



CITY OF RENSSELAER PLANNING DEPARTMENT

VIRTUAL PUBLIC MEETING – ZOOM CLIENT, MONDAY, JANUARY 10TH AT 6:00 PM

Brownfield Opportunity Area Nomination Plan Community Goal Assessment

Introduction – What is a brownfield? What is the Brownfield Opportunity Area Nomination Plan?

Brownfield: *a property whose expansion, redevelopment, or reuse may be complicated by the presence or potential presence of a hazardous substance, pollutant, or contaminant.*

“The Brownfield Opportunity Area (BOA) Program provides communities grant funding and technical assistance to develop area-wide, community-based plans to ***effectively redevelop brownfields and other vacant and abandoned sites***”

- The BOA is a proposed area in the City where certain sites are being assessed for both past contamination and future redevelopment potential.
- If target sites in the area are contaminated, they can be assessed for cleanup.
- If they are not contaminated, but may be negatively impacted by nearby sites that are contaminated, they are eligible for future funding as well.

BOA Study Area Map, Subareas, and Key Brownfields



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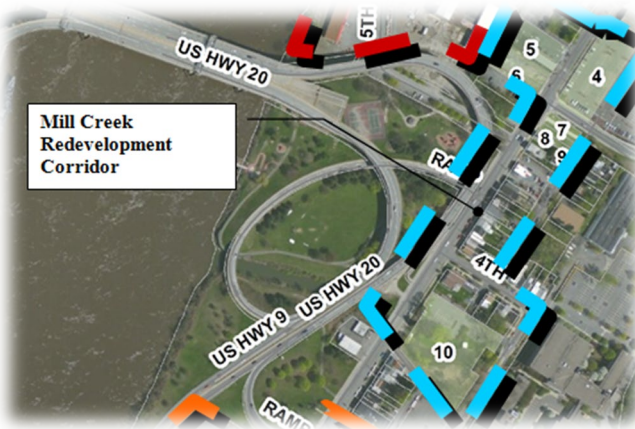
1. Downtown Core Development Subarea

Key brownfield: former Hess Station on Columbia Turnpike



2. Mill Creek Redevelopment Corridor Subarea

Key brownfield: former City Hall



3. Waterfront Mixed Use Subarea

Key brownfield: Amtrak Maintenance Facility /East Street parking



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Background – BOA Program in Rensselaer

- Awarded grant in 2013
- High staff turnover has resulted in numerous delays in completing Phase I of the program
- Before we are able to complete Phase I, we must revisit community feedback from nearly a decade ago
- After Phase I: Nomination Plan is complete including new community feedback, we will apply to be “designated” as a NYS Brownfield Opportunity Area
- After we become “designated” as a NYS Brownfield Opportunity Area, we will be eligible for funding to complete Phase II
 - **Only** designated BOAs are eligible for Phase II funding!
 - Phase II provides funding for site-specific spending and overall program area marketing to help remediate contaminated sites and attract development to areas that are nearby brownfields

How will we assess goals and objectives?

- Discuss each individual goal
- Determine if the goal is still relevant (Yes/No)
- If the goal is still relevant, determine priority level (High/Medium/Low/Not a Priority)

2013 Community Vision: *The City of Rensselaer is a unique riverfront community that is one of the most attractive places to live in the Northeast, with a beautiful and accessible waterfront, active downtown, and convenient transportation to other regional communities for business and leisure. The traditional downtown main street is alive and vibrant where civic and community entities are clustered, and downtown businesses are teeming with entrepreneurs aiming to attract local residents, commuters and visitors alike. The City enjoys close civic, cultural, and strategic planning ties with other riverfront communities to its north and south. Sweeping vistas of the Hudson River and the NYS Capitol greet those who travel through the bustling Rensselaer Amtrak Station. Access, beauty, activity, and small-town atmosphere make Rensselaer a great place to live.*

Summary of current community goals:

Summary of current community concerns:

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Community Goals from 2012-2014

Goal #1: *Attract emerging regional high-tech companies to Rensselaer;*

Relevant? Yes No

If yes, priority level? High Medium Low Not a priority

Other Notes:

Goal #2: *Increase the population through home purchases and development of affordable rental housing;*

Relevant? Yes No

If yes, priority level? High Medium Low Not a priority

Other Notes:

Goal #3: *Continue revitalizing the Hudson Riverfront to bring new residents, businesses, and recreational enthusiasts to the City;*

