in the family structure, such as single-parent families and single-person households. Clearly, these are dynamics outside Binghamton's circle of influence.

Figure 3 City of Binghamton Housing Supply



Source: Bureau of the Census, except 2004 projection from Binghamton University

However, the number of households in the overall region, except Binghamton, is increasing. (The Town of Vestal had a 9% increase in the number of households between 1980-1990). This again indicates that something is fundamentally wrong and needs attention. The question to be answered is how to re-attract household formation to the City, or at least retain the City's existing population.

Figure 4 City of Binghamton Households

| Year | Number of Households | Percentage Change | Avg HH Size |
|------|----------------------|-------------------|-------------|
| 1980 | 22,730 | | 2.46 |
| 1990 | 22,599 | -0.6% | 2.35 |
| 2000 | 21,089 | -6.7% | 2.25 |
| 2004 | 20,039 | -5.0% | 2.22 |

Source: Bureau of the Census, except 2004 projection from Binghamton University



An Aging Population

Understanding a community's age composition is an important component of future planning efforts. It is useful in forecasting trends in labor force, household formation, and social security needs. An aging population (depending on its composition) can potentially increase the fiscal and infrastructural burden on the community. Figure 5 below illustrates Binghamton's age distribution trends between 1990 and 2000. As is evident, in both 1990 and 2000 the greatest concentration of residents was in the 65+ age category. Three age categories experienced a net growth in the last decade: 10 to 14 years (11.2%), 45 to 54 years (31.9%), and 55 to 59 years (1.3%). The remaining categories all indicate a net decline. Of those categories that experienced growth, the 45 to 54 age category saw the most significant increase (31.9%). Many of these individuals will likely be experiencing significant life changes in the next ten years as their children leave the home. This same group is also beginning to enter into their peak employment and earning potential years. On the other hand, the 25 to 34 age category has experienced a nearly equal loss of residents at almost 33 percent. The loss of these individuals could have significant implications on the entry-level labor market, not only for Binghamton, but also for the entire region. Future planning to meet the needs of the 25 to 34 and 45 to 54 age categories could hold the greatest potential for Binghamton.

Figure 5 City of Binghamton and Regional Age Distribution: 1990 & 2000

| Age Category | 2000 | | 1990 | | Binghamton % Change 1990 - 2000 | Region % Change 1990 2000 |
|----------------|--------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| | Binghamton % of Total | Region % of Total | Binghamton % of Total | Region % of Total | | |
| Under 5 years | 6.1 | 5.4 | 6.6 | 6.4 | -18.2 | -18.6 |
| 5 to 9 years | 6.2 | 6 | 5.7 | 6.1 | -1.6 | -5.1 |
| 10 to 14 years | 5.9 | 6.3 | 4.7 | 5.6 | 11.2 | 7 |
| 15 to 19 years | 5.8 | 9.1 | 5.3 | 8.1 | -2.9 | 8.3 |
| 20 to 24 years | 10.8 | 7.5 | 11.4 | 8.5 | -15.5 | -15.8 |
| 25 to 34 years | 13 | 11 | 17.2 | 16.6 | -32.8 | -36.3 |
| 35 to 44 years | 13.7 | 15 | 12.9 | 13.5 | -5 | 6.6 |
| 45 to 54 years | 12.5 | 12.8 | 8.5 | 10.4 | 31.9 | 19.2 |
| 55 to 59 years | 4.5 | 5 | 4 | 4.7 | 1.3 | 0.6 |
| 60 to 64 years | 4 | 4.3 | 4.6 | 5 | -22.7 | -17.1 |
| 65+ | 17.6 | 17.6 | 19.1 | 15.1 | -17.5 | 12.1 |

Source: Bureau of the Census

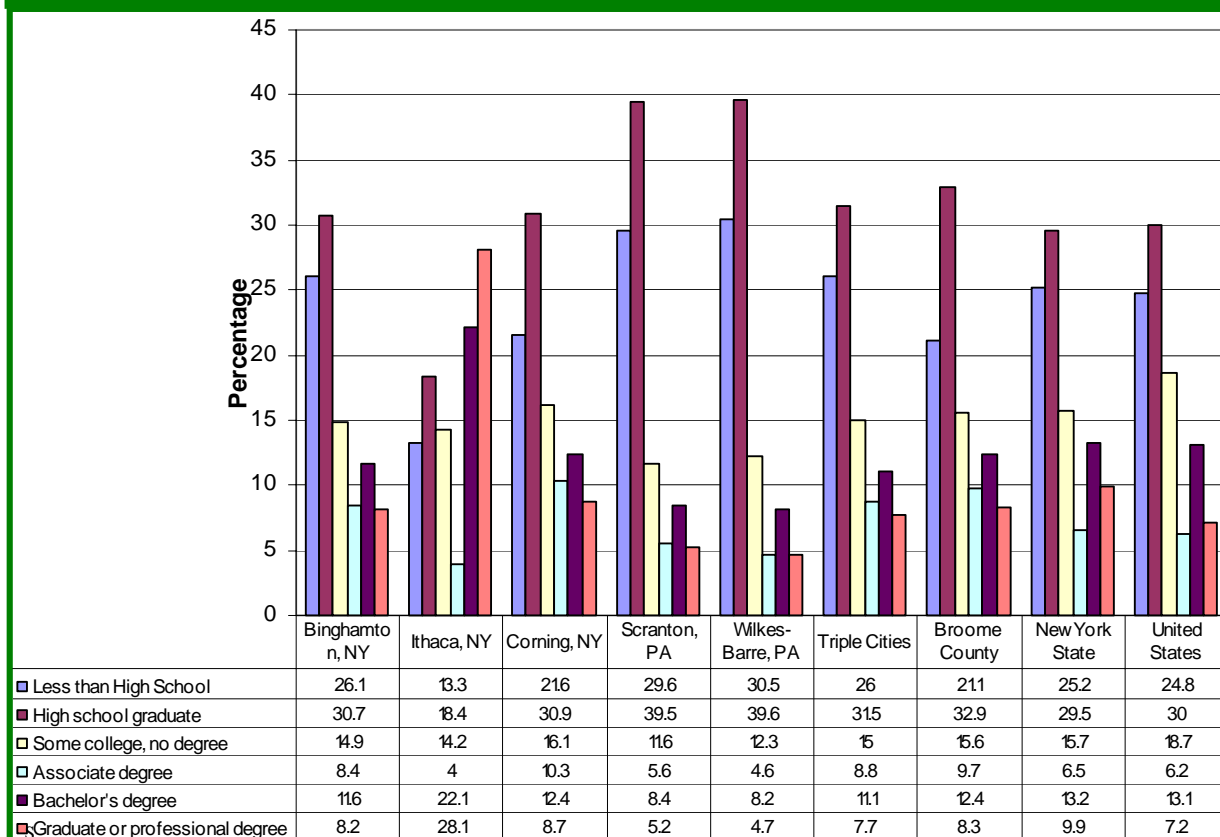
A comparison is drawn between the age trends in Binghamton and the region (comprising the Towns of Union, Vestal and Binghamton) it finds itself in. Clearly, the age distributions in Binghamton mirror regional trends, as the regional population is aging too. But some of the differences found in the changes between 1990 and 2000 may indicate that the City's population is aging faster than the population of the overall region. Whereas the 35-44 age group declined by 5% in the City of Binghamton in this period, it increased by 6.6% in the region. On the other hand, the 45-54 age group increased by far more in the City than in the region. The 15-19 age group fell by almost 3% in the City, but increased by over 8% in the region.



Residues of the Past: A Well-Educated, Professional Population

In the not so distant past, it was not unusual for an individual to graduate from high school and begin working in the manufacturing and trade industries. For many, if their father worked as a plumber, then they too would apprentice as a plumber. In Binghamton, the IBM presence has, over the last 20 years, encouraged a historically higher educated workforce. But has this trend continued till today? Is Binghamton's workforce positioned to march into the 21st century? Today's "smarter," information-driven industries require "smarter" workers. Consequently, Binghamton's current educational level will play a critical role in the extent to which it is able to participate in what is being called the "New Economy": an economy driven by knowledge-intensive industries.

Figure 6 1990 Educational Attainment



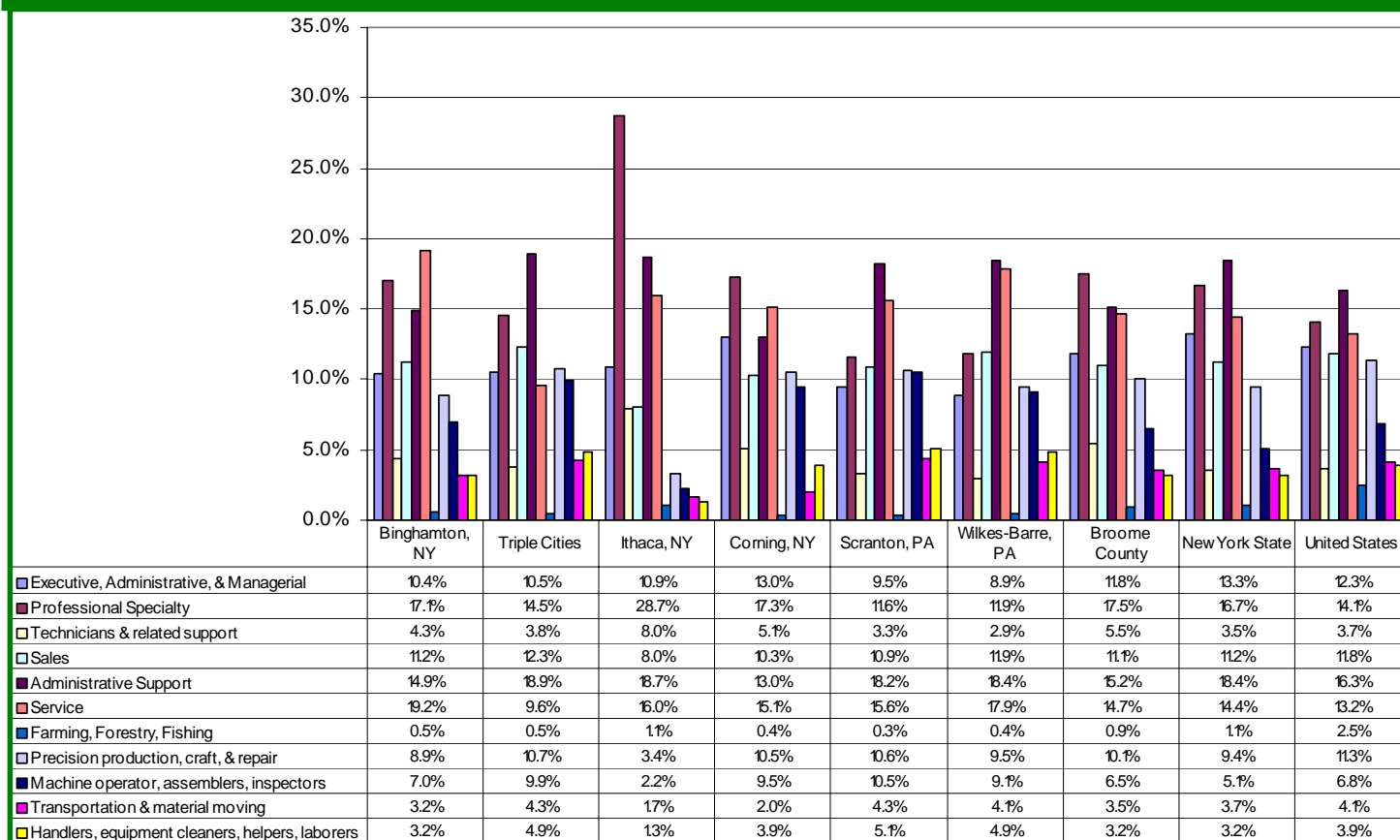
As 2000 Census data for education and occupation is not yet available, it is difficult to measure how well Binghamton is positioned to participate in the New Economy. However, 1990 data suggests potential for future employment opportunities in the New Economy. The educational attainment and occupational composition of Binghamton reflect its legacy as a former IBM stronghold. Figure 6 (above) illustrates that in 1990, 28.2 percent of the adult population (persons above the age of 25) had an Associates degree or better. Of those, 11.6 percent had a Bachelor's degree, outperforming Wilkes-Barre (8.2%), Scranton (8.4%), and the Triple Cities (11.1%), and just shy of Corning (12.4 %). Ithaca performed significantly better, with over half educated to Bachelors or higher. This is not surprising when one considers the



presence of the local colleges and universities as major employers. On the downside, more than one in every four adults in Binghamton is not a high school graduate. This is about average when compared with Triple Cities, the state, and the nation, but not as good as Broome County, Ithaca, and Corning.

The reasonably high level of educational attainment is reflected in the 1990 occupational composition of Binghamton. The proportion of population greater than 16 years of age employed in the service industries is roughly 19 percent. The next greatest occupation category is professional specialty, followed by administrative support. As indicated by 1990 U.S. Census data, better than 10 percent of the employed Binghamton population is engaged in the executive, administrative, and managerial occupations. All of these employment categories are part of the evolving information-driven, global economy. Binghamton's educational attainment and occupational composition suggests that, thanks to IBM, Raytheon and Binghamton University, Binghamton had been participating in the "information economy" even before the term was coined.

Figure 7 1990 Occupational Composition



Source: Bureau of the Census

Feeling the Effects of Economic Transition

Understanding a community's income characteristics is an important indicator for determining a community's economic well-being. Three of these key indicators are median household income, median family income, and per capita income (as with education attainment, 2000 Census data for income is not yet available, so 1990 data was used). Figure 8 shows how Binghamton measures up to the comparison communities as well as Broome County, New York State, and the United States as a whole. Both New York State and Broome County consistently rank higher across the three categories than the comparison communities and Binghamton. This indicates that the general region is suffering relative to the County and State. Corning appears as the bright spot in the Southern Tier Region.

| Figure 8 1990 Comparative Incomes | | | |
|--|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| | Median Household Income | Median Family Income | Per Capita Income |
| Binghamton | \$20,891 | \$29,169 | \$12,106 |
| Broome County | \$28,743 | \$35,824 | \$13,626 |
| Triple Cities | \$23,199 | \$29,746 | \$12,468 |
| Ithaca | \$17,738 | \$30,787 | \$9,213 |
| Corning | \$24,127 | \$31,923 | \$13,736 |
| Scranton, PA | \$21,060 | \$28,431 | \$11,108 |
| Wilkes-Barre, PA | \$19,525 | \$27,458 | \$10,513 |
| New York State | \$32,965 | \$39,741 | \$16,501 |
| United States | \$30,056 | \$35,225 | \$14,420 |

Source: Bureau of the Census

When measured against the comparison communities, Binghamton is roughly at the middle of the group. The median household income in Binghamton is higher than both Ithaca and Wilkes-Barre. Scranton, the Triple Cities, and Corning all outperform Binghamton. Binghamton's median family income is higher than both Wilkes-Barre and Scranton and not below the Triple Cities. Ithaca and Corning both exceed Binghamton in terms of median family income. While Binghamton's per capita income is lower than Broome County's, it is higher than Ithaca, Wilkes-Barre, and Scranton. The Triple Cities is only modestly better than Binghamton. Again, Corning surpasses Binghamton. While it may be obvious, it is important to note that much of Corning's income success may be driven by the presence of Corning Incorporated, a company which has been out in front of many emerging technologies and attracts some of the most highly paid employees.

Understanding the income types of a community can also help determine a community's economic well-being. Figure 9 shows the source of income for Binghamton's residents (again, because 2000 Census data of this type is not yet available, 1990 data was used). Binghamton is relatively consistent with both the comparison communities and the county for wage and salary income and non-farm self-employment income, although Corning, Ithaca and the county reported higher self-employment income (suggesting higher levels of entrepreneurial activity). These statistics also show Binghamton with one of the lower levels of households reporting Social Security income. This may suggest that, for Binghamton, a higher proportion of the population is starting "second careers" in retirement years. Accordingly, fostering an innovative environment and meeting the needs of an aging population may have significant implications for Binghamton's future.



However, it is also important to note that the number of households reporting public assistance income in Binghamton is the highest. Further, about 46 percent of the county's public assistance recipients indicate that they live in the City of Binghamton. This is principally because many public assistance programs are

Figure 9 1990 Income Types

| Income Types Received | Binghamton | Corning | Ithaca | Scranton | Wilkes-Barre | Broome County |
|-------------------------|------------|---------|--------|----------|--------------|---------------|
| Wage and salary | 68.9% | 68.2% | 81.6% | 65.3% | 64.5% | 75.5% |
| Nonfarm self-employment | 8.1% | 9.1% | 13.4% | 7.4% | 6.1% | 9.8% |
| Social Security | 34.9% | 37.4% | 18.1% | 41.9% | 40.7% | 30.7% |
| Public Assistance | 10.5% | 8.9% | 5.4% | 9.8% | 10.4% | 6.3% |
| Retirement Income | 20.8% | 24.7% | 11.9% | 20.1% | 21.1% | 20.9% |

Source: Bureau of the Census

administered from Binghamton, the county seat, and the need for recipients to access these programs (transportation being the limiting factor for recipients). Meeting the employment and housing needs of this population will be important for the City to address even as the City works with the social service organizations to provide housing opportunities in adjoining communities.

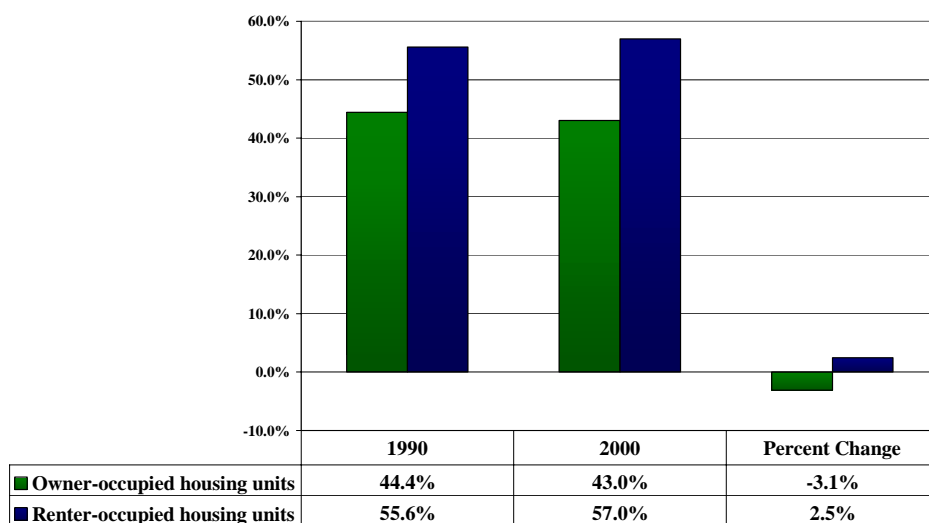
Changing Housing Setting

One foundation of this plan is to recognize the value of Binghamton's neighborhoods as its building blocks for revitalization. These neighborhoods consist of households. Understanding the occupancy and ownership rates of these households is one measure for assessing the stability of communities. Although research has not defined a definitive percentage of homeownership for a stable community, state and national trends indicate that roughly 50 percent homeownership should be a minimum target.

Historical Census data shows that since the 1940s, homeownership rates in the United States have been steadily rising. In 1990, about 64 percent of American households were owner-occupied. U.S. Census data for 2000 indicates that this increasing national home-ownership trend has continued into the 21st Century as slightly better than 66 percent of homes are owner-

occupied nationwide. New York State has been experiencing similar home ownership trends; in 1990 the homeownership rate was 52.2 percent; in 2000 the New York State homeownership rate had increased to

Figure 10 Binghamton Housing Tenure



Source: Bureau of the Census



53 percent. Recently released 2000 Census data indicates that Binghamton has not shared in the fortunes of increasing home-ownership rates.

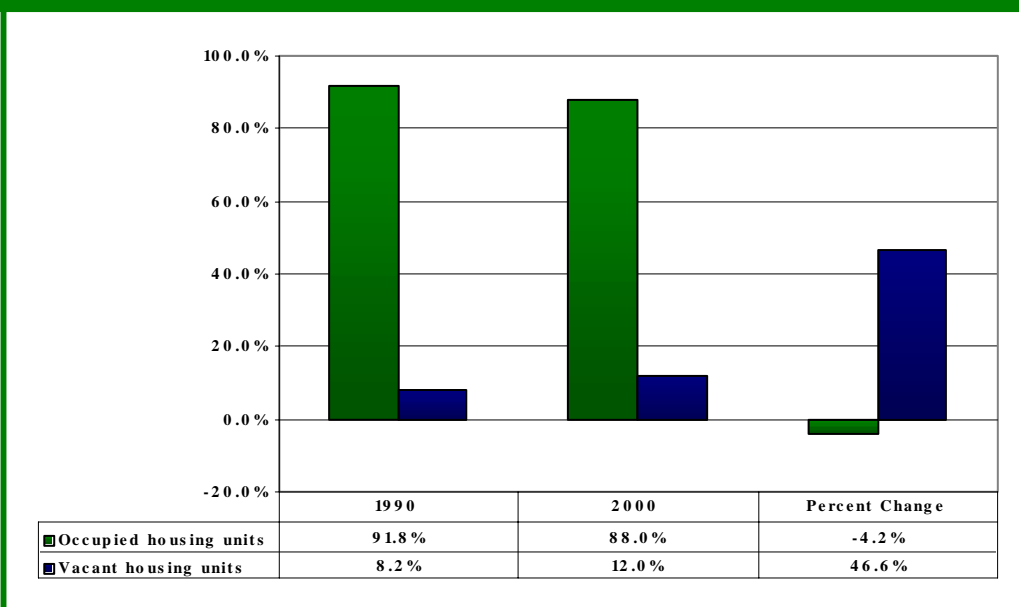
Figure 10 illustrates Binghamton's home ownership rates between 1990, and 2000. This trend depicts a dangerous future for Binghamton's neighborhoods and their stability (neighborhoods are reviewed more specifically below). In 1990, owner-occupied housing units comprised just over 44 percent of Binghamton's overall occupied housing stock. In 1990 signs of decline were evident with 56 percent of households being renter-occupied. 2000 Census data confirms that home-ownership is becoming less likely in Binghamton as ownership rates decreased over 3 percent and rental occupancy increased 2.5 percent.

Figure 11 shows cause for concern over the future stability of Binghamton's neighborhoods.

Between 1990 and 2000, the number of vacant housing units increased by 46.6 percent. 2000 Census data suggests that Binghamton now has 2,882 vacant housing units. Adding to these concerns of decreasing home-ownership and increasing vacant housing units is the illegal conversion of

many large single-family homes into multiple unit dwellings, adding further disruption to some of Binghamton's neighborhoods. Some of these trends can be explained by the downsizing of corporations like IBM and Raytheon, as well as Binghamton University's goal to increase its student population. One measure of the success of this plan will depend on comprehensively addressing these housing trends by turning them around by the next decennial census (2010).

Figure 11 Binghamton Housing Occupancy



Source: Bureau of the Census

COMMERCIAL CORE IN NEED OF REPAIR

A former Federal Housing Administrator said, "any city that does not set in motion by 1960 a comprehensive program to fight blight will be flirting with municipal ruin by 1965." Unfortunately, the City's leaders took heed of this advice and "set in motion carefully designed programs of progress."



In the 1960s, the City developed and adopted a “contemporary” urban renewal plan. This urban renewal plan outlined strategies for the demolition of many portions of the City to create efficient movement and parking opportunities for vehicles. Under the guise of “progress,” large portions of Binghamton’s earlier architectural beauty were removed and rebuilt into ordinary buildings, often without respect for its impacts on human interaction and architectural cohesiveness. These improvements failed to develop around people, that which makes a city vibrant.

One of the greatest impacts of the urban renewal plan was the creation of vast expanses of open spaces, resulting in pockets of inactivity and creating disconnections among destinations like The Forum and Veterans Memorial Arena. Although the impacts of these events have been long standing, progress toward a revitalized downtown is being made through several initiatives currently underway. For instance, the City is engaged in many project level activities to attract uses that generate activity and will help to reestablish Binghamton’s role as the regional social and civic center. Some of these projects include the conversion of the Metro Center to office uses, new investments in the arena, stadium, and waterfront trail development, as well as the proposed intermodal facility and business incubator. Gorgeous Washington’s festival events are once again attracting residents into the downtown core. Other on-going initiatives are renewing downtown Binghamton’s role as the arts and financial hub of the region. Guided by a strategic vision, the City can further leverage vacant and underutilized land downtown to build upon these initiatives and create vibrant urban districts. The challenge for downtown revitalization will be to establish a coordinated organization to support this evolution and address the issues of parking, lighting, clear connections to open space, and restoring outside perceptions of Binghamton.



BINGHAMTON FISCAL IMPACT ANALYSIS

The fiscal impact analysis is intended to be one of several tools policy makers can use to evaluate Binghamton's tax structure compared to other similar communities. For each of the comparative communities below, the analysis evaluates the local municipal and school tax structure to understand how Binghamton is performing relative to other New York State communities. Using this analysis will allow policy makers to have a general sense of how Binghamton might be better prepared when developing a marketing strategy for the community. This combined with such other decision criteria such as quality of life, conservation values, existing infrastructure, community character and others, should help provide a framework for Binghamton's future.

The model of fiscal analysis used for this plan is geared toward a comparative analysis. It uses local taxes (municipal and school), property values, and tax rates in place in fiscal year ending 1998. The data used is the most recent available from the NYS Comptroller's Office. It doesn't provide a comprehensive picture of Binghamton's total fiscal position. Rather it indicates the City's fiscal position in relationship to other communities.

Interpreting the Results

The State Board of Real Property Services establishes equalization rates annually for each of New York's cities, towns and villages that are assessing units. The assessors can assess property at any fraction of market value that they choose. The equalization rate is the ratio of the locally determined assessed value of taxable real property to the Board's estimate of market value. The equalization rate can thus be used to convert assessed taxes and values to equalized (or full) taxes and values that can then be compared across municipalities to determine actual wealth of the community.

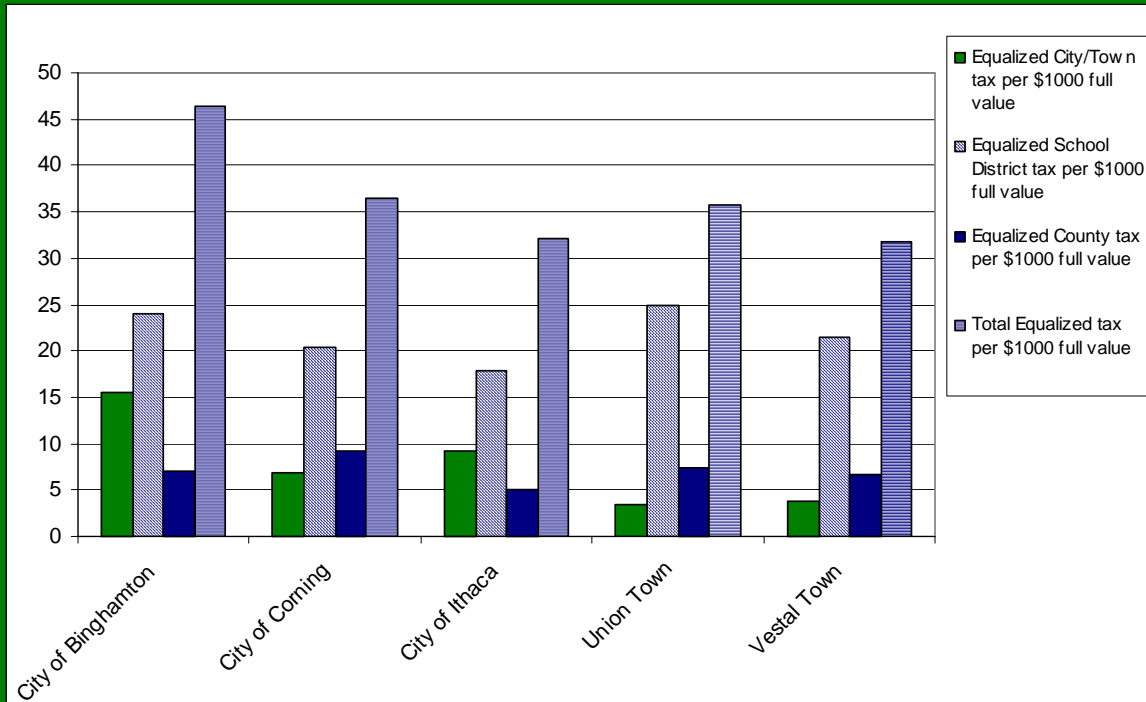
In the following section, equalization rates are used to bring all communities under comparison to a common yardstick. High taxable values should (all things equal) indicate greater wealth. In order to take account of sheer size and numbers that could lead to disproportionate results, ratios of full taxable value to land, population, and enrolled students were used (See Figure 13). This gives a more accurate comparative picture.

A low taxable value could indicate lower wealth, or erosion of the tax base over time, perhaps due to declining industries and/or migration to greener pastures. This is especially true if accompanied by higher than average equalized tax rates (See Figure 12). These may indicate that the eroded tax base has lead to a higher rate of taxation in the effort to raise revenue. This analysis also looks at some indicators of school, county and local finances in order to assess whether high taxes could be due to skewed finances.

Equalized Taxes and Taxable Value

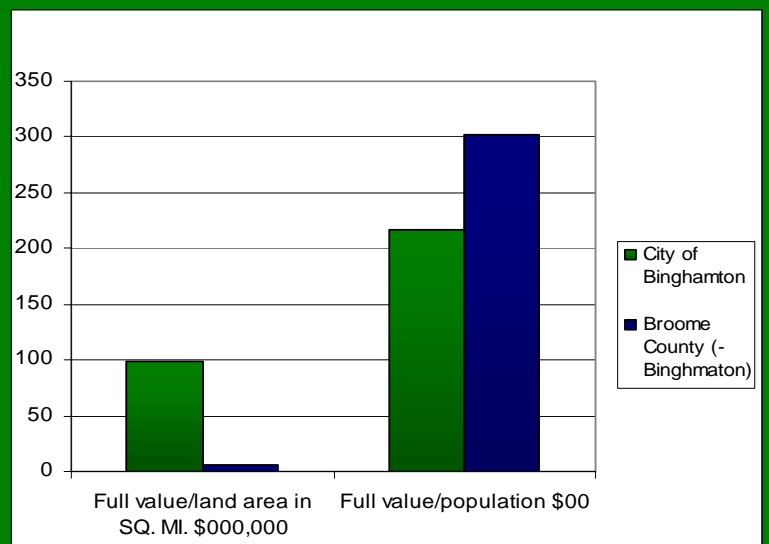
How does the City of Binghamton compare with the City of Ithaca, the City of Corning, the Town of Union (containing Endicott and Johnson City) and the Town of Vestal in terms of taxes and land values?



Figure 12 Equalized Taxes

The City of Binghamton has a much higher total equalized tax per \$1000 of taxable value than any of the other municipalities under comparison. In particular, it has the highest City tax and the second highest school district tax. The reason for this emerges in the Figure 13. Binghamton has the lowest taxable full values as a ratio of population, land area and enrolled pupils.

The analysis further compares the taxable values of Binghamton with Broome County, minus the City of Binghamton (Figure 13). The results are what we would expect: Although the figure for taxable value as a proportion of land value for Broome County is much lower than that for Binghamton, (understandable, given that Broome County covers over 706 square miles and includes rural areas) the figure for taxable value as a proportion of population is higher. This is despite the fact that the population of Binghamton has been steadily decreasing. And disturbingly, the full taxable value of

Figure 13 Taxable Value as a Proportion of Land and Population

Full Value = Equalization Rate x locally assessed value



Binghamton fell by 14.4% in just one year between 1997-1998, from \$1,204,451 to \$1,031,113. So not only is the tax base of Binghamton comparatively low, it is also declining.

A look at the school district finances (Figure 14) does not seem to indicate that school district spending is out of line relative to the comparison communities. Indeed, the total expenditure per pupil in the City of Binghamton is just about average. This reinforces the argument that it is an eroding of the tax base that has lead to such high taxes per thousand dollars of full value in Binghamton.

Figure 14 School District Finances

| Place | No. of Pupils | Total Expenditure \$000 | Total Expenditure/Enrolled Pupils \$000 |
|-------------------------|---------------|-------------------------|---|
| City of Binghamton | 6,210 | 64336.5 | 10.4 |
| City of Corning | 5,456 | 57678.3 | 10.6 |
| Village of Endicott | 4,705 | 42840.5 | 9.1 |
| City of Ithaca | 6,021 | 73452.9 | 12.2 |
| Village of Johnson City | 2,781 | 27088.1 | 9.7 |
| Town of Vestal | 4,358 | 37135.7 | 8.5 |
| Place Average | 4,291.8 | 50,422 | 10 |

(Source: Comptroller's Special Report for Municipal Affairs for New York State, 1998)

Interestingly, Broome County's finances do seem skewed (Figure 15). It has the highest expenditure per capita and the biggest percentage shortfall between revenue and expenditure. But Binghamton's county tax is not appreciably different from those of the other municipalities surveyed. This is not surprising. The Town's of Union and Vestal and City of Binghamton are all in Broome County, so a difference in County expenditures would not really show up as a difference in the taxes of the municipalities surveyed.

Figure 15 County Finances

| County | 2000 Population | Total Expenditure \$000 | Total Expenditure per capita \$000 | Total Revenue \$000 | (Total Revenue – Total Expenditure) / Total Revenue |
|----------|-----------------|-------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------|---|
| Broome | 2,00,536 | 257,664.8 | 1.28 | 241,711.3 | -6.6% |
| Steuben | 98,726 | 107,388.4 | 1.08 | 107,887.6 | .46% |
| Tompkins | 96,501 | 96,239.7 | 1 | 94,051.9 | -2.3% |

(Source: Comptroller's Special Report for Municipal Affairs for New York State, 1998)



Figure 16 Local Finances

| Place | 2000 Population | Total Expenditure \$000 | Total Revenue \$000 | Total Expenditure per capita | (Total Revenue – Total Expenditure) / Total Revenue% |
|-------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------------|--|
| City of Binghamton | 47,380 | 57,284.1 | 49,819.7 | 1209 | -15 |
| City of Corning | 10,842 | 14,856.1 | 12,763.3 | 1370 | -16 |
| Village of Endicott | 13,038 | 17,697.6 | 16,837 | 1357 | -5 |
| City of Ithaca | 29,287 | 37,142.6 | 33,811.1 | 1268 | -10 |
| Village of Johnson City | 15,535 | 12,492.4 | 12,797.9 | 804 | 2.4 |
| Town of Vestal | 26,535 | 14,947.5 | 13,349.4 | 563 | -12 |
| Place Average | 23,769.5 | 25,736.7 | 23,229.7 | 1095 | -9 |

(Source: Comptroller's Special Report for Municipal Affairs for New York State, 1998)

The local finances too seem a bit skewed (Figure 16). Binghamton has an above average expenditure per capita and the second highest percentage deficit between revenue and expenditure.

Even though the tax rates are so high, a homeowner in Binghamton still pays less in taxes than the average homeowner because the cost of homes is lowest among all municipalities surveyed (Figure 17). But this advantage does get somewhat dented because of the higher tax rates. Compare the financial vitality of Binghamton with Vestal, where an average home costs 26% more but overall taxes are 8% lower. Additionally, there is the factor of affordability. When we take account of the fact that Binghamton has the second lowest median household income among all areas under comparison, the advantage seems to vanish completely. An average homeowner in Binghamton spends about 10.7% of household income on homeownership taxes, whereas the average figure is 9.8% of household income.

Figure 17 Tax Cost of Home Ownership

| Place | Median cost of home \$ | Total tax burden \$ | Median Household Income 1990 \$ |
|-------------------------|------------------------|---------------------|------------------------------------|
| City of Binghamton | 48,000 | 2231 | 20,891 |
| City of Corning | 71,000 | 2584.4 | 24,127 |
| Village of Endicott | 69,900 | 3318.2 | 24,610 |
| City of Ithaca | 76,000 | 2448.7 | 17,738 |
| Village of Johnson City | 54,600 | 2439 | 24,097 |
| Town of Vestal | 64,900 | 2063.8 | 41,822 |
| Place Average | 64,067 | 2514 | 25,547.5 |

(Source: Yahoo Real Estate listings)



Summary

The fiscal impact analysis indicates that the tax rates in Binghamton are comparatively on the higher side, and the community is relatively less wealthy than the comparative communities. A significant reason for this appears to be a low or eroded tax base. A lesser reason for high tax rates may be attributed to local finances. It may benefit Binghamton to streamline its expenses, bring out timely budgets and, if at all possible, avoid raising taxes. In the long run, fiscal health will depend on the City's ability to revitalize the tax base, and attract investment, companies, and new jobs to the local economy. Merely raising taxes to increase revenue would dilute one of the advantages Binghamton has: its relatively low cost of living. Instead, the City needs to focus on fostering and maintaining the perception that it is a good, safe, economical place to live and do business in.

BINGHAMTON'S EMPLOYMENT AND PRODUCTIVITY

Occupational Projections and Trends

We are heading now towards a knowledge-based economy in which good jobs will require higher levels of skill and knowledge than ever before. Nationally, between 1998 and 2008, the number of jobs for college graduates is expected to grow nearly 28%, more than twice as fast as other jobs. Many jobs that were considered non-college level by employers are now classified as college level. "Education" upgrading has occurred in many occupations due to changes in job duties, business practices, or technology.

Figure 18 Distribution of Total Employment by Occupation %, U.S.

| Occupation | 1988 | 1998 | 2008 |
|-----------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Executive & Managerial | 10.3 | 10.5 | 10.7 |
| Professional | 12.5 | 14.1 | 15.6 |
| Technicians | 3.2 | 3.5 | 3.8 |
| Marketing/Sales | 10.3 | 10.9 | 11 |
| Administrative support | 18.5 | 17.4 | 16.6 |
| Services | 15.5 | 16 | 16.4 |
| Agriculture | 3.5 | 3.2 | 2.8 |
| Production, craft & repair | 11.9 | 11.1 | 10.5 |
| Operators, fabricators & laborers | 14.2 | 13.2 | 12.7 |

Source: The Economist November 3rd 2001

In the Southern Tier Region of New York State (including the Broome, Chemung, Chenango, Delaware, Otsego, Schuyler, Steuben, Tioga, and Tompkins Counties), the four fastest growing occupations are projected to be in the computer field. Eight of the top 25 fastest growing jobs are projected to be in the health field (see Appendix I: Occupational Projections). Thus, technical skills and professional education will continue to have an edge in the future job market, both in the Southern Tier Region and in the country as a whole. This point is reinforced by a look at the compensation trends of occupations at three very different points in the skill continuum in the New York-Northern New Jersey-Long Island area:



Figure 19 Compensation Trends

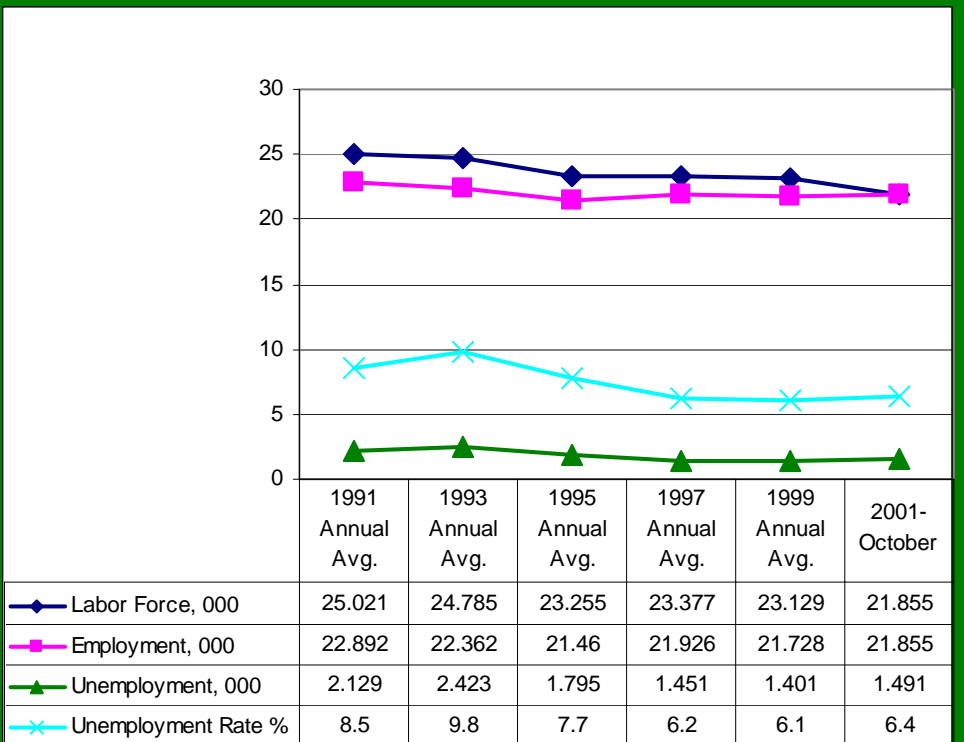
| Occupation | Date | Hourly Compensation \$ |
|--------------------------------------|------------|------------------------|
| Laborers (except construction) | March 1998 | 9.19 |
| | July 1999 | 9.38 |
| | April 2000 | 8.87 |
| Machinists | March 1998 | 16.81 |
| | July 1999 | 17.4 |
| | April 2000 | 17.73 |
| Mathematical and computer scientists | March 1998 | 32.93 |
| | July 1999 | 36.36 |
| | April 2000 | 39.31 |

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

The hourly compensation to unskilled laborers has actually declined between 1998 and 2000, showing a decline in demand, or an increase in supply. The compensation to machinists has increased by 5.5% in the same period. In contrast, the compensation to mathematical and computer scientists has increased by 19.4%. So not only are the compensations of knowledge-based workers four times that of unskilled workers, the income gaps are increasing at an accelerating pace.

Employment Trends

Clearly, unemployment has fallen in the City of Binghamton over the last decade. Even in the midst of the current recession, the unemployment rate is much lower than it was in 1993. However, it is also clear that the labor force has declined steadily since 1991. It has fallen by over 12.6% between 1991-2001. Hence, it is doubtful if the decline in unemployment rate is solely due to new job creation. More likely, it is due in part to the exodus from the city towards greener pastures that has led to a decrease in population and labor force. Moreover, the current rate of unemployment

Figure 20 Binghamton: Labor Force and Unemployment

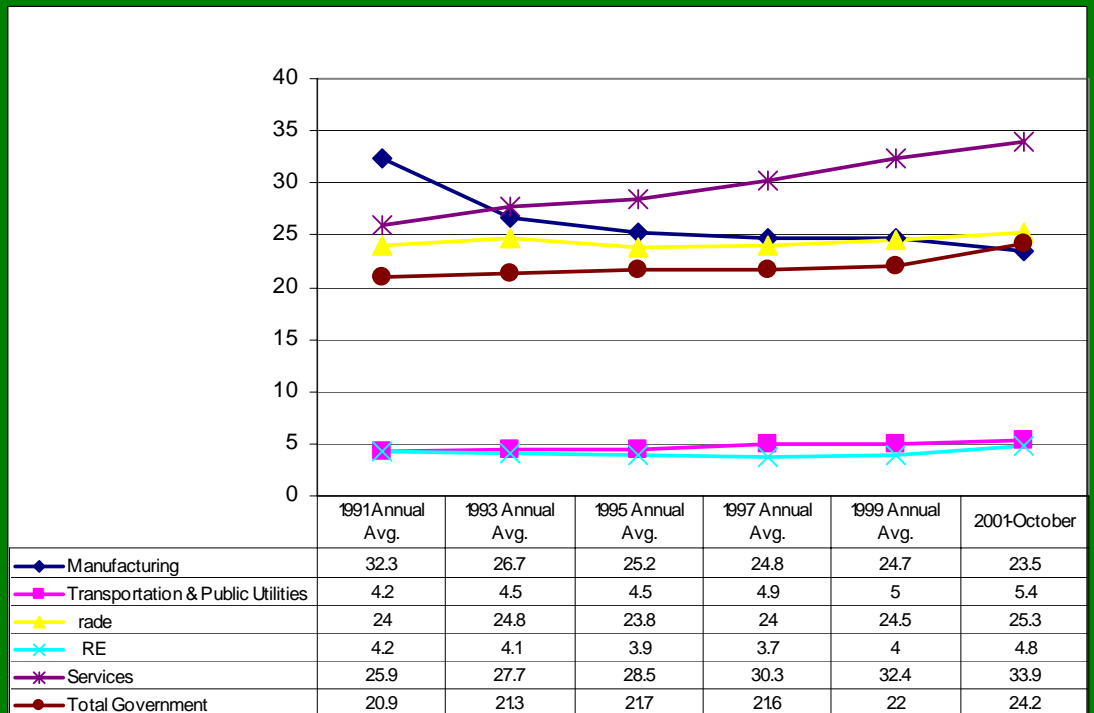
Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics



at 6.4% is higher than the national average of 5.7% (November 2001).

Employment in the manufacturing sector has declined unambiguously in the decade between 1991-2001 (Figure 21). The same period has seen a steady increase in public utilities and services. However, there are fluctuations in employment in Trade, and an increase (largely recent) in government employment.

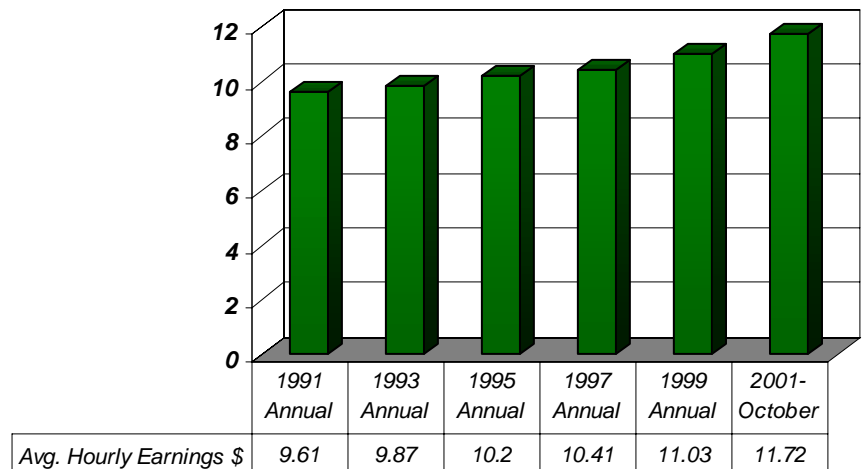
Figure 21 Binghamton: Total Employment By Industry



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

To be sure, manufacturing sector wages in Binghamton have been rising steadily in the last several years (Figure 22). But they have only risen at an average annual rate of 2.2% in the last decade. And, going by the compensation trends at different points in the skill continuum, it is likely that the increases have been largely for more skilled or experienced workers.

Figure 22 Binghamton: Manufacturing Wages



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

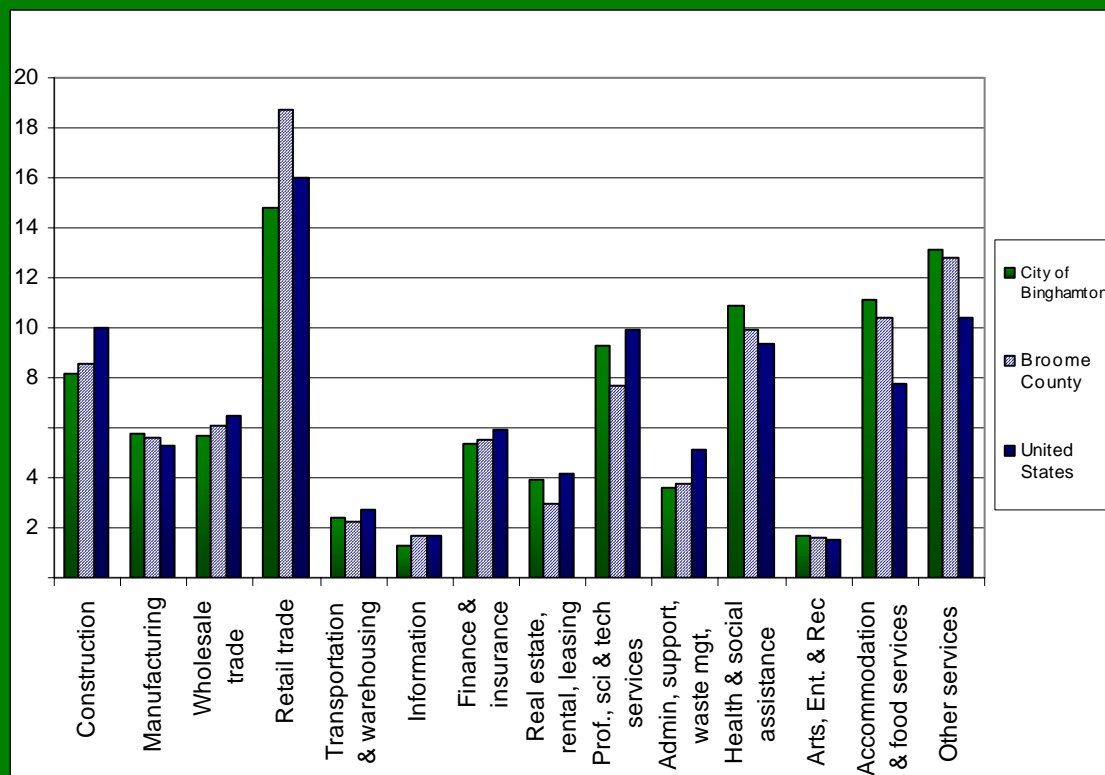
Industrial Structure and Productivity

How does the City of Binghamton compare with the nation in terms of industrial structure? We can answer that question partially with a look at the number of establishments in each industry within the City of Binghamton, Broome County and the United States.

As is evident from Figure 23, there are some marked differences.

Binghamton has a somewhat lower proportion of establishments in construction, retail trade, administration, support, waste management and remediation. The City has a higher proportion in health and social assistance, accommodation and food services, and other services. Broome County has a high representation of retail trade establishments, and a low representation of professional, scientific and technical services.

Figure 23 Percent Share of Establishments, 1998



Source: US Census Bureau, 1998 data

It would appear that Binghamton is well positioned to take advantage of occupational growth projections, as it has a good focus on expanding industries like the different kinds of services, and has an above average educational attainment.

What about the manufacturing sector that has shown national and state level decline in employment over the years? Binghamton has an about average representation of manufacturing establishments. Does it perhaps also have some sort of comparative advantage as far as manufacturing is concerned? To answer this question, we examine trends within the manufacturing sector. In particular, we compare the average income, average value added by manufacture, and capital expenditure in the manufacturing sectors in Binghamton, Broome County, New York State and the United States. The value added by manufacture is



derived by subtracting all materials and contract costs from the receipts. It is one of the best measures for comparing the economic importance of manufacturing among different areas and industries.

Figure 24 Manufacturing Sector Productivity

| Geographic area | Average income in \$ | Value added by manufacture per employee in \$ | Value added per dollar spent on labor | Capital expenditure per worker in \$ (capital intensity) | Value added by manufacture per dollar of capital expenditure |
|--------------------|----------------------|---|---------------------------------------|--|--|
| City of Binghamton | 33,299 | 1,19,803 | 3.6 | 2,790 | 42.9 |
| Broome County | 38,563 | 79,883 | 2.07 | 5,544 | 14.4 |
| New York State | 33,740 | 97,978 | 2.9 | 7,284 | 13.45 |
| United States | 33,907 | 1,08,639 | 3.2 | 9,016 | 12 |

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1997 Economic Census, Manufacturing Series

The City of Binghamton outperforms the County, State and National averages for manufacturing sector productivity. The manufacturing sector is more labor intensive² in the City as compared to the other geographic units under comparison, and yet the returns to labor, in terms of value added by manufacture per worker, are the highest. To look at it another way, manufacturing sector employees in the City of Binghamton get paid the lowest average income, and yet produce the maximum in terms of value added. This is a very positive indication of the vitality and competitiveness of the existing manufacturing sector, and is perhaps linked to the comparatively high rate of educational attainment that Binghamton enjoys.

However, the very low rate of capital expenditure per worker, together with the finding that the City has high tax rates and comparatively low (and falling) taxable values, points to a disturbing conclusion, that the City and businesses have stopped investing in themselves, their buildings and capital equipment. A key objective of the City must, therefore, include an assessment of how it can attract more private investment, and the areas in which public investment may pay the highest dividends (for instance, in a public transportation system, parks, and other public infrastructure).

Key Employment Findings For Binghamton

- The unemployment rate in Binghamton has fallen from 9.8% to 6.4% in the last decade, but the labor force has also declined by 12.6% in this period.
- The services sector employs the maximum number of people and is the fastest growing sector. Manufacturing, on the other hand, has seen a steady decline in employment. These facts mirror national trends.

² Labor intensity is defined as the ratio of labor to capital used in production. We are assuming here that average cost of capital is uniform in all the geographic regions under consideration. Then we can use capital expenditure per worker as an indication of capital intensity, and its inverse as labor intensity.



- Binghamton has a higher than average (as compared to county, state and national figures) capital and labor productivity in the manufacturing sector. However, it has markedly low capital investment.
- Binghamton's high productivity coupled with its high rate of educational attainment makes it well poised to take advantage of growth occupations and expanding industries. However, the City must replenish its capital stock by encouraging reinvestment in plants, equipment, and buildings.

MAKING NEIGHBORHOODS COMPETITIVE

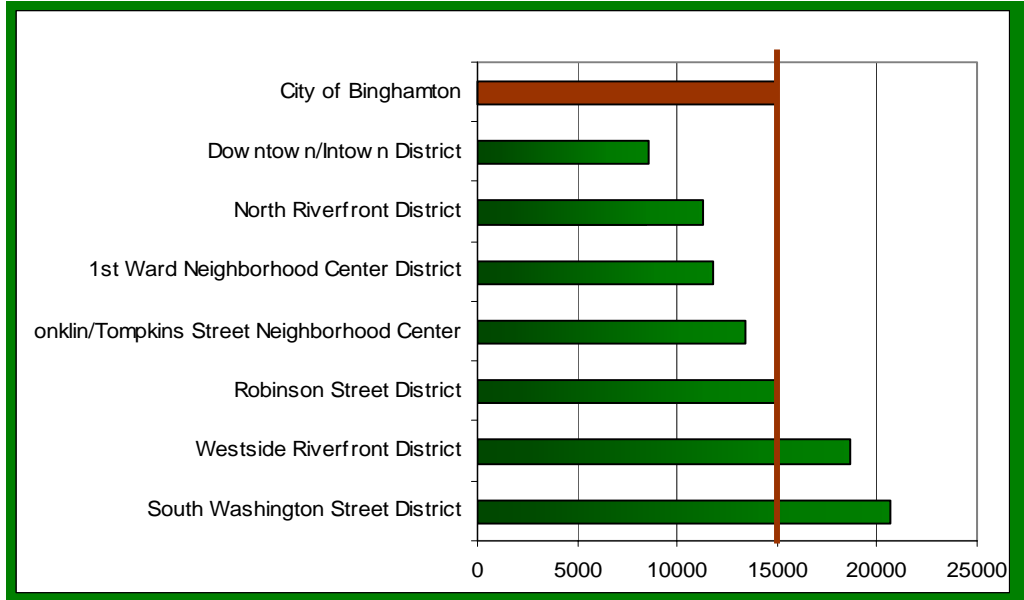
An examination of Binghamton's neighborhoods shows a clear pattern of disparity between them. The trends outlined below illustrate problems of poverty, lack of education, and inadequate infrastructure that haunt specific

neighborhoods of the City. The neighborhood definitions used here are based on the district plans used later in the Comprehensive Plan. Calculations are based on U.S. Census block group data. The block groups for each neighborhood are defined in the appendices.

Figure 25 indicates that the Downtown/Intown District has the lowest per capita income level relative to the other districts (just over \$8,600). The North Riverfront and First Ward

Neighborhood Center Districts follow with per capita income levels at \$11,339 and \$11,757 respectively. The Conklin/Tompkins Street Neighborhood Center (\$15,062) and Robinson Street Districts (\$13,422) are in the middle. The 1999 estimates indicate that the West Side Riverfront and South Washington Street Districts are the most prosperous with per capita income levels of \$18,682 and \$20,674, respectively. This review shows that the southwest portion of the City, in particular, seems relatively wealthy, while the Downtown and North Riverfront, constituting the central core of the City, and the neighborhoods in the northwest portion of the City are relatively poor.

Figure 25 1999 Per Capita Income By Neighborhood

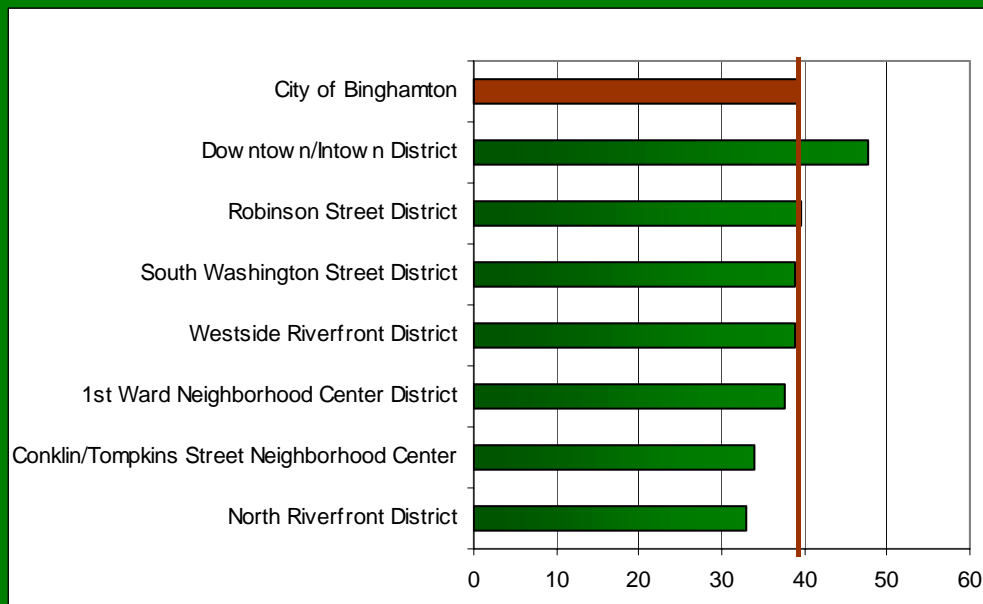


Source: Binghamton University projections



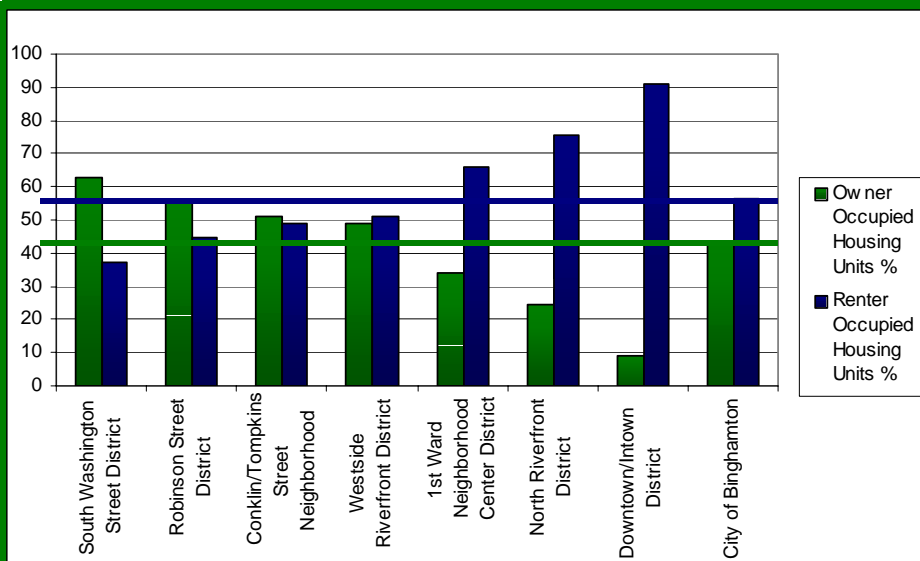
Figure 26 shows that not only does the Downtown/Intown District have the lowest per capita income population, it also has the oldest with a median age of nearly 48 years old. The Robinson Street District shows up as the second oldest population in the City (39.6). The following districts are all roughly the same age with a median age pushing 40: South Washington Street District (38.9), West Side Riverfront District (38.8), and First Ward Neighborhood Center District (38). The Conklin/Tompkins Street Neighborhood Center District has the second youngest population (34). While the North Riverfront District has the second lowest per capita income, it has the youngest population in the City with a median age of 33.

Figure 26 1999 Median Age By Neighborhood



Source: Binghamton University projections

Figure 27 1999 Housing Ownership by Neighborhood



Source: Binghamton University projections

The City's pattern of homeownership is strikingly similar to that of the City's per capita income distribution. A far greater percentage of housing units are owner occupied in the comparatively rich South Washington Street District than in the Downtown/In-town District, where an overwhelming majority are renter occupied. This fact bears out the general observation that areas with predominantly renter-occupied units usually have lower incomes. They may also tend to have lower quality, old or deteriorating housing stock.



The Downtown/In-Town District is also the least educated, with the maximum percentage of people educated below the 12th grade, and the least percentage with college degrees (see overleaf). The North Riverfront District does not do well either in terms of educational attainment. Predictably, the rich Westside Riverfront District and South Washington Street District have the highest proportion of people with college degrees.

Clearly, the supply of and demand for housing within the City should be more in balance than it presently is. A close look at the City suggests, that reinvestment efforts need to be targeted towards the poor, less educated, and mostly renter-occupied districts of Downtown/In-Town, North Riverfront, and the First Ward Neighborhood Center District. While the Conklin/Tompkins Street Neighborhood Center District does not show any outright signs of concern based on this data, other indicators do begin to show a pattern of decline. For instance, the District is still predominately owner-occupied, but just barely. Binghamton University's housing survey did find a higher tendency of low homeowner maintenance. This coupled with mediocre per capita incomes and a relatively young, educated population may suggest that residents need help in the short-term to maintain their properties with low-interest loans and/or a grant program. The intent of such a program would be to generally "dress-up" the neighborhoods by encouraging residents to maintain their homes so that the housing balance does not make the shift to higher renter occupancies. The West Side Riverfront District also shows some indication of a need for attention as with its relatively high student population and increasing number of single-family home conversions. Binghamton needs to rebuild its core to regain its once vital neighborhood centers and make Downtown a vital destination for both City and regional residents. Creating vital neighborhood centers which support a variety of relatively small-scale enterprises that are both information-rich and neighborhood friendly will be the fundamental theme to revitalizing Binghamton's neighborhoods and the City as a whole.

CONCLUSION: ANOTHER NEW START FOR BINGHAMTON

The findings above indicate that Binghamton is feeling the effects of a major economic transition. Nonetheless, despite the economic upheavals of the 1990s, the City has a well-educated population and the potential to attract a younger population with the presence of Binghamton University in neighboring Vestal. In the past, companies like IBM and Raytheon thrived in the Binghamton region because of its strengths, which was essentially built on a dedicated, hard working, and well-educated citizenry. The Southern Tier itself has shown signs of employment growth. After eight years of decline, Broome County has added more than 3,000 jobs in the last two years.

The challenge to Binghamton City leaders today is to create an environment that is appealing to new business and industry, as well as new and returning residents. This means renewing the City's image in the region, revitalizing Binghamton's more challenged neighborhoods (and protecting those that work), and establishing an attractive environment for business development efforts. To be successful, Binghamton leadership and residents alike must be willing to commit to a common direction, take simple coordinated steps to get reinvestment, and attract new partners. Finally, and most importantly, the community must be prepared to maintain a long-term commitment to reestablishing itself.



III. CHOOSING THE STRATEGIC DIRECTION: PLAN ALTERNATIVES

BINGHAMTON'S ALTERNATIVE PLANS

Creating alternative development scenarios is an element of community visioning strategies that helps communities understand their current state of affairs and build community consensus regarding how to develop a common vision. Development of the following alternative scenarios began with a detailed understanding of the community, including its history, development patterns, and demographic and economic trends. Consideration was also given to the community's function in the regional, national, and global economic markets. Based on this analysis, alternative plans were developed to better understand how Binghamton might progress through the early stages of the 21st century.

It's important to recognize that the social, economic, and land use choices made today will have profound impacts on the future successes of Binghamton. Accordingly, this section outlines three possible alternative development scenarios for Binghamton. The alternatives presented do not exhaust the potential range of alternatives that could be considered. The existing conditions inventory, community involvement process, and community survey were reviewed in conjunction with municipal leadership to shape the following alternative visions for Binghamton. These scenarios do not attempt to predict future conditions exactly. Instead, the alternatives are used to determine what *could* happen if each these policy choices were made today. The preferred alternative will be the community's vision for its future as well as the foundation for the Comprehensive Plan. This alternative will determine the level of commitment necessary as well as the policies and projects required to achieve the community's vision.

Alternative 1: Patch & Mend (Status Quo)

The *Patch & Mend* alternative focuses on Binghamton's continued efforts to invest in scattered projects on an as needed basis, with minimal coordination and long-term cumulative impacts. Generally, the *Patch & Mend* alternative maintains existing economic and land use development policies. The *Patch & Mend* alternative maintains current downtown revitalization efforts, but does not provide for a coordinated approach that connects and enhances these recent successes. Quality of life improvements, such as an enhanced waterfront and park reinvestment, do not play a role in the long-term budgeting process. Instead, existing amenities are taken care of as they become deteriorated and need repairing. Economic development initiatives under this approach do not actively work to diversify the economic base by defining target industries, but instead accepts anything proposed. Gateway enhancements and local infrastructure improvements under the *Patch & Mend* alternative are completed on an as needed basis, with minimal investment at the gateways. The *Patch & Mend* alternative recognizes the emerging conflicts between commercial and residential uses by refining zoning district boundaries, but does not impose design policies to control the negative impacts inflicted on adjacent residences and neighborhoods. With regard to housing and neighborhood improvements, the *Patch & Mend* alternative would refine zoning districts and encourage improved code enforcement in targeted areas experiencing considerable transition.



Alternative 2: Restructuring for Regional Access

The *Restructuring for Regional Access* alternative focuses investment on Binghamton's infrastructure network, including roads, sewer, water, and telecommunications. However, the greatest investment is put into the city's internal roadway network and connections to the regional highway network to foster efficient movement into and through the city for automobiles. More recent development trends have positioned new economic activity at the outskirts of the urban core primarily because of the inherent difficulties of accessibility.

The intent of the *Restructuring for Regional Access* strategy is to market the efficient infrastructure network to business and industry and illustrate how the City has overcome these perceived limitations to urban redevelopment. Consequently, this strategy will involve new economic and land use development policies that cater to the needs of efficiency. The *Restructuring for Regional Access* alternative redirects downtown revitalization efforts to improve access to major destinations, such as the Forum, Veterans Memorial Arena, and NYSEG Stadium. The *Restructuring for Regional Access* alternative has little incentive to improve quality of life matters. Instead, the focus is on the functional regiments of industry such as effective and efficient infrastructure, accessibility and community acceptance. This strategy involves profound public sector capital investment, which will "hold" industry in place, but will be less likely to attract new residents. The net result is often a stable tax base. Like the *Patch & Mend* strategy, quality of life improvements, such as an enhanced waterfront and park reinvestment, do not play a role in the long-term budgeting process. Instead, minimal funding is steered into the maintenance of the parks and other convenience amenities. Business development efforts under the *Restructuring for Regional Access* alternative would primarily focus on industries that could take advantage of the City's rail and roadway networks, such as a distribution center. Gateway enhancements and local infrastructure improvements under the *Restructuring for Regional Access* alternative become a primary investment in the city. Generally, land use decisions will focus on investing in significant land banks to foster intense impact development with little focus on quality of life endeavors. In addition, the treatment of the gateways becomes important not only from a functional perspective, but also aesthetically. Like the *Patch & Mend* approach, the *Restructuring for Regional Access* alternative recognizes the emerging conflicts between commercial and residential uses by refining zoning district boundaries. However, the *Restructuring for Regional Access* alternative would establish site design standards that promote clear and efficient movement of vehicular traffic. The *Restructuring for Regional Access* alternative would refine zoning districts and promote code enforcement as mechanisms to improve deteriorating and threatened neighborhoods.

Alternative 3: Restructuring to Create a Vital Place

The *Restructuring to Create a Vital Place* alternative requires the most significant amount of change for Binghamton. Under this alternative, Binghamton's master plan will call for a community of balanced land use, which includes services, products, and amenities for both visitors and residents. This scenario is structured around the basic notion that a city can enhance its residents' quality of life by providing



convenience, encouraging community involvement and offering its residents a long list of amenities. The *Restructuring to Create a Vital Place* alternative would create a positive environment in which to live, work and raise a family.

The *Restructuring to Create a Vital Place* alternative recognizes Binghamton as the social, cultural, and government hub of the region. Appropriately, this strategy reinvests heavily in the downtown core with destination-oriented projects. Under this strategy the location of these projects becomes a critical component to their future success. The primary intent is to “connect” existing destinations to create a more vibrant social and commerce-related environment. The *Restructuring to Create a Vital Place* alternative would draw on the best thinking in urban planning and design to create a master plan which integrates elements essential to a successful regional niche commercial and retail, as well as arts and entertainment market for the downtown. Some of these elements would include encouraging both professional and residential development on the upper floors of existing underutilized buildings, improved access to the waterfront, and promoting stimulating regional cultural and civic establishments. Under this scenario, retail activities would range from convenience shops and services at a neighborhood level to citywide and regionally oriented activities attracting shoppers from throughout the Binghamton region. The commercial vitality of Binghamton would especially be reflected in the variety of places to eat and opportunities for entertainment. The *Restructuring to Create a Vital Place* alternative would provide interconnected venues throughout the city, allowing for events such as a wine festival, antique shows, an Arts Festival, an open air summer concert series, and other activities. This alternative would also include the cultivation of arts and culture-related institutions, particularly in the downtown area.

The *Restructuring to Create a Vital Place* alternative would provide for increased efforts to broaden the local employment base and create improved opportunity for local and regional residents. A diversified economy would be the objective, meaning that several different sectors would service the local and regional employment base. In Binghamton, this would include information-based technologies and manufacturing industries as well as building on recent successes, such as the conversion of the Metro Center to office uses, investments in the Arena, ball field, and library, and the proposed student housing projects, intermodal facility, and business incubator. If a successful plan is developed around this scenario, the measures that accomplish this will lead to a steadily expanding and relatively stable local and regional economy with the flexibility to respond to changing market conditions and withstand setbacks in individual sectors.

Gateways are important transition areas in which visitors form first impressions of a community. Gateways are also important to residents as identifiers that they live in a “special” place and care about where they live. Under this alternative, gateways are recognized as important areas that deserve special treatments. In addition, local infrastructure improvements become an important component to rebuilding and renewing the image of Binghamton.

Like the previous alternatives, the *Restructuring to Create a Vital Place* alternative recognizes the emerging conflicts between commercial and residential uses by refining zoning district boundaries, but also develops design policies to control the negative impacts inflicted on adjacent residences and



neighborhoods. This strategy also moves the design policies to the next level by imposing, and strictly holding to, architectural policies. With regard to housing and neighborhood improvements, the *Restructuring to Create a Vital Place* alternative would promote improved code enforcement in targeted areas experiencing considerable transition as well as redefine the uses permitted in each residential district.

In January 2001, the Alternatives Plans outlined above were presented to the Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee at the new Broome County Public Library. That night the Committee selected *Restructuring to Create a Vital Place* as the Preferred Alternative. Consequently, this alternative strategy is the foundation for the City of Binghamton Comprehensive Plan.

Restructuring to Create a Vital Place proposes a highly diversified economy, which includes some level of industry, and attracts both conventional and emerging high-tech, information driven industries, and high value added services. This alternative will also require that investments be made to attract leisurely activities and provide recreational opportunities that are appealing to a broad population. This strategy will involve a strong commitment and leadership by the public sector to develop high quality of life amenities as a mechanism to attract new business and industry as well as forming partnerships with existing institutions such as Broome County Community College and Binghamton University.

Public parks are fundamental features of livable and enjoyable communities. In order to attract industries proposed in this alternative, public parks, open space, and recreational activities will be important to address. Moreover, enhancing the public realm will be an important means for Binghamton to maximize its share of future private sector investment. Investments made in public amenities such as bicycle paths, amenities along major arterial highways, street trees, sidewalks, public parks and open spaces; when viewed collectively, create an inviting and livable environment in which to live and work. These types of public investments will make a significant impact on future generations as they make their choices of where to live and raise families.



IV. BINGHAMTON'S FUTURE: VISION AND APPROACH

THE PLAN VISION: REESTABLISH A VIBRANT REGIONAL CENTER

Smaller cities like Binghamton have traditionally played a relatively clear function: they provided a place for regional residents to gather for social and cultural activities as well as to meet their daily banking, commercial and retail needs. Some, like Binghamton, also included an industrial base that employed city and regional residents. In today's ever-changing and increasingly "portable" economy, businesses and entrepreneurs are searching for communities that offer a high quality of life, an atmosphere of innovation, and the ability to share information and ideas in informal, casual settings. More and more of these companies and entrepreneurs are establishing themselves in smaller cities that offer a lower cost of living and provide distinctive cultural and social experiences.

Like many communities in the Southern Tier of New York State, Binghamton is challenged to meet the needs of today's younger entrepreneurs and emerging businesses. Binghamton is also challenged with the need to create opportunity for recently displaced middle-aged workers as a result of corporate restructurings. However, Binghamton has the advantage of being the region's social and cultural hub with amenities like Veterans Memorial Arena, NYSEG Stadium, and The Forum. The City's parks and recreation system provides numerous activities for both City and regional residents with its swimming pools, annual professional tennis competitions and bike races at Rec Park, and the BMX facilities at Cheri Ann Lindsey Park. Binghamton provides the civic needs of the region with its new County Library, County Court House, state office complex and post offices. Binghamton's transportation connections are notable because of the City's location at the junction of two major highway corridors, which has prompted the coming of a new Intermodal Center. The City is also set apart from other regional communities with its rail yard, which provides nationwide freight connections. Binghamton has the further advantages of a nearby State University and community college, a relatively low cost of living, a high quality school district, and proximity to major metropolitan cities like New York City, Syracuse, and Scranton, Pennsylvania. Few communities can offer such a complete package of so many advantages. The challenge for Binghamton is to bring these assets to the front and begin to renew its image.

Maintaining and stabilizing Binghamton's neighborhoods while connecting to the new information economy will be fundamental to the future success of Binghamton. As information technologies continue to advance and businesses and industries continue to "right size," people will progressively search for communities that offer a high quality of life and foster social interaction while they continue to use the skills and knowledge they developed as professionals. Whether it is consulting or product development and marketing, many individuals are establishing their own small operations. Because of their scale, attracting these operations would be a good match for Binghamton's revitalized neighborhood centers. As these smaller operations begin to become successful, they will also begin to grow and create new employment opportunities. Larger corporations will recognize this success and also become attracted to



Binghamton. Consequently, it is these smaller, innovative entrepreneurial operations that may hold the greatest potential for Binghamton.

It is rare that innovation is accomplished in isolation; innovation is a social process. As noted above, many entrepreneurs and businesses are searching for communities that offer a high quality of life. These amenities alone are not enough. Vital to the success of these small businesses is the need to share ideas. Consequently, communities that foster social interaction among small business and industry hold the greatest potential to attract these entities. This means providing places for people to integrate and share ideas, providing high-speed Internet connections, and providing civic, cultural, and recreational amenities. Renewing Binghamton's neighborhoods and reinvesting in the commercial core of downtown will be the City's source of long-term economic competitiveness for attracting and expanding employment opportunities and once again making Binghamton a regional center.

Reestablishing Binghamton as a vibrant regional center means continued investment in the City's neighborhoods, parks, and the overall public realm. It means protecting the environmental quality in the City. It means maintaining and improving the integrity of Binghamton's neighborhoods and historical character. It means nurturing and supporting a variety of relatively small-scale enterprises that are both information-rich and neighborhood friendly. It means capitalizing on the City's distinctive civic and cultural advantages. Even before the term was coined, the Binghamton region was the leader in the "information/idea economy." This Comprehensive Plan seeks to restore a role for Binghamton in the information/idea economy by building upon Binghamton's civic and cultural strengths as well as the region's reputation for innovation. However, a number of challenges must also be addressed.



THE PLAN APPROACH: REVITALIZE VITAL NEIGHBORHOOD CENTERS

Binghamton's Comprehensive Plan places a high value on the vitality that the centers of neighborhoods can bring to the community as a whole. These centers promote the interaction, accessibility, and creativity on which neighborhoods and communities depend to be sustainable, vital places. They also provide more cohesive work-living arrangements. Developing these centers as attractive places will help to attract a new generation of people who can help stabilize and create an improved sense of ownership within Binghamton's neighborhoods. By connecting these centers to the people of Binghamton, new opportunities will emerge for social and work interaction. To help achieve this interaction, the use of physical design improvements will be fundamental to a cohesive environment of working and living. Thus, the Comprehensive Plan must address the critical issue of improving the quality of life in the City while maintaining the diversity, liveliness, and history of its neighborhoods as vital centers of activity.

The challenge of this approach is the fact that revitalization is the process of influencing the choices people and businesses make about where they want to live and work. The Plan responds to this challenge by focusing revitalization efforts on seven discrete districts throughout the City. These seven districts include the First Ward Neighborhood Center District, Westside Riverfront District, North Riverfront District, Downtown/In-Town District, South Bridge District, Robinson Street District, and the Conklin/Tompkins Street Neighborhood Center District. (See map on following page for geographic locations.) Each district generally defines a development program and key characteristics to help guide both public and private investment in both the outlined district as well as the adjoining areas. Although it is unlikely each area will be developed exactly pursuant to the plans outlined, they demonstrate the key characteristics and development principles for each area and should be used in any decision making for the City.

The district plans represent places that are of unique character or have a specific function within the City of Binghamton's neighborhoods. Generally, the goal of each district is to add quality and functionality to adjoining neighborhoods, and to the City as a whole. When successfully implemented, these areas will contribute significantly to the revitalization of Binghamton.



V. PLAN RESPONSE: POLICIES AND PROJECTS FOR A VIBRANT REGIONAL CENTER

Development of this Comprehensive Plan included a significant public participation process that involved not only the residents and business owners of Binghamton, but also the public officials who work daily to ensure the City continues to operate safely and efficiently. Consequently, the projects and policies outlined below are essentially a reflection of the community as a whole and outline how Binghamton should move forward into the beginning of the 21st Century. This Plan, then, should serve the community as a vision statement and development framework to guide both public and private sector decision-making and investments.

This Plan builds on Binghamton's rich cultural and economic diversity by embracing development principles that recognize the delicate, and often difficult, interaction between community, environment and economic progress. To accomplish much of what is outlined in this plan, the leadership of Binghamton must work to stimulate new growth and development. The City must also continue to preserve and enhance the existing stable neighborhoods and work to revitalize neighborhoods experiencing decline and lack of investment. In a society that is becoming increasingly mobile, the City's neighborhoods and cultural and recreational amenities will become increasingly important. Their importance is further emphasized as Binghamton begins to promote itself in the new global economy to expand business and industry opportunity and to attract new residents.

The following Comprehensive Plan recognizes and respects the significance of Binghamton's neighborhoods as important elements to the recovery of the City's economy and quality of life. Accordingly, the Comprehensive Plan begins with recommendations which generally define Binghamton's neighborhoods on a district basis. These district recommendations represent places of unique character and have a specific function within the City (see map following page 34). These *neighborhood-oriented districts include:*

- **First Ward Neighborhood Center**
- **West Side Riverfront**
- **North Riverfront**
- **Robinson Street**
- **South Washington Street**
- **Conklin/Tompkins Street Neighborhood Center**

This Plan also recognizes the crucial role that *Downtown* will play in Binghamton's efforts to become a vibrant regional center. Accordingly, recommendations for **Downtown/Intown** follow the neighborhood-based proposals.

Finally, *citywide recommendations* which transcend individual neighborhoods follow the neighborhood recommendations. These citywide recommendations are organized into four categories that will:

- **Strengthen Binghamton's Quality of Life**
- **Enhance Binghamton's Regional Community Image**
- **Promote Economic Vitality**
- **Advance Neighborhood Stability**



.....

*Comprehensive Plan
Neighborhood District Locations*

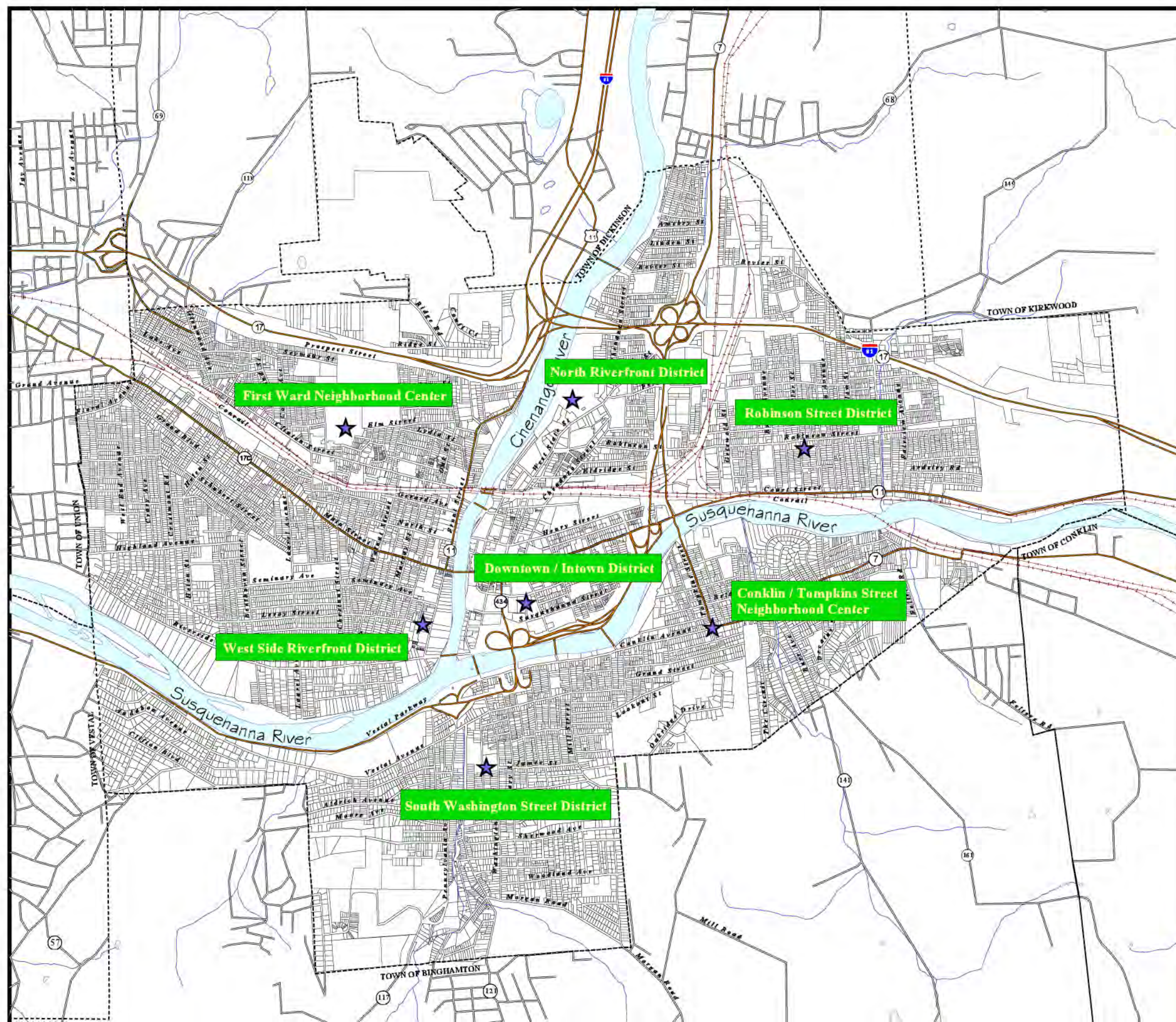




NEIGHBORHOOD DISTRICTS

★ Neighborhood Districts

- Municipal Boundaries
- Railroads
- Major Roads
- Minor Roads
- Rivers & Streams
- Rivers & Lakes
- Parcel Boundary



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FIRST WARD NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER DISTRICT

The First Ward is composed of neighborhoods with rich Eastern European tradition. Historically, residents have taken great pride in this neighborhood and are committed to reinvesting in the area, and the families that make this neighborhood thrive. However, the edges of the neighborhood are experiencing steady decline, which has many causes. Transitioning global markets have had profound impacts on many communities. This transition has been particularly evident in First Ward neighborhoods where Anitec was once a leading employer. This decline was compounded by the rise of technological innovations pushing new business and industry towards “clean” sites with good regional access capable of accommodating sprawling one-story business campuses.

The main transportation corridors that define the edges of the First Ward neighborhoods, including Clinton Street, Front Street, Prospect Street and Glenwood Avenue, have experienced the most

...takes advantage of future redevelopment opportunities at the former Anitec site and creates a definable neighborhood center...

visible and unfavorable impacts through this transition. Although Clinton Street is trying to rebuild itself as a regional antiques destination, this alone will not help revitalize the adjoining neighborhoods. New employment opportunities need to be integrated for the benefit of neighborhood residents. First Ward neighborhoods are also significantly impacted by the presence of Route 17 and may experience further impacts with the proposed upgrading of the highway to meet interstate standards (I-86). These factors have resulted in neighborhood edges that have a “worn-out” appearance and in general transition about their purpose within the City of Binghamton.

The First Ward Neighborhood Center District plan outlined below, and illustrated following page 38, takes advantage of future redevelopment opportunities at the former Anitec site and creates a definable neighborhood center while enhancing important gateways to the emerging Antique Row.

Redevelop the Former Anitec Site as a First Ward Business Center

Historically, the former Anitec site has played an important employment role for residents of the First Ward neighborhood. This site will continue to play an important role for both the City and the adjoining neighborhoods. Consequently, the site should be redeveloped in a way that complements the surrounding neighborhoods and commercial areas. It is further recommended that the site be redeveloped as a campus-like environment with clear pedestrian connections to the adjoining neighborhoods and commercial setting. These same principles should be applied to the nearby Philadelphia Sales and Crane sites.



Sample building environment

Action Steps

- Reposition the former Anitec site for tech industries and/or back office operations.
- The City, NYSDOT, and BMTS are currently developing a strategy to improve access to the First Ward via Front Street, which involves the replacement of the railroad structures over Front Street (near Clinton Street) and realignment of Clinton Street so that it intersects with Front Street on the north side of the tracks. However, the ultimate long-term success of the Anitec site is dependent on improved accessibility. Consequently, consideration should also be given to developing a new access road into the Anitec site via Prospect Street, west of Spring Forest Cemetery.
- Create a market address through amenity. Organize hi-tech industrial buildings around an open, common lawn green space, which provides visual relief and passive leisure opportunities for employees.
- The road network through the business center should include “green” linkages and pedestrian connections throughout.

First Ward Neighborhood Square

As noted, Clinton Street is being rebuilt as a destination/attraction around antiques. Investments like the new pedestrian-oriented lighting and signage that identifies “Antique Row” at the intersection of Front Street should, in the long-term, help to build this corridor as a vital center. However, other projects should be developed that further enhance this corridor and provide increased opportunity for residents and visitors alike to understand the history and vitality of the varied cultures in the First Ward.



Sample Building Design

With this in mind, a new use should be incorporated into the redevelopment of the corridor that renews the neighborhoods identity by establishing a focal point that celebrates Eastern European traditions, such as the First Ward Neighborhood Square.

Action Steps

- Organize in a form that brings special attention to the pedestrian; build around a market square to provide ethnic festival opportunities.
- Include specialty ethnic retail and restaurants which do not compete with downtown renewal but help to stimulate the success of Antique Row.
- A large portion of First Ward residents is made up of an elderly population. As the population continues to age, home maintenance and repairs become an increasing burden. Further, many long-time residents do not want to leave the area in which they raised their families. Consequently, programming of the First Ward Neighborhood Square should include further investigation for the development of a senior living facility (not subsidized by the City). In conjunction with the various services provided along Clinton Street and the proposed Neighborhood Square, retirement housing in this area would help to reestablish the First Ward “neighborhood” and create pedestrian activity along Front Street while supporting the establishments of restaurants and commercial services.
- The First Ward Action Council is very active in developing housing solutions in the First Ward. Consequently, a working relationship with the First Ward Action Council could facilitate development of the Neighborhood Square.



First Ward Park Reprogramming

Binghamton's neighborhood parks have played an important role in providing a gathering place for neighborhood residents, especially those parks with pools. While First Ward Park includes a pool, it requires significant investment to maintain and requires a new program of activities that still economically meet the needs of neighborhood residents. Consequently, the park should be redeveloped with the following principles in mind:

Action Steps

- First Ward Park Memorial Pool needs restoration work because of its cracked foundation. Initial analysis indicates that this will be an extremely costly endeavor. The City should perform a feasibility study to comprehensively understand rehabilitation costs versus new uses for the structure. Then appropriate reuse for the facility should be determined.
- Expand the park east across Charles Street to include a new outdoor amphitheater which takes advantage of the steep nature of the hillside.
- Develop well-lit parking.

Charles Street Streetscape

Charles Street is an important connection from Clinton Street to the First Ward Park. Currently, the park is "hidden" in the neighborhood and those who do not specifically know of its location will never "find" the park. Consequently, it is recommended that West Street be enhanced to make a visual connection that leads neighborhood residents and visitors to the park.

Action Steps

- Increase visual amenity with street trees and pedestrian-scale lighting to draw visitors to First Ward Park.

Continue Antique Row Improvements

Antique Row is an excellent on-going initiative that will help bring increased attention to the First Ward commercial corridor following Clinton Street. However, as the corridor continues to evolve with antique establishments, special attention should be given to provide amenities to both the visitors and residents of the First Ward neighborhoods. These services should include restaurants and other types of attraction-oriented establishments like artist's galleries and living space as well as local service needs like dry cleaners and delis.

Action Steps

- The City should develop a marketing strategy to attract infill commercial/retail and restaurants.



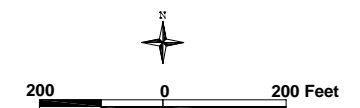
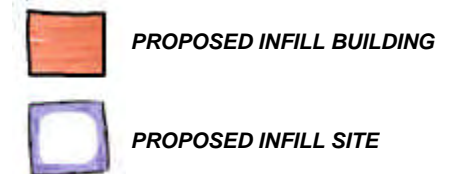


*First Ward Neighborhood Center
Concept Plan Graphic*





First Ward Neighborhood Center Concept Plan

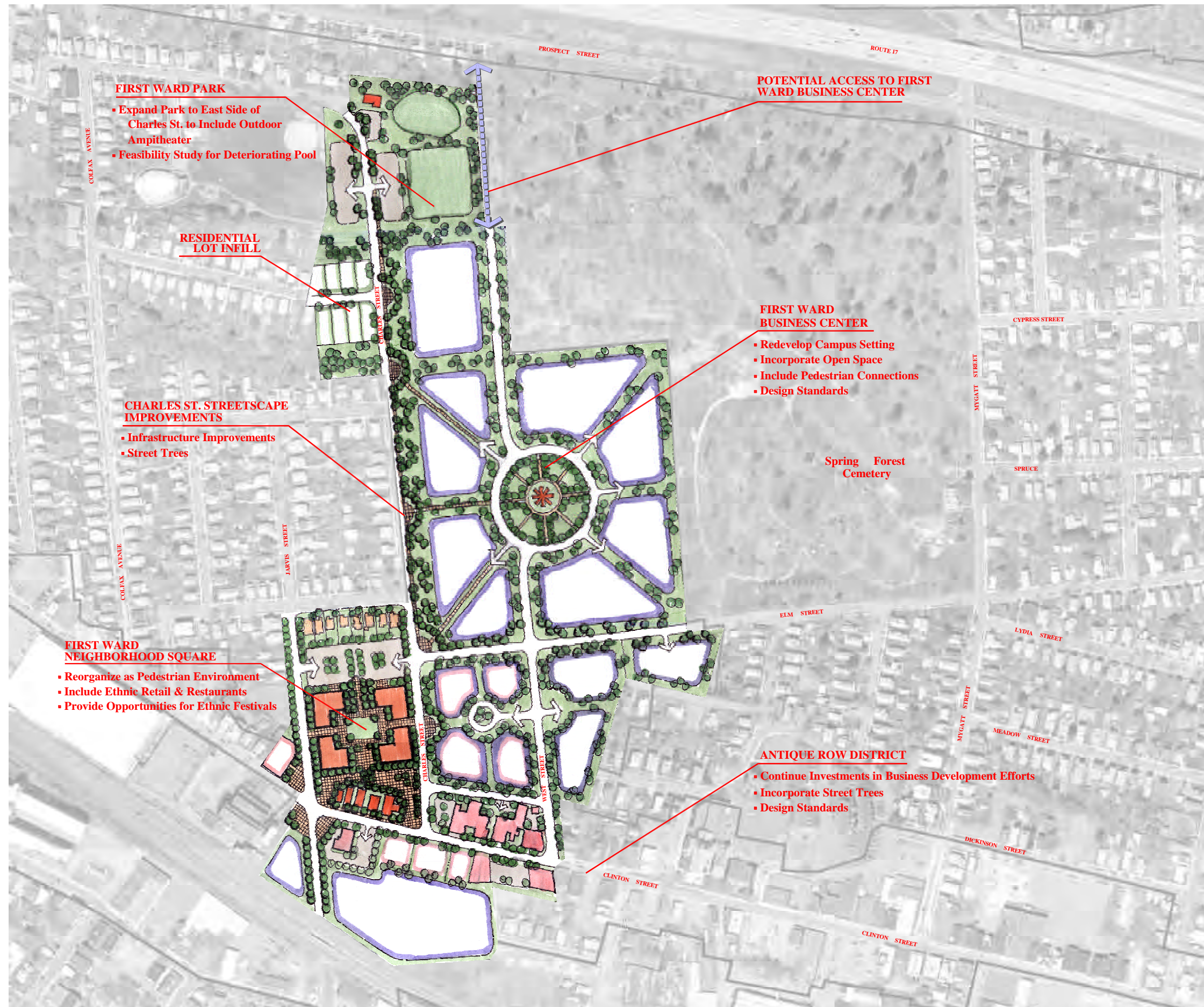


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WEST SIDE RIVERFRONT DISTRICT

Binghamton's West Side Riverside District is principally defined as the neighborhoods bounded by Main Street, the Chenango River, the Susquehanna River and the western municipal boundary. The District is generally characterized as

...recognizes the importance of this area as a gateway into downtown and helps to form a more positive first impression upon arrival. This district further emphasizes the need to reestablish the stability of adjoining neighborhoods and provide new enrichment opportunities for area residents.

stable single-family neighborhoods. However, the integrity of these neighborhoods is a matter of concern resulting from the growing student housing presence. Commercial encroachment, predominantly along Main Street, is also threatening the edges of the neighborhood. Impacts such as parking, noise and trash must be addressed to help stabilize these neighborhoods from further infringement.

The character of Front Street, located near the east edge of the District, is a mixed-use area including stable institutional uses, such as the Roberson Museum and Science Center, as well as commercial, office and higher density residential uses. However, the mixed-use nature of the area

has created parking problems and may limit the effectiveness of the area to continue to function in this capacity. If these parking issues can be sufficiently addressed, then the existing nature of this street creates the potential for increased

professional office and higher density residential land uses, creating a vibrant mixed use social, professional and cultural setting.

The strategies for the West Side Riverfront District outlined below recognize the importance of this area as a gateway into downtown and help to form a more positive first impression upon arrival. This district further emphasizes the need to reestablish the stability of adjoining neighborhoods and provide new enrichment opportunities for area residents. The plan graphic following 42 illustrates the concepts outlined for the West Side Riverfront District.

Promote a Self Empowerment Zone

Located in Binghamton's West Side neighborhoods, the proposed self-empowerment zone is intended to create a unique opportunity to bring enhanced learning and social interaction opportunities to the residents of Binghamton. While many of the activities may be geared to meet these needs of a younger population, it should also be recognized that a unique opportunity exists to create a multi-generational learning environment, which involves the coordination of existing institutions for both the youth and the senior populations in Binghamton. The activities and programs offered within this empowerment zone will enhance



community life through recreation and learning and bring the community together to 'make a difference' in the life of Binghamton residents. The empowerment zone has the additional advantage of rebuilding Binghamton's tarnished reputation by providing a wide range of creative, educational and culturally enriching programs to



both community and region residents. Programmed activities may include a small theater, art and music lessons, a dance studio, and a student center. More ambitious efforts may include a small-scale non-profit business venture where students from the high school develop web pages or even system networks for area businesses.

Action Steps

- The Main Street Empowerment Zone has been proposed for this district because of its relationship to the high school and Riverfront Centre (senior living) located on Front Street as well as the Roberson Museum. By coordinating this cluster of programs that appeal to both generations, the Empowerment Zone has the potential to be in active center throughout the day and into the evening. To promote the integration of existing programs, and to explore the creation of new programs, it is recommended that Binghamton follow sequence of steps outlined below:
 - Begin by establishing a task force to evaluate how the Empowerment Zone should be structured and how existing activities and services can be integrated. For instance, the task force should inventory existing programs and activities and explore ways that these programs and activities can be enhanced through shared services and/or consolidated. The task force should include specific talents relating to the cultural arts, local youth and senior representatives, local religious organizations, real estate, law, finance, architecture, management and municipal representation (such as the Planning Department).
 - Once activities and services to be offered have been determined it is possible to estimate space requirements. If necessary, the task force can then begin to estimate the costs for new physical development or redevelopment of existing spaces.
- To receive maximum benefit from potential funding sources (state/federal grant programs, foundations, corporate philanthropy), management of the Empowerment Zone should come from a non-profit organization (either existing or newly formed).
- Create a physical image of the Empowerment Zone with street trees, signage, pavement, and parking lot improvements.

Renew the Front Street/Main Street Intersection

It has been previously noted in this Comprehensive Plan that Binghamton's gateways do not provide a clear expression of history and pride in the community. The Front Street/Main Street intersection plays an important role as a gateway into downtown Binghamton. Accordingly, this intersection should be treated as an important focal point for travelers entering downtown Binghamton. A creative paving pattern, banners and organic materials (trees, shrubs, flowers) should be included to recognize pedestrian activity and provide enhanced visual appeal to the intersection. The lighting and banners should also be included across the bridge into Downtown as well as down Front Street.



Action Steps

- As previously noted, the Binghamton Metropolitan Transportation Study (BMTS) is currently evaluating Binghamton's gateways and will be developing improvement plans for these areas. Front Street is one of those areas being studied. The City should work with BMTS to develop improvements consistent with the plans and policies outlined in the Comprehensive Plan.

Reduce Density to Protect the Integrity of Neighborhoods

Binghamton's West Side neighborhoods include some of the best neighborhoods in the community. Currently, some of these neighborhoods are zoned R-5, Residential High Density. This Comprehensive Plan recommends that the Zoning Ordinance be revised to include a number of new districts as well as amendments to existing residential zoning boundaries. When the Zoning Ordinance is updated, attention should be given to the residential districts in these West Side neighborhoods to reduce the density, particularly in the areas west of Oak Street currently zoned R-5. Additionally, increased police surveillance will help to deter any "loud" and/or illicit activities.

Develop a Riverfront Trail that Connects with the Roberson Museum

The west shore of the Chenango River offers some unique views of the City of Binghamton. The use of riverfront (roughly between Main Street and Riverside Drive) should be enhanced with a trail that allows neighborhood residents an opportunity to view the City in a relaxed environment. Further, this shoreline also has the potential to provide a unique learning experience as part of the proposed Empowerment Zone. Interpretive signage could be provided along the trail that describes the types of organisms that live in the river, where the river flows from and to, and/or even a history of Binghamton and the flood of 1972.

Action Steps

- The City should partner with the Roberson Museum to develop the trail.
- Property ownership should be investigated. Property owners should be educated on the proposed trail and asked if they would be willing to donate an easement to the City (or Roberson Museum) for development of the trail. The City may even consider special recognition of the donation with a special plaque indicating the property owners name on a trail bench or trail marker.





*West Side Riverfront District
Plan Graphic*

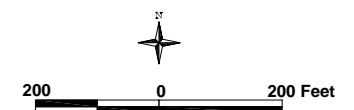




West Side Riverfront District Concept Plan

*Draft
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-  EXISTING ZONING
-  AMENDED ZONING
-  POTENTIAL SITE IMPROVEMENTS
-  POTENTIAL REDEVELOPMENT
-  POTENTIAL WATERFRONT TRAIL
-  SELF EMPOWERMENT ZONE

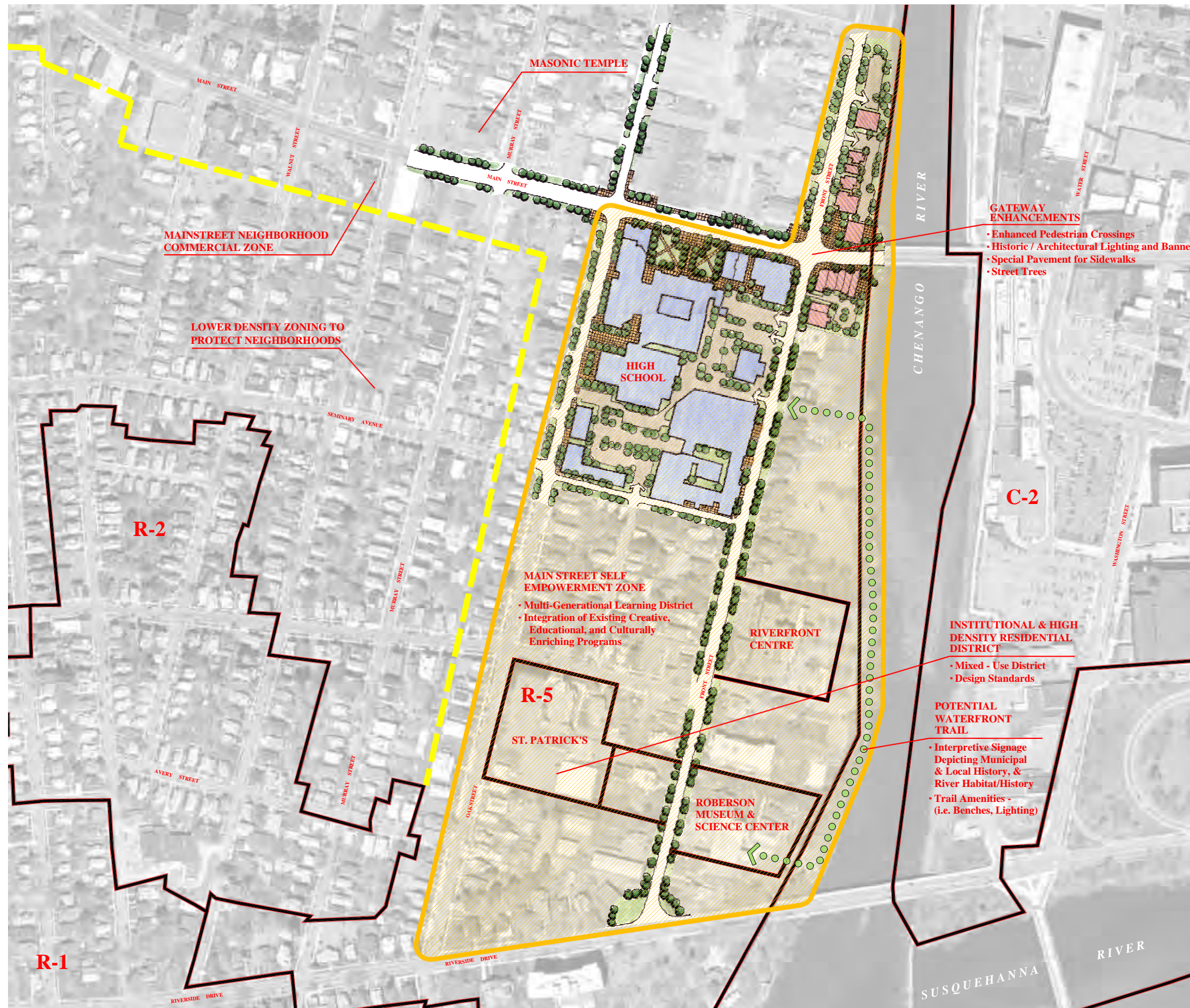


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NORTH RIVERFRONT DISTRICT

The North Riverfront District is located in the northern portion of Binghamton along the Chenango River west to Brandywine Street, then south to Eldredge Street and north to I-81. Generally, the district can be characterized as underutilized commercial properties with conflicting highway commercial, industrial, and highly stressed mixed-use neighborhoods. The majority of the neighborhoods are experiencing significant transition, evidenced by declining economic and demographic characteristics.

Existing demographic data shows that the North Riverfront District accounts for approximately six percent of the City's total population and families.

North Riverfront District residents are relatively young with a 1999 median age of 32.99; the City's 2000 median age was 36.7. Some indicators of a neighborhood's vitality include educational attainment, per capita income, and home ownership patterns. Although the educational attainment data is for 1990, North Riverfront District data indicates that nearly fourteen percent of the population has less than a high school diploma, compared to the City's nearly ten percent. Further, about one quarter of the district population has post-high school

education; compared to nearly one-third at the City level. The district's 1999 projected per capita income is also disconcerting at \$11,339, compared to the City's \$15,038.

Further examination of these indicators show the greatest area of distress within Census Tract 005 Block Group 1, generally defined by Frederick Street, Brandywine Avenue, Robinson Street and Chenango Street. This same area has historically experienced a significant amount of tax foreclosed homes. Greater than seventy-five percent of the

housing is renter-occupied. Evidence of transition is also illustrated at Binghamton Plaza, which is visually unpleasing and includes significantly underutilized land.

...reinvesting in Cheri Ann Lindsey Park while encouraging reinvestment in Binghamton Plaza will facilitate neighborhood and commercial stability.

The district has two defining features that can be important ingredients to stabilizing the adjoining neighborhoods: the Chenango River and good access to Interstate 81. Building on these two features and reinvesting in Cheri Ann Lindsey Park while encouraging reinvestment in Binghamton Plaza will facilitate neighborhood and commercial stability. The plan graphic following 56 illustrates the concepts outlined for the North Riverfront District.



Establish a New Neighborhood Center

Located in Binghamton's North Riverfront District, Binghamton Plaza presents a unique opportunity to create a new focal point for adjoining struggling neighborhoods as well as new commercial development opportunities. In its present state, much of the plaza's parking area is not used and is visually unattractive. Binghamton Plaza is a clear indicator of an area in transition with its empty storefronts, disinvestments, and general underutilization of the site. However, the site does present an opportunity for reinvestment. In its current form, the plaza has a significant amount of "available" land for infill commercial and retail development; the large parking surface presents an opportunity to create a defined edge along West State Street with out-parcel development sites. This new "edge" will then provide an improved visual environment for the West State Street corridor by creating a more closed in feeling and providing enhanced definition to the roadway. Additionally, expanded commercial development will result in an increased tax base for the City while providing improved commercial services for community residents.

Creation of any new out-parcel development at Binghamton Plaza, will require that special attention be given to both the form and the structure of future development. For instance, if new commercial sites are made available and these sites do not have any relationship to West State Street (i.e. the building's rear faces the street), then this new development will only add to the visual distortion of the corridor. Consequently, it will be important that before this type of development is encouraged, the City have fully developed design standards in place.

Action Steps

- Before any type of new commercial development is encouraged at Binghamton Plaza, it will be essential that design standards be put in place. This can be accomplished in two ways. First, if the City chooses to develop a new Zoning Ordinance, then design standards can be written into the ordinance. However, these standards can take a significant amount of time to develop. A second approach may be to develop commercial design standards for the West State Street corridor and incorporate them by reference into the Zoning Ordinance.
- Clearly, redevelopment of the Binghamton Plaza will ultimately have to come from cooperation with the private landowner. However, there are some incentives that can be offered to the landowner to help stimulate redevelopment. The following incentives should be considered by the City:
 - Working with the landowner, the City should engage both the City's Economic Development Department and Planning Department to lead the process of determining the design, density and economics of the project.
 - The City's Economic Development Department and Planning Department should establish a public sector financial assistance plan for the project. (Use of incentives offered through the Empire Zone program should be a starting point.)
 - The landowner and the City together should apply for loans and grants.

Before any type of new commercial development is encouraged at Binghamton Plaza it will be essential that design standards be put in place.



Open Up and Expand Cheri Ann Lindsey Park

The community survey found that City residents put a high value on their City parks and recreation network. When asked if providing youth activities/recreational and cultural amenities was important, 75 percent of the respondents indicated that this was an extremely important benefit to offer residents.

Cheri Ann Lindsey Park is a diamond in the rough. The park is located on the east shore of the Chenango River and is relatively unfamiliar to many residents, even though it includes a pool, playground equipment, a baseball field and a BMX track, which hosts major BMX competitions that attract competitors from throughout the country during the summer months. One of the primary reasons that residents are unaware of this impressive park is because it is relatively hidden from public view, meaning that it is generally not identifiable from Chenango Street to passersby. Therefore, increasing investment in the park (like the recent decision to construct a new skate park) and making it more visible to the community with gateway improvements holds the greatest potential for revitalizing the park as a prominent neighborhood and community resource.

Action Steps

- During the neighborhood meetings, it was noted that the east side neighborhoods need baseball facilities that meet little league dimension requirements. Consequently, increasing the size of the existing ball field or constructing a new ball field should be considered.
- In its current arrangement, the park does not take advantage of its location along the Chenango River. Initiatives underway include the continued development of a trail network along the east shore of the Chenango River. Future plans should include improved use of the land along the river to include passive recreation activities, such as benches and picnic tables. Some opportunity may also exist to extend these passive recreation amenities to the southwest side of Binghamton Plaza.
- Building on the “extreme” nature of BMX competitions and the proposed skate park, other appropriate complementary activities to be located within Cheri Anne Lindsey Park may include a climbing wall and in-line facility. These type of activities could make the park regionally recognized among the youth who are interested in these nontraditional “extreme sport” activities. Some time in the future, the City may also consider promoting a small-scale water park and commercial development related to these sporting activities, like a skate shop and/or coffee bar.
- As noted above, the park is hidden away from the main transportation corridors, resulting in the park not being clearly recognized a neighborhood asset and underutilization. Improvements should be made to “open” the park with gateway improvements that make passers-by curious and invite



them into the park with a clear connection. Clear signage and pedestrian-scaled lighting should be incorporated in design improvements. This can be accomplished near the intersection of West State Street and Frederick Street. If the proposed intersection is selected for improvements, then coordination with private property owners will be necessary.

- The City should develop a master plan for Cheri Ann Lindsey Park as a mechanism to direct investment in a coordinated fashion and to understand the timing of each phase.

Neighborhood Reinvestment

As demonstrated above, many of the neighborhoods in the North Riverfront District are significantly challenged. While increased home ownership may help to stimulate greater commitment to the neighborhoods by residents, residents also need to see that the City is committed to the revitalization of these neighborhoods. Investments in Cheri Ann Lindsey Park will be one way to demonstrate the City's commitment, but investments *inside* the neighborhoods also need to take place.

Action Steps

- The neighborhood east of Robert Street and west of Brandywine Avenue is among the most challenged in all of Binghamton. A focused home ownership program combined with public investments in the right of way will significantly improve the integrity of this area. This may also be a good neighborhood to develop a Demonstration Project for the proposed strategy for foreclosed properties outlined in the section addressing *Citywide Policies and Projects to Enhance Community Image*.
- Neighborhoods north of Fredrick Street will also benefit from a similar program.
- The neighborhoods south of Frederick Street are important to some of the business and industry located in the area as many residents walk to their jobs. These neighborhoods should be well lit with pedestrian-scaled lighting and include clearly identifiable pedestrian crossings. Home ownership programs would also benefit these residents.



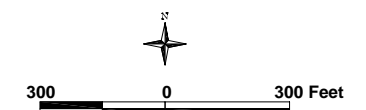


*North Riverfront District
Plan Graphic*





North Riverfront District Concept Plan



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ROBINSON STREET DISTRICT

The Robinson Street District is generally located along the Robinson Street corridor between Mason Avenue and Griswold Street, including the adjoining neighborhoods and portions of Court Street. Robinson Street is a collector roadway characterized by a mixture of commercial and office land uses and some residences. While many of the existing commercial operations serve adjoining neighborhoods, many of the properties are vacant or underutilized. Robinson Street is the

primary roadway connecting East Side neighborhoods to points within the City, such as Binghamton Plaza and downtown. The district represents an opportunity to enhance the role of the Robinson Street corridor as a meaningful neighborhood focal point. By defining the commercial district with improved landscaping and pedestrian amenity, this district will help to stabilize adjoining neighborhoods. The plan graphic following 51 illustrates the concepts outlined for the Robinson Street District.

Provide Improved Bike and Pedestrian Environment

In its current state, Robinson Street provides poor amenities for bike and pedestrian circulation. In an effort to encourage and facilitate bike and pedestrian circulation, the City should provide improved pedestrian amenities like well-maintained sidewalks, distinct crosswalks (using either stamped pavement or brickpavers), street trees and a designated bike lane. Further improvements should be made for those using public buses with a bus shelter (designed to reflect local architectural features) at the intersection of Ely Avenue and Robinson Streets or Broad Avenue and Robinson Street. The intention is to provide for neighborhood residents who need to use the Giant Supermarket and other services near these intersections.



Action Steps

- A tree-planting program should be established for Robinson Street that provides a tree every 75 - 100 feet. This will help the corridor become more visually attractive as well as provide a safety barrier for pedestrians.
- Sidewalks should be evaluated and replaced where necessary. It is recommended that the City develop a 50/50 sidewalk program to help reduce residents' costs.
- Crosswalk improvements should first be made at key intersections such as Ely and Broad Streets.
- Working in coordination with the NYS Department of Transportation, the City should lead the discussion to provide a bike lane along Robinson Street that connects to the citywide bike network and to Cheri Ann Lindsey Park.

Develop Neighborhood Calming Strategies and Buffers

During the neighborhood meetings, it was noted that cars entering the area from Court Street frequently use some of the neighborhood streets, often at high speeds. In an effort to reduce traffic flow through the neighborhoods south of Robinson Street, the opportunity exists to close off some streets. Further, some of the commercial establishments along both Court Street and Robinson Street are having negative impacts on adjoining residences. The closing of these streets should be done in coordination with the NYSDOT

reconstruction Court Street project, which also will include new streetlights at the intersection of Bigelow Street and Court Street.

Action Steps

- Through traffic should be eliminated by creating a dead end on Howard Avenue, Louisa Street, and Oliver Street to reduce vehicle trips in these neighborhoods. Oliver Street should be the initial street closed to through traffic. If all three streets are closed to through traffic, it will also set up an opportunity to create a service alley for commercial businesses fronting Court Street and allow for potential expansion of the commercial district.
- As Court Street and Robinson Street begin to revitalize, special consideration should be given to protecting the integrity of the surrounding neighborhoods. The use of evergreen trees and sound barriers should be used to dampen the noise created by additional traffic.

Reinvest In and Market East Side Neighborhoods

Attracting the middle class back into the City may hold the greatest potential for stabilizing and revitalizing the neighborhoods in Binghamton's East Side. In an effort to stabilize and maintain the economic and housing diversity of these neighborhoods, reinvestment in the public realm should be targeted to adjoining areas. However, this approach will require some innovative policies, some of which may not always be recognized at first as a means to attract new residents. Below are two uncharacteristic approaches that will help Binghamton in its efforts to improve home ownership in East Side neighborhoods.

Action Steps

- Real estate agents typically encourage their clients to “dress up” their home with minor improvements like a fresh coat of paint or simply having the house cleaned up when prospective purchasers visit. This “curb appeal” is one of the best ways to sell a home. These same principles should be applied to neighborhood revitalization efforts being made by the City. For instance, public investments in the right-of-way (i.e. streets, curbing, sidewalks, lighting, street trees) will be an effective means to demonstrate the City's commitment to creating a high quality of life for Binghamton residents. These roadway improvements in the East Side Neighborhoods should be specifically targeted to Moeller Street, Milford Street, and East Frederick Street.
- Traditional planning principles build community around neighborhoods. Neighborhoods were built around schools. Likewise, the East Side neighborhoods were originally built to encourage residents to walk (or bike) to meet some of their every day needs, like grocery shopping and dry cleaning, or even some of their professional needs like doctors. The City should work with local real estate agents to bring the quality and affordability of these homes to their attention.
- The City should generate enthusiasm about the revitalization efforts the City is experiencing by hosting a Binghamton Housing Summit. The summit should include all regional real estate businesses and local banks. The goal of this summit should be to further develop a strategy for improved home-ownership in the City of Binghamton. Specific neighborhoods, like those in the East Side, should be highlighted.



Make Improvements to Fairview Park

During the inventory stage of the Comprehensive Plan, it was recognized that the northeast quadrant of the City does not have an adequate amount of parkland. More specifically, during both the neighborhood and department head meetings, it was noted that there is a need for Babe Ruth baseball fields for residents in this portion of the City. Further, parking has repeatedly been identified as a major concern at the park. One potential solution may be to include baseball facilities as a component of the proposed improvements at Cheri Ann Lindsey Park.

Action Steps

- The City should undertake a detailed study of the east side to assess the necessity of improved park facilities in the East Side Neighborhoods. If additional park space is necessary, then one possibility may be to develop a sports field complex in the area at the end of Clapham Street (Psychiatric Facility property, opposite Route 17/I-81), or at a minimum to require any future development of this area to include athletic fields.

Coordinate with DOT on Reconstruction of the East End of Court Street

New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) is currently preparing to reconstruct the east end of Court Street. Most of the design work for this project has already been completed. However, the City should evaluate the corridor and determine opportunities to reduce curb cuts by encouraging parking consolidation. The land uses along Court Street principally accommodate automobile-oriented establishments. Further, the corridor is visually unattractive. The City should coordinate with NYSDOT to include street trees every 75 - 100 feet. This reconstruction period provides a unique opportunity for the City to coordinate parking among the various commercial establishments as well as encourage consolidation of parcels to create lots able to accommodate larger footprint retail and commercial operations.



Example of street trees and lights with banners which should be applied to Court Street.

Action Steps

- The City should create special gateway signatures from Court Street into the East Side Neighborhoods. Specifically, these signature pieces should be located at Ely Street and Broad Avenue.



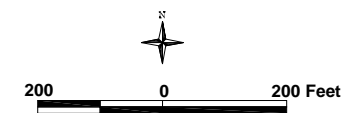
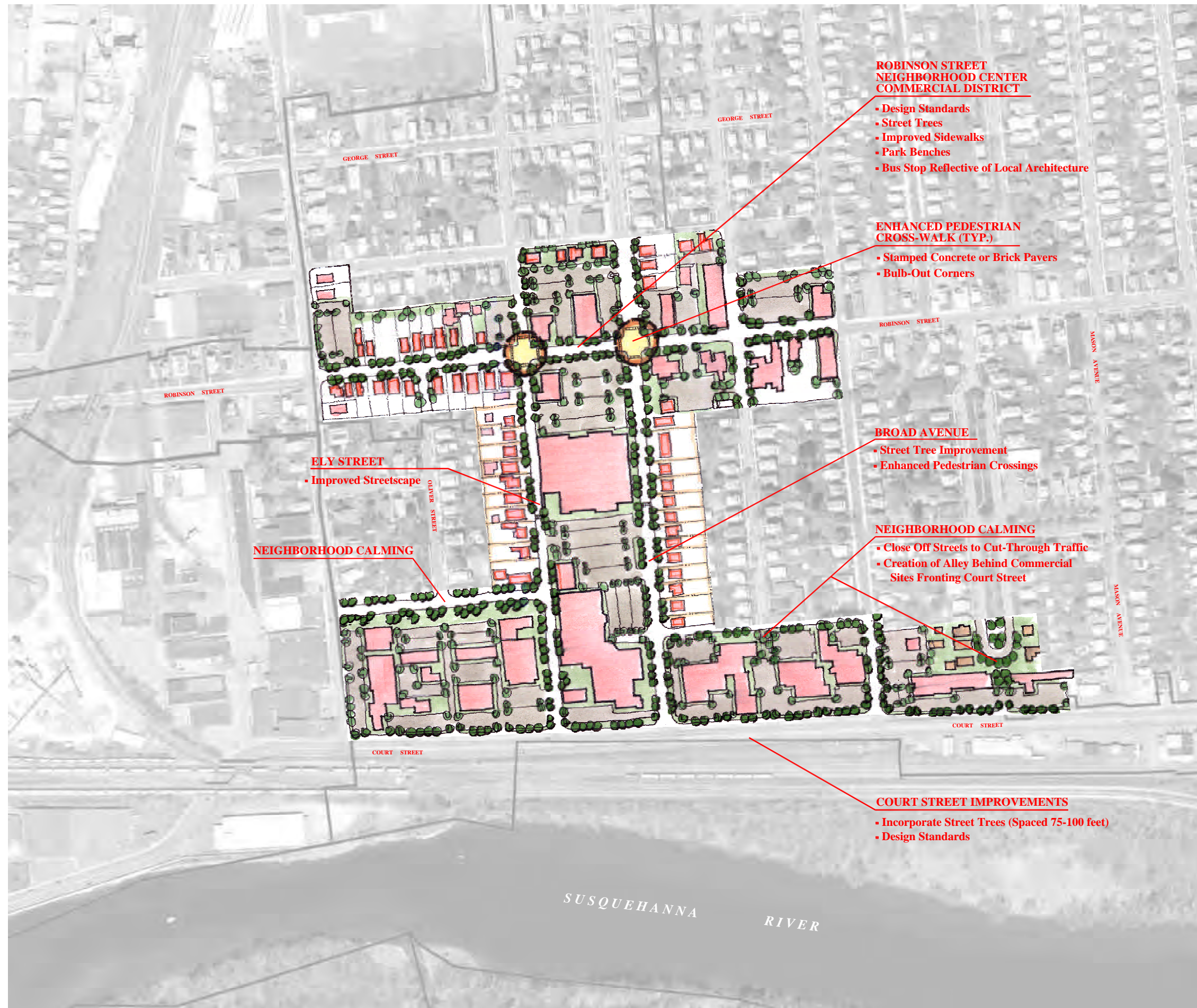


*Robinson Street District
Plan Graphic*





Robinson Street District Concept Plan



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SOUTH WASHINGTON STREET DISTRICT

The South Washington Street District is principally defined as Rush Avenue, Vestal Avenue, Washington Street, and Morris Street.

The

neighborhoods surrounding the district are predominately

The South Washington Street District is an example of a successful commercial district in Binghamton... [but] many residents point to the lack of parking in the district.

made up of stable single-family residences. The commercial district, for the most part, serves the commercial needs of residents living in the neighborhoods south of the Susquehanna River. Some regional medical related needs are provided at Binghamton General Hospital and the medical offices that support the hospital. The district includes an entertainment function with

restaurants like the Number 5, The Whole in the Wall, Southside Yani's, and Marnielli's. The district also includes the Binghamton Art Theater,

a small one-screen theater showing unconventional films. Although

these uses are generally in harmony, a shortage of public parking space is threatening the vitality of the district. As this district continues to thrive parking, conflicts will also continue unless adequately addressed. The plan graphic following 54 illustrates the concepts outlined for the South Washington Street District.

Coordinate District Parking - Develop a Municipal Parking Lot

The South Washington Street District is an example of a successful commercial district in Binghamton. But that same success has brought problems that may diminish the continued success of the district. During the neighborhood meetings, many residents in these neighborhoods pointed to the lack of parking in the district. Some noted that ample parking exists if the various owners could agree to share parking. For instance, some businesses draw their customer base during the daytime hours, while others draw customers during the evening and night hours. As a result, parking facilities are often not fully utilized throughout the day. If an agreement could be reached between property owners to share parking, then some of the parking concerns could be relieved. But property owners have been reluctant to make these agreements for concerns regarding liability and potential vandalism. Parking and pedestrian circulation will need to be addressed if the district is to continue to be successful.



Plantings should be incorporated into parking lot design.

Action Steps

- The vitality of the South Washington Street District can be significantly improved with appropriately utilized parking. As an interim measure, the City should bring existing business owners together to facilitate a discussion to develop a shared parking agreement.
- As business owners agree to share parking for a predetermined period, the City should develop a municipal parking lot that will help to relieve parking pressures. One potential location may be to locate the parking lot behind the buildings fronting South Washington Street and Vestal Avenue. When this lot



.....

is designed, though, special attention should be given to the edges of the lot at the public right-of-way. For instance, a hedgerow with a low wrought iron fence and special signage (identifying the public lot) should be incorporated. Merely providing a public lot without including special treatments at the parking lots edges would draw away from improvements that have already been made in the district (i.e. sidewalk improvements and historic lighting posts).

Continue Investment to Enhance Streetscape Environment

As noted above, the South Washington Street District already includes a number of establishments. To some extent, patrons can walk between these establishments. The City has already recognized this with its sidewalk and historic lighting improvements. However, other amenities can be added to further enhance efforts already started. One of these enhancements should include special treatments at pedestrian crossings, using either stamped pavement or brick pavers, similar to the treatment recently put in the median between the roadway and sidewalk in this district. Banners, noting the name of the district, should also be considered for the light posts.





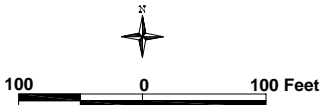
*South Washington Street District
Plan Graphic*





**South Washington
Street District
Concept Plan**

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CONKLIN/TOMPKINS STREET NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER

The Conklin/Tompkins Street District is principally defined as the Tompkins Street corridor south of the Susquehanna River to Conklin Avenue. The portion of Conklin Avenue west of Tompkins Street is currently under transition. The number of empty storefronts and low levels of investment in existing businesses makes this clear. Further, many stand alone commercial activities are beginning to filter into the neighborhoods. If this district continues to

evolve status quo, the long-term integrity of the adjoining neighborhoods will be at risk. An improvement in the public right-of-way combined with design polices and holding commercial uses from further intrusion into the neighborhoods will significantly improve the long-term success of this area. The plan graphic following 57 illustrates the concepts outlined for the Conklin/Tompkins Street Neighborhood Center

Create a Commercial Node of Activity

The most significant deficiency along Conklin Avenue is the way in which the stand-alone commercial activities are spread out along the corridor with no internal vehicle connectivity or maintained parking areas. In an effort to relieve some of these deficiencies, a commercial node of activity should be considered. The goal of this node is to provide more concentrated commercial activity and reduce the number of vehicle access points along the corridor. The net effect will be improved safety and traffic flow as commercial activities are required to share parking, resulting in a fewer number of vehicle access points along Conklin Avenue. However, to be effective, the nodal concept will require consolidation of parcels in order to create land necessary for efficient commercial uses.

Action Steps

- The City should facilitate coordination between private landowners to create larger commercial development sites.
- Design standards that, at minimum, address site design should be developed for the district. Site design standards should include provisions that encourage interconnected or shared parking lots. Further, vegetative buffers where commercial uses abut residential uses should be included.

Investigate the Need for Homeownership and Maintenance Programs

While the neighborhoods in the Conklin/Tompkins Street Neighborhood Center District are slightly in favor of homeowners, both the median age and per capita income are among the lowest in the City. What is more compelling, though, are Binghamton University's housing survey findings which indicates a higher than average number of homes needing repairs, particularly south of Conklin Avenue. This suggests that neighborhoods in the district may be threatened because they might be less desirable to future homebuyers who perceive the neighborhood to be weakening. Based on these findings, it would be prudent for the City to intervene before more strenuous problems begin to emerge in these neighborhoods, such increasing renter occupancy and prolonged neglect of property.



Action Steps

- The City should explore the possibility of creating a low-interest loan fund to help homeowners in these neighborhoods with improvements. This type of program would serve to help deter perceptions that the neighborhoods are deteriorating, thereby creating improved conditions to attract new homeowners.
- Given the districts overall young population, relationship to downtown and the regional transportation network, and affordable single-family housing stock, the adjoining neighborhoods may become attractive investments for young families desiring to live in the Binghamton region. Consequently, the City should coordinate with local realtors to promote these neighborhoods to young families in search of new a home.



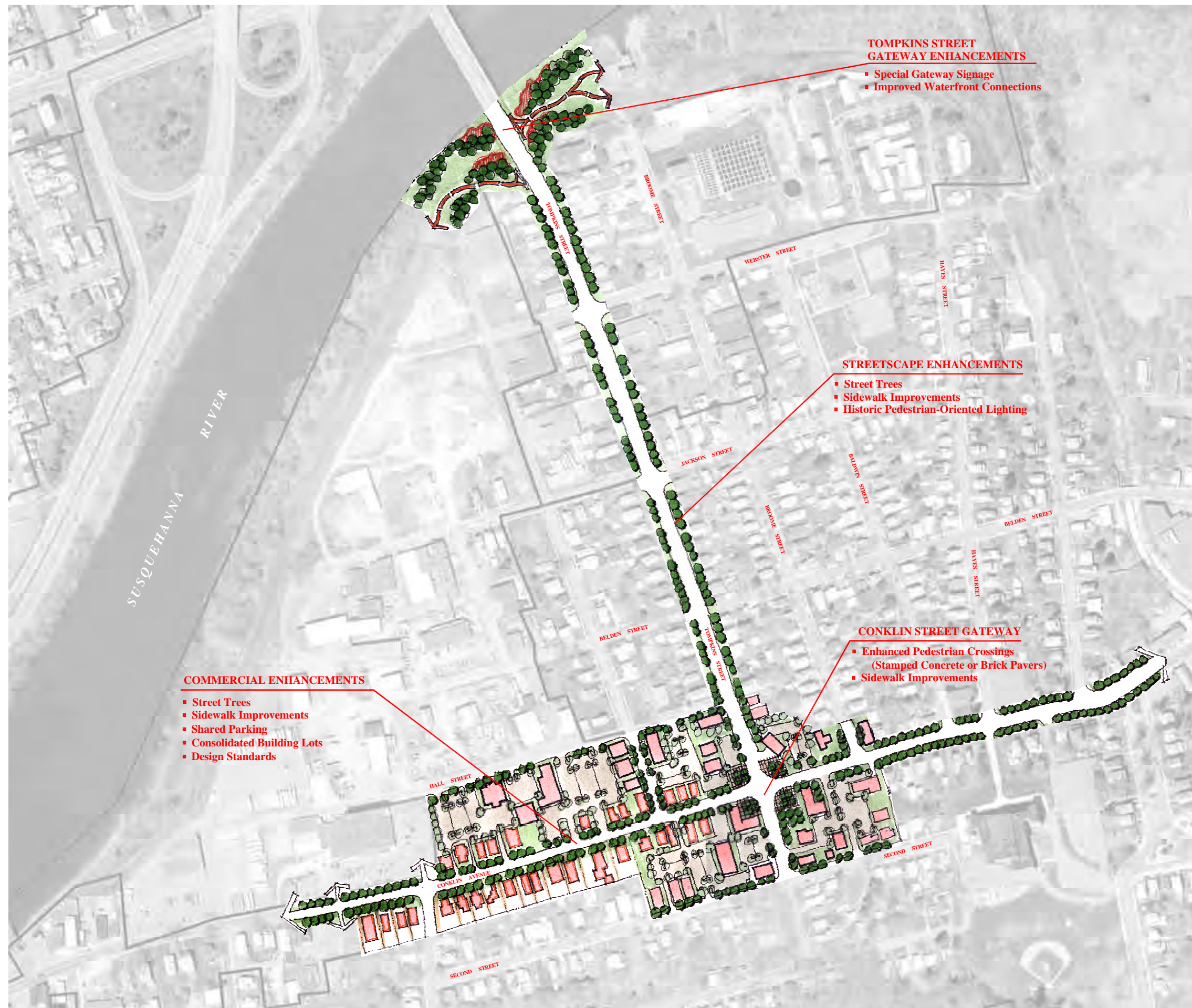


*Conklin/Tompkins Street Neighborhood Center
Plan Graphic*





Conklin / Tompkins Street Neighborhood Center Concept Plan



**TOMPKINS STREET
GATEWAY ENHANCEMENTS**

- Special Gateway Signage
- Improved Waterfront Connections

STREETSCAPE ENHANCEMENTS

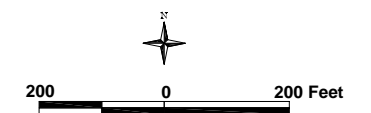
- Street Trees
- Sidewalk Improvements
- Historic Pedestrian-Oriented Lighting

CONKLIN STREET GATEWAY

- Enhanced Pedestrian Crossings
(Stamped Concrete or Brick Pavers)
- Sidewalk Improvements

COMMERCIAL ENHANCEMENTS

- Street Trees
- Sidewalk Improvements
- Shared Parking
- Consolidated Building Lots
- Design Standards



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DOWNTOWN/IN-TOWN DISTRICT

In years past, downtown Binghamton was the retail, government, and social hub for the region. However, past economic downturns, major



renewal initiatives, and modern retail development standards have significantly

weakened the fabric of the downtown core. Furthermore, the City is not experiencing the economic benefits typically generated by universities. Although the impacts of these events have been long standing, progress toward a revitalized downtown is being made through initiatives currently underway. The City is currently engaged in many project level activities to attract uses that generate activity, such as the conversion of the MetroCenter to office uses, investments in the Arena, ball field, and library and the proposed student housing projects, intermodal facility, and the business incubator. The City is also currently engaged in a comprehensive study of the street lighting network downtown that will ultimately define options for an integrated lighting system that provides improved lighting “connections” for pedestrians. These reinvestments will certainly help to restore Binghamton’s image as the regional civic and social center.

To some degree, these investments have helped stimulate private sector investment downtown as an arts district is evolving in the northern portion of downtown (around The Forum) and a financial district is forming at the core of downtown. Guided



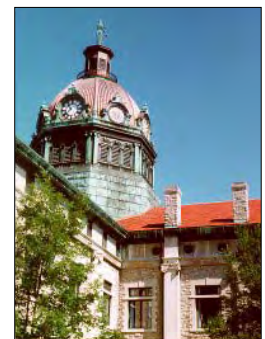
by a strategic vision of restructuring, the City can further leverage vacant and underutilized land to build upon these initiatives and create vibrant and exciting districts. The challenge for downtown revitalization is to establish a coordinated mechanism to support this evolution and address the issues of parking, needed open space and outside negative perceptions of Binghamton.

The In-Town District is located in Council District 7 and is principally defined as the



neighborhoods bounded by Henry Street, Chenango Street/Exchange Street, Susquehanna

Street and Chapman Street. The concept of an In-Town District is to generate improved housing opportunities for downtown professional workers and create a critical mass of residents that will help to support new service industries and socially oriented enterprises. The neighborhoods within this district can potentially experience some meaningful impacts as downtown continues to strengthen and become a vital place for employment opportunity. Additionally, portions of this district are located within an Empire Zone. These neighborhoods border the eastern edge of downtown and should be made more livable and appealing as a gateway into downtown Binghamton. In their present state, these neighborhoods are experiencing significant



transition evidenced by several factors, such as the number of in rem proceedings, the increasing number of surface parking lots, low-income levels, and low home ownership rates. In the last decade, an imbalance has started to occur in the City's housing stock, resulting in a disproportionate amount of subsidized housing and rental housing, coupled with very little growth in housing for middle-income families. These neighborhoods have been particularly hit with these trends. Consequently, this district could be significantly improved with increased home ownership. Like the underutilized buildings downtown, these "next-to-downtown" neighborhoods are substantive assets to Binghamton and should be redeveloped to support downtown housing and revitalization strategies. The plan graphic following 76 illustrates the concepts outlined for the Downtown/Intown District.

Implement an Integrated Niche Market Framework for Downtown Revitalization

Many urban communities across the country have put downtown revitalization at the forefront of community-wide recovery for the last

several decades. In previous years Binghamton has made similar investments in an effort to make downtown a regional focal point. Many of these successful projects (Veterans Memorial Arena, NYSEG Stadium, and the Broome County Library) have laid the groundwork for a renewed downtown. The question downtown Binghamton is faced with now is, "Where to turn next?" How the City responds to this question will determine the overall economic success of Binghamton as a whole as well as the character and quality of the Binghamton experience. As Binghamton responds to this question, it will be important that the City embrace the belief that local leaders must be the backbone for downtown decision-making and lead revitalization.

When evaluated closely, most successful urban cores have clusters of integrated economic activity districts. This clustering frequently occurs because local and regional entrepreneurs

...local leaders must be the backbone for downtown decision-making and lead revitalization.

recognize the benefits of being closely linked to each other as well as the potential labor pool in the area and available space. In addition,

local economic development organizations make the renewal of downtown a clear objective. The spin-off result of these clusters typically leads to an improved commercial environment (i.e. more stores and restaurants) and an improved sense of activity. Binghamton has several of these clusters already emerging downtown, which are vital economic elements for downtown Binghamton. The Concept Plan following page 73 recognizes many of these emerging clusters. An arts and culture market is already growing around the Forum. An entertainment market can be promoted with the success of places like Veterans Memorial Arena, the Forum, the Lost Dog Café, and Gorgeous Washington's efforts. The technology and office market is taking hold in downtown Binghamton in and around the MetroCenter. While the current housing market is weak in the downtown core, opportunities exist in the upper floors of many buildings.

Binghamton can, and should, recognize these clusters and encourage their success. Over time

Binghamton can, and should, recognize these clusters and encourage their success.



this will lead to greater success for the commercial core. Focusing on niche markets, and promoting these opportunities, can hold the greatest potential for renewing and invigorating an improved identity for downtown while attracting people and new businesses that support these markets.

Urban design is a critical component in the process of creating a sense of place. This process involves the planning, design, and specifying of the graphic elements in the built environment. Ideally, Binghamton's urban design elements should be considered in all projects proposed downtown. Including the City's urban design elements into both public

and private projects will provide a more functional and aesthetically pleasing design and allow graphic elements to be integrated into a building's architecture and site design.

A successful downtown is also compact and walkable. It encourages and simplifies interaction between people and space. Currently, Binghamton's downtown is too large. Further, the regional destinations (i.e., The Forum, NYSEG Stadium, Veterans Memorial Arena, Broome County Regional Library, etc.) are disconnected from each other, and some are disengaged from downtown activities. To address this issue, downtown should recognize emerging clusters that serve different functions and provide clear connections between each.

Action Steps

- A downtown design manual can be used to implement a unified goal for the entire area. While this citywide Comprehensive Plan outlines specific actions that will provide direction for the City in its efforts to revitalize downtown, it does not establish specific design criteria, such as sign standards, building materials, or lighting and wayfinding elements. These elements need to be addressed in greater detail than a Citywide Comprehensive Plan provides. Consequently, a downtown design manual should be developed. This manual should be developed in coordination with the proposed the proposed design review and incentive programs for historic preservation.
- In an effort to create a vigorous downtown environment, the following emerging market clusters should be promoted and balanced. Further, many of downtowns buildings should be required to include a mix of uses, with people generating activities at the ground level (e.g. stores, restaurants) and upper levels to include office and residential units. Creating this mix will provide greater potential for both day and evening activities downtown.
- **Arts and Culture Market.** Arts and culture naturally gravitate to urban centers because of their unique offerings. For instance, older buildings tend to offer large spaces with unique architectural integrity and are generally affordable. Further, artists have a propensity to be visionary and see long term potential in unique areas and buildings. Binghamton has an emerging arts cluster evolving around establishments such as the Forum and the Lost Dog Café. The City should continue to support these activities and help to re-create a regional center for cultural entertainment. Pedestrian-oriented amenities, such as benches, street trees, light post banners and historic street lighting, should be developed in this district. A stronger visual connection to the Chenango River should also be established at Henry Street.



Several buildings in this area would lend themselves well to artist live/work space. Artists have already recognized that the building space serves their needs well, and the buildings are affordable. The City should work with these emerging artists to help them achieve their goals.

The Forum offers popular Broadway shows, popular acts, and civic productions. In order to maximize the Forum's impact on downtown, it will be essential for the Forum to continue to increase the number of events, such as Broadway shows and popular acts that are

The City can help bring improved attention to the Forum by investing in the public realm with special lighting features, park benches and banners that celebrate the arts.

considered high impact events. The City can help bring improved attention to the Forum by investing in the public realm with special lighting features, park benches and banners that celebrate the arts. The City could also help to market the area to various food and beverage entrepreneurs, which would then give Forum patrons a reason to come early or stay late when visiting Forum events.

- **Entertainment Market.** Providing opportunity for regional entertainment has long been a component of successful urban centers. Anchored by the Veterans Memorial Arena at the south and the Forum at the north, Entertainment Alley can become a crossroads for pedestrians circulating through downtown Binghamton and provide a connection among various visitor-related activities. To be successful, Entertainment Alley will need focused investment which is easily identifiable and evokes a sense of safety and fun. Emphasis should be made on pedestrian and traffic calming techniques. Investments should include special paving along sidewalks, unique pedestrian-scale lighting, street light banners, street trees and landscaping, and benches. Success will also depend on the City's ability to attract enough establishments to create a critical mass of activity. Activities should include niche retail, restaurants, nightclubs, coffee shops, bookstores, a movie theater (e.g. IMAX or Hoyt's) and even museums. The overall sensation should be one of celebration and excitement.

The initial basis for this district is to develop facilities that are geared toward regular use by residents, as opposed to occasional visitors, and in turn create demand that encourages incremental infill/reuse development. As local interest grows and residents embrace this district, entertainment penetration of a broader geographic region will be realized. The initial development of entertainment establishments will likely come from local developers/entrepreneurs and community groups, such as The Forum. As the district evolves, regional and national organizations will begin to take interest, at which point a larger people generator that attracts multiple market segments should be solicited.

The creation of a diverse entertainment district will have significant positive impacts on the appeal of downtown and the market potential for residential, office, and destination/specialty



retail. Downtown has to be more than just a place for workers if it is to evolve into a vibrant urban center.

Anchored by Veterans Memorial Arena at the south and the Forum at the north, Entertainment Alley can become a crossroads for pedestrians circulating through downtown Binghamton and provide a connection among various visitor-related activities.

- **Professional Market.** For centuries the urban core has been the nucleus for regional trade and commerce. Although more recent trends have shown many corporations moving into the outer reaches of urban centers, many others are realizing the benefits of returning to the core.

The Mid-Town Office Cluster is principally defined around existing office uses, including Government Plaza and the MetroCenter. Professional industries (i.e. call centers, finance, insurance) should be further developed, especially on upper floors of buildings with retail/commercial uses at the ground level. Ground level retail/commercial uses should be encouraged to stay open into the evening hours. Service-based industries should be the focus for development of this district. Commercial/retail uses will follow after the critical mass has been reestablished.

Lisle Avenue should be rezoned as a C-2 district and include design standards for new office development as well as parking lot development.

During the neighborhood meetings, it was noted that the crossroads of Court Street and Water Street (Boscov's) to the County Court house is where City residents most often identify as the center of downtown. Consequently, this would be a logical corridor to begin with enhanced streetscape investment in an effort to attract specialty niche retail and supporting services (i.e. deli's, banking services, dry cleaning services, day care facilities) for professional office workers.

- **Housing Market.** A survey recently completed by The Brookings Institution on Urban and Metropolitan Policy and the Fannie Mae Foundation indicates that many of America's downtowns are experiencing a renaissance of sorts with an increasing number of residents. Although there is no direct correlation as to why this is occurring, anecdotal evidence suggests that people increasingly want to be near their work places and cultural amenities. Further, household demographics are changing as the baby-boomer generation is beginning to near retirement and people are waiting longer to start families and focus on career development.

Downtown housing markets can generally be seen as serving five discrete markets segments:



1. Low- to moderate-income
2. Students
3. Professionals
4. Live-Work Units
5. Seniors

The first housing type is that which is present in most urban centers: **low- to moderate-income** residents. Many of these individuals choose to live in the urban core because of travel costs associated with employment and/or public assistance programs. Binghamton already has a significant low- to moderate-income population living in its downtown or nearby neighborhoods. The low- to moderate-income market is typically driven by the cost of housing and has less opportunity to be particular about the type of housing, as long as it meets their space needs.

Another housing market that is present in some downtowns is that which meets the needs of a **student** population. The primary driver to attract this type of housing is the presence of a higher education learning institution, such as Binghamton University. Although some development interests have recently been expressed for downtown student housing, Binghamton has not yet been successful in attracting this population in a manner that has any significance on the downtown housing market. However, recent studies indicate that Binghamton University students are particularly attracted to downtown Binghamton's living environment. This is largely attributed to downtown's walkability and proximity to entertainment, like stores, restaurants, and bars.

A third type of downtown housing is that which caters to the needs of a **professional** population. Many of these individuals recognize the value of living and working in close proximity. They tend to be characterized as young professionals and empty-nesters. These professionals tend to live in higher-end rental units typically with one to two bedrooms. This market will be difficult for Binghamton to attract until new employment opportunities as well as cultural and entertainment venues are attracted to downtown.

As telecommuting and "one man shop" operations continue to play an increasing role in our economy, the **live-work unit** will also become increasingly popular. The demographics attracted to this home life and work integration is similar in nature to those young and empty-nester professionals living downtown. However, those with families also realize benefits as workspace allows regular contact with children and one mortgage can cover both the house and shop/office. In the strictest sense, a live-work unit is a building with first-floor retail or office space and an upstairs (of perhaps one to three floors) that accommodates a single housing unit. One purchaser owns the entire building and uses the shop level for business purposes and resides upstairs. Another arrangement might provide retail or other work space for rent on the first floor and apartments above that provide a mix of living and work spaces within one unit. These arrangements are typically rental property containing many residential and work space units owned by a developer/investor while the strict live-work unit is usually owned by a homeowner. Although not all live-work arrangements require high-speed Internet connections (i.e. some



artists), telecommunications plays a critical role in the success of these arrangements. Consequently, it will be important for Binghamton to work with existing telecommunications providers to supply these connections to targeted buildings.

The final downtown housing potential for Binghamton is to attract the **senior** population downtown. Downtown living can offer a number of advantages to seniors. First, maintenance and upkeep costs can be significantly reduced and free-up time, and capital, for travel and socialization. In addition, the concentration of cultural and commercial establishments (i.e. restaurants, coffee shops, book stores, etc.) provides opportunity for enhanced socialization and activity. Finally, these same commercial establishments can provide part-time employment for those who still wish to modestly participate in the work force. For downtown Binghamton to attract this population it will be necessary to create a concentration of cultural and commercial destinations that are attractive to seniors, such as restaurants, bookstores, and, perhaps, a movie theater (many of the same attractions for a student population).

Of course for any of these housing markets to be successful, downtown parking limitations will need to be addressed. Further, building codes often make building rehabilitation cost prohibitive. Consequently, the City may need to stimulate the market by providing financial assistance to bring buildings up to code. Consequently, any downtown housing initiative would benefit by coordinating with the proposed Historic District Grant and Low Interest Loan Program.

- **Riverfront Development.** The City is currently enhancing the Chenango River corridor with its investments in the Riverfront Trail. Future investments will include a trail along the Susquehanna River with new trail investments as well as a boathouse and improved access. These investments will certainly attract residents to Binghamton's waterfront. However, the waterfront principally following the area from Henry Street to Riverside Drive is not being utilized to its fullest potential as a people generating, destination-oriented area. As the Riverfront



Example of a Festival Market area on property south of Holiday Inn

Trail continues to evolve, activities on the ground level of the buildings facing the riverfront should be people generating, such as retail establishments, bars and restaurants. These activities should be used to attract people and “close the loop” from Entertainment Alley, Henry Street and the Veterans’ Memorial Arena. New pedestrian-oriented amenities should continue to be cultivated, such as lighting, landscaping, benches and special paving on the walkway.

At the south end of the waterfront on the parcel south of the Holiday Inn, a primary people generating activity should be established. One recommendation is to create a meeting center which capitalizes on its location to downtown, the Arena and Holiday Inn. Another might be a large-scale farmers' market with shelters. Whatever the ultimate use, the site should be programmed with potential users and/or sponsors to confirm its role, program, scale and location.

At the central portion of this corridor, near Court Street, the Fair Store Building should be targeted for market-rate residential development on the upper floors and niche retail and restaurants at the ground level.

Develop a Management Framework for Successful Downtown Revitalization

The community survey asked respondents to select from five options what one thing would make the biggest improvement in downtown Binghamton. Nearly 70 percent of the respondents choose two options: improve the mix of stores and services (41.4 percent) and make it feel safer and livelier (27.3 percent). Both of these improvements can be successfully accomplished by a formal downtown management organization.

In order to maximize the benefits from successful downtown revitalization efforts, the following functions must be delivered in a coordinated, consistent and integrated manner:

➤ Overall Management

This key function ensures the overall efficiency and effectiveness of the entire downtown by coordinating its different arms. It provides strategic guidelines for how downtown will evolve and facilitates long-term decision-making.

➤ Operation and Maintenance

This involves operation and maintenance of the downtown physical environment and its related improvements. Tasks include working with existing business to determine their needs, managing building inventory, maintaining and improving supporting facilities, and managing downtown public spaces.

➤ Operations Management

This logistical function involves receiving and administering revenue, making payments for services, promoting and advertising activities, and making all staffing decisions.

➤ Events, Marketing and Promotion

The governing entity will oversee the sustained development and promotion of events, and unified marketing and promotional campaign required to make downtown an economic success. It will design a logo, develop and distribute promotional material, and coordinate and assist the local marketing initiatives, ensuring that they complement and not compete with each other. It will ensure that a coordinated series of consistent messages promotes the image of a unique, holistic downtown experience. Further, the governing entity will work with the City's Economic Development Department to continue developing the strategic planning property inventory.



➤ **Community Planning & Economic Development**

This function addresses the question of how to maximize the benefits of downtown efforts and to be certain that these initiatives are consistent with existing regulations. The economic development arm should encourage new and improved businesses within downtown. The economic development arm must also have the capability of purchasing, leasing, developing and selling land as necessary to stimulate downtown revitalization efforts, as well as promote the economy of the region.

POWERS REQUIRED TO MANAGE THE REVITALIZATION OF DOWNTOWN BINGHAMTON

There are various structures possible for managing the revitalization of downtown. To determine how effective and efficient each would be, they must be examined in the context of the following powers and characteristics:

➤ **Formation and Membership**

An important consideration is ease and speed of formation. In the long run, a more complex organization (requiring, for instance, special acts of legislature) may be formed to deal more effectively with the myriad tasks of an empowered entity.

➤ **Debt & Funding Flexibility**

This addresses the question of whether the entity can borrow money, incur debt and accept funds/contributions, and if so, from whom and what kind. The greater the financial flexibility an entity has, the greater is its power to make financial decisions.

➤ **Risk/Liability**

This addresses the question of who takes responsibility for something going ‘wrong’. Most governance structures limit the personal liability of their directors, members and employees.

➤ **Property/Facility Ownership**

Can the entity acquire, hold and dispose of real and personal property in order to further its purposes? It is probable that the governing body will need the power to acquire and dispose of land and facilities to aid in the revitalization and promotion of downtown.



ALTERNATIVE GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES AVAILABLE TO MANAGE THE REVITALIZATION OF DOWNTOWN BINGHAMTON

While there exists other structures for downtown revitalization, Binghamton has two potential structures with the greatest chance of success: establish a Downtown Business Improvement District or restructure the mission of the Binghamton Local Development Corporation.

➤ **Consider Revising the Mission of the Binghamton Local Development Corporation (BLDC)**

The Binghamton Local Development Corporation is a special Type C, tax-exempt, not-for-profit corporation operated for public or quasi-public purposes. The objectives and purposes of the BLDC are “to encourage location and expansion of industrial, manufacturing and commercial capacity and the creation of new and improved job opportunities” within the City of Binghamton. BLDC’s purpose is non-pecuniary in nature (i.e. it was formed with an objective other than making money). It cannot conduct activities for financial gain.

The BLDC can be particularly effective for acquiring land, incurring debt, or hiring staff essential for the effective operation and revitalization of downtown, such as when the opportunity arises to redevelop a specific building and/or site. In such developments, a single corporate entity capable of making quick decisions will greatly enhance the efficiency of Binghamton to respond. The BLDC can also have direct control over the physical and financial assets of downtown Binghamton. Moreover, it can absorb the debt liability of any bonds or notes necessary for downtown revitalization.

In its current form, the BLDC possesses broad powers to implement and effect economic development efforts citywide. It can acquire and dispose of (by purchase, lease, mortgage or gift) real or personal property and industrial or manufacturing plants; it can borrow money and issue negotiable bonds, notes and other obligations; it can enter into covenants and agreements; and it can provide information, advice and technical assistance. But the BLDC’s focus is citywide economic development, whereas the focus of downtown revitalization includes a tourism component as well. Thus, redefining BLDC’s mission may be required. The mission of the redefined BLDC should include a clearly defined role for a person or persons with the sole purpose of revitalizing downtown Binghamton. This may require an internal reorganization of existing staff, or hiring new staff to meet BLDC’s new mission for downtown revitalization.

➤ **Consider Establishing a Business Improvement District**

Established in General Municipal Law Article 19-A, a business improvement district (BID) is a method used to finance improvements in designated districts in order to restore or promote business activity. The property owners and merchants in a district agree to be assessed for



improvements that will benefit the entire district. The municipality collects the funds for the district management association and uses them on enhanced services or services which are not ordinarily provided by the municipality. The funds from a BID are not intended to replace existing municipal services. The success of a BID is dependent upon local support and participation of the property owners and merchants.

Section 980-c of the law sets forth the purposes for which money collected through a BID may be used. The first purpose is to provide for district improvements located on, or within, the district that will restore or promote business activity. The following eleven services are set forth in the law as permissible:

The second purpose for which money may be expended is to provide for the operation and maintenance of any district improvement listed above. Money may be used for additional maintenance or other additional services required for the enjoyment and protection of the public and the promotion and enhancement of the district.

The overall goal of a BID is to provide for the comprehensive management of the entire downtown. Specifically, a BID manages and implements capital, maintenance or marketing plans, conducts overall management, and *generally operates to keep all parties at the table*. Since the nature of the BID program is one of self-help, the success of its implementation depends on community consensus on a variety of issues. These include the organizational structure of the BID, its boundaries, most-pressing needs and the amount to be spent.

By centralizing the management and coordination of business activities, property owners and merchants can also help make the business district more competitive in the regional market. If downtown Binghamton is to renew itself, it must not only improve physically, but also refine its image in the eyes of today's increasingly mobile and discerning shoppers. A BID can help the City achieve this.

➤ Conclusion

Revitalizing downtowns can be a daunting task for municipalities to undertake single-handedly. To lead and administer downtown revitalization efforts, the City should work cooperatively with downtown business and property owners to establish a formal revitalization structure. Currently, two different downtown organizations are working independently to revitalize downtown. In the past, other organizations have also been formed. Although the BLDC has made efforts to revitalize downtown by investing in holiday decorations and management of the Italian Festival and Columbus Day Parade, a more consistent and comprehensive approach is necessary. BLDC has recognized this need by dedicating staff time to work with interested parties to establish a coordinated downtown revitalization structure. However, these organizations have not been able to effectively establish a unified vision for downtown and bring about large-scale change



downtown. If this independent style of downtown management continues, then downtown Binghamton's potential will continue to be suppressed. An incremental and coordinated redevelopment approach for downtown Binghamton will only be successful if a formal management structure is established to streamline and implement decision-making, isolate liability and risk, and provide flexibility for funding.

This Comprehensive Plan recognizes that there is no silver bullet for community-wide revitalization. This belief also holds true for downtown revitalization. In order to be effective, the City must develop a long-term incremental approach to downtown renewal that capitalizes on existing assets and builds momentum for successive projects. Likewise, building strong relationships between the public and private sectors will be crucial to success. As new initiatives are planned, it will be important to make the quality of the experience a defining component of the initiative. It will also be important that the City celebrate these initiatives, no matter how big or small. Frequent reminders of revitalization efforts will bring downtown to the front of peoples minds and help to gradually change negative perceptions.

Given the complexity of downtown Binghamton's revitalization, the Binghamton Local Development Corporation may be the best option for managing downtown revitalization, as it is procedurally least complicated to define, and has insurance to indemnify itself and its members. The only restriction is that it cannot conduct activities for financial gain. This condition being satisfied, it has broad powers to effectively perform the function of a downtown revitalization governing body.

Continue to Develop a Strategic Planning Property Inventory

In an effort to understand the opportunities and to know when and where to market downtown, a comprehensive building inventory should continue to be developed. As the Economic Development Department is already developing such an inventory, the Department should use Binghamton University interns to get as precise data as possible regarding the commercial, office, and residential market potential for downtown. The database should be categorized to include commercial, retail, office, and residential uses. Data such as building type, total square footage (by type), ownership and zoning should be linked to a Geographic Information System. The database could then be used not only as an instrument to track the turnover of businesses by premises, but also as a strategic tool to monitor the movement of various establishments throughout downtown. Further, the database could be utilized as a guide in local economic planning matters, by providing an accurate, legible and easily accessible summary of the success or otherwise of both specific businesses and of business types within the downtown.

The City is currently working with Broome County to prepare a Needs Assessment Study to determine the Geographic Information System (GIS) needs of the City. This Needs Assessment Study should include linking the proposed property inventory to the GIS. This will allow the City to develop maps to graphically illustrate trends. For instance, graphically illustrating businesses by type would allow the City to quickly see where clusters are emerging as well as where the highest business turnovers are



occurring. By this means, positive and negative economic patterns may be quickly observed and strategic plans implemented to ensure future economic successes.

Develop a Parking Inventory and Management Program

Parking is always a topic of discussion when discussing the success of downtowns. Binghamton has been no exception. During the neighborhood meetings, residents repeatedly pointed to the lack of parking downtown and the poor condition of existing parking garages.

It is estimated that retail customers will walk from 300 to 600 feet from their parking space to their destination, while employee's are willing to travel from 1,200 feet to 1,500 feet from car to office. While such rules of thumb are useful in considering the provision of additional parking, they are not absolutes. For example, if the walkway in question is clean, well lit, and sheltered, (i.e., where basic amenities are provided) people are willing to walk further.



Unfortunately, there is no rule of thumb to dictate how many parking spaces are required for specific uses in downtown areas. While such standards can be applied to shopping centers, downtowns are more complex in terms of land and space uses, the nature of parkers (shoppers vs. workers), transit availability, density, walk-in traffic, mixed uses, and mixed hours of operation among other factors. Typically, the downtown retail segment needs a lower ratio of parking spaces per square feet of leaseable area than shopping centers. A balance must be achieved to prevent direct business losses where too few parking spaces are available.

Action Steps

- In order to specifically and effectively understand downtown Binghamton's parking needs, the City should authorize a comprehensive parking analysis.
- The parking analysis can be accomplished by either hiring outside help or internally. If an internal analysis is chosen, then the following principles will help structure the analysis.

➤ Parking Zones

When providing additional downtown parking, the pivotal question is: For whom are you providing this parking – shoppers, residents or workers? For downtown Binghamton to begin to reestablish its vitality, it is a combination of all.

As additional office space and downtown shops are developed, parking spaces will become increasingly difficult to find. Due to limited land and financial resources, the City must be creative in its provision of additional parking.

The City may consider encouraging parking areas at the edges of downtown. This may include, depending upon their availability, sites along Lisle Avenue and the south end of Washington Street with good access to the transportation corridors. However, it's important to recognize the impacts that parking areas have on adjoining properties, whether surface or multi-tiered. Consequently, when appropriate areas are defined, site standards should be incorporated for appropriate mitigations and architecturally creative designs.

It is important to note that, while the amount varies from downtown to downtown, a common rule-of-thumb for the value of prime parking space is approximately \$150 to \$300 in retail sales per day, according to HyettPalma, Inc. of Alexandria, Virginia. Based on this calculation, the cost per year to downtown retailers is a loss of \$45,000 to \$90,000 when business owners and employees park in prime downtown spaces. Based on these values, the City should work with business owners (or with the BID, if established) to discourage employees and business owners from parking in prime spaces and designate employee parking areas at the edges.

➤ **On-Street Parking**

On-street parking can play an important role in controlling the speed and volume of traffic on downtown streets. It can also narrow streets and lanes and create interrupted sight lines – all of which slow drivers and make downtown streets safer and more pleasant for cyclists, pedestrians, and even motorists. This combination of factors makes for downtown streets that are easier to cross and thus increasing the viability of pedestrian activity.



Downtown Binghamton has a number of non-metered parking spaces along many of its streets. A major consideration is whether it is appropriate to keep the spaces as they are, perhaps with additional signs indicating a time limit or to install parking meters. Although neither method is absolutely sound, each has certain positive and negative features.

Parking meters may be installed downtown to help ensure that parking spaces were not occupied all day. Working with the existing Parking Authority, the City may consider installing parking meters or having the existing Parking Control Officer also act as a Customer Service Representative. The latter option may provide a more inviting and friendly atmosphere, making people more willing to visit downtown Binghamton.

➤ **Off-Street Parking**

To alleviate downtown's parking problems, the existing Parking Authority, jointly with the proposed BID, may wish to consider constructing a parking deck. The structure should be in an architectural style that matches similar styles found in the City and, depending upon its location, should have ground floor retail activities to help create an active public space.

During the neighborhood meetings, many residents expressed safety concerns with the existing parking decks. The most common reason for these concerns was the lack of appropriate lighting within the garages. The City should evaluate appropriate lighting standards and apply them to the existing parking decks.

➤ **Signage**

Signage is an important part of designing a downtown parking system. Good signage will help make parking easier for visitors and work as an ongoing promotion for downtown parking. The City should create a system that both promotes parking and easily directs the visitor. Signs can also be color-coded to denote the length of time parking is available. A color-coded map can be produced that illustrates both the location of the lots and what type of parking is available therein (i.e., all day, 2 hour permit parking, etc.). The product should be clear and easy to use.

Create a Neighborhood Redevelopment Plan for Adjoining Neighborhoods

The neighborhoods southeast of Binghamton's downtown are experiencing significant decline from lack of investment by both the public and private sectors. Sidewalks and roads are deteriorating, homes are not being maintained, parking lots and commercial businesses are infringing further into the neighborhood, and cut-through traffic often occurs at speeds above the limit. Similar to the neighborhoods in the North Riverfront District, a comprehensive approach will be necessary to reestablish the integrity of long-term neglect. The City should develop a Redevelopment Plan for this neighborhood to comprehensively understand the areas role in relationship to downtown and when and where public and institutional investment should occur.

Action Steps

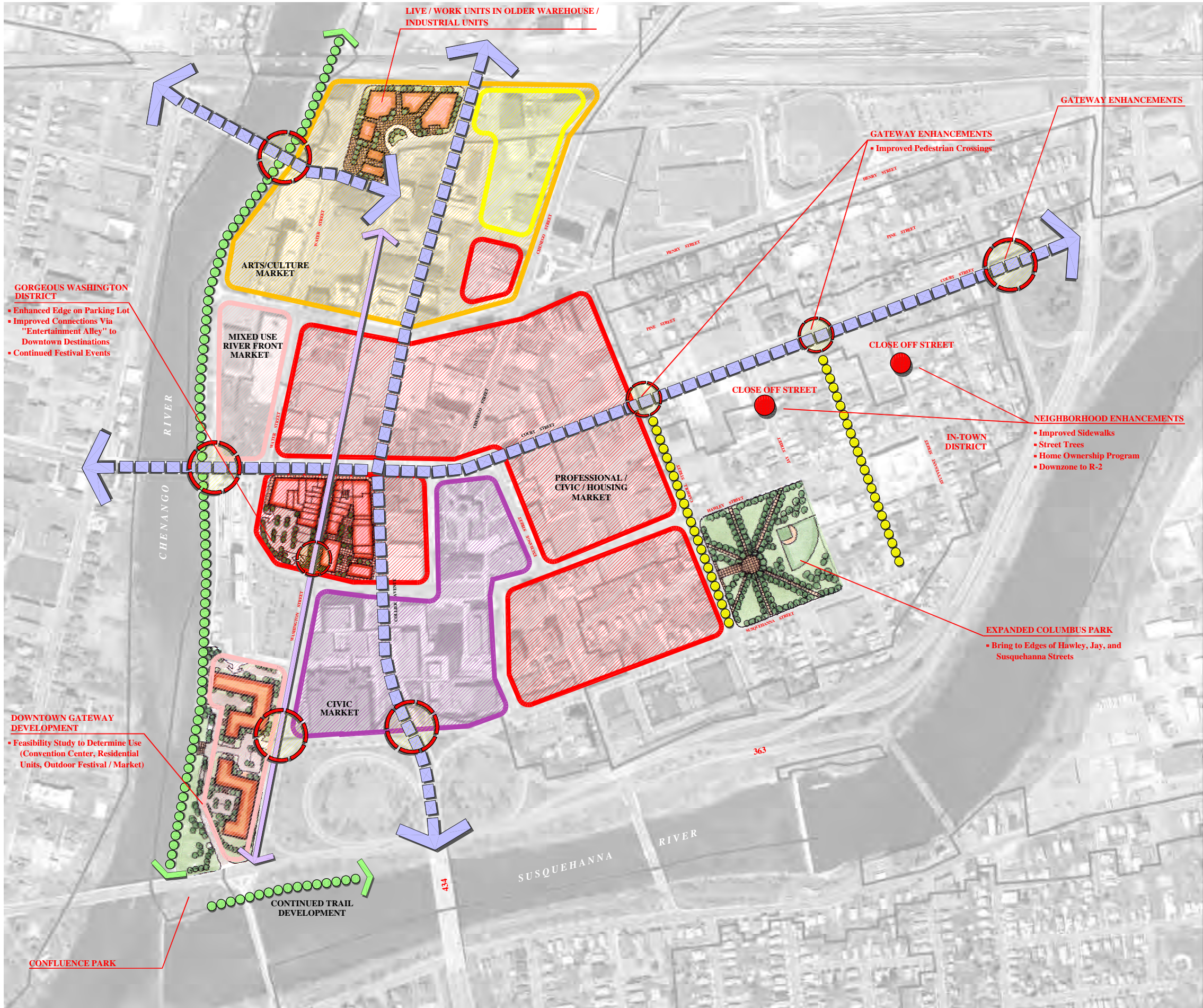
- Establish a Neighborhood Redevelopment Plan.
- Reinvest in Public Infrastructure.
- In an effort to stabilize and maintain the economic and cultural diversity of these neighborhoods, a home ownership program should be targeted to adjoining areas.
- Reduce the number of "cut-through" streets by closing Stuyvesant Street and Jay Street.
- Rezone neighborhoods from R-5 to R-2.
- Make Columbus Park a focal point in the neighborhood by expanding the park and removing some of the development on its edges.





*Downtown/In-Town District
Plan Graphic*



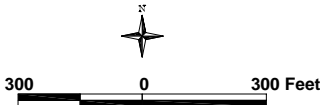


Downtown / Intown District Concept Plan

- Significant Gateways
- Primary Neighborhood Gateways
- Improved Riverfront Trail Connection
- Primary Transportation Corridors
- Potential Pedestrian-Oriented "Entertainment Alley"

Emerging Downtown Markets
(Districts Generally Outline Emerging Markets, But Do Not Limit Locations)

- Arts, Cultural, & Housing Market
- Entertainment Market (Entertainment Alley)
- Professional / Civic / Housing Market
- Riverfront Market
- Civic Market



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Comprehensive Plan

CITYWIDE POLICIES & PROJECTS TO STRENGTHEN BINGHAMTON'S QUALITY OF LIFE

The Comprehensive Plan recommends programs and projects to promote wide-ranging and meaningful dialogues among residents, neighborhoods and local institutions. The following recommendations are intended to promote citizen involvement in problem solving and empower the community with ideas and resources that can help shape the future of Binghamton.

Maintain Progress Toward Community-Based Policing

In every avenue of public participation used in developing this plan, improving public safety in Binghamton emerged as a top priority. Public safety was often mentioned during the neighborhood meetings. Further, the community survey found that 65.6 percent of survey respondents recognized community-policing programs as an extremely important benefit to the residents of the City of Binghamton. Before outside perceptions of Binghamton's public safety can be changed, residents must feel safe from crime at the same time that they are confident that their police force understands and respects all community members and their needs. If Binghamton is to reach its full potential as a successful, lively place, all people must feel safe in the streets.

Building partnerships and nurturing communication among residents and community leaders in

In every avenue of public participation used in developing this plan, improving public safety in Binghamton emerged as a top priority...

Binghamton is one of the key elements of this plan. This involves not only interaction among local residents and public officials, but also interaction among residents and public safety personnel. However, many residents feel that Binghamton's police force, not unlike many other communities across the country, has become somewhat disconnected from the community residents they serve. Although officers enter into constant contact with citizens, they increasingly do so without developing any degree of familiarity. Required to travel through the City in patrol cars, officers have little opportunity to develop positive relationships with community residents. This has essentially allowed citizens to become passive in relation to policing. As a consequence, officers not only perceive the environments in which they work to be dangerous, they also begin to attribute dangerous traits to many community residents.

Action Steps

- In an effort to reduce neighborhood criminal activity, reduce fear of crime and enhance the overall quality of life in Binghamton, the City should encourage greater interaction between the Police Department and residents through the Binghamton Neighborhood Enhancement Team (B-NET) program. Among the many aspects of community-based policing is increased use of foot and bicycle patrols in neighborhoods. For Binghamton, this may require a commitment from the City to redeploy police personnel to effectively meet the needs of this important community program.



- Strategies to reduce crime that involve the built environment should also be explored. For instance, strategically placed lighting (including “safe path” lighting) will deter criminal activities. Other strategies may emerge from this initiative that integrate citizens into the planning and implementation of these efforts and all public safety programs. The overall goal of such a program should be to encourage the development of neighborhood organizations, get citizens involved in crime prevention, and encourage personal interaction between Binghamton police officers and neighborhood residents. Overall, these efforts should result in an improved quality of life in Binghamton by making it a safer and more livable community.



Continue Responding to the Needs of Binghamton's Youth Population

Generally, Binghamton's twenty-nine parks and recreation facilities are a reflection of the community's heyday. From the neighborhood parks, including Rec Park, Cheri Ann Lindsey Park and MacArthur Park, to Ely Park Golf Course, Binghamton's parks and recreational facilities meet the needs of a diverse population. However, the types of activities that interest the youth of the community are more diverse than ever before. While some prefer more traditional activities, like baseball and basketball, others prefer more “extreme” activities, like BMX racing, skate parks, and climbing walls. Still others are not interested in these “fitness-oriented” activities, but would rather develop their talents in the arts, like music and dance. Clearly, providing for these diverse interests can be challenging.

The community survey asked respondents what one thing would

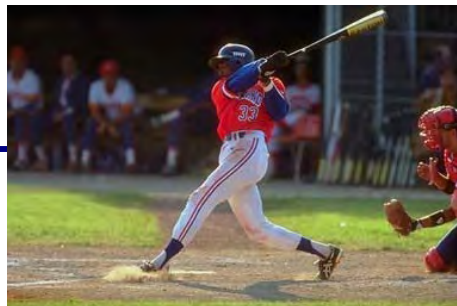
make the biggest improvement in Binghamton's City Parks. The majority of the respondents (39.3 percent) pointed to better maintenance of existing parks. The next highest response (19.3 percent) was the need to provide new park equipment to meet changing recreational demands. Further, an overwhelming number of survey respondents (75 percent) consider providing youth activities/recreational and cultural opportunities as extremely important benefits to the residents of the City of Binghamton. This suggests that residents would support City initiatives to provide additional youth amenities that help to engender a sense of pride in the community at a young age by providing the amenities that meet the needs of today's youth population. A good example of

this type of endeavor is the recent decision to construct a skate park at Cheri Ann Lindsey Park.

Binghamton's parks and recreational facilities meet the needs of a diverse population. However, the types of activities that interest the youth of the community are more diverse than ever before.

Action Steps

- Recognizing that different activities interest different people, the City of Binghamton should coordinate a youth task force that includes existing youth organizations *and the youth of the community* to develop a Youth and Community Center that meets the varied interests of today's younger generations. For instance, some might be interested in active sports such as basketball, indoor beach volleyball, or even a climbing wall, while others may be interested in a place to develop their language, artistic or music skills. A new multi-use facility, such as that proposed for the Main Street Empowerment Zone located adjacent to the High School, could also offer places for social gathering with a small Internet café and/or lounge. Providing these types of resources and services to the youth of Binghamton can help to reaffirm the values of community life and instill a greater sense of integrity and respect for Binghamton's pluralistic community.



Respond to the Needs of Binghamton's Senior Population

Trends across the country are indicating that as the “baby-boomer” generation ages and approaches retirement, new housing types and activities are necessary. While recent statistics indicate that the proportion of the two population groups from 60 to 64 and 65 and older in Binghamton has declined by 22.7 percent and 17.5 percent, respectively, the 45 to 54 age group has increased by nearly 32 percent. Consequently, in the next ten to fifteen years, Binghamton can expect a significant increase in market demand for elderly living amenities, services, and activities.

The changing demographics in Binghamton are consistent with both national and state trends, and are being met with varying approaches. One approach is to build one and two bedroom town houses and/or condominiums with leisure amenities to meet the demands of a healthy retired community, such as congregate care communities and facilities. Another level of housing development is to build for a population that requires assistance in daily routines such as cooking meals and laundry, as in assisted living

facilities. Both congregate care and assisted living housing allow residents to continue to be independent while providing the security and knowledge that amenities and support services are available. Many of these senior housing facilities provide regular organized activity programs including, speakers, seminars, and entertainment, as well as transportation to grocery stores and banks. A third level of housing for an aging population is to develop nursing home facilities. Often nursing home facilities are built near hospitals and other medically related services, and provide for those requiring 24-hour medical attention.



Action Steps

- Studies have shown that seniors are living increasingly active lifestyles. The inventory and analysis phase of this project indicates that the senior population will play an increasingly important role in Binghamton's future. While the community survey indicates that better than 50 percent of the respondents consider senior citizen activities to be satisfactory, Binghamton should address the changing needs of this population by creating a task force made up of City staff, members of both the current senior community and the “baby-boomer” generation, and local senior citizen organizations, such as the First Ward and Loyal D. Greenman Senior Centers. Together, this group can determine the needs of future senior populations in Binghamton and develop a strategy to provide these amenities. One consideration of the group should be how the needs of the senior and youth populations can be combined to create a unique community enrichment center that encourages interaction between the groups, perhaps in the proposed Main Street Empowerment Zone in the West

Riverfront District. Opportunity may also exist for senior housing development in the proposed First Ward Neighborhood Square or even downtown.

Continue Developing an Integrated Waterfront Trail

Multi-use trail networks are becoming increasingly popular in communities across the country, especially along waterfronts. Because of their continuous, linear nature, these corridors link communities and resources to each other. For many communities, these evolving corridors provide unique opportunities for both recreation and travel. They provide residents recreational opportunities like walking, roller blading, bicycling, or jogging. They can be used for community-building events like summer concerts or a Farmers' Market. Trails also provide residents with a functional alternative to vehicle travel, whether for a 20-minute bicycle commute to the downtown commercial core area or a safe short-cut to a local event. Trails connect destinations with neighborhoods, like community and cultural resources (libraries, schools, or parks) and destinations outside the community (rural settings or regional parks). Increasingly, communities are investing in fully integrated and connected trail networks that offer routes for non-polluting methods of travel, which can also reduce congestion, promote energy conservation, and improve air quality. These factors, in tandem with numerous nearby recreational opportunities, can enhance the quality of life for Binghamton residents.



Binghamton has recently acknowledged the value of trail development with its recent plans to invest in trail improvements along the Chenango River. The first phase of riverfront trail upgrades along the Chenango River includes development of Confluence Park at the intersection of the Chenango and Susquehanna Rivers. Phase II is will connect Memorial Bridge to Clinton Street Bridge. The third stage will make the final connection to Otsiningo Park. As trail improvements are being made, special care should be taken to improve connections with adjoining neighborhoods and downtown. For instance, Phase II and III improvements will involve expanding the waterfront trail on the east shore of the Chenango River north to Otsiningo Park. As these phased improvements are considered, special thought should be given to making the trail well connected to North Side neighborhoods (See Citywide Bike and Pedestrian Network recommendations below). Improvements may also include a new passive park at the south end of Binghamton Plaza along the shoreline (See recommendations for North Riverfront District). As the trail is being planned, general consideration should be given to understanding how the trail will function within Binghamton and connect to a Citywide bike and pedestrian system. Research should also

be given to understanding where opportunities exist to make connections to regional trail networks (such as along the Susquehanna River), which will enhance the use of the Binghamton waterfront trail. Whenever possible, connections into neighborhoods should be developed.

Action Steps

- Ultimately, Binghamton will have a trail network in place that connects various destinations within the City. Connections will also be made to connect with regional destinations, such as Otsiningo Park. To improve the use of the trail, a promotional and marketing program should be developed. Publicizing the trail will have numerous benefits. Some of these benefits are highlighted below.
 - As the trail network is being developed, increasing support through promotion may increase regional interest from community residents as well as local businesses. These people and organizations may realize advantages to sponsoring development of various portions of the trail.
 - Using the press to inform the public that the trail is a “work in progress” may help to generate community enthusiasm and support. Regular updates should be provided to the community.
- Publicity of the trail network will likely come from the local media outlets (television, newspaper, radio). However, it will be important that the City help to generate publicity through events like a “Name the Trail” contest, a children’s poster contest or even an adults’ logo contest. The City should also organize a semi-annual Trail Work Day. Anything that brings more people to the trail and draws attention to it can be effective.

Continue Investment in a Citywide Bike & Pedestrian Network

Bike and pedestrian networks are becoming increasingly popular in many communities. They provide residents with a recreational amenity, as well as connections between neighborhoods and to recreation and commercial destinations within the community and region. In fact, many people will choose to bike or walk if the connections are safe, comfortable, and enjoyable, and if destinations are clearly linked by a network of sidewalks and trails. Combined, bike and pedestrian networks can help create a vibrant and well-connected community.

In large measure, Binghamton already has many of these connections in place or under development. For instance, the City is reasonably well connected with its extensive sidewalk network and bridge connections. The City’s investment in the Washington Street

Bridge, which connects South Side neighborhoods with downtown, is a good example. The City’s current initiative to expand a trail along the Chenango River will further enhance safe bike and pedestrian connections into downtown from North Side neighborhoods. In order to continue to provide these connections, the City should further promote and expand its 50/50 sidewalk improvement program that encourages residents to replace worn-out sidewalks by covering half of the costs, as well as seek opportunities to provide bike lanes in any new road construction.



Action Steps

- Bike and pedestrian connections are valuable assets that many suburban communities do not offer. Combined with amenities such as benches placed in shaded areas, directional signage, and pedestrian-scaled lighting, these provisions can help create a vibrant community where residents have ample opportunity for chance social encounters. In addition, street plantings can improve the urban aesthetic immeasurably. These public amenities can play a strong role in connecting neighborhoods to other neighborhoods, parks, and the commercial areas within neighborhoods. While Binghamton is currently developing many of these amenities in the downtown commercial core, it should extend these amenities into the primary corridors through its neighborhoods. Binghamton should address the following improvements:

➤ Improved Crosswalks

The easier a street is to cross, the more inviting and safe it will be for pedestrians. While stop signs and traffic signals are helpful, their goal is usually to stop automobiles rather than to guide the pedestrian safely across the road. In response, a highly visible crosswalk standard should be designed which can be applied throughout the City. It is recommended that the City investigate the possibility of stamped pavement at key (i.e., heavily traveled) intersections. Examples of key intersections include, but are not limited to: Ely Street and Robinson Street, Broad Avenue and Robinson Street, Chestnut Street and Main Street, Frederick Street and State Street, Chestnut Street and Leroy Street, Conklin Avenue and Tompkins Street, and South Washington Street and Vestal Avenue.

➤ Landscape Edges

Where parking lots abut the sidewalk, a distinct border should exist between the two. Ideally, this border would be landscaped, creating a continuous edge to the sidewalk and enhancing the aesthetic value. Such a border could take the form of a low hedgerow, a wooden or wrought iron fence, or a planting strip of shrubbery. This border would serve not only to improve the aesthetics, but also to create a physical barrier to separate pedestrians from parked vehicles. A good example for the need of this type of treatment would be the parking lot on Hawley Street opposite the Holiday Inn. While not located within Binghamton, a sample of this treatment is provided below.



Before



After

Example not in Binghamton



➤ *Provide Pedestrian Amenities*

In addition to safe crosswalks and continuous sidewalks, it is important that the City continue to invest in amenities that make walking more interesting and enjoyable. Benches offer pedestrians a place to rest, talk, and people watch, and should be distributed widely. Attractive human-scale lighting enhances the aesthetic and engenders a sense of personal security. Trees, planters, hanging flower baskets, banners, and attractive pavement also help enhance the pedestrian environment. These types of amenities should, at a minimum, be introduced within the boundaries of the proposed Neighborhood Commercial Districts. Current investments being put into the South Washington Bridge Street District is a good illustration of this concept.



Improve Safety of Pedestrian Connections Around Schools

Given that neighborhoods are the fundamental building block of this document, the role of elementary schools, which essentially give a focal point to a neighborhood, should be recognized as fundamental to rebuilding a neighborhood.

Generally, the school district is autonomous of City government and responsible for the

operations of each school within the City. However, during neighborhood meetings, several residents noted the need for improved pedestrian crossings near the elementary schools. In an effort to provide for increased

safety for school children being dropped-off, highly visible crosswalks and/or pull-off areas should be developed.

...during neighborhood meetings several residents noted the need for improved pedestrian crossings near the elementary schools. In an effort to provide for increased safety for school children being dropped-off, highly visible crosswalks and/or pull-off areas should be developed.

Action Steps

- The City should lead coordination with the school district to develop a plan to improve pedestrian safety around areas of need. For instance, in some areas the City may develop improved street crossings in the public right-of-way, while in others it may be appropriate for the school to develop pull-off areas, as was recently completed near the MacArthur and Coolidge schools.
- Improved pedestrian crossings can be created in a variety of ways, from the less expensive improvements like painted white striping to more expensive improvements like inlaid brick pavers. Even then, enhancements can be made that include bulb-outs which provide for shorter crossing distances, and pull-off areas for vehicles to safely let children out. As noted above, the City should work in cooperation with the school district to determine the most appropriate measures to take at each school.

Address Student Housing Needs and Concerns

If appropriately located, Binghamton University students can have positive impacts on the City of Binghamton. If inappropriately located, these same students can be extremely disruptive to stable neighborhoods. More specifically, many single-family West Side neighborhoods are currently being threatened by high concentrations of students. Further, many of these students are living in homes that are being converted from single-family to house the students. As students continue to prefer living in Binghamton's neighborhoods the market will respond by providing necessary units. If this pattern continues the students can have negative impacts on family living as well as some adverse public safety consequences.

As Binghamton University grows its student population, it too has realized that the surrounding communities will be greatly affected with more student housing. Recognizing the need to address potential conflicts, Binghamton University has developed a team of University administrators, known as the BU Presence Team. This team has been charged with the responsibility to develop a framework to resolve student housing needs and issues which will surface as more students are attracted to the University.

Action Steps

- The City's efforts should begin by identifying and building a database of illegally converted homes. Initial identification of these homes can begin with the streets and neighborhoods with the highest concentrations of students. A recently completed Binghamton University graduate thesis reveals where these concentrations exist. The findings generally show that Binghamton University students are concentrated in the Westside neighborhoods, particularly along five streets (see chart below). In total, approximately 615 students are clustered in 139 homes within a .21 square mile area, (averaging about 4.4 students per household) effectively creating a miniature college town. The chart below illustrates where these students reside by street.

| Street Name | Number of Students | Number of Student Properties | Zoning |
|---------------|--------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Murray Street | 138 | 35 | Mostly R-5, some R-2 |
| Chapin Street | 127 | 29 | Mostly R-5, some R-2 |
| Oak Street | 125 | 27 | R-5 |
| Walnut Street | 113 | 25 | Mostly R-5, some R-2 |
| Leroy Street | 112 | 23 | Mostly R-1, some R-2 & R-5 |

- The greatest measure the City can take is to prevent any further intrusions. This can best be accomplished by improving enforcement of existing zoning regulations. The recent transfer of responsibility for the Housing Code to the Fire Department should facilitate this process.



- Density reduction is an element of stabilizing threatened neighborhoods. This Comprehensive Plan recommends rezoning portions of the West Side neighborhoods to R-2 districts. Another component to this density reduction policy is to address the family definition, something the City continues to work through. In addition, recognizing where illegal conversions are will help in efforts to reduce density. Finally, developing a grant conversion program should make conversions more attractive to building owners.
- Managing student housing will be critical to success. After zoning amendments are made, based on recommendations made in this Plan, it will become more evident as to where students “fit” into the community. For instance, R-1 neighborhoods should not allow for student living. While R-2 neighborhoods could assimilate some of the student housing, most should be directed to the proposed R-3 districts and mixed-use professional/commercial/residential districts outlined for downtown. Finally, the City should institute the proposed Rental Permit and Inspection program, which will enable the City to track where students are living and coordinate municipal initiatives with student housing initiatives. For instance, as students are attracted to a particular proposed R-3 district, then amenities that are attractive to a student population could be targeted for those areas (i.e. nearby pizza and sub shops, a coffee house and movie rental stores). Managing student housing will become increasingly important as Binghamton University works to grow its student population and should continue to be a priority for the City.
- The City should maintain a database of where students are living in the City and compare this database to the proposed Rental Permit and Inspection program. The City may consider requiring that student housing arrangements downtown by a certain distance from bars and require that the buildings be mixed-use (i.e. require that the building have some public purpose such as a restaurant or commercial establishment). This can be imposed by requiring a Special Use permit for any proposed student housing projects (in addition to the Rental Permit and Inspection program). Building this database can begin by obtaining student location records from Binghamton University. If this is not possible, then a standard method for tabulating student locations should be developed.
- The City should work closely with the University to develop an awareness program that outlines the responsibilities of living in the community as well as the students expectations of landlords.

Managing student housing will become increasingly important as Binghamton University works to grow its student population and should continue to be a priority for the City.



Develop a Comprehensive Historic Preservation Strategy

Preserving historic buildings and traditional urban development patterns helps connect a community to its origins, which can, in turn, establish the community's contemporary identity and help set a direction for future revitalization efforts. Like many urban communities of the 1960s, Binghamton knew that it had a number of special buildings that were being destroyed by Urban Renewal projects. In response, Binghamton established the Commission on Architecture and Urban Design (CAUD), which is still very alive and active today. Then in 1978 the Landmarks Ordinance was developed and adopted to add further protections to unique buildings in Binghamton.

The 1980s were a busy time for historic preservation efforts in Binghamton. In 1983 the City's Court Street Historic District was added to the State and National Register of Historic places. Two years later, the City adopted the Susquehanna Heritage Area Program. In 1987 the State & Henry Street Historic District was added to the State and National Register of Historic places. The following year the Rail Yard Historic District was added to the State and National Register of Historic Places. In 1989, the Susquehanna Heritage Area Local Landmarks District was established and all properties within the district were adopted as local landmarks. These districts are a living reminder of the values that made Binghamton a desired community in which to live during the first half of the 20th Century. Finally, in 1989, the Court Street Façade Paint Program was created, which allowed for all landmark properties within the Downtown Historic Districts to benefit from \$120,000 in grant funds. It has been estimated that these funds leveraged \$1.5 million in renovations.

Both the Federal and State governments encourage historic preservation through various means. A number of not-for-profit organizations have also established programs that support local historic preservation efforts. Many progressive economic development practitioners are using historic preservation as a central component to long-term economic development. In fact, the National Trust for Historic Preservation Main Street initiative reports the following compelling statistics:

- The total amount of public and private reinvestment in Main Street communities is \$15.2 billion
- Average reinvestment per community: \$9,302,000
- Number of net new businesses generated: 52,000
- Number of net new jobs generated: 206,000
- Number of building rehabilitations: 79,000
- The Ratio of Reinvestment into the Community: the average number of dollars generated in each community for every dollar used to operate the local Main Street program: \$39.22 reinvested for every \$1 spent
- Average program length, to date: 6.27 years
- Average cost per job created: \$1,878
- Average cost per business created in a main street district: \$7,567



The advantages of historic preservation is best summarized by the National Trust's Main Street program:

"The Main Street program is designed to improve all aspects of the downtown or central business district, producing both tangible and intangible benefits. Improving economic management, strengthening public participation, and making downtown a fun place to visit are as critical to Main Street's future as recruiting new businesses, rehabilitating buildings, and expanding parking. Building on downtown's inherent assets -- rich architecture, personal service, and traditional values and most of all, a sense of place -- the Main Street approach has rekindled entrepreneurship, downtown cooperation and civic concern. It has earned national recognition as a practical strategy appropriately scaled to a community's local resources and conditions. And because it is a locally driven program, all initiative stems from local issues and concerns."

Action Steps

- In 1991 a Citywide *Reconnaissance Level Survey of Local Historic Resources* was developed. The summary chapter provides long-range recommendations pertaining to the development of districts, designation of landmarks, policy creation and potential programs. It has been used as a guide for all programming. The City should develop a third volume to this survey which clearly illustrates design review and incentive programs for historic preservation efforts. A similar type of report should be developed to assist CAUD with its efforts to maintain the historical integrity of Binghamton.
- A comprehensive single volume Historic Preservation Plan should be developed in coordination with the proposed design standards. This plan can comprehensively revise the numerous existing policies that have been added since the policies were developed in 1964 and more accurately reflect current practices. This plan should include the definition (or redefinition) of the Historic District boundaries, standards for building renovation and reconstruction within the district, and financial assistance programs (including local, state and federal programs) as well as technical assistance programs. The plan should specifically recognize unique buildings and sites of historic importance (such as those listed on the State and National Historic Register).
- While the National and State Historic districts have the potential to gain tax credits for various projects, the Susquehanna Heritage Area Local Landmarks District does not receive this same level of attention. Consequently, a Historic District Grant and Low Interest Loan Program should be developed that includes grants and low-interest loans for storefront renovation, signage, elevator installations, painting, and roofing which directly benefits the Local Landmarks District. The program could be modeled after the extremely successful Court Street Façade Paint Program.
- Consider redefining portions of the Susquehanna Heritage Area Local Landmarks District as State or National Historic District.
- Consider combining the State and Henry Street Historic District with the Court Street Historic District. Combining these two districts could help with the creation of the proposed Entertainment Alley concept outlined for the Downtown/Intown District.



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- The City should continue to develop a comprehensive digital version of Binghamton's Historic Districts and Local Landmarks.
 - Gorgeous Washington has recognized the value of historic preservation downtown with many of its beautification efforts, particularly in Parlor City Commons and along Washington Street itself. The efforts of this organization should be recognized by the downtown management organization that ultimately evolves as recommended in this Comprehensive Plan as a model for "placemaking."
 - Taking advantage of the National Trust's Main Street Program can be one approach used to market and manage an expanded Binghamton Historic Preservation program. Clearly, other partners and funding sources will need to be identified. Some of these partners may include the National Park Service, National Trust for Historic Preservation, Preservation League of New York State, New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, New York State Department of Transportation, New York State Council on the Arts, and New York Landmarks Conservancy.



CITYWIDE POLICIES & PROJECTS TO ENHANCE BINGHAMTON'S REGIONAL COMMUNITY IMAGE

The Plan calls for maintaining and improving the overall image of the City. This can be achieved by developing a comprehensive approach to protecting the character of Binghamton's neighborhoods and creating multiple front door impressions, either through the Internet or on the ground. But the City, too, must balance this with cost-effective development that enhances opportunities for social interaction.

Promote Binghamton to Improve its Image

Many regional residents never visit downtown Binghamton, assuming the City is unsafe and unpleasant. Many of these impressions are formed by the information regional residents are receiving from local media. For Binghamton to continue to renew itself, it must overcome these stereotypes and encourage people to visit and explore the City. Binghamton should build on its efforts to attract visitors with well-organized events like the Rec Park Music Fest, First Night Binghamton, and the Annual Chris Thater Memorial Races. Others the City might consider include a Garden Walk, Community Clean-Up Day, an Antiques Festival, and ethnic festivals that celebrate the diversity of Binghamton. When these visitors come to the City and experience a safe environment, they are more likely to let go of their negative perceptions and come back for other reasons.

As important as providing events to attract visitors to Binghamton is the need to continually portray Binghamton in a positive light through the media, even during difficult times.

As important as providing events to attract visitors to Binghamton is the need to continually portray Binghamton in



a positive light through the media, even during difficult times. To do this successfully, an internal media relations person should have the capacity to promote Binghamton at all times, not just for special events like festivals or when a major employer moves into the City. It is also important to realize that organizing community events alone will not generate positive press just because it represents a good cause. So it is important to be prepared because often the public and the media are not always going to see the City's efforts in a positive light.

Action Steps

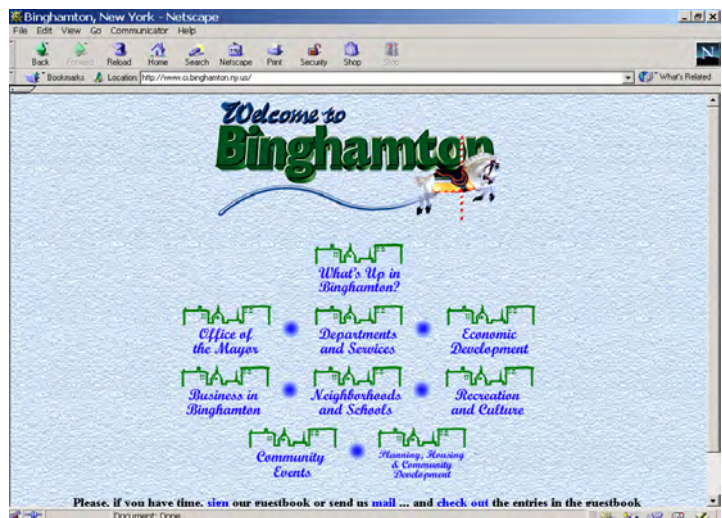
- Having a key point person will be important so that a consistent message is being delivered to the public and the media. With this in mind, the City should create a new position in the Mayor's office or specifically assign to a current position the responsibility of consistent and frequent public relations. To accomplish this, the City should follow the approach outlined below:



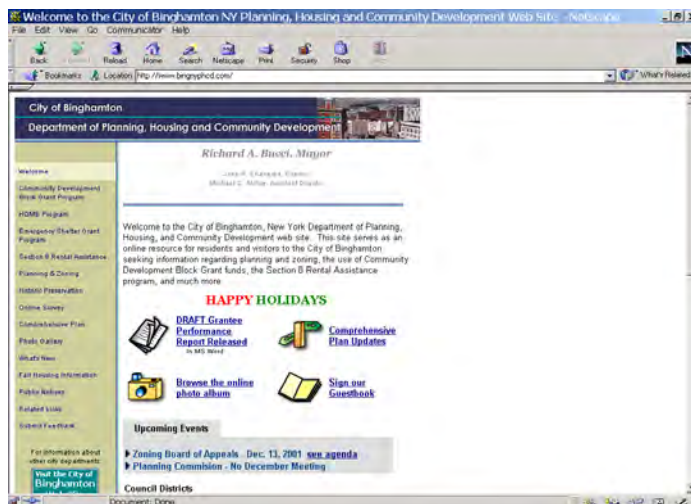
- In order for the message to be consistent, the message should first be discussed and determined. Consequently, the City should establish a continuous public relations campaign after the completion of a thorough planning process. This is one of the best ways to counter negativity and criticism. By delivering a continuous and consistent message, the PR person will establish credibility with the media and be sought after for comment during times of distress. In addition, a continuous public relations program will help to build public support and engender a sense of pride in Binghamton residents.
- Get activities noticed regionally with frequent press releases. Press releases are one of the best tools for the City to keep its name and presence before the region. For example, when organizing an event for downtown, develop a press release containing all of the details of the event, but also develop several smaller releases for each event-related activity and include follow-up announcements. When planning for First Night Binghamton, develop announcements prior to the celebration. Also, after the event has concluded, develop more releases announcing that the event had been a success and begin promoting for the next event.
- Develop multiple press releases highlighting the same event that are relevant to a variety of publications. When writing the releases, keep the demographic target in mind. For instance, if the event draws large numbers of senior citizens, then develop a press release that appeals to the group. If the event draws a high population of Spanish-speaking citizens, then develop an announcement in Spanish. The general idea is to make the job of editors easier resulting in an increased amount of exposure in various publications.

Improve the City Web Page with Interactive Features and Additional Public Services

Today's technological advancements allow members of a community to access a great deal of information from the Internet. Many activities that once required some amount of travel and inconvenience can now be completed from one's home computer. The City of Binghamton can continue to benefit the community through further improvements to its Internet services, similar to those in its recently remodeled Planning, Housing, and Community Development website. These improvements include providing vital news and information, while also creating a highly interactive user interface. Creation of a useful and meaningful website can be an extremely cost-effective means of promoting the City of Binghamton.



Currently, the City web pages provide a wealth of information to the community, including important contact names, phone numbers, and addresses for Departments within City government. Notices of important meetings such as City Council, Planning Commission, and Zoning Board of Appeals are posted, as are important news items regarding projects and activities in the City and within City government. While the City's web pages do presently provide some valuable services to the community, increasing the interactive nature of the site will further improve communication with the community while also potentially cutting time and monetary costs through automation of certain tasks. For instance, payment of parking tickets, water bills, and property taxes can be completed via the Internet. This would provide a convenience for members of the community while reducing paperwork and staff time commitments in City offices.



Action Steps

- The ever-increasing use and reliance on the Internet for information gathering has created a new avenue of exposure for businesses, individuals, and organizations looking to advertise and spread information. Government entities are no exception. A newly revamped web interface could be instrumental in molding perceptions of Binghamton as a great place to live, work, and play. In today's increasingly technology-driven society, it is crucial to reflect that Binghamton has a strong position.
 - The layout of the website should be reconstructed such that is clear and easy to navigate. Links to relevant sites on the website could make the City site a "jump-off" point for local residents interested in finding information not already located on the site. For instance, links to resources showing local news, weather, and events would be helpful.
 - Clear links to the City services offered on the site, such as those listed below, should be prominent.
 - The site could occasionally showcase some of the recreational and cultural opportunities available in the area, as mentioned below.
 - A vibrant, dynamic interface could become a source of pride in the community and could indeed become very useful for businesses, residents, and non-residents alike who are curious as to what Binghamton has to offer.
 - To be effective, the website must be maintained and updated frequently.
- A number of Departments within City government can provide basic services via Binghamton's Internet site. Examples of these services include:



- The Civil Service Office: Examination announcements and job postings for City employment opportunities should be placed on the Internet. In addition, the user should be able to download application forms, as well as view the requirements and qualifications for the given job.
 - Department of Public Works: Residents of the community should be able to make service requests over the Internet. These requests may include necessary repairs to potholes, streetlights, and traffic signs. This service can help to ensure that all potentially dangerous problems are quickly noted and attended to.
 - Department of Planning, Housing, and Community Development: A searchable database of City codes and zoning ordinances should be made available. The application forms for site plan review and variance requests that are currently available online are a good first step and illustrate how the efficiencies of the Internet can benefit the City.
 - Office of the Treasurer: Payment of real estate and school district taxes can be carried out online, as well as the payment of parking tickets, which is handled by the Office's Traffic Violations Bureau.
 - Office of the City Clerk: Forms for a variety of licenses and permits should be made available. Though many of these forms could not be submitted online, providing them for printing would save many residents a trip to City offices.
- Exposure of recreational and cultural opportunities within the City can be improved via the Internet.
 - The Parks and Recreation Department currently lists the wide variety of clinics, activities, and events that are available, but the information may be better conveyed through a month-by-month calendar interface with corresponding maps that show the locations of events in the community. Though Binghamton has twenty-nine public parks, it is likely that few residents know the location of more than a handful. Increased emphasis and exposure of these parks could lead to increased enjoyment and use.
 - Links to websites showing the many recreational and cultural opportunities within the City should be present. These links should include the Internet sites of The Binghamton Mets, the Roberson Museum & Science Center, and the Broome County Public Library, to name a few. Additionally, the site could occasionally showcase a certain event, such as the Spiedie Fest and Balloon Rally, the Chris Thater Memorial Race, or First Night activities. The City website can work with organizations such as the Broome County Chamber of Commerce, the Binghamton Convention and Visitor's Bureau, and Tier.net, whose websites all work to promote the vast opportunities available in the Binghamton area.
 - Interactive mapping on the Internet can be a valuable and useful resource for community residents. City employees would also be able to use such a service for their needs, reducing requests for Geographic Information Systems (GIS) maps created by the Department of Planning, Housing, and Community Development. Map information can be useful for simply viewing and locating services and facilities, while also providing a research and analysis tool.



- Information often becomes more useful and meaningful when it is placed in a visual format that is familiar and relevant to the user. Tax parcel locations, zoning boundaries, land use attributes, parks, recreation areas, historic areas, and school district boundaries are examples of mapping layers that might be useful to the general public.
- Internet mapping is also useful as an analytical tool. Residents may want to look at crime displayed within the bounds of their neighborhood. New potential homebuyers may want to find a home near shopping, parks, and / or schools. A company researching potential sites for relocation could employ the map data to narrow their search. The presence of this map data allows the user to make their own searches, queries, and consequent analysis.

Strengthen and Maintain the Integrity of Gateways

Gateways play an important role in forming first impressions and welcoming visitors and residents alike. Both the form and the character of a gateway can influence the overall experience of a particular area. In their current condition, most of Binghamton's gateways do not establish a clear expression of community pride. Presently, Binghamton Metropolitan Transportation Study staff is comprehensively addressing access points into the City of

Gateways play an important role in forming first impressions and welcoming visitors and residents alike. Both the form and the character of a gateway can influence the overall experience of a particular area.

Binghamton and the Central Business District. Findings from this study will result in physical improvements in 2006, as scheduled in the 2002-2006 Transportation Improvement Program. Generally, the goal should be to create signature gateways that give an enlivened feeling and a sense of arrival into Binghamton. As the City's gateways are comprehensively addressed, these principles should be upheld.

Action Steps

- Binghamton has several gateways that should be addressed at various levels:

- *Front Street:* Front Street provides access to and from points northwest of the Chenango River and is a primary connection to NYS Route 17, I-86, I-81 and I-88. This gateway should continue with a primary orientation toward auto-traffic, but a more prominent welcoming to the City of Binghamton should be established. This might involve a new welcome sign, but land uses at this intersection should also be addressed. Further, the visual character of this gateway is unique given its proximity to I-86. Consequently, special treatment should be taken to enhance the views from I-86.



Example of a signature gateway



- *Clinton Street:* Clinton Street provides an important gateway for visitors coming into Binghamton's downtown commercial core from points northwest. Further, it provides one of the primary gateways to The Forum and to what is emerging as a downtown Arts District. This gateway (at the Clinton Street Bridge) should be enlivened in a way that celebrates the arts with amenities like public sculpture and banners that identify the area as an Arts District. At the western end (its intersection with Glenwood Avenue), improved signage should be developed that makes visitors aware of Antique Row, similar to that already provided at the east end.
- *Main Street:* Main Street plays an important gateway role for points west of Binghamton. A large arch spanning Main Street already exists for those entering from Johnson City, but the general feeling of the gateway is still relatively characterless beyond the archway. The gateway could be enhanced with improved plantings and banners. The banners, for instance, could read, "Welcome to Binghamton" or advertise an upcoming special event. These same principals could then be applied at various intersections along the corridor to identify special connections into neighborhoods. Some intersections for consideration should include:

- | | |
|--------------------|-------------------|
| ◆ Floral Avenue | ◆ Chestnut Street |
| ◆ Crestmont Street | ◆ Murray Street |
| ◆ Helen Street | ◆ Oak Street |
| ◆ Laurel Avenue | ◆ Jarvis Street |

- *Court Street:* This gateway serves two important welcoming roles. First, at the west end, the Court Street Bridge is an important connection for not only vehicles entering the downtown commercial core, but also for pedestrians (residents, workers, and students). Further, the bridge is a prominent visual feature from the east shore of the Chenango River, location of the Holiday Inn and often a setting for popular summertime festive events. Consequently, this bridge should include unique lighting and banners that welcome visitors to downtown as well as provide a pleasing visual experience for guests of the Holiday Inn and other points along the southeast shore of the river.

The second gateway, at the Court Street intersection with Route 363, is a primary gateway to NYSEG Stadium and the downtown commercial core. In its present state, it is visually unappealing and somewhat confusing for those vehicles entering the City. A signature monument could be incorporated as a primary focal point at the intersection and improved directional signage (with a unique architectural character) should be incorporated.

- *Riverside Drive:* Riverside Drive provides a gateway into Binghamton from the southwest, north of the Susquehanna River. The general character of this corridor is more residential than other gateways and should be treated as such. Improved pedestrian connections should be made into the commercial core area. A green planting strip with trees between the roadway and sidewalk should continue to be provided. Improved lighting of a historic pedestrian character should be



developed along the corridor and be clearly connected to Confluence Park and ongoing waterfront development improvements.

- *Vestal Avenue:* Vestal Avenue provides a gateway to the City from the Town of Vestal and is the City's most direct connection to Binghamton University. Generally, the corridor provides a more parkway-like environment and should be maintained. A unique welcoming sign should be placed at this gateway.
- *Vestal Parkway:* Vestal Parkway also provides an important connection for the City from the Town of Vestal. Special attention should also be made at this gateway. Given the amount of traffic volume here, an enhanced signature monument or water feature could be incorporated as a primary focal point, perhaps featuring an artistic interpretation of Binghamton's history and culture.
- *North Shore Drive:* Like the Vestal Parkway, North Shore Drive carries heavy traffic volumes. Special attention should especially be placed at the cloverleaf interchange that brings traffic into downtown Binghamton.



CITYWIDE POLICIES & PROJECTS TO PROMOTE ECONOMIC VITALITY

This Plan recommends that the City develop the tools to promote a diversity of housing, employment, shopping and social opportunities for all members of the community. Managing the economic and social progress of the City will be the most challenging component of this plan. To be successful, it will be important to compare and maintain an equilibrium regarding the type and location of investments being made within the community.

Develop a Strategy for Foreclosed Properties

Since 1990, Binghamton has seen nearly a 47 percent increase in vacant housing units. Further, renter-occupied housing units have increased by 2.5 percent, while owner-occupied housing units have decreased by 3.1 percent. The community survey asked residents to rate which activities would provide the greatest benefit to the residents of Binghamton. Nearly 70 percent of the respondents believe that improving neighborhoods through housing rehabilitation is an extremely important endeavor. This suggests that City residents think rebuilding the City's neighborhoods should be a top priority for the City.

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These are complicated issues to address, but if the City embraces the notion of building partnerships with not only the private sector, but also non-profit housing organizations, over the long-term some of these trends may be reversed. For this plan, one of its greatest challenges will be how to effectively address the increasing trend toward vacant housing units and decreasing home-ownership within the City. To be successful in revitalizing the City through neighborhood-based initiatives, a two-pronged foreclosed property strategy should be developed which addresses how to bring foreclosed properties back on line and, more importantly, proactive steps to preclude foreclosure.

Action Steps

- Initial steps should deal with homes that have become vacant through tax foreclosure followed by a strategy to bring bank-foreclosed properties back on line. First, developing a municipal foreclosed property strategy should be developed. To accomplish this, the City should follow the approach outlined below:
 - Initial steps should begin from the inside out. Homes that are currently in the City's ownership should be released, but subject to the following criteria (modeled on Troy, New York's foreclosed property program):



- ◆ Prospective purchasers should be required to submit a proposal including a description of how the property will be used, a summary of improvements to be made and how they will be made, how the improvement will be financed, and proposed purchase price.
 - ◆ In an effort to encourage increased home-ownership, prospective purchasers should be required to live in the residence for a specified period of time, preferably a minimum of five years.
 - ◆ The winning bidder should be required to begin work within 30 calendar days, and repairs should be completed within a determined time frame (six to twelve months). If these criteria are not met, then the City should take title to the property and offer it for sale to another party (subject to the same proposal criteria).
 - ◆ Final approval of any proposal or sale of municipally owned property should be made by the City Council.
- Subsequent to developing a municipal foreclosed properties strategy, the City should develop a strategy in coordination with the banks that own properties within the City. By working with the banks, the City may improve its understanding of problems in advance of either tax delinquency and/or mortgage default. Additionally, the City and the banks could devise a strategy for financial assistance that to make home ownership more realistic for those who have limited financial means, but meet all other criteria for ownership.
- The City should also consider educating and partnering with local realtors to help bring middle-income residents back into the City. To accomplish this, the City might consider organizing regular meetings of local realtors to discuss municipal housing efforts and programs, as well as to discuss emerging trends noticed by either the realtors or the City. Local banks should also be encouraged to be involved in these discussions.
 - The City should also consider alternatives for the current policy which holds new homeowners responsible for “inflated” tax assessments when purchasing homes at significantly lower values than the assessment. (Currently, homeowners must wait three years before they can contest their assessment.)

Improve Enforcement of Zoning Regulations

A common sentiment expressed by the community is that the existing enforcement of zoning and housing regulations is inadequate. Many residents specifically referenced the conversion of single-family homes to multiple-dwelling units, or the number of units being rented to multiple residents. In response, the City has already employed two additional zoning officials. However, to be successful at maintaining and/or improving the integrity of these neighborhoods, the regulations need to be based on fair and consistent enforcement. Otherwise, these efforts will not be effective over the long-term.



Action Steps

- Currently the Superintendent of the Building Bureau is responsible for zoning enforcement as well as building inspection. He simply does not have the staff to enforce the zoning regulations and building codes. In an effort to more comprehensively understand where problems are becoming a trend, City should begin keeping a register of every suspected or reported code violation in the City's Geographic information Systems database. This will allow for violations to be mapped, thereby creating a visual means to quickly and accurately identify trends.
- The City should develop a Rental Permit program that requires all rental units in Binghamton to be registered and annually inspected. The City could hire temporary staff to inspect every registered unit (or perhaps contract out code inspection work to local architects).
 - The inspector and the owner should develop a compliance plan that identifies remediation actions to be undertaken immediately, which is then subject to reinspection before a Rental Permit can be issued.
 - Recognizing that some rental units create more problems than others, the City should develop a comprehensive strategy that works to bring troubled units into conformance with neighborhood principles. This will in part be accomplished by developing a Rental Unit Permit and Inspection Program. However, some of these units may also have environmental impacts (e.g. regular high levels of noise) that regularly disrupt the neighborhood. Consequently, the City should impose standards that allow the City to revoke a Rental Permit if, for instance, a certain number of nuisance calls are made within a determined period of time. This can also be an effective technique to address student housing concerns citywide.
- The City should develop a rehabilitation loan program aimed at improving the quality and condition of homes in targeted areas. For instance, while a home may be structurally sound, it may need minor improvements to make improve its "curb appeal" with a new porch or a fresh coat of paint.
- The City should reach out to the building community to remind it to report work that requires permits and to encourage compliance with the building code.
- The City should also encourage emergency response personnel (e.g. police, fire, and EMS) to report violations to the Building Department for appropriate follow-up.
- The City should develop a strategy to comprehensively address illegally converted housing units. Beginning with the student population should be the first step in recognizing where these illegal conversions exist.
 - To begin to more comprehensively understand where the illegal conversions might exist, the City should follow the approach outlined below (see also *Address Student Housing Needs and Concerns* on page 82):

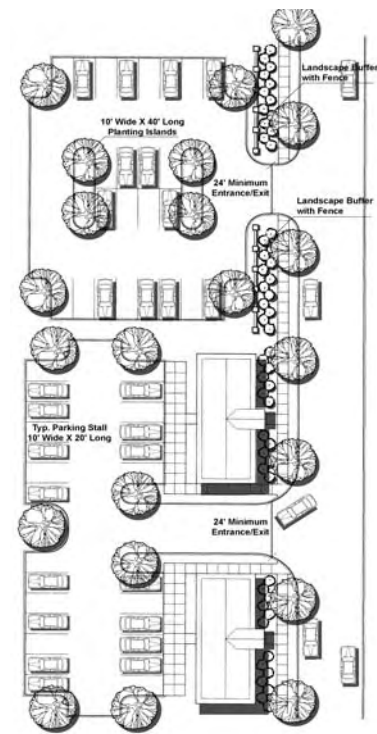


- ◆ First, the City should map where all students are reporting addresses within the City of Binghamton.
- ◆ The data can then be ordered to indicate how many students are residing within each residence.
- ◆ The City should then compare these addresses (indicating the number of students within each household) to existing zoning and reported land use codes. Addresses found within existing R-1 and R-2 districts that have more than two students can then be reviewed at a greater level of detail. This might involve site visits and/or a review of municipal records to determine those units granted variances for multiple units.
- ◆ It is important to note that this process will not reveal all illegally converted housing units. However, it will send a clear message to the landlords that the City recognizes these units are detrimental to the safety of the students and the integrity of the City's neighborhoods.
- ◆ The City may also consider offering incentives, such as low-interest loans, to help bring the homes back into compliance with existing zoning regulations.
- ◆ Finally, it is recommended below that the definition of "Family" be addressed with a more strict enforcement and interpretation of the definition. This should be completed as a preliminary step to any enforcement of the findings resulting from the process outlined above.

Develop Design Standards to Maintain and Improve Character of Development

Like many urban communities, Binghamton is a mature city with little undeveloped land available. Any future development that occurs in Binghamton will generally take place on sites that have been previously used for other activities, such as the Anitec site located in the First Ward neighborhood. Ultimately, the projects that are rebuilt to meet high-level standards will strengthen the City as a whole. Projects that short-change the City will become a burden. Consequently, it is critical that when development/redevelopment occurs, it is coordinated with the overall vision for the City. In an effort to promote this coordination, the City should develop design standards that reflect Binghamton's history and values. *Many of the Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee Members and residents alike (nearly forty-three percent of survey respondents) agree that this should be a **high priority** for the City.*

Zoning regulations define the kinds of activities that can be used for particular properties and how many buildings are allowed per acre of land. But zoning does not ensure that new buildings will enhance Binghamton's community character. If Binghamton wants to ensure that future development adds value to the community's built environment, design policies should be developed.





Many of the Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee Members and residents alike agree that this should be a high priority for the City.

Design policies can provide basic guidelines for the way new development should look and feel as well as how they relate to adjacent uses. They can address each aspect of construction (from materials to window sizes to colors) to make sure new buildings, or rehabilitated buildings, complement older ones. Through the community survey, 42.5 percent of the respondents indicated a desire for design standards as a tool to help improve Binghamton's overall image.



Action Steps

- There are a variety of ways in which such standards can be implemented. The community design manual can be created as a mandatory policy, with those new construction projects that do not adhere subject to fines and/or other legal penalties. At the other extreme, the design manual can be implemented as suggested guidelines, encouraged by the City but lacking the force of law. Alternatively, the standards can remain voluntary guidelines, with incentives provided by the City in the way of tax credits, variances in other criteria, etc., as a means of encouraging compliance with the guidelines. This plan proposes standards that mandate how the building, sidewalks, lighting, and plantings should be located on the site (site organization), how those features relate to each other (site

design), and how the building itself looks (architectural design). (See Appendix F for model design standards).

- Developing these policies can be accomplished in several ways. For instance, the City may choose to appoint a committee made up of City Council members, Planning Commission and Zoning Board members, CAUD members, City residents and business owners to develop the policies. Or, the Planning Department may take the lead and develop the policies. A third approach would be to select a consultant to develop the policies in coordination with a committee representing local interests.
- Once these standards have been developed and adopted by the City Council, they should, at minimum, be incorporated by reference into the City's Zoning Ordinance. However, as noted below, it is recommended that the City also rewrite the Zoning Ordinance. Therefore, to have the most efficient and greatest impact, the rewriting of the Zoning Ordinance and the development of design standards should occur in tandem, and the Zoning Ordinance should include design standards for each zoning district.
- When developing these policies, it will likely be necessary to develop different standards for different areas in the City. For instance, standards for downtown will be different than those for new development along Main Street or even developments in smaller neighborhood commercial districts. These policies can also address how residences are reused for professional office space, such as more recent developments along Riverside Drive. When the policies are developed, it will be important to recognize that different parts of the City have different characteristics.

Revise Zoning Ordinance

Cities in New York State have been authorized to regulate land use through New York State's General City Law §20(24). These zoning regulations govern the way in which land is used and developed. Its goal is to carry out the municipality's long-range land use objectives. However, as noted above, the regulations do not address the quality and character of development. The Zoning Ordinance revisions combined with design standards (proposed above) are two primary tools Binghamton can use to reshape existing land use patterns to

meet the goals and objectives outlined in the Comprehensive Plan.

The City's current Zoning Ordinance was written in 1988 (amended in 1994). On the whole, Binghamton's Zoning Ordinance is difficult to interpret for the average user. For instance, its five different Residential Districts, some of which are very similar in nature,

combined with the six Overlay Districts often make it difficult not only for residents to interpret, but also

The zoning ordinance revision combined with design standards (proposed above) are two primary tools Binghamton can use to reshape existing land use patterns to meet the goals and objectives outlined in the Comprehensive Plan.



for City officials responsible for interpretation and enforcement to understand. Further, the existing ordinance includes certain language that has been written too loosely and has allowed for some incompatible uses to evolve. For instance, the City has recently attempted to address the growing student housing problems in some neighborhoods, but the existing definition of a “family” effectively allows for students to live in

groups in single-family neighborhoods. Consequently, Binghamton University students continue to threaten some West Side neighborhoods. In an effort to help improve enforcement of zoning regulations as well as stabilize neighborhoods, Binghamton should revise its Zoning Ordinance to more contemporary standards.

Action Steps

- The zoning recommendations outlined below can be accomplished two ways. The more economical and timely approach may be to merely amend the existing ordinance consistent with the recommendations. However, the existing ordinance is a fairly complicated document to comprehend and simply amending it may only further complicate interpretation of the document. Instead of taking a patchwork approach to the existing ordinance, written in 1988 and amended in 1994, *it is recommended that the existing ordinance be completely rewritten and include the design standards recommended above.* The following recommendations should be considered for either approach:
 - *Create a Neighborhood Commercial (NC) Zoning District.* Neighborhood Commercial centers are small and scattered throughout the City and primarily provide small-scale services to the surrounding population and contribute to the commercial development within the City. The current Overlay Districts, which provide for similar uses proposed under the Neighborhood Commercial district, currently allow for conflicts to emerge within the neighborhoods and add a confusing level of interpretation to the Zoning Ordinance. Proposed areas for the Neighborhood Commercial District are illustrated on the Proposed Zoning Map in Appendix H. Representative uses are provided in Appendix G.
 - *Create a Neighborhood Professional (NP) Zoning District.* Recognizing that some professional office uses are appropriate in a neighborhood setting, this district provides for the less intensive professional uses that take advantage of strategic locations outside the commercial core of downtown. These office land uses tend to be single-use oriented and have low employee/acre ratios and will often result in the conversion of existing residential units. Proposed areas for the Neighborhood Professional District are illustrated on the Proposed Zoning Map in Appendix H. Representative uses are provided in Appendix G.
 - *Create a Light Industrial (LI) Zoning District.* Currently, Binghamton has only one industrial district with uses that include traditional heavy industrial manufacturing and processing establishments. In an effort to recognize different levels of intensity in industrial activities, it is recommended that a Light Industrial district be established. Initially, this district should be applied to the current industrial zone west of Tompkins Street and north of Conklin Avenue.



Representative uses are reflective of existing operations in this district, such as building materials and supply facilities, warehousing, storage, distribution, and beverage distributors. Proposed areas for the Light Industrial District are illustrated on the Proposed Zoning Map in Appendix H. Representative uses are provided in Appendix G.

- *Create an Urban Business Park (UBP) Zoning District.* As noted above, Binghamton currently does not have an industrial district which is reflective of new technology-based business and industry. It is recommended that a new zoning district be established that specifically recognizes the needs and expectations of 21st century business and industry, including design standards as a tool to manage the scale and character of development. Proposed areas for the Urban Business Park District are illustrated on the Proposed Zoning Map in Appendix H. Representative uses are provided in Appendix G.
- *Create a Medical/Institutional (MI) Zoning District.* Binghamton largely serves as the medical hub of the region, and accordingly has two significant hospital establishments: Our Lady of the Lourdes Hospital on Riverside Drive and Binghamton General Hospital near Vestal Avenue. Binghamton's existing code currently has an overlay district (OD-6) that specifically recognizes the institutional needs of these establishments. However, in an effort to clarify the ordinance, it is recommended that a Medical/Institutional district be added to the code as the OD-6 district is eliminated. Proposed areas for the Medical/Institutional District are illustrated on the Proposed Zoning Map in Appendix H. Representative uses are provided in Appendix G.
- *Consolidate Residential Zoning Districts from Five into Three.* Binghamton's Zoning Ordinance includes five residential districts. There is considerable overlap in the allowed uses across some of these districts. For instance, the primary difference between the R-4 and R-5 districts is that R-5 allows for new construction of multiple dwelling units of five units or more and allows for the conversion of existing buildings into five or more dwelling units, both under the special permitting process. There are also similar likenesses between the R-3 and R-4 districts.

An additional concern with the Zoning Ordinance is the Commercial Overlay District which permits various commercial activities within residential districts, often resulting in conflicts between existing land uses. Administration of these districts, as well as interpretation by the nonprofessional, is often confusing.

In an effort to comprehensively stabilize Binghamton's neighborhoods, the City should consolidate the residential zoning districts and redefine the use table in parallel to adding the proposed Neighborhood Commercial and Neighborhood Professional districts. It is recommended that the modifications reflect the chart below:



| Proposed Representative Uses | R-1 | R-2 | R-3 |
|--|-----|-----|-----|
| One-Unit | P | P | P |
| Two-Unit | - | P | P |
| Accessory | SC | SC | SC |
| Townhouse or Rowhouse | - | SP* | SP |
| Multi-unit New Construction | - | - | SP |
| Conversion Into 3 or More Dwelling-Units | - | - | SP |

* limit to no more than 4 connected units

The new matrix outlined above has consolidated the five residential districts into three, but also proposes the consolidation of uses. The fundamental change in the use matrix combines the townhouses, multi-unit new construction, and conversions of existing buildings into discrete categories, and requires each be reviewed via the Special Permitting process. The net result strengthens the control of the City to more comprehensively address the impacts of these uses in adjoining neighborhoods.

- *Develop a New “Family” Definition.* The definition of “family” has been widely litigated nationwide. With the influx of student housing in many stable single-family neighborhoods, Binghamton’s “Family” definition has become a part of this legal dialogue. Many definitions define family as a single housekeeping unit rather than as persons related by blood or marriage, thereby creating the ability for students and others to reside together. Several definitions specifically exclude a group living in a boarding house, hotel, lodging house, or rooming house. These exclusions might be extended to include fraternities, sororities, and clubs. Many of these definitions employ restrictions on the number of unrelated persons living in a single-family housekeeping unit. Such restrictions, however, may be struck down by the courts if they limit the housing opportunities of nontraditional families, such as group homes for people with developmental disabilities. The Federal Fair Housing Act, state law, case law, and the attorney for the jurisdiction should all be consulted before adopting or drafting a new definition of family.

Coordinate Gateway Improvements with Business Development Efforts

Typically, gateway enhancements are viewed as community beautifying projects that do not necessarily contribute to the business environment of the community as a whole. But these gateways often include some of the more prominent properties in the City as they form first impressions for visitors. Consequently, the land uses and visual attractiveness of these lands should become key redevelopment sites for business attraction efforts.

Action Steps

- As BMTS is evaluating the gateways into the City and urban core, the City should work in tandem to understand the land uses that define these gateways. Zoning amendments and design standards



should be written in a fashion that recognizes the vitality that these sites can create at the City and urban core edges.

Develop Model Public/Private Partnerships

This Comprehensive Plan has outlined a number of policy and project recommendations. To implement many of them will require a substantial commitment of City staff, time, and capital. When it comes to plan implementation, the public sector (i.e. City staff) is best at establishing appropriate policies, but often not as effective as the private sector in implementing development. Therefore, it is recommended that the use of public/private partnerships be used as a means to efficiently and effectively implement this plan. This means making local developers, contractors, and architects an important part of the City's future development. These public/private partnerships will depend on establishing a new level of trust between the parties that can only come from an open book approach. In successful public/private partnerships, each side brings valuable skills and expertise to the table. The private sector brings expertise in planning, architectural design, and construction knowledge, as well as a willingness to take risks and an interest in keeping the public process moving. Complementing this, the public sector brings land, financial incentives, and zoning approvals.

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Action Steps

- As a demonstration project, it is recommended that the City develop a project on land currently owned, or to be acquired, by the City. The project should be used to build confidence in the City's ability to effectively forge partnerships with the private sector. The project should appeal to as broad a constituency as possible. For instance, the student housing matters the City currently faces may be an opportunity to forge a public/private partnership that benefits both City residents and businesses alike. Another good example may be the development of senior living in the First Ward Neighborhood Center District. The project might be structured as follows:
 - The City should provide the land (or building) by way of a 99-year lease (this will allow the City to recapture it for what may be other pressing needs 100 years from now).
 - The City should engage the City's planners to lead the process of determining the design, density, and economics of the project.
 - The City should establish a financing plan for the project.
 - Once the City has agreed on the scope of the project, it should establish clear design and financial guidelines and issue an RFP to secure an architect/developer/contractor team. To stimulate the greatest multiplier effects, preference should be given to local teams.



-
- The selected development team should design the project according to the design guidelines and will present its plans to the City for approval.
 - The development team and the City together should apply for loans and grants. The development team should provide completion and other guarantees as needed.
 - The plan may need to be modified by mutual consent of both parties to be financially and/or politically approvable.
 - Once approved, the development team should start and complete the development (and if not started by a specific date, the developer team loses its rights to the project).
 - The Department of Planning, Housing and Community Development should work in coordination with the Economic Development Department to market the units to students.





Proposed Zoning Map





PROPOSED ZONING

DRAFT

FOR DISCUSSION PURPOSES ONLY

- Municipal Boundaries
- Railroads
- Major Roads
- Minor Roads
- Rivers & Streams
- Rivers & Lakes
- Parcel Boundary

ZONING

- R-1 Single - Family Residential
- R-2 One - Two Family Residential
- R-3 Multi - Family Residential
- C-1 Community Commercial
- C-2 Downtown Commercial
- NC Neighborhood Commercial
- NP Neighborhood Professional
- IND Industrial
- LI Light Industrial
- UBP Urban Business Park
- MI Medical / Institutional



April 2002

THE SARATOGA ASSOCIATES



LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS, ARCHITECTS, ENGINEERS, AND PLANNERS P.C.

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Comprehensive Plan

Prepare Sites for Development

Like most urban communities, Binghamton has a limited supply of undeveloped land available. Further, many larger corporations are not willing to engage in urban redevelopment because of the time and money involved in these ventures. For instance, many urban sites already have an existing structure that does not meet the requirements for contemporary office, commercial or industrial needs and needs to be demolished to make way for a new building. Further, many of these sites often are perceived to include environmental constraints, which would further escalate development costs and time. If Binghamton is to be successful in its efforts to reestablish itself as a vital regional center, then the City must willing to engage in an aggressive proactive campaign to make properties available to meet the needs of today's corporations. Without doubt, this will require visionary and pragmatic leadership as well as a focused mission with clear goals.

If Binghamton is to be successful in its efforts to reestablish itself as a vital regional center, then the City must willing to engage in an aggressive proactive campaign to make properties available to meet the needs of today's corporations.

Action Steps

- Identify opportunities
 - The first step in making sites “shovel ready” for business attraction efforts will involve identification of opportunities within the City. Potential sites should include those that have been vacant or underutilized for some time. After the sites are identified, they should then be evaluated for their potential success in the market place. For instance, how does the site connect to the regional highway network? What condition is the site infrastructure (sewer, water, telecommunications) in? Then the sites should be evaluated based on their estimated redevelopment costs.
 - As the City is choosing a site for redevelopment, evaluation should also be given to understanding the potential types of business or industry to be attracted to the site.
 - After a site has been determined, then the City should begin making the necessary site improvements. This might include parcel consolidation, building demolition, environmental investigation and subsequent remediation, infrastructure improvements, and/or improved roadway connections to the site.
- Establish Goals and Outcomes
 - Following an assessment of opportunities, it will be possible to identify which industries might work well on the selected site.
 - After a selected industry has been identified, the City should establish goals for the site and develop a list of desired measurable outcomes. These goals should be consistent with those outlined in this Comprehensive Plan.



- Develop an Investment Plan
 - It will be necessary to identify which state funding is available for this purpose and where funding partners from other sectors might be needed and/or desirable. In addition, establishing City priorities for this initiative will assist the City in allocating resources among the competing needs of the City. Once priorities are established, it will be possible to attach a dollar amount to each based on the value to the overall initiative. Before setting a budget, outside commitments of funding will have to be secured.
- Establish a budget for redevelopment
- Implement Redevelopment of Site
 - As the site becomes “shovel ready,” the City should make the permitting process for redevelopment as efficient as possible for the potential developer. For instance, the site should already be approved for the specific business being targeted. In today’s ever-changing and high-speed market, business and industry need to respond quickly and efficiently to market demands. Having a site that meets these demands “ready to go” will make the City more attractive to potential developers.
 - The first step in implementation is easier to manage when begun on a pilot basis. The implementation this way is done on a manageable scale. It also provides the opportunity to test the approach before going to full implementation.
 - Based on the experience of the first stage, it will be possible to increase the scale of activity for broader implementation. This will take additional resources, but will provide greater chances for success because concepts have been tested in the pilot phase.

Support the Broome County Economic Development Strategy

Broome County is currently engaged in a study to develop a strategy to strengthen the regional economy. Clearly, the findings in this study will have long-term impacts on the City of Binghamton. The findings in this Comprehensive Plan suggest that Binghamton should target business and industries that build on the regions strengths and include knowledge-based workers. The City should use these findings and support development of the Broome County Economic Development Strategy in a manner that:

- Targets high value added jobs in manufacturing and services
- Adhere to community design standards
- Reinforces Binghamton’s reputation as the regional center
- Generates innovation and entrepreneurship

Action Steps

- It is critical that Binghamton representation continue to be involved in the development of the Broome County Economic Development Strategy. This is also a unique opportunity for Binghamton to improve county and regional relations, as many of the County and regional players will be brought



together at one table to discuss and develop a strategy for the future success of the region. Not being actively involved will only create long-term challenges for both the City and regional economies.

Study the Need for Improved Downtown Convention/Meeting Facilities

Conventions and regional meetings have the potential to offer numerous benefits to urban centers. Many smaller cities, like Binghamton, have heavily investing public funds in convention centers on behalf of local economic development. However, these investments have had conflicting outcomes in many communities and should be extensively examined before public investments are committed. Some argue that the economic impacts generate significant opportunity for spin-off businesses. However, the economic impact alone should not be the only reason to build a convention center. Providing improved convention/meeting space in downtown Binghamton may be an opportunity to attract regional meetings and conferences to downtown Binghamton. Consequently, the City should do a feasibility study to determine how the City can better position itself to attract these regional meetings and conventions.

Binghamton's location at the convergence of two major highways offers efficient connections north-south via Interstate 81 and east-west via Interstates 86 and 88. If improved convention/meeting space is deemed necessary for the region, then it could likely be located in downtown Binghamton and create synergies with downtown activities such as Veterans Memorial Arena, the Forum and meeting facilities in the Holiday Inn.

If located in downtown Binghamton, downtown convention-goers may buy tickets to performances at the Forum, NYSEG Stadium or Veterans Memorial Arena. Downtown retailers could also benefit from increased sidewalk traffic. However, statistics increasingly show that the economic impacts of convention centers are not nearly as great as projected in feasibility studies. Nonetheless, providing a venue that attracts outside business into Binghamton may help in the City's efforts to renew its image. For instance, when convention participants arrive in Binghamton then local economic development staff can entertain these individuals by sponsoring dinners that promote Binghamton as a quality location for business expansion.



If a downtown convention center is found to be a potential project, then the design elements should be highly considered.

Action Steps

- Understanding the regional potential for convention/meeting space is critical to the success, or failure, of such space. To understand the market potential for convention/meeting space in Binghamton, the City has two options. First, the City could sponsor the necessary market research by hiring a consultant to develop a feasibility study. This approach would provide very specific information to the potential success of convention/meeting space within the City as well as outline various strategies for development. A second approach may be to first determine if additional convention/meeting space is necessary in the region through the Broome County Economic Development Strategy. If the Economic Development Strategy determines that improved convention/meeting space is needed in the

region, then the City could further develop these findings into a strategy that promotes the City as the regional center for convention/meeting space.

- If improved convention/meeting space is deemed feasible, then the City should partner with or solicit proposals from private sector developers to provide the improved space necessary for successful meeting and conventions.



CITYWIDE POLICIES & PROJECTS TO ADVANCE NEIGHBORHOOD STABILITY

This Plan recognizes the vital role that Binghamton's neighborhood will play in the City's future. Creating improved opportunities for home-ownership will be fundamental to this success. To be successful, it will be important for the City to provide residents with improved capacity to obtain the funding support necessary become to homeowners and make meaningful contributions to Binghamton's future.

Make Use Of Fannie Mae Programs to Further Community Development

Fannie Mae serves as a catalyst for local community development efforts by encouraging and leveraging investment of private and public funds. In 1938, Congress created Fannie Mae to bolster the housing industry during the Depression. At that time, Fannie Mae was part of the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) and authorized to buy only FHA-insured loans to replenish lenders' supply of money.

In 1968, Fannie Mae became a private company operating with private capital on a self-sustaining basis. Its role was expanded to buy mortgages beyond traditional government loan limits, reaching out to a broader cross-section of Americans.

Today, under federal mandate, Fannie Mae is working to increase the availability and affordability of homeownership for low-, moderate-, and *middle-income* Americans. Fannie Mae offers a number of lending products that can be coordinated to work in parallel with existing Binghamton housing programs. For instance, the *Community Seconds* program offers a second lien mortgage that can be combined with one of Fannie Mae's Community Lending mortgage products to increase affordability. Other programs are offered to non-profit organizations that work to stimulate neighborhood revitalization and home-ownership. For instance, *Lease-Purchase* is an option that nonprofit organizations can use to help borrowers who have successfully managed their credit obligations in the past, but have insufficient savings for a down payment. With *Lease-Purchase*, nonprofit organizations can purchase homes that can be leased with an option to buy.

Some Fannie Mae programs have also been tailored to meet the ever-changing and broad needs

Fannie Mae offers a number of lending products that can be coordinated to work in parallel with existing Binghamton housing programs... Community Seconds offers a second lien mortgage... Lease-Purchase is an option that nonprofit organizations can use... FannieNeighbors can be used to remove income limits if a property is located in an underserved area.

of middle-income residents. For instance, the *FannieNeighbors* program is a neighborhood-based mortgage option designed to increase homeownership and revitalization in areas designated as underserved by HUD, in low- to moderate-income or minority census tracts, or in central cities. The *FannieNeighbors* option adds underwriting flexibility to Fannie Mae's Community Home Buyer's Program mortgage product by removing the income limit if a property is located in one of these areas.



Action Steps

- Hold stakeholder meetings to discuss medium and long-range objectives for revitalizing housing and neighborhoods in Binghamton. Involved organizations should include:
 - Developers
 - Local foundations
 - Housing non-profits and Land Trusts
 - Real Estate Industry (Real Estate Agents)
 - Economic Development Agencies
 - Community Development Corporations
- Fannie Mae Partnership Offices are working in communities across the country to create long-term partnerships with local governments, lenders, public officials, housing organizations, community nonprofits, real estate professionals, and others to expand affordable homeownership and rental housing opportunities. After the City develops a comprehensive understanding of existing housing and neighborhood revitalization, the City should contact Fannie Mae to develop a partnership for neighborhood revitalization. (New York contact: Naomi Bayer - Phone: (917) 322-8960. www.fanniemae.com)

Consider Tax Increment Financing for Challenged Neighborhoods

The North Riverfront District is one of the most challenged areas in the City of Binghamton. From its low demographic and home ownership characteristics to its vacant and underutilized commercial and industrial sites and its confusing circulation patterns, the North Riverfront District needs an innovative and large-scale approach to an overall improved business and commercial environment as well as quality of life. The First Ward Neighborhood Center and Downtown/Intown Districts are equally as challenged.

There is little the City can do to influence private sector development if the

There is little the City can do to influence private sector development if the only plan implementation tools the City has available are the Zoning Ordinance and the permitting process. Besides regulating development, the City should have at its disposal the means to take an active role in land assembly and construction.

only plan implementation tools the City has available are the Zoning Ordinance and the permitting process. Besides regulating development, the City should have at its disposal the means to take an active role in land assembly and construction. New public infrastructure placed into redesigned urban settings could provide the physical framework for private development. Without it, the City has almost no leverage to stimulate or guide new development. Private developers themselves (or even corporations) cannot be expected to provide all the desired public amenities and still make a profit. New sources of project-specific capital funding must be found in order to provide this leverage.



.....

The main objective of this Comprehensive Plan is to strengthen Binghamton's neighborhoods and economic conditions by inducing opportunities and incentives through public sector initiatives. Some of these initiatives, like revitalization of the North Riverfront District, will be large-scale while others will be more subtle and less tangible, like improved community-based policing. Tax Increment Financing (TIF) is a locally-based strategy that can be used to accomplish the large-scale redevelopment necessary to improve the North Waterfront District.

Traditionally, Tax Increment Financing has been used for numerous types of economic revitalization efforts, usually in economically distressed or abandoned areas. Various tax increment financing projects include redeveloping or rehabilitating deteriorated areas of a city, facilitating the construction of low-to moderate income housing, promoting economic development and providing employment opportunities. Tax increment financing is one of the few tools that local governments can use to intervene directly in development. In the beginning, tax increment financing was designed to cure blighted neighborhoods, to redevelop properties that no one would touch, and to meet social and economic needs.

To raise public sector capital for a project, the Tax Increment Financing process uses the anticipated growth in property taxes generated by the proposed development project. Bonds are then issued to raise the capital needed for the proposed redevelopment, and the new tax revenues generated by the project are earmarked to redeem the bonds. After the debt, which has created the redevelopment, has been paid, the increased property taxes become available for alternative uses. (Appendix E provides more detailed questions and answers regarding tax increment financing)

Action Steps

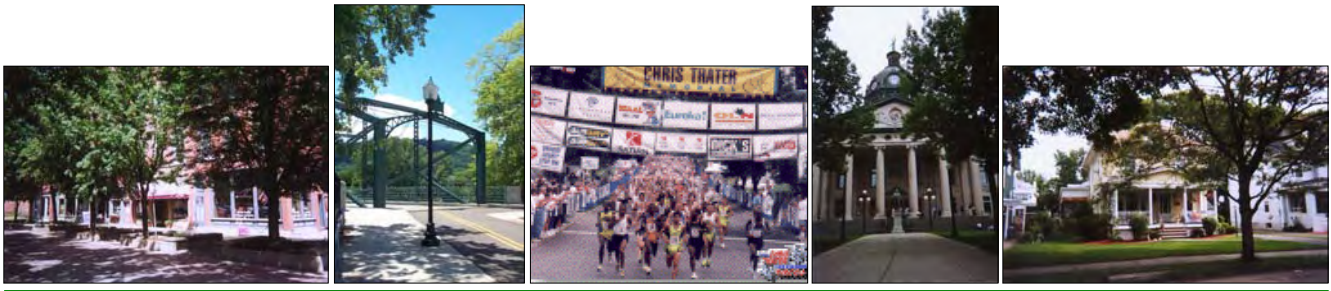
- Section 960 of the New York State General Municipal Law provides the basis for the establishment of a Municipal Redevelopment Area. The purpose of the law is for protecting and promoting sound development and redevelopment of economically underproductive areas whenever redevelopment cannot be accomplished without public assistance. The Municipal Redevelopment Law authorizes a municipality to:
 - Use eminent domain to assist in the acquisition or assembly of land for the purposes of economic redevelopment; and
 - Issue tax increment bonds or tax increment bond anticipation notes for the purpose of carrying out or administering a specific redevelopment plan.

The concept of Tax Increment Financing provides a unique tool for funding capital improvements to base infrastructure as a means to encourage economic development. Tax Increment Financing is a flexible, low cost mechanism which uses projected increases in property tax revenues in a development area over a specific period to back bonds that are used to finance project costs in the area. TIF, in effect, freezes tax revenues from a designated area at their current level and allows the community to sell bonds or notes for major improvements and other redevelopment activities, with the bond repayments derived solely from the increase, or increment, of the new taxes.



The TIF bonds would not be viewed as general revenue bonds in the market, since they would not be secured by the full faith and credit of the City. Rather, the TIF bonds would be as secure and as marketable as the private development on which they would be based. In order to attract purchasers, TIF bonds cannot be based on projected taxes from hypothetical developments. They must be based on projects already in the pipe line, where a steady stream of taxes can be virtually assured.

- If Binghamton chooses to use tax increment financing as a tool to redevelop the North Riverfront District (or any other district), then an extensive process must be followed. This process involves a study and analysis both of area problems and of the feasibility of the TIF approach. The Comprehensive Plan can be used as a starting point for this survey of the area, but a more detailed survey area study will need to be completed. This will include defining the study area, a project feasibility study, a general land use plan and its relationship to the Comprehensive Plan, and recommended next steps. It then includes the preparation and adoption of redevelopment plans for the area, with review and recommendation by the Planning Commission prior to City Council adoption. Public hearings and environmental reviews are also required.



VI. IMPLEMENTING BINGHAMTON'S COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The City of Binghamton Comprehensive Plan is a statement of intent, which recommends steps toward action. It translates community goals into a long-range social, economic and land use action program. It is designed to obtain a commitment by decision-makers to a coordinated set of actions that will maintain and improve

Binghamton's quality of life for future generations.

At the most basic level, this Plan

identifies critical steps that are needed to enhance the quality of life and improve the economic opportunities in the City. The specific recommendations are provided as a guide to those who participate in the effort to implement the goals of the community. Achieving these goals will require the efforts of local government, federal and state funding, and the participation of volunteers throughout the community. No one single person or group will be able to achieve the goals independently. It will command the determination, strengths and diversity of many offices, agencies and volunteers working toward a common vision. This section of the Plan proposes a strategy to coordinate these efforts incrementally for long-term success.

Community plans as ambitious as this one cannot be accomplished all at once. Given the limited resources with which the City has to work, implementation must be phased. This course of action will allow the community to focus on short-term success, capitalize on funding as it may be available, and realize the

cumulative success leading to comprehensive community-wide revitalization.

The vision of the Comprehensive Plan is to reestablish Binghamton as a vibrant regional center. As the Plan is implemented, it will be important to show both the community and the region that Binghamton is a place worth caring

about. Projects like the proposed First Ward

Neighborhood Square and the new neighborhood center in the North

Riverfront District will reconnect residents with the needs of business and industry and stimulate social interaction. This in turn will generate an enthusiasm that will carry over into other projects and renew residents' belief in Binghamton as a community of choice. The proposed Binghamton Main Street Empowerment Zone will provide culturally enriching programs for Binghamton's youth and senior populations. An improved parks and recreation system with the associated trail amenity will provide further opportunity for social interaction and entertainment. Enhanced gateways will provide an initial gesture of welcome to visitors and establish a sense of pride in community residents. These community entrances will further reflect the care and quality of the environment within. Taken together, these redevelopment undertakings will create a synergy that will lead to a distinctive quality of life for City residents as well as help generate a community commitment to success. Ultimate success of this plan will be realized through the persistent dedication of both community residents and leaders to these common goals.

Binghamton is in the process of building a long-term sustainable future. Success comes down to one thing: defining a course of action and committing to consistent and incremental implementation.



Binghamton is in the process of building a long-term sustainable future. Success comes down to one thing: defining a course of action and being committed over the long-term. Staying the course will require dedication to the goals and policy recommendations outlined in this Plan. As Binghamton continues to reconnect its people and places in a community fabric for

generations to come, community-wide interaction and dialogue are critical. To a large extent, it is a matter of maintaining and building upon the interaction that is already underway. As long as this interaction continues to embrace the full diversity of the community, Binghamton will set the standard for community renewal for the Southern Tier and beyond.



Establish the Capacity to Implement

While this plan seeks to establish a role for Binghamton as a vibrant regional center, it also seeks to reestablish Binghamton as a community in which residents feel comfortable to live, learn, and recreate. To succeed, the City will need to make a number of strategic investments which:

- leverage the City's commitment to revitalization;
- retain neighborhood vitality; and
- rebuild the economic and fiscal vitality of the community in a regional context.

Given the complex nature of plan implementation, it is critical to create an implementation plan that effectively leverages all of the community's resources. Moreover, leveraging long-term partnerships with state and federal agencies as well as private sector investors and non-profit organizations will be critical to the long-term realization of this Comprehensive Plan. Accordingly, the strategies outlined below are intended to create a team of professionals who will have the resources to act in a complementary and coordinated manner with a variety of public and private partners.

Building the Management Team

The management strategy outlined below is founded on the principles of effective leadership and strong partnerships. These partnerships should be infused with a shared commitment to win-win agreements and mutual, long-term understanding. Essential to these partnerships is consistency and dependability.

Leadership will continue to come from the Mayor and City Council. Putting the Plan into motion and building momentum will come from the various departments that manage the daily operations of the City. Consequently, effective implementation will require restructuring of existing procedures and routines. This means that it will be necessary for the City to improve internal

The long-term success and effectiveness of this plan will hinge on the management team's dedication to the goals outlined in this plan as well as its ability to express to the community that revitalization is an on-going process, not something that will be completed at a certain point in time.

coordination. The long-term success and effectiveness of this Plan will hinge on the management team's dedication to the goals outlined in this plan as well as its ability to express to the community that revitalization is an on-going process, not something that will be completed at a certain point in time. Thus, *the implementation of this plan should be viewed as an incremental management process for community renewal* to become a vibrant regional center; part of a program that responds effectively to the needs of the community at different points in time.

The following team of professionals should be formed to implement the Comprehensive Plan in a coordinated and consistent manner. The proposed Catalytic Action Team will be the principal leader for Plan implementation. The subsequent two teams, the Neighborhood Reinvestment Committee and the Grants Strategy Committee, should work under the direction of the Catalytic Action Team (effectively as sub-committees to the Catalytic Action Team). In addition, the proposed Downtown Management Organization, recommended in *Section V. Plan Response*, should lead reinvestment efforts for Downtown. While many of the recommendations in this Plan will not require capital outlays, many recommendations will, particularly those that relate to business development efforts. Consequently, it will be *absolutely* necessary that the Binghamton Local Development Corporation operate in coordination with the Catalytic Action Team for Plan implementation. It is further noted that a fundamental component of this Comprehensive Plan be improved communication between existing departments. This necessity for improved communication is the foundation for the establishment of the team management structure outlined below.

... a fundamental component of this Comprehensive Plan is improved communication between existing departments.

1. CATALYTIC ACTION TEAM

To help guide implementation of the Comprehensive Plan, a Catalytic Action Team (CAT) should be formulated. Based on the priorities established by the Mayor and City Council, the Catalytic Action



Team will be responsible for focusing and coordinating the implementation of the City's annual goals and objectives in accordance with the goals of the Comprehensive Plan. Composition of

*...the implementation of this plan should be viewed
as an incremental management process for
community renewal...*

the team should include representation from all of the City's departments, a representative from City Council, the Chairs of the Planning Commission and the Zoning Board of Appeals, the Commission on Architecture and Urban Design (CAUD), representation from the local banking institutions, and local business and real estate professionals. The Catalytic Action Team should meet on a semi-annual basis to clarify the year's objectives and outline annual tasks in a prioritized manner. However, in an effort to "get the ball rolling" in the first year of implementation, the Team should meet monthly. To help cultivate the public's confidence, the Catalytic Action Team should develop annual reports highlighting the successes of Binghamton. These reports should be made readily available to City residents and published on the City's website.

Over time, conditions in Binghamton will change and new opportunities will emerge. For this reason, a formal review of the Comprehensive Plan, led by the Catalytic Action Team, should occur on a predetermined schedule. The Planning Director should organize and lead these meetings. Typically, it is recommended that a detailed review of the Comprehensive Plan take place *every five years*.

The Planning Director should be responsible for coordinating and leading the Catalytic Action Team. The Catalytic Action Team should be responsible for:

- *Monitoring* implementation of the Comprehensive Plan;
- *Coordinating* partnerships for Plan implementation;
- *Cultivating* relationships with both public and private funding sources; and
- *Managing* planning activities for consistency with the Comprehensive Plan.

2. *NEIGHBORHOOD REINVESTMENT COMMITTEE*

Urban communities across the country are struggling with housing and neighborhood revitalization efforts. In an effort to gain a complete understanding of neighborhood conditions in Binghamton, and to develop a coordinated, holistic approach to neighborhood revitalization, a Neighborhood Reinvestment Committee should be organized. This Committee will work in close coordination with the Catalytic Action Team and the Grants Strategy Committee outlined below. The mission of the Neighborhood Reinvestment Committee will be to prepare well thought-out targeted investments in Binghamton's neighborhoods. For instance, this Comprehensive Plan recommends that a phased-in compliance period for homes that have been illegally converted or do not meet existing code. As a component of this strategy, the Neighborhood Reinvestment Committee should be certain that the proposed phased-in compliance period include some type of rehabilitation loan program aimed at attracting middle-income home owners (to avoid neighborhoods filled with empty, deteriorating homes). Regular meetings of the



Neighborhood Reinvestment Committee will allow for various groups to discuss and share ideas and coordinate their efforts.

The concept of the Neighborhood Reinvestment Committee is similar to Rochester's *Neighborhoods Building Neighborhoods*, a renowned citizen-based community renewal program. Based on this model, Syracuse established a similar citizen-based community planning process called *Tomorrow's Neighborhoods Today*. The City of Rochester provides peer-consulting sessions with communities and organizations that express an interest in learning more about effective citizen-based community planning. For more information visit their website at <http://www.rochesternbn.com/>. Richmond, Virginia also provides a good neighborhood reinvestment program with its *Neighborhood's in Bloom (NIB)* program (http://www.ci.richmond.va.us/citizen/neighborhoods/cmxxs_neindex.asp).

Representation from all of the departments that contribute to successful neighborhoods should be included (see graphic to the right). The composition of the Neighborhood Reinvestment Committee should include representatives from Planning and Housing, Codes, Engineering, Public Works, Finance, Police, Binghamton University, First Ward Action Council, neighborhood groups (i.e. United Neighbors of Binghamton), the school district, local business owners, banks and non-profits. Leadership for this group should come from the Department of Planning, Housing and Community Development. The success of this group will come from the shared commitment of all involved groups to provide improved opportunities and the coordination of efforts across all of the City's departments and community groups.

Components of Successful Neighborhoods



There is no “silver bullet” for revitalizing threatened neighborhoods within the City of Binghamton. Recovery will come from the coordinated work of private citizens and groups combined with public programs that involve many different levels of investment and commitment. Thus far, many of Binghamton's housing and neighborhood investments have come from Community Development Block Grants, which are targeted to those that are at or below 80 percent of the area median income. In the absence of balancing housing and neighborhood planning efforts, this has contributed to concentrations of low-income families. In response, a comprehensive neighborhood reinvestment program should be developed, beginning with the definition of neighborhoods in need of intervention from persistent decline. Consistent with the Plan's theme of incremental change, the priority ranking of neighborhoods should begin by identifying those which are most stressed. Initial review of the City indicates the following neighborhoods as most stressed in Binghamton:

- neighborhoods in the First Ward Neighborhood Center District;
- neighborhoods on the fringe of downtown; and
- neighborhoods in the North Riverfront District.

Next, moderate neighborhoods should be identified. These are neighborhoods that have been relatively stable over time, but are beginning to show signs of transition, such as declining home-ownership rates and noticeable declines in home maintenance. Again, based on analysis for this Comprehensive Plan, these neighborhoods would include:

- neighborhoods in the Conklin/Tompkins Street Neighborhood Center;
- portions of neighborhoods in the West Side Riverfront District (particularly those closer to Front Street); and
- neighborhoods in the Robinson Street District.

Finally, relatively stable neighborhoods should be identified. These neighborhoods are largely made up of single-family ownership and show higher levels of per capita income. This Comprehensive Plan would categorize the following neighborhoods as relatively stable:

...a comprehensive neighborhood reinvestment program should be developed, beginning with the definition of neighborhoods in need of intervention from persistent decline.

- western portions of the West Side Riverfront District; and
- most of the South Washington Street District.

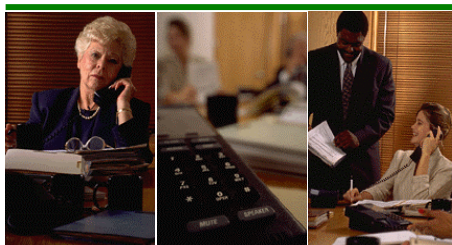
After the Neighborhood Reinvestment Committee understands where and what kind of investment is necessary, investments in the neighborhood can be implemented at various levels. Beginning with the more challenged neighborhoods, investment should be made in the public realm. These physical investments should include improved streets, sidewalks and lighting. In an effort to upgrade substandard housing, a two-fold approach may be taken. First, improved enforcement of existing codes should be encouraged. Simultaneously, a rental unit inspection program should be developed that requires the owners of these units to open their doors to building inspections. In an effort to stimulate home ownership and maintenance in these neighborhoods, local business and banks could be encouraged to partner and create a low-interest loan fund that helps residents purchase homes as well as make necessary improvements, such as a new roof, exterior painting or plumbing improvements. Public safety concerns should also be targeted for these neighborhoods. Finally, investments in quality of life amenities should also be considered, such as park reinvestment. The moderate and relatively stable neighborhoods should be given attention by making the necessary zoning amendments and improved enforcement. In addition, programs should be set up for these neighborhoods to help “fill the gaps” for home maintenance and ownership. Working closely with the Grants Strategy Committee outlined below will help the Neighborhood Reinvestment Committee find the additional funding necessary for local projects.



3. GRANTS STRATEGY COMMITTEE

While Comprehensive Plan evaluation and monitoring will be the responsibility of the Catalytic Action Team, the Grants Strategy Committee will be responsible for coordinating funding initiatives for community renewal. Presently, each department within the City is responsible for writing its own grants independently of one other. As a result, various projects are spread throughout the City without any economies of scale. A Grants Strategy Committee will effectively coordinate funding opportunities in targeted locations to gain maximum benefit. This Committee should be led by the Planning Department and include representatives from Housing and Community Development, Codes, Police, Fire, Economic Development, and nonprofit organizations such as the West Side Neighborhood Association and the First Ward Action Council.

After the Grants Strategy Committee has been formed, a strategy must be defined for obtaining grants. While most departments can continue to pursue their typical grant sources, other sources will also need to be identified. Developing the best strategy for tapping into the world of grants should be well thought out. Some Internet-based how-to primers include the Foundation Centers "Online Orientation to the Grantseeking Process" (<http://fdcenter.org/learn/orient/intro1.html>). Many basic questions are answered among the frequently asked questions, which often include direct links to additional sources of information.



A Grants Strategy Committee will effectively coordinate funding opportunities in targeted locations to gain maximum benefit.

In the past decade, as government funding at all levels has declined, more interest has been shown in the area of corporate support. Most corporations provide funds for local projects in areas where they have headquarters or plants.

Many are aware that targeted funding can enhance their image, influence opinion makers, build business-community relationships, or capture stockholder interest. An excellent publication with reliable data on corporate philanthropy is:

Corporate Foundation Profiles. 10th ed. Foundation Center. 1998.

Despite the decline in available dollars, federal and state financial assistance to local governments remains an important component of local program funding. Federal aid alone contributed about twenty-five percent to local government activities in the last decade. The single best source for leads on federal assistance is administered by federal agencies is:

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance. Washington, DC: US GPO.
<http://www.gsa.gov/fdac/queryfdac.htm>.

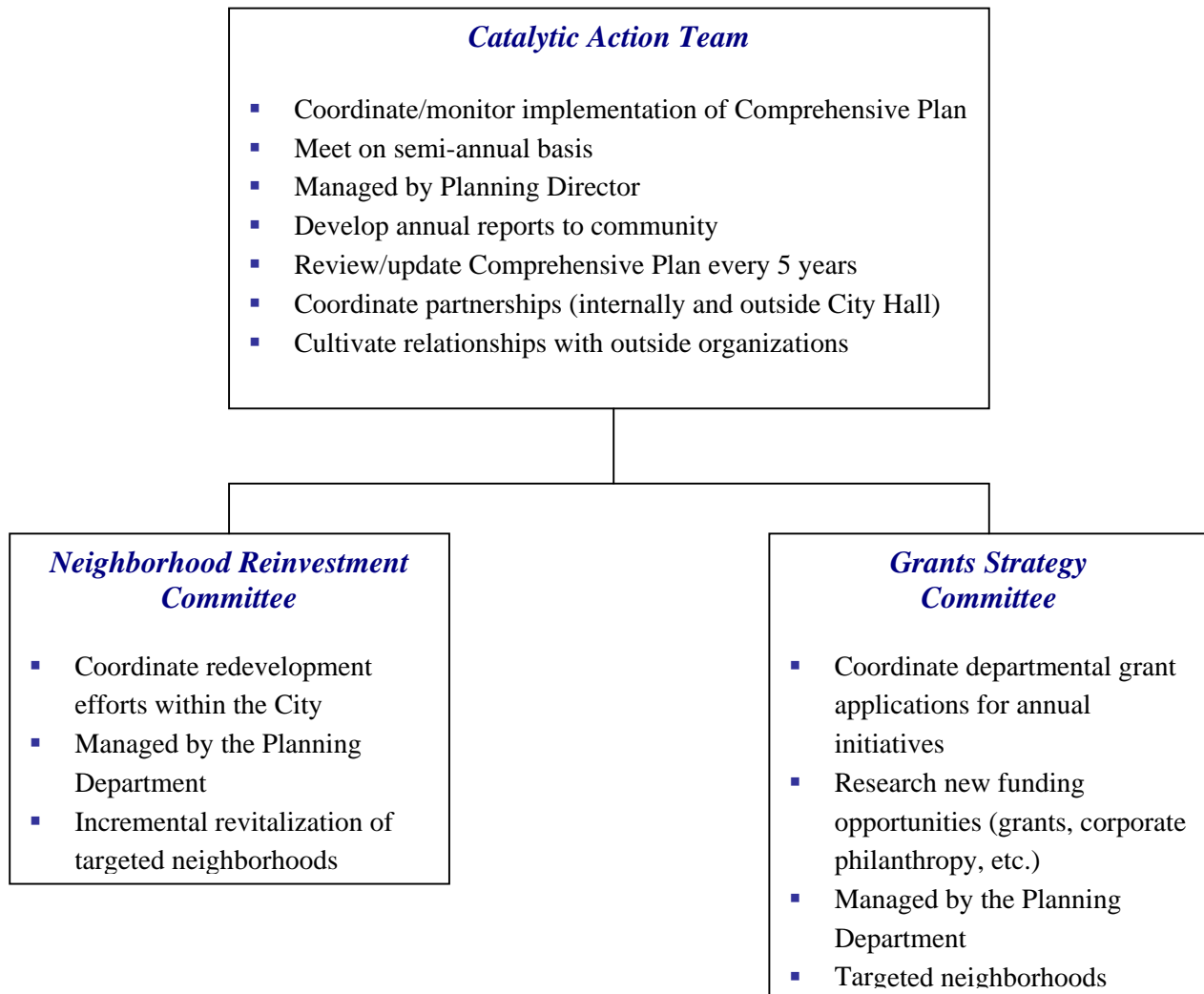
Grants Action News identifies new and existing State and federal grant opportunities. This report can be accessed at:

<http://www.assembly.state.ny.us> under "Announcements."



Accessing some of these funding sources can be challenging and very competitive. Consequently, developing a strategy for finding and accessing these sources will be important for the Grants Strategy Committee to develop early. One strategy for the Committee may be to develop formidable partnerships with local nonprofits, small businesses, other public agencies (schools and library), and banks. Recent trends show that many private, as well as public, funders are increasingly supportive of applications that involve partnerships. Another strategy may be to create a new 501(c)(3) that can develop and accept grants on behalf of municipal initiatives. This strategy may help when dealing with smaller grant-making sources that typically do not award grants directly to municipalities. The final approach is to be direct. Researching and understanding the various foundations available for community initiatives is critical. Working directly with these organizations and forming relationships may be time consuming, but can also pay great dividends in the long run.

The Management Team Structure



Develop an Organized and Complementary Capital Investment Strategy

This Plan outlines an ambitious future for the City of Binghamton, in terms of both capital investments and staff coordination. The table below illustrates estimated costs for many of the physical improvements outlined in the Comprehensive Plan. While the initial total investment of about \$57 million to \$72 million may appear daunting at first, it is important to recognize that these investments are projected over a 20-year period. This means an annual investment of about \$3 million to \$3.5 million over a twenty-year period to improve both the social and economic environment of the City. The table below also illustrates that the City is already making many of these investments, as reflected in the 2002 adopted budget. For instance, of the roughly \$11 million estimated for streetscape improvements, the City has budgeted \$985,000 this year alone. As these annual budgets are being made, the team management structure outlined provides a framework for a coordinated effort across all departments.

| Estimated Investments for Implementation of the Comprehensive Plan | | | |
|---|--|---------------------|---------------------|
| | Comprehensive Plan Investment Range | | 2002 Budget |
| | Low | High | |
| Total Investment | \$57,165,000 | \$71,456,250 | \$12,657,000 |
| Land Acquisition | \$0 | \$0 | |
| Demolition | 12,175,000 | 15,218,750 | 100,000 |
| Environmental Investigation | 800,000 | 1,000,000 | |
| Street Reconstruction | 740,000 | 925,000 | 1,880,000 |
| New Street Construction | 2,740,000 | 3,425,000 | |
| Utilities | 2,060,000 | 2,575,000 | 8,600,000 |
| Streetscape | 11,000,000 | 13,750,000 | 985,000 |
| Commercial Parking | 8,200,000 | 10,250,000 | 700,000 |
| Parks and Trails | 9,700,000 | 12,125,000 | 392,000 |
| Plazas and Courtyards | 9,750,000 | 12,187,500 | |
| | | | |
| Average Annual Investment (over 20-year implementation) | \$2,858,250 | \$3,572,813 | |
| | | | |
| Illustration: Annual Bond Payment for all Streetscape Improvements | | | |
| Debt Term | 30 years | | |
| Borrowing | \$11,000,000 | | |
| Interest Rate | 5% | | |
| Annual Payment | \$708,600 | | |



The key to successful implementation will be making certain that an organized and complementary investment strategy is planned when improvements are made. For instance, street reconstruction (whether completely rebuilt or repaired) should include curb repair/replacement with associated sidewalk and utility improvements. After a reconstruction period has been completed, the proposed Neighborhood Reinvestment Committee should be certain that the appropriate home ownership/improvement programs are targeted to these areas. Likewise, any homes for sale in the area should be brought to the attention of area real estate agents, the façade improvement program should be promoted to any commercial and office establishments in the area and available commercial/office space should be marketed. The goal should be to develop a coordinated redevelopment approach in advance so that the City gets its maximum “bang-for-the-buck” rather than piecemeal, “patch and mend” improvements.

The key to successful implementation will be making certain that an organized and complementary investment strategy is planned when improvements are made.

Continue Working to Establish a Partnership with Binghamton University

Many higher education institutions are regarded as a culturally distinct unit within their own surrounding communities. Over time, these institutions have built their own housing, restaurants, bookstores and entertainment venues on campus, furthering their isolation from the communities in which they are established. With the growth of higher education's importance in today's society, this relationship, in most cases, has undergone a marked change. Unfortunately, however, the mutuality of interests is still not fully recognized in Binghamton.

Binghamton University has the potential to bring long-term impacts to the Binghamton economy by upgrading skilled and professional manpower, contributing scientific research to manufacturing and industry, adding to neighborhood and economic renewal and drawing new students and faculty to the region because of the quality of life amenities offered in the Binghamton region. The City of Binghamton, in turn, provides housing for many students, faculty and staff, and offers venues to meet daily banking, grocery, and entertainment needs, like dining, movies, and recreation. The City also offers a unique urban learning and living environment. Among the most important influences the City has on Binghamton University is that it forms many of the first-impressions of visiting students and professors considering Binghamton University as an institution of choice. Often these impressions can “make-it or break-it” for the University's ability to attract the most talented faculty and students. It is clear that the economic interrelationships between the university and community are profound. Yet Binghamton University and the City have not been able to capitalize on these potential benefits.

Developing a productive relationship with Binghamton University should continue to be a priority for the City.

With the growth of higher education's importance in society and the increasingly recognized benefits that both university and community bring to one another, many town-gown relationships have been on the



mend. If Binghamton is to realize its fullest potential to become a vibrant regional center, then Binghamton University must be a partner in this process. As a first step in developing improved relations, senior level Binghamton University administrators should be part of the management implementation team. In addition, partnerships should be formed to help bring student housing to downtown Binghamton. Another partnership opportunity should be the development of a downtown learning center that offers shared space for both Binghamton University as well as Broome Community College. This space should offer continuing education programs that cater to the needs of the professional and support staff working downtown.

Below are some examples of “town-gown” relationships that have bridged their differences and brought about meaningful change for both the university and the community.

Union College

City of Schenectady

Union College and the City of Schenectady, New York - In 1998, Union College unveiled the Union-Schenectady (US) Initiative, a broad-based plan to revitalize the neighborhood to the immediate west of the historic campus and stimulate home ownership in that area. The initiative, which offers incentives to purchase and maintain homes in the area, includes infrastructure improvements to create a safe, attractive neighborhood, restoring this historic community to its past prosperity. Plans call for the installation of new sidewalks as well as the upgrade of existing walkways, the incorporation of historic lighting and banners, and cobblestone crosswalks to help slow traffic.

The neighborhood will also feature the College Park Outreach Center, a place for the exchange of ideas, suggestions, and community-focused activities. The College Park Neighborhood Association will work closely with Union's Security Office and the Schenectady Police Department to establish a neighborhood-watch program. Union College will offer scholarship funds to cover the full cost of tuition for children of qualified homeowners in the US Initiative area. For eligible students, Union and Schenectady County Community College has a joint admissions program. Trustco Bank is offering attractive mortgage programs for homeowners in the US Initiative area. Union College is also encouraging faculty and staff to live in the neighborhood by offering an impressive mortgage program for those who purchase a primary residence in the area. Finally, a satellite Safety and Security office for the College will be located within the College Park Neighborhood.

Arizona State University

City of Phoenix

Arizona State University and the City of Phoenix, Arizona - Arizona State University's Community Fellows Program links the Morrison Institute for Public Policy and the university at-large with inner-city neighborhood leaders to solve a variety of urban policy problems. Sponsored by Motorola, the Community Fellows Program has three main goals: to bring experienced community leaders onto campus to share knowledge of local community development issues with faculty, staff, and students; to create university-



community partnerships that address community issues; and to provide Morrison Institute staff with a “close-up” view of urban policy issues. Fellows are selected by committee through an application process for a year-long commitment. Each participant engages in activities - such as guest lecturing, arranging faculty and student visits to observe local neighborhood problems, speaking at high-level university meetings, and developing outreach projects that link the university community and neighborhood residents.

Cleary University

City of Ann Arbor

Cleary University and the City of Ann Arbor, Michigan - Leadership Livingston is a seminar series designed to expand the leadership potential in Livingston County, Michigan. Cleary College and the Brighton and Howell Chambers of Commerce sponsor this year-long program, which began in 1992. A community-based committee plans eight seminars that teach participants about the county's resources and its problems and teach the skills required to assume leadership roles. Topics include the nature of leadership, the justice system, business and economic development, State and local government, education, human needs and services, quality of life, and the future of the community. Programs include site visits within the community and presentations from community representatives.

The Leadership Livingston Program benefits participants, their organizations, and the community. Participants, who come from local businesses, public and private agencies, and civic organizations, take their new leadership skills back to their organizations. In addition, they form subgroups to complete a community service project. Past projects have included improving the inventory and storage at a Goodwill Industries center, serving meals at a Salvation Army facility, and building a children's park.

University of Arkansas

City of Little Rock

University of Arkansas and the City of Little Rock, Arkansas - Established in 1996, the Neighborhood Leadership Program is a training program for Little Rock community residents to enhance their leadership skills. More than 17 courses per year are offered to neighborhood leaders in areas such as planning, presentation skills, grant writing, accessing resources, and developing action plans. Courses are taught by both community experts and faculty from the University of Arkansas, Little Rock, who utilize active learning approaches such as group work and case studies. The courses are offered at the Oak Forest Alert Center, a city-administered facility in the neighborhood adjacent to the university campus, and at the Neighborhood Homework Center. The program is being expanded to offer leadership training to neighborhood teams.



**University of
Arkansas****City of Little
Rock**

University of Arkansas and the City of Little Rock, Arkansas - The University of Arkansas, Little Rock and the Oak Forest neighborhood have formed a comprehensive partnership to stabilize and revitalize a rapidly deteriorating area. The Oak Forest Initiative is a network of four neighborhood associations, three of which did not exist before the university's involvement. The initiative includes both housing and strategic planning components. The housing program, a partnership with the city of Little Rock and First Commercial Bank, aims to revitalize Oak Forest homes, with the hope that improvements will encourage homeowners to do the same. With the assistance of the university and the city of Little Rock, the four associations developed an action plan for revitalizing the community that includes housing, infrastructure, job opportunities, economic development, public safety, education, and leadership activities for youth. The plan has been submitted to the city, and the university is now working with the initiative's steering committee to set up work groups for each of the plan's components. Originally part of a 1995 revitalization grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the initiative recently has benefited from funding the university received through HUD's Community Outreach Partnership Center Program. A community development corporation is being established, the university's neighborhood leadership training program is being expanded, and a job-training program has been established to improve employment opportunities. The university also is providing a permanent outreach center for the initiative's programs in a renovated building.

**Fitchburg
State College****City of
Fitchburg**

Fitchburg State College & the City of Fitchburg, Massachusetts - The City of Fitchburg and Fitchburg State College forged a mutually dependent town-gown relationship based on the common goal to ensure economic, social and physical revitalization of their shared "main street" neighborhood.

**Cornell
University****City of
Geneva**

Cornell University & the City of Geneva, New York - The City of Geneva, the Cornell University Agricultural Station at Geneva and the Ontario County IDA joined their services to prepare a market feasibility study for the Cornell Ag and Food Tech Park. This effort was followed by a physical development and implementation strategy to build the Park. The project utilizes 68 acres of underutilized property at the Ag Station to accommodate the research and development needs of food and agriculture companies. In addition to lease and purchase space, access to college faculty and facilities are provided as a part of the business attraction strategy to bring emerging food and agricultural companies to the Park.



University at
Albany

City of
Albany

University at Albany & the City of Albany, New York - The University at Albany is developing an innovative university-affiliated venture that will result in the development of an intergenerational residential community. The community will feature housing that serves faculty emeriti and professional staff retirees along with students with children.

Emory
University

Community
Stakeholders

Emory University & Community Stakeholders - The Alliance to Improve Emory Village, Inc., is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the revitalization of Emory Village. The organization represents all of the stakeholders of Emory Village - business owners, Emory University, and the Druid Hills Civic Association. The Board of Directors is equally comprised of representatives from these three groups.

The Alliance mission is to “create a safe, economically viable, walkable and compact mixed-use community that is compatible with and a resource to Emory University and the surrounding historic neighborhoods”.

West Chester
University

Borough of
West Chester

West Chester University & the Borough of West Chester - The Town Gown Council is a group of interested local residents, University students, Borough of West Chester officials, and administrators from the University who meet monthly to discuss ways to maintain and enhance healthy relationships between the University and the Borough of West Chester.

Over the years, this group has been instrumental in developing a host of programs, including the Adopt-A-Block Program, designed to help long-term residents and University students get to know each other as individuals and neighbors. Each semester the Council publishes a copy of the Town Gown Newsletter. Currently, the Adopt-A-Block program student organizations have volunteered to conduct clean-ups for their respective areas four times during the academic year, and to periodically distribute materials to students and residents within their block.

University of
Guelph

City of
Guelph

University of Guelph and the City of Guelph, Ontario, Canada - The University of Guelph and the City have a “Good-Neighborhood” policy that fosters interaction between the two entities. However, many city people still refer to the University as the “college on the hill,” and it is this perception that has sometimes created two solitudes.

Over the last few years, however, U of G has worked towards strengthening town-gown ties. Mayor Joe Young and University President Mordechai Rozanski have established frequent informal communication, the University has hosted city officials and local and regional businesspeople at getting-to-know-you gatherings, and regular meetings between city officials and Physical Resources have been reestablished.



U of G continues to enhance its interaction with the city. The Director of community relations, and staff attend regular board meetings of the Chamber of Commerce, Downtown Board of Management, Guelph Tourism Connection, the new civic centre and the city's Strategic Economic-Planning Group. Community Relations has also worked with the Chamber of Commerce in developing a program called "Focus" that is directed at educators, labor and business in the city. In addition, the unit has been involved in inviting community groups to campus to provide municipal, business and labor responses to University matters such as the Strategic-Planning Commission's interim report.

Capital Community College

City of Hartford

Capital Community College and the City of Hartford, Connecticut - In September 2002 the historic G. Fox building in downtown Hartford was reopened as a convenient downtown learning center that combines history with modern amenities for Hartford students. In its new 304,000 square foot campus, Capital Community College expanded in this long-awaited signature location. The G. Fox building totals 833,000 square feet of space through eleven stories. Capital Community College will occupy 40 percent of the building, on all eleven floors, facing Main Street. The first floor will be shared between the CCC lobby and the new, privately developed, retail mall. The basement and first floor of the building have been redeveloped as a pedestrian mall that will include dining and other businesses useful to students, faculty, other tenants and the general public. Students and faculty will enjoy parking at the new Morgan Street Garage next door and convenient access from both Market Street and Main Street.

The Approximately \$60-million campus portion of the project was funded by the State of Connecticut through the Department of Public Works and the Capital City Economic Development Authority. The renovation is part of a comprehensive economic revitalization effort that also includes the Central Connecticut Convention Center and surrounding Adriaen's Landing project, housing, riverfront development retail and a 40,000-seat football stadium.

Trinity College

City of Hartford

Trinity College and the City of Hartford, Connecticut - In January 1996, Trinity College announced a comprehensive \$175-million neighborhood revitalization initiative for the community surrounding its campus in the heart of Hartford. The initiative, which links neighborhood institutions in an unprecedented collaboration, has been designed to create a safe, viable, and vibrant neighborhood that is also a central hub of educational, health, family-support, and economic-development activities. Drawing on community resources and institutions already in place, the revitalization initiative creates an infrastructure for local families that encourages stable home ownership, supports neighborhood economic development, and provides educational resources for children, youth, and adults.



.....

In coordination with the public and private sectors, including the local, county and state governments, the Learning Corridor is being developed as the central hub of the University's efforts to become a leader in Hartford's recovery. A major component of the project involves the revitalization of formerly a blighted 15-square-block area. The initiative will generate over \$130 million in new construction. Designed to increase owner occupancy throughout the neighborhoods, the initiative will weave housing rehabilitation, neighborhood retail businesses, streetscape improvements, job training, recreation, and family services into the fabric of the reinvigorated residential community, thus building widespread and deeply vested interest in maintaining the quality and vibrancy of the community.

As these examples above begin to illustrate, colleges and universities are redirecting their economic and intellectual resources, facilities, and other assets to benefit their communities in many innovative ways. They are working to facilitate economic development, provide much-needed social services, support public schools, offer technical assistance to community-based organizations, target research that provides guidance for community problem solving, and create opportunities for faculty, students, and community residents to learn from one another.

The City of Binghamton's relationship with Binghamton University has largely been one as a liaison between the University and various developers for student housing projects. While the University has a need to grow its student and professor population, the City also has a need to revitalize its economic base. Consequently, the time is right for this relationship to evolve to the next level and take advantage of the resources that both the University and the City can bring to one another. For instance, a partnership could be developed for a research/business park at either the Anitec site or the State Psychiatric Center. Such a partnership would provide for local employment opportunities as well as the types of incentives necessary to keep the most talented university students and professors in the community. Developing a productive relationship with Binghamton University should continue to be a priority for the City. By simply continuing to establish a dialog with the University, the two parties can be honest, sit down and recognize the limitations of each party's interest - and then find where those interests intersect.

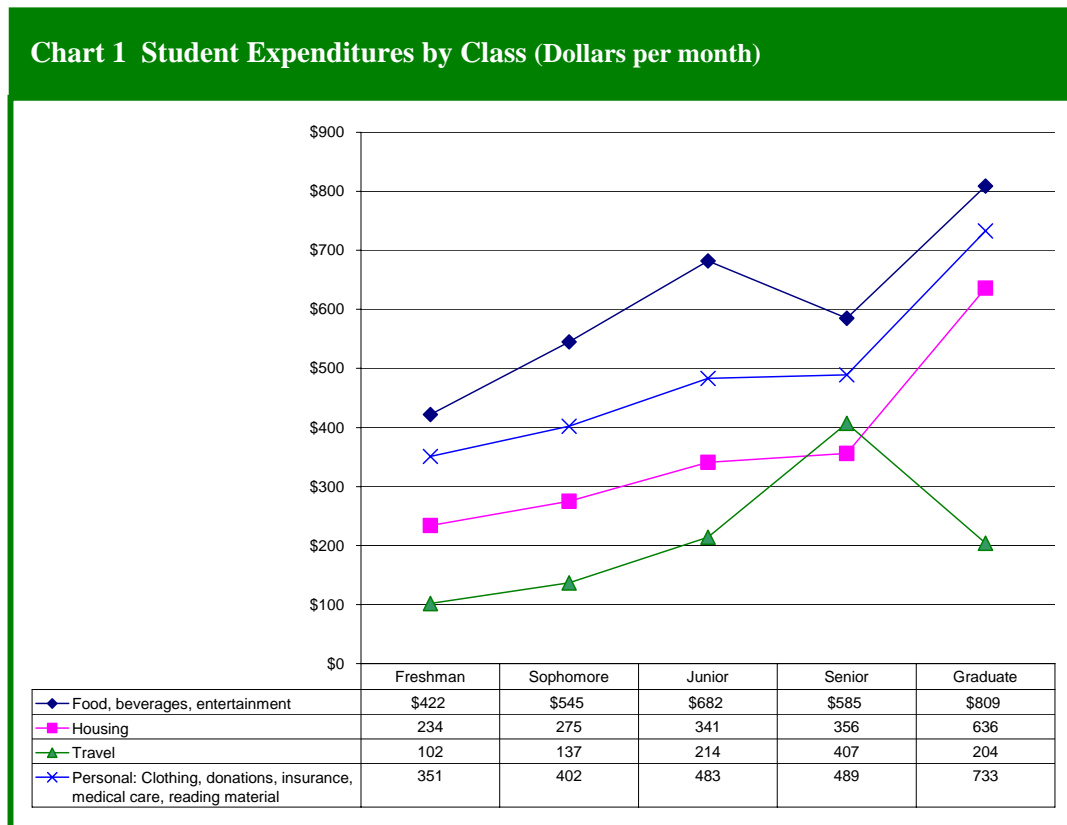
By simply continuing to establish a dialog with the University, the two parties can be honest, sit down and recognize the limitations of each party's interest - and then find where those interests intersect.

Action Steps

- Begin by making Binghamton University an important part of revitalization efforts by inviting senior level administrators (e.g. the Assistant Vice President, the Assistant Comptroller and members of the Off Campus College) to be a part of the implementation teams.



- The City should work to attract upper level students (i.e. graduate students) to the City because they tend to have a better understanding of neighborhood living. Further, from a business development perspective, studies in student expenditures indicate that the younger the student, e.g. junior college and undergraduate students, the lower their expenditures. Conversely, the older the students, e.g. graduates, the greater their expenditures. The chart below illustrates these findings.



Note: Based on national statistics. Not actual local figures.

- This Comprehensive Plan recognizes the value that Binghamton University students, faculty and staff can bring to the community as a whole. These students can also play an important role in helping to create much needed vitality on downtown streets, especially after working hours. Although some recent initiatives have fallen through, continued efforts to bring student housing downtown should continued to be pursued. However, downtown should not be the only location for student housing. Other opportunities, in coordination with the proposed annual rental inspection and permitting program, are present in the proposed R-3 districts. Additionally, the proposed R-2 districts can assimilate student housing with the appropriate inspection and permitting program in place.



- Surveys are a good tool for understanding individual preferences. Indeed, two surveys have been completed that may give insight regarding Binghamton University student preferences. Brailsford and Dunlavey developed a survey called the *BU Strategic Housing Plan*. A second survey was completed by Binghamton University's Geography Department called *An Analysis of BU Off Campus Non-Permanent Students*, which found that students contribute roughly \$37 million to the local Broome County economy. The City should use the figures from these surveys to obtain a greater proportion of the student revenue in the downtown area.

If the findings of these surveys do not supply enough information for appropriate business attraction efforts, then the City and the University should consider developing a survey to understand the

If Binghamton is to realize its fullest potential to become a vibrant regional center, then Binghamton University must be a partner in this process.

needs and perceptions of Binghamton University students and faculty/staff regarding downtown. This survey will help to further understand what is necessary in order to make downtown an attractive and inviting environment for Binghamton University students and faculty/staff to live and entertain. If the University is not willing to partner, then the City should develop the survey. The timing of the survey should be sensitive to student's schedules and completed early in a semester - before students get too bogged down with work. A particular question should be posed - *why would the campus community choose to get their service needs met in one location or the other*. An objective knowledge base in this area can raise "town-gown" negotiations above the political plane to a level of understanding which promotes the interests of both the university and the local community. These results could give the proposed downtown development organization direction as to what new services should be offered downtown. Finally, gift certificates to a downtown destination could be offered as an incentive to respond to the survey.

- Communication offers the central means to resolution. While the City's Economic Development Department has worked as an intermediary between Binghamton University and various developers for student housing projects, a more participatory relationship needs to be developed. *The City should continue to make efforts to establish dialog with the University to be a partner in the future redevelopment of the community.* Further, the City should continue to develop a relationship with upper levels of government and the S.U.N.Y. Chancellor's office concerning the University's role within the community.
- Work to become active with the *CEOs for Cities* program (www.ceosforcities.org). *CEOs for Cities* is a national bipartisan alliance of mayors, corporate executives, university presidents and nonprofit leaders. Their mission is to advance the economic competitiveness of cities. CEOs for Cities works to accelerate urban economic growth by strengthening public-private partnerships across sectors and cities.



THE KEY TO IMPLEMENTATION SUCCESS: BUILDING MOMENTUM THROUGH INCREMENTALISM

Binghamton's vision for its future, which emerged from public discussion over the past year and a half, is to reestablish itself as a vibrant regional center. This Comprehensive Plan outlines policy and project recommendations that will steer Binghamton in that direction. It is a rallying point or goal to be achieved that will require sustained commitment. The

next step is to begin implementing the changes proposed in the Plan. Making

the types of systemic changes associated with community reform will take the effort of City administrators, community residents, local non-profit organizations and community stakeholders all working together toward common goals. City Hall, however, ultimately holds the key to implementing and sustaining change within the community. The City's staff provides the bridge between the Comprehensive Plan and the benefits the community gains from this Plan. Thus, the City needs to be committed to long-term revitalization.

This long-term revitalization period must be approached systematically and include a series of regular consecutive additions which will ultimately result in a renewed community. This, in fact, is the very definition of incrementalism. Cities can be – and increasingly are being – made more livable, more attractive to businesses and investors, and more inviting to people of various levels of income. This is not the result of short-term work and it has begun in many places.

Binghamton is beginning to realize the benefits of urban

...the City must take incremental steps that balances the needs of the neighborhoods and complements the needs of a revitalizing downtown.

... a rallying point or goal to be achieved that will require sustained commitment...

revitalization. Places like Washington Street and the redevelopment of the Metro Center as a mixed-use professional/commercial focal point are signs that the businesses and investors are recognizing the value of Binghamton as a regional center. While efforts should be maintained to revitalize downtown as a regional center, the City must not forget the value of revitalizing its neighborhoods as sources of both a customer and an employee base.

Consequently, the City must take incremental steps that balance the needs of the neighborhoods and complements the needs of a revitalizing downtown. In fact, it is this approach that has warranted the uncharacteristic composition of the Team structure outlined above. Involving groups like the police and fire departments in community development decision-making is uncommon not only in Binghamton, but in many other communities as well.

Focusing on improved homeownership is one approach to renewing Binghamton. While it has been illustrated that Binghamton has several thriving neighborhoods, others are severely challenged. By reinvesting in these challenged neighborhoods and recreating a stable, decently maintained residential base, businesses will have the incentive to locate there and draw on the neighborhood residents as both customers and employees. This Plan recommends that homeownership and maintenance programs be established for the neighborhoods that will benefit most from these types of programs.



To show both potential homebuyers and the business community the City's commitment to community revitalization, the City should invest in the physical infrastructure necessary for these places to be successful. For instance, this Plan recommends the design and construction of a public parking lot in the City's South Washington Street commercial district to relieve some of the parking limitations resulting from the continued success of this area. In fact, much of the success here can be credited to the City's investment in new lighting and pedestrian improvements recently completed. As the City continues to build momentum with successful smaller projects as these, larger-scale, more complicated efforts, such as significant investment in downtown and its nearby neighborhoods, will become more realistic.

However, simply establishing these programs will not alone be enough to stimulate market interest in some of Binghamton's more challenged neighborhoods. Some of these places are challenged with social issues, like drugs and prostitution, which will not be stabilized by simply improving homeownership and rebuilding the physical infrastructure. That is why this Plan encourages the diverse composition of both the Neighborhood Reinvestment Committee and the Grants Strategy Committee. By working in coordination, a comprehensive approach to homeownership, physical design and police practices can significantly improve Binghamton's most challenged neighborhoods. If this approach to neighborhood revitalization is successful, then neighborhood success may become self reinforcing: holding crime (or even the perception of crime) to tolerable levels may have an incalculable effect on rebuilding confidence and commerce; the resulting investment could contribute to further drops in

crime and increases in home ownership, both of which will result in an increased tax base for city-wide revitalization efforts. This is the essence of building momentum through incremental, choreographed steps.



As noted, community plans as ambitious as this one cannot be accomplished all at once. Given the limited resources with which the City has to work, implementation must be phased. This will keep the Plan moving forward while ensuring that the workload remains within the management capacity of the City.

To help with the sequencing of recommendations made in this Plan, the implementation schedule following page 147 is suggested. In no way is this intended to be concrete. Rather, the schedule should be dynamic and reflect annual goals outlined at the beginning of each year. Before any of these action steps are undertaken, the City should form the proposed management teams in order to bring clarity and direction at a citywide level.

Without a plan that establishes a direction for building into the future, the City cannot expect to recover from these challenging times.

With any initiative that the City undertakes, there are certain risks associated with progress. Adoption and

implementation of this Plan is no different. Both the leaders and the residents of Binghamton must be prepared to accept that not all of the initiatives undertaken are going to result in immediate success. Sometimes the wrong project may be undertaken at the wrong time and success may not be immediately realized. Likewise, many projects will require significant capital outlays. While these investments may seem difficult to bear in the short term, longer term they will pay for themselves as other projects are incrementally developed that add value to previous efforts. Without a plan that establishes a direction for building into the future, the City cannot expect to recover from these challenging times.

BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE: A NEW START

Binghamton will not be transformed overnight. However, through relatively modest commitments made today and a dedicated community leadership, the City can achieve the goals outlined in this Plan. The community need only embrace a few simple principles summarized by the acronym **START**: **S**et a Direction, **T**ake Simple Steps, **A**tttract New Partners, **R**einvest for Success, and **T**ake the Long-Term View.

Set a Direction: If the community chooses a direction and sticks to it, it can shape a future for itself. If it does not set a direction, or does not hold to it, Binghamton's future will be dictated to it by outside forces.

Take Simple Steps to Get Started: Even the most ambitious future can be realized if the City starts taking a few simple steps and keeps moving towards its vision. For example, Court Street (east end) improvements are going to happen with or without a plan. It would be

relatively simple and inexpensive for the community to proactively work with the State Highway Department to ensure that those improvements move Binghamton closer to its own vision for the future. The redevelopment of key areas can be achieved by "priming the pump." Examples include making streetscape improvements along West Street and continued investments in Antique Row as a catalyst, which in turn will lead to the First Ward Neighborhood Square. By restructuring the gateway to Cheri Ann Lindsey Park, the park will be "opened up"



and establish the grounds for reinvestment in the park itself. Improving homeownership rates in the North Riverfront District will lead to an improved regional retail environment which will occur because the infrastructure capital exists to serve it. On the other hand, development on Main Street will occur because of market forces. But the City can influence the development pattern by establishing Design Standards which reflect the preferred character of that development. By stringing together a series of such small steps, Binghamton can make giant strides toward realizing its future.

Attract New Partners: In the past, corporations like IBM and Endicott-Johnson were the partners Binghamton needed for prosperity. In order to succeed in the 21st Century, the City must be prepared to build new relationships with state and federal agencies, private investors, and others.

Reinvest for Success: The only way to make this Plan effective and affordable is by integrating and coordinating the professional staff to effectively build new partnerships,

manage new projects, and tap into grants programs and other resources. Over the long-term, this restructuring of staff coordination should lead to a more efficiently operated municipal government.

Take the Long-Term View: The County itself is showing signs of recovery. If the community can maintain a long-term commitment to quality development, it can reestablish itself as a community of choice for the high-wage industries of the 21st Century. The entire community must work together to ensure that long-term benefits of quality development are not sacrificed for short-term gain associated with low-cost growth.

The choices presented by this Plan are worth considering because the legacy of Binghamton is worth saving. By choosing to invest in Binghamton's future, Binghamton's citizens can be assured that over the next generation, the City will assume its rightful place in the 21st Century. All they need to do is realize that their vision is "START."



RECOMMENDED SHORT-TERM ACTION ITEMS

CITY OF BINGHAMTON COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

BINGHAMTON, NEW YORK

2002

| Task/Strategy | Lead | Other Involved Agencies | Implementation Strategy | Implementation Timing |
|---|--------------------------------|---|---|-----------------------|
| Establish the Management Team Structure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Catalytic Action Team ▪ Neighborhood Reinvestment Committee ▪ Grants Strategy Committee | City Council | City Council, Mayor's Office, All Department Heads | Coordinate all department heads; recruit participation of Binghamton School District, Binghamton University and Broome Community College, local banks, local realtors, and business owners. | Immediate |
| Establish downtown management structure | Catalytic Action Team | Mayor's Office, Downtown Businesses, Economic Development Department, Corporation Counsel | Redefine the mission of the BLDC to include staff with the sole purpose of managing the entire downtown. | Immediate |
| Continue coordinating with DOT on Court Street reconstruction | Neighborhood Reinvestment Team | City Public Works and Engineering Departments, BMTS, NYS DOT, GSC | Seek additional TEA-21 and NYSDOT funds to make necessary community character improvements | Immediate |
| Coordinate gateway improvements with BMTS | Neighborhood Reinvestment Team | BMTS, NYSDOT, Binghamton DPW, Binghamton Fire and Police, Binghamton University, Broome Community College, Various Neighborhood Groups, GSC | Seek TEA-21, NYSDOT funding | Within 6 months |
| Familiarize staff with Fannie Mae Programs | Grants Strategy Team | Fannie Mae, Planning Department, GSC | Invite Fannie Mae representatives into the City to help identify partnering opportunities in the Comprehensive Plan. | Within 6 months |
| Address parking concerns in South Washington Street District | Neighborhood Reinvestment Team | Engineering, Planning and Public Works Departments, Business Owners | Seek TEA-21 funding opportunities and DOT assistance in engineering community-sensitive designs | 6-12 months |



| Task/Strategy | Lead | Other Involved Agencies | Implementation Strategy | Implementation Timing |
|---|--------------------------------|---|--|------------------------------|
| Revise zoning ordinance | Catalytic Action Team | Building Department, Planning Department | Allocate local revenues for revision. Seek DOS funding/technical assistance. Seek NY Planning Federation funding/technical assistance. Partner with Broome County Planning Department for technical assistance | 6-18 months |
| Develop design policies | Catalytic Action Team | Planning Department | Allocate local revenues. Seek NYS Council on the Arts funding assistance. Seek NYS Planning Federation funding/technical assistance. Partner with Broome County Planning Department and BMTS for funding/technical assistance. | 6-18 months |
| Solution to the "Family" definition | Catalytic Action Team | Corporation Counsel, Planning Department | Partner with NYS Department of State for technical assistance. | 6-18 months |
| Cheri Ann Lindsey Park Gateway Improvements | Neighborhood Reinvestment Team | Planning Department, Corporation Counsel, Code Enforcement, City Parks and Recreation, Engineering Department, and Public Works Department, Neighborhood Organizations, GSC | Allocate local revenues. Leverage funding assistance with in-kind services. Seek funding assistance from BMTS. Seek funding assistance from NYS OPRHP. Seek funding assistance from NYS DOS. Seek funding assistance from TEA-21. | 12-18 months |
| Continue with waterfront trail development | Neighborhood Reinvestment Team | Planning Department, Parks Department, Engineering, Neighborhood Organizations, GSC | Coordinate with BMTS. Seek TEA-21 funding assistance. Encourage participation by local foundations and non-profits. Seek additional assistance from private sector. Partner with the NYS Physical Activity Coalition for funding/technical assistance. | On-going |



| Task/Strategy | Lead | Other Involved Agencies | Implementation Strategy | Implementation Timing |
|---|-----------------------|---|---|------------------------------|
| Improve the City web pages with interactive features and additional public services | Catalytic Action Team | Mayor's Office, all City Departmental Heads, Broome County Information Technology | Allocate local revenues. Seek funds through ESRI's Public Access Grant Program. Partner with the Binghamton University Department of Geography. | On-going |



Step 1: Adopt the Comprehensive Plan

The Comprehensive Plan provides a solid, long-term, centrally developed Plan for the City. Who does the City want to be in the future? What does the City need to do to become healthier? Where and how should resources be invested? This Comprehensive Plan outlines a framework that addresses these questions. As this Comprehensive Plan is implemented, it will help the City build credibility with the business community and its constituents. This Plan provides the citywide goals and objectives necessary as a framework for specific neighborhood analysis and planning to be successful.

This Plan provides the citywide goals and objectives necessary as a framework for specific neighborhood analysis and planning to be successful

Step 2: Establish the Management Team Structure

An improved management structure for the implementation of the Comprehensive Plan will be critical to the City's long-term recovery and implementation of the Comprehensive Plan. The Catalytic Action Team recommended should be the leader in Plan implementation. The Neighborhood Reinvestment Committee and Grants Strategy Committee should act in unison to support the goals outlined by the Catalytic Action Team. Finally, the Catalytic Action Team should analyze management practices, the capital equipment available to each department and the skills and training necessary to effectively carry out implementation of the Comprehensive Plan.

Step 3: Establish a Downtown Management Structure

Establishing a strategic vision for the City as a whole will allow the City to make citywide investments that will cumulatively add to the resurgence of Binghamton. However, the creation of a healthy downtown will require a focused, coordinated approach. This Comprehensive Plan recommends that the Binghamton Local Development Corporation establish a position with the sole purpose of revitalizing downtown Binghamton.

Step 4: Create Marketable Opportunities

Developing many of the proposals outlined in this Plan will require conditions that the private sector deems favorable. This makes it necessary to make the development process straightforward and predictable. It also requires providing viable sites that meet the needs of business and industry. Based on Binghamton's regional market conditions, it will be necessary for the City to intervene to make many vacant and underutilized locations marketable and to ultimately bring them back into productive use. This may mean the City works to cluster sites large enough to create a market for economic development; old structures may need to be demolished and the site cleared and improved; street patterns may have to be modified and new infrastructure developed; or sites may need environmental remediation. To achieve this, close working relationships with real estate developers, non-profit groups, state and federal agencies, and local businesses and residents is a must.

...close working relationships with real estate developers, non-profit groups, state and federal agencies, and local businesses and residents is a must.



Step 5: Implement Neighborhood Plans

In large part, the motivation behind the efforts of the City of Binghamton to renew itself is to bring vacant and underutilized land into appropriate reuse and revitalize neighborhood economies cumulatively, resulting in an overall improved quality of life. The neighborhood plans outlined in this Comprehensive Plan are ambitious and will require a sustained effort. A successful approach to realizing these plans will require that the City work in partnership with citizens, community development organizations, business owners and other community stakeholders. These groups, along with real estate agents and lenders, often bring a more intimate knowledge of neighborhood conditions than planners working with city government. They should be viewed as allies in the redevelopment process, and their involvement in developing these plans and facilitating its implementation is critical. A solid model for citizen participation in implementation is found in the *City of Richmond's Neighborhood in Bloom Program*.

The following section of this Comprehensive Plan highlights some potential funding sources for implementation of the Plan. The final segment is a table summary of the Plan's recommendations, which outlines implementation leaders, likely involved agencies, a strategy for implementation, and, finally, a general timeline to begin implementation.

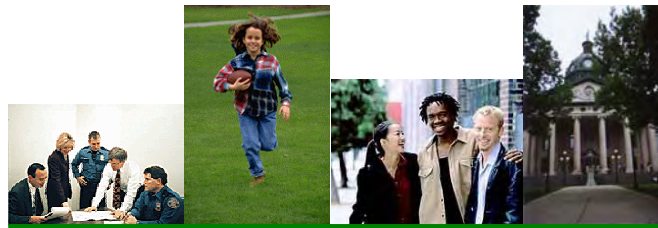


External Sources for Financial, Technical and Marketing Assistance

This section of the document is intended to provide the City of Binghamton with assistance in developing proposed projects for efficient and effective implementation of the City's Comprehensive Plan. It is intended to be used as a tool to inform the community's leaders of funding dollars in grants and services that are available for economic and community development.

*The following sources are supplied for informational purposes only. The list is not intended to be exhaustive. The Comprehensive Plan recommends that a **Grants Strategy Committee** be developed to continually research existing and new grant sources which are frequently announced. This section should be a starting point for proposed Grants Strategy Committee.*

*The Saratoga Associates encourages the Binghamton community to look into the opportunities detailed in this section of the document and to **actively explore** other programs offered by the various entities identified herein, as well as other entities not mentioned here. As noted previously, accessing many of these programs can be a time-consuming endeavor; however, building relationships with various funding organizations can pay great dividends in the long run. The City should take advantage of the various programs as funding becomes available that will advance implementation of the Comprehensive Plan. A proactive approach will be critical to accessing the varied funding prospects available.*



STATE RESOURCES

| <i>Entity</i> | <i>Description</i> | <i>Web Address</i> |
|--|--|---|
| New York State Department of State | Through DOS's web page detailed program information and applications are available. | www.dos.state.ny.us |
| Clean Water/Clean Air Bond Act | Five types of projects may qualify for funding under the Bond Act: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Clean Water - \$790 million ▪ Safe Drinking Water - \$344 million ▪ Solid Waste - \$175 million ▪ Municipal Environmental Restoration (Brownfields) - \$200 million ▪ Air Quality - \$230 million | www.dos.state.ny.us/cstl/cwca.html |
| Environmental Protection Fund | Planning, design, feasibility studies, and construction projects are among the eligible grant activities. Each year the Department of State Division of Coastal Resources establishes funding priorities. | www.dos.state.ny.us/cstl/epf.html |
| | | |
| New York State Department of Transportation | Through DOT's web page detailed program information and applications are available. | www.dot.state.ny.us/ |
| Industrial Access Program | Designed to complement economic development projects throughout the State where transportation access poses a problem or may offer a unique opportunity to the viability of a project. Awards are made on a 60% grant, 40% interest free loan basis, up to a maximum of \$1 million. | www.dot.state.ny.us/progs/iap.html |
| TEA-21 | The Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century, TEA-21, is the name given to the Federal legislation which authorizes Federal highway, highway safety, transit and other surface transportation programs. | http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/tea21/index.htm |
| New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation | Through OPRHP's web page detailed program information and applications are available. | www.nysparks.state.ny.us/ |
| Clean Water/Clean Air Bond Act | Offers four programs which allows for acquisition, development, expansion or enhancement for various project types (depending on the program accessed). | www.nysparks.state.ny.us/grants/ |
| Environmental Protection Fund | Offers six programs which allows for acquisition, development, expansion or enhancement for various project types (depending on the program accessed). | www.nysparks.state.ny.us/grants/ |
| - State resources continued on the following page - | | |



| <i>Entity</i> | <i>Description</i> | <i>Web Address</i> |
|--|--|--|
| New York State Environmental Facilities Corporation | EFC promotes environmental quality by providing low cost capital and expert technical assistance to municipalities, businesses and State agencies for environmental regulations. | www.nysefc.org/ |
| Pipeline for Jobs | The New York State Pipeline For Jobs Fund Program provides up to \$14.5 million in financial assistance for the planning, design and construction of eligible projects that are intended to create, improve or extend water supply facilities. This includes, but is not limited to, drinking water facilities and cold water supply facilities. | www.nysefc.org/pipelineforjobs/plfj.htm |
| State Revolving Fund (SRF) | EFC currently has two Revolving Loan Funds. The Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF) has been in existence since 1990 and is used to make low-interest loans to municipalities for the capital costs of water pollution control facilities. The Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF) began operation in 1997. It is administered jointly between EFC and the Department of Health. The DWSRF provides both low-interest loans and state assistance payments to public and private water systems to undertake needed drinking water infrastructure improvements. | www.nysefc.org/srf/SRFhome.htm |
| Empire State Development Corporation | | |
| Main Street New York Downtown Development Initiative | Supports projects designed to improve the appearance and the viability of downtown commercial areas. The grants are provided by the Governor's Office for Small Cities (GOSC) in conjunction with Empire State Development. | |
| Empire State Opportunity Fund | Projects must fall within three designated categories which include the development of industrial facilities, business parks and incubators; downtown and rural retail and commercial projects; and enhancements to tourism destinations. | |
| Governor's Office for Small Cities | Administers the Community Development Block Grant Program for the State of New York. The Community Development Block Grant Program provides grants to eligible cities, towns, and villages with a population under 50,000 and counties with an area population under 200,000 to revitalize neighborhoods, expand affordable housing and economic opportunities and or improve community facilities and services. Also offers Technical Assistance (TA) grants for planning purposes. | www.nysmallcities.com/ |



| <i>Entity</i> | <i>Description</i> | <i>Web Address</i> |
|--|---|--|
| NYS Division of Housing and Community Renewal | <p>Preservation Program grants are administrative funds which allow Companies to perform a number of housing and community renewal activities. A majority of Preservation Companies are involved in the planning and development of capital projects including the new construction and/or rehabilitation of existing facilities for residential use, one of the eligible activities under the Program.</p> <p>Preservation Program funds can also be used to administer "soft services," which include housing management; loan and grant application assistance; home ownership financial counseling; tenant counseling; and other activities to preserve and promote housing in low-income, blighted areas. Most Preservation Companies offer a combination of these services.</p> | www.dhcr.state.ny.us/ |
| NYSERDA | <p>Rebuild New York's Communities is a gateway to all NYSERDA programs and opportunities, including energy and environmental research and development opportunities. Goals include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting local communities in the process of identifying goals, • Structuring and implementing an action plan to meet those goals, • Spurring consumer demand for energy-efficient products and services, • Developing an infrastructure to respond to consumer demand for these types of products and services. | www.nyscrda.org/rebuildcommunities.html |
| New York State Council on the Arts | A state funding agency that provides support for activities of nonprofit arts and cultural organizations in New York State and helps to bring artistic programs of high quality to the citizens of the state. Of particular interest to municipalities is the Architecture, Planning and Design program | www.nysca.org/guidelines.html |



FEDERAL RESOURCES

| <i>Entity</i> | <i>Description</i> | <i>Web Address</i> |
|---|--|--|
| Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) | CFDA is a government-wide compendium of Federal programs, projects, services and activities that provide assistance of benefits to the American public. | www.cfda.gov |
| CFDA Energy Category | Grants for the conservation, education, training facilities, equipment, research & development, general information and specialized technical services. | www.cfda.gov/public/browse_fa.asp?catcode=i |
| CFDA Environmental Quality Category | Grants for air pollution control, solid waste management, research, education and training. | www.cfda.gov/public/browse_fa.asp?catcode=J |
| CFDA Science and Technology Category | Grants for information and technical services, including energy related inventions and lab equipment grants. | www.cfda.gov/public/browse_fa.asp?catcode=S |
| CFDA Business and Commerce Category | Grants for economic development, small business and minority owned businesses. | www.cfda.gov/public/browse_fa.asp?catcode=B |
| Economic Development Administration | EDA creates a climate conducive to the development of private enterprise in America's distressed communities. | www.doc.gov/eda |
| Grants for Public Works and Economic Development | Grants to promote long-term economic development and assist in the construction of public works and development facilities. | www.cfda.gov/public/viewprog.asp?progid=16 |
| Economic Adjustment Assistance | Assists state and local interests in design and implementation of strategies to adjust or bring about change to an economy. | www.cfda.gov/public/viewprog.asp?progid=17 |
| Economic Development Support for Planning Organizations | Helps States sub-States planning units or local governments strengthen economic development planning capability and produce policy to reduce unemployment and increase incomes. | www.cfda.gov/public/viewprog.asp?progid=1429 |
| Federal Highway Administration | Provides expertise, resources, and information to continually improve the quality of our nation's highway system and its intermodal connections. | www.fhwa.dot.gov/ |
| Recreational Trails Program | The Recreational Trails Program provides funds to the States to develop and maintain recreational trails and trail-related facilities for both nonmotorized and motorized recreational trail uses. Examples of trail uses include hiking, bicycling, in-line skating, equestrian use, cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, off-road motorcycling, all-terrain vehicle riding, four-wheel driving, or using other off-road motorized vehicles. | www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/rectrail.htm |



PRIVATE SECTOR RESOURCES

| <i>Entity</i> | <i>Description</i> | <i>Web Address</i> |
|---|---|---|
| CASE Center at Syracuse University | NYS Center for Advanced Technology in Computer Applications and Software Engineering (CASE) uses the University and other resources to help nurture New York's high-tech economy. | www.cat.syr.edu |
| Launch Center 39, LLC | Provides New York start-ups with funding, housing, business development and other resources. | www.lc39.com |
| Energy and Environmental Ventures, LLC | Serves clients developing "clean" technology and infrastructure by providing project finance and venture capital. | www.eeventures.com |
| Exponential Business Development Company | Invests capital in early stage, start-up and spin-off software, manufacturing and communications technology businesses in Upstate New York. | www.exponential-ny.com |
| NYSEG Foundation, Inc. | <p>To enhance the economic, cultural, civic and social well-being of the communities in upstate New York.</p> <p>To directly assist organizations that play key roles in education, health and welfare, the arts and cultural enrichment, and civic activities. Of special interest are programs serving the disadvantaged, elderly, young, gifted, disabled, minorities and women.</p> <p>To support organizations whose goal is to improve the community.</p> | www.nyseg.com/nysegweb/main.nsf/doc/ocnysegfoundation2 |
| ESRI | <p>The goal of this program is to foster and support the integration of geographic information system (GIS) technology in local government organizations nationwide. Software and hardware grants will be awarded to local government agencies throughout the United States.</p> <p>The Public Access Grant Program is one in a series of Grant Programs designed to promote the development of Livable Communities. Grants also are available for many other local government departments.</p> | http://www.esri.com/industries/localgov/grants/livable_communities/public_access_grant.html |
| Aging in New York Fund, Inc. | The Aging in New York Fund, Inc. is dedicated to enhancing the quality of life for older New Yorkers and their families. Through partnerships with the public and private sectors, the Fund is forging vital new visions and innovative models for services for the aging. | www.anyf.org |



| <i>Entity</i> | <i>Description</i> | <i>Web Address</i> |
|---|--|--|
| Pew Charitable Trusts | The Pew Charitable Trusts support nonprofit activities in the areas of culture, education, the environment, health and human services, public policy and religion. Based in Philadelphia, the Trusts make strategic investments that encourage and support citizen participation in addressing critical issues and effecting social change. | www.pewtrusts.com |
| The Foundation Center | Provides a comprehensive foundation directory, offers guidelines in grant writing, seminars, workshops and training programs. | www.fdncenter.org |
| Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance | Gives access to a database of all Federal programs available to State and local governments (including the District of Columbia); federally-recognized Indian tribal governments; Territories (and possessions) of the United States; domestic public, quasi-public, and private profit and nonprofit organizations and institutions; specialized groups; and individuals. | www.cfda.gov |