Relevant? Yes No

If yes, priority level? High Medium Low Not a priority

Other Notes:

Goal #4: *Encourage small business growth throughout the Downtown and along the Hudson River where former industrial land uses were dominant;*

Relevant? Yes No

If yes, priority level? High Medium Low Not a priority

Other Notes:

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Goal #5: *Provide off-street parking to support Downtown businesses;*

Relevant? Yes No

If yes, priority level? High Medium Low Not a priority

Other Notes:

Goal #6: *Promote the cleanup and redevelopment of brownfield and vacant sites;*

Relevant? Yes No

If yes, priority level? High Medium Low Not a priority

Other Notes:

Goal #7: *Maximize marketing efforts to promote available retail opportunities in the City;*

Relevant? Yes No

If yes, priority level? High Medium Low Not a priority

Other Notes:

Additional notes on community goals:

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Community concerns from 2012-2014

- **Conflicts between incompatible uses.** There are land uses in the area that are not consistent with the Vision established in the LWRP or the Comprehensive Plan. These incompatible uses include **rail car maintenance, auto repair facilities, heavy industry, and large swaths of surface parking areas where there should be non-industrial uses.**

Relevant? Yes No

If yes, priority level? High Medium Low Not a priority

Other Notes:

- **Lack of appropriate design standards on behalf of the City during development review procedures that result in distasteful developments that do not stress or promote key urban design guidelines.**

Relevant? Yes No

If yes, priority level? High Medium Low Not a priority

Other Notes:

- **Lack of investment from the local community in the development of projects.** Past efforts to attract investors to Rensselaer have not always included those that live and do business in the community and, therefore, do not have a personal stake in the outcome. Residents would like to see more community-based ownership of property and more community-oriented uses, such as entertainment venues, youth recreational facilities, and essential community business/retail services.

Relevant? Yes No

If yes, priority level? High Medium Low Not a priority

Other Notes:

- **Vacant and/or underutilized parcels and buildings** are prevalent within the Rensselaer BOA, especially along the Broadway and North Broadway corridor. The presence of these properties has a blighting influence and act as a deterrent to new investment.

Relevant? Yes No

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If yes, priority level? **High** **Medium** **Low** **Not a priority**

Other Notes:

- There is community support for more greening of neighborhoods, trail interconnections to the riverfront, and an increase in the number and quality of park facilities.

Relevant? **Yes** **No**

If yes, priority level? **High** **Medium** **Low** **Not a priority**

Other Notes:

- A central issue to redevelopment in the Rensselaer BOA is that of land assemblage given the very broad ownership patterns that currently exist throughout all neighborhoods.

Relevant? **Yes** **No**

If yes, priority level? **High** **Medium** **Low** **Not a priority**

Other Notes:

- Development models such as the Aldi's Market located nearby are outdated and do not reflect the design and vision for the BOA.

Relevant? **Yes** **No**

If yes, priority level? **High** **Medium** **Low** **Not a priority**

Other Notes:

- Build-out of the former High School site (DeLaet's Landing) and nearby waterfront parcels as an area that is a prime location for development will be vital to the success of the three separate subareas.

➤ **Relevant?** Yes OR No

➤ **If yes, priority level?** High OR Medium OR Low OR Not a priority

➤ **Other Notes:**

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- City Council members indicated that it was imperative that the City pursue potential developers and retailers for vacant sites that understand the dynamics of dense urban and culturally diverse neighborhoods.

Relevant? Yes No

If yes, priority level? High Medium Low Not a priority

Other Notes:

- The City needs to commit to development projects across the entire BOA study area.

Relevant? Yes No

If yes, priority level? High Medium Low Not a priority

Other Notes:

Additional notes on community concerns:

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State and Community Priorities 2022

- **Planning for placemaking** as a priority to support new and existing local businesses with necessary infrastructure and attractive public spaces;

Relevant? Yes No

If yes, priority level? High Medium Low Not a priority

Other Notes:

- **Supporting the creative arts as a driver of local economic activity;**

Relevant? Yes No

If yes, priority level? High Medium Low Not a priority

Other Notes:

- **Food and beverage as a driver of local economic activity to support new and existing residents and local employees;**

Relevant? Yes No

If yes, priority level? High Medium Low Not a priority

Other Notes:

- **Optimizing our local provision of goods and services** to become an ideal place for freelancers, contractors, and other similarly independent employers to locate their home base;

Relevant? Yes No

If yes, priority level? High Medium Low Not a priority

Other Notes:
