



The City of Rensselaer

Downtown Redevelopment Plan

2003-2010

*Mayor Mark Pratt*



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# The City of Rensselaer Downtown Redevelopment Plan

2003-2010

June 2003

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*This plan was prepared for the City of Rensselaer and the New York State Department of State with funds provided under Title 11 of the Environmental Protection Fund.*





# CHAPTER 1

## Section 1





## Introduction

On the shores of the Hudson River sits a quaint American City known as Rensselaer, New York. The community is passionate, taking pride in their history and waterfront location. Throughout time, Rensselaer has functioned as a hub for transportation and distribution related activity. During the 17th Century, Fort Crailo, now operated by the National Parks Service as a National Historic Landmark, played an integral role in the settlement of the upper Hudson Valley. Moreover, the song "Yankee Doodle" was penned in the backroom of the Fort by Dr. Richard Schuckburg, an army surgeon during the French and Indian war.

Today, the City of Rensselaer is considered the Capital District's diamond in the rough. Once again building upon its natural strength as a regional transportation and distribution center, the City is focusing its efforts on becoming the regional hub for rail, automobile, boat and pedestrian modes of transportation. Recent investments in the Rensselaer Train Station marked the beginning of the City's redevelopment efforts. With great vision and region-wide support, the Train Station is expected to function as the cornerstone of a multi-modal transportation network and related transit-oriented development. The Downtown Redevelopment Plan builds on the vision of this project, integrating the goals and objectives into a larger scaled, city-wide effort.

To further impress upon the region Rensselaer's importance to the health and vibrancy of the Capital District, the New York State Department of State (NYS DOS) provided a \$470,000 grant to explore redevelopment options as well as the design and construction of a waterfront trail. The NYS DOS identified the importance of linking the Rensselaer Train Station to the waterfront, which will be a conduit for spurring related public and private revitalization efforts.

The Downtown Redevelopment Plan focuses specifically on the revitalization of three key areas: the Central Business District, the Train Station Area, and North Broadway/Historic Bath Neighborhood. However, the primary goal of this document is to provide an accurate interpretation of the City's vision, created by both public officials and citizens, for redevelopment of the existing and future activity nodes.

## Development Strategy: Building on Our Assets, Filling a Regional Niche

The City of Rensselaer is a unique place within the Capital District. It has a small town, village-like, feel with all of the assets of a larger urban area. Rensselaer is walkable, architecturally diverse, mixed use, compact and human scaled. Moreover, it is home to the 9th busiest train station in the United States and the greatest stretch of underutilized Hudson River waterfront in the Capital District. In short, Rensselaer is a diamond in the rough that requires some significant “cuts” and minor polishing to create a quality place to live, work and play.

The Downtown Redevelopment Plan is both visionary and strategic. In order to evolve as the Capital District’s Urban Village\*, Rensselaer must always consider the impacts that decisions today will have on the vision for the future. Everyday decisions are not individual and unrelated; they are part of the matrix that determines how the City will function for future generations.

Community leaders should consider the following principles as essential components of the downtown redevelopment effort.

1. Change local and regional perceptions of the City.
2. Work as a unified body of residents, elected officials and city staff.
3. Strengthen inter-municipal cooperation.
4. Sell the image by recruiting new residents and businesses.
5. Require good urban design that supports the existing fabric of the City.
6. Strengthen neighborhoods, respect neighbors.
7. Preserve key historic and environmental infrastructure.
8. Use all properties for their highest and best use.
9. Promote the waterfront as the City’s greatest asset.
10. Educate and involve the public in large scale planning efforts.

\* Urban Village’s are typically definable “neighborhood” units within a larger urban environment such as a major city. In the case of Rensselaer, the term is used to identify the City’s potential niche in the Capital District as a whole.



*“Rensselaer has so much potential. The key to our success is reinventing our image at the local and regional level.”*

*~ Advisory Committee Member*



*Broadway looking south today.....*



*....Our vision of the Broadway Corridor in the future.*



## Planning Methods

The purpose of the Downtown Redevelopment Plan is to provide the City of Rensselaer with a blueprint for revitalization and reorganization of the primary downtown areas. The Plan is designed to focus on realistic options for improvements based on current conditions and assets. At the same time, many of the goals and strategies are based on desired future end states that may be several years and even decades in the future. For this reason, the City of Rensselaer is taking small steps toward revitalization that will lead down a defined pathway to a larger vision.

The planning process included substantial information gathering efforts in order to catalog, identify and analyze the numerous social, environmental and economic factors involved in downtown redevelopment. This information was presented to an Advisory Committee consisting of city officials, residents and county and state representatives. Utilizing their comments, the City defined cursory goals, objectives and policies in order to focus the vision of the Plan.

In October 2002, a mini-charrette was held with residents of Rensselaer at the Rensselaer Community Center. A short presentation on existing conditions was provided to ensure participants had a foundation to work from in the later stages of the workshop. Several exercises were facilitated to gather information from the residents including a Preferred Development Survey and a visioning exercise. The remainder of the day was spent in groups that focused on identifying redevelopment strategies for the three primary focus areas of this Plan: The Central Business District, the Train Station Area and the North Broadway/Historic Bath Neighborhood area. Redevelopment recommendations outlined later in this Plan are based primarily on the input generated from the public.

*"Prepare for today but always plan for the future."*



*"For years the City of Rensselaer has neglected to take into account what the residents want. For this reason, people have developed a negative image of the community. This Plan represents a change in philosophy, it interprets their vision of the future."*

*~ Mayor Mark Pratt*



## Planning Methods

Several meetings were held with the Advisory Committee and city staff to determine specific details that were most important such as build-out concepts and parking demand for the Train Station Area. Cost estimates were generated for each recommendation when appropriate. Phasing and implementation strategies were generated in order to provide a step-by-step guide for realizing the recommendations of the Plan.

Throughout the planning process, utilization of the Hudson Waterfront was discussed and recommendations were generated that will guide the development of a waterfront trail. It was determined early on that downtown redevelopment is directly tied to the future uses on the waterfront. For this reason, potential linkages between waterfront and the central business district, neighborhoods, and train station were identified.

*“Rensselaer needs to develop a cooperative approach to planning and development in order to improve our quality of life.”*

*~ City Resident*



*“We are fortunate to have numerous local and regional projects underway, and in the planning stages. We have to use a comprehensive approach to ensure our redevelopment plan is consistent with the broad regional vision.”*

*~ City Council Member*



## CHAPTER 2





## Envisioning the Future - Rensselaer 2003-2010

The City of Rensselaer is committed to, and actively promoting, economic development efforts, social equity, community enhancement, and environmental stewardship. The awareness and common desire to improve the quality of life in Rensselaer is an evolutionary step for the City. Over the next seven years, Rensselaer has the potential to become the Capital District's premiere "urban village," providing residents with small town living in the heart of a major urban area.

*Envisioning the Future* provides the blueprint for Rensselaer's downtown redevelopment efforts. There are many concepts in this section that can be implemented in the short term. Conversely, several ideas will require a long term approach. In some instances, the reader may look at the more "visionary" concepts and think "not in my lifetime." However, in the words of Kofi Anan, Secretary General of the United Nations:

*"Many of you will say that we are dreaming. I say, where would the world be today without dreamers?"*

It is important to remember that plans are meant to interpret a community's vision of the future and inspire creativity. This is the first stage in an organic process leading to significant, citywide revitalization.

*Envisioning the Future* is divided into three main sections as described below.

### ***Section One: Redevelopment Policy and Implementation***

This section includes the guiding policy for redevelopment, the objectives of the policy and the steps to implement each objective.

### ***Section Two: Future Land Use Plan and Design Guidelines***

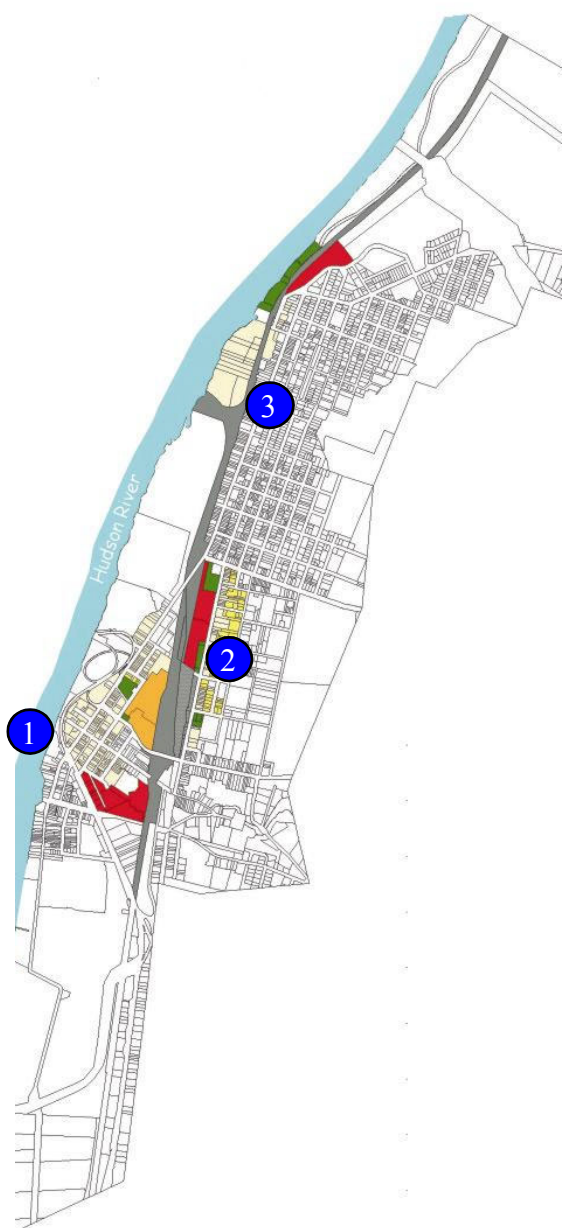
This section outlines the recommended future land use plan for each of the focus areas. A design guideline is provided to help facilitate high quality development.

### ***Section Three: Concept Plans for Redevelopment***

This section introduces the conceptual redevelopment plans for each focus area. Brief discussions are provided concerning costs associated with each concept plan and expected timeline for implementation.



## The Focus Areas



*Envisioning the Future* is focused on identifying redevelopment options for three primary areas in the City of Rensselaer. These three areas, further defined below, are viewed to have the greatest potential for redevelopment. Moreover, each area can function as a new central node for neighborhood revitalization.

### 1. The Central Business District (119 Acres):

The Central Business District (CBD) is defined as the land and uses from Routes 9&20 north to Herrick Street, bounded by the train tracks on the east and the rear parcel lines on the western side of Broadway.

#### *Snapshot of Current Conditions*

- Over 80 percent of assessed land use is commercial.
- Several structures, approximately 20 percent, are vacant.
- Most commercial uses do not use upper floors.
- Broadway is the primary corridor, experiencing significant traffic at the intersections with 3rd Ave., Route 9, and the I-787 Broadway Exit ramp.

### 2. The Train Station Area (240 Acres):

The Train Station Area is defined as the land and uses from Third Avenue to the south extending north to Partition Street, bounded by the railroad right of way to the west and by Lawrence Street to the east.

#### *Snapshot of Current Conditions*

- The primary land use type is residential although the Train Station is the dominant use due to the various facilities and parking involved. Significant vacant parcels are present (2 parcels, approximately 6 acres).
- The corridor is poorly configured to handle increased auto traffic.
- Most structures are in average to poor condition and land values are depressed.
- Excellent views of the Albany skyline are present.

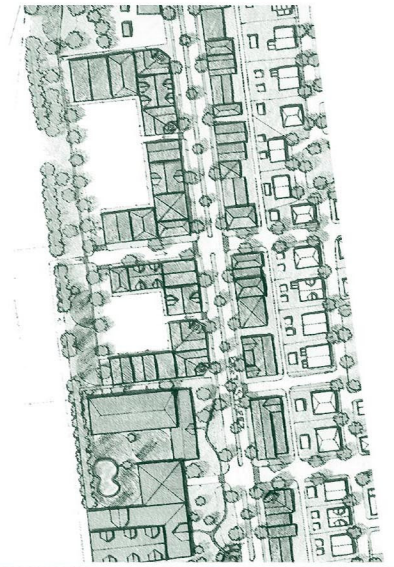
### 3. The Bath Neighborhood (40 Acres):

The Bath Neighborhood is defined as the land and uses from the Livingston Avenue Bridge abutment to the south and to the end of the Barnett Mills parcel to the north, bounded on the west by the Hudson River and North Broadway on the east.

#### *Snapshot of Current Conditions*

- The Bath neighborhood is arguably the most historic area of the City.
- Land uses include a mix of residential, industrial and parkland.
- Significant vacant structures exist to the north of the study area most notable being Barnett Mills (4 acres).
- Traffic flow is hindered due to the railroad alignment and limited ingress/egress points.





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# C H A P T E R 2

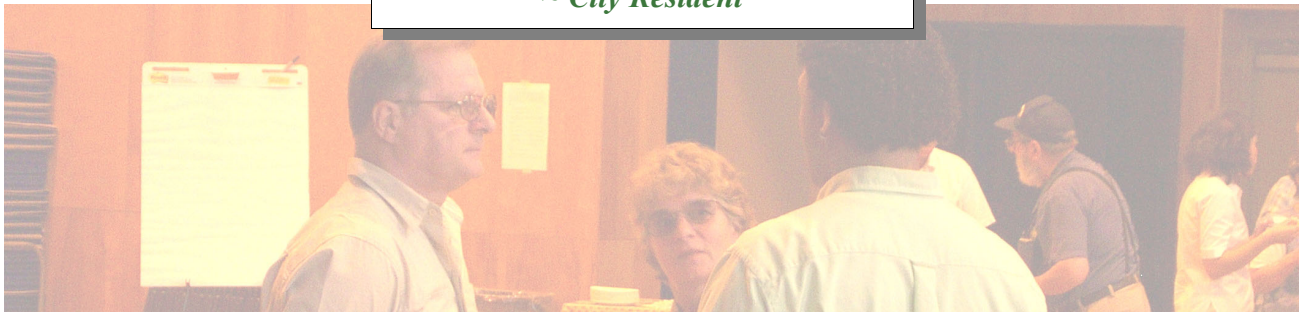
## S e c t i o n 1



## **Downtown Redevelopment Policy Statement**

It is the policy of Rensselaer to create a vibrant, attractive, and enjoyable City. The identification and revitalization of these areas is the keystone to the City's future success. City officials and property owners recognize the need to create a more pleasurable downtown experience for residents and visitors alike. Increased attention should be given to aesthetic features, which include landscaping, building facades and sidewalks. Future development opportunities should be encouraged to utilize all properties for their highest and best use and strive to integrate into the City's existing urban fabric.

*"For too long now Rensselaer has been viewed as a community on the ropes. This effort will refocus our efforts and guide us towards a common vision."  
~ City Resident*



Based upon the public input received during the community workshops and the feedback provided by the Advisory Committee throughout the planning process, the following objectives were developed to guide the Downtown Redevelopment Plan:

### **Implementation Objectives**

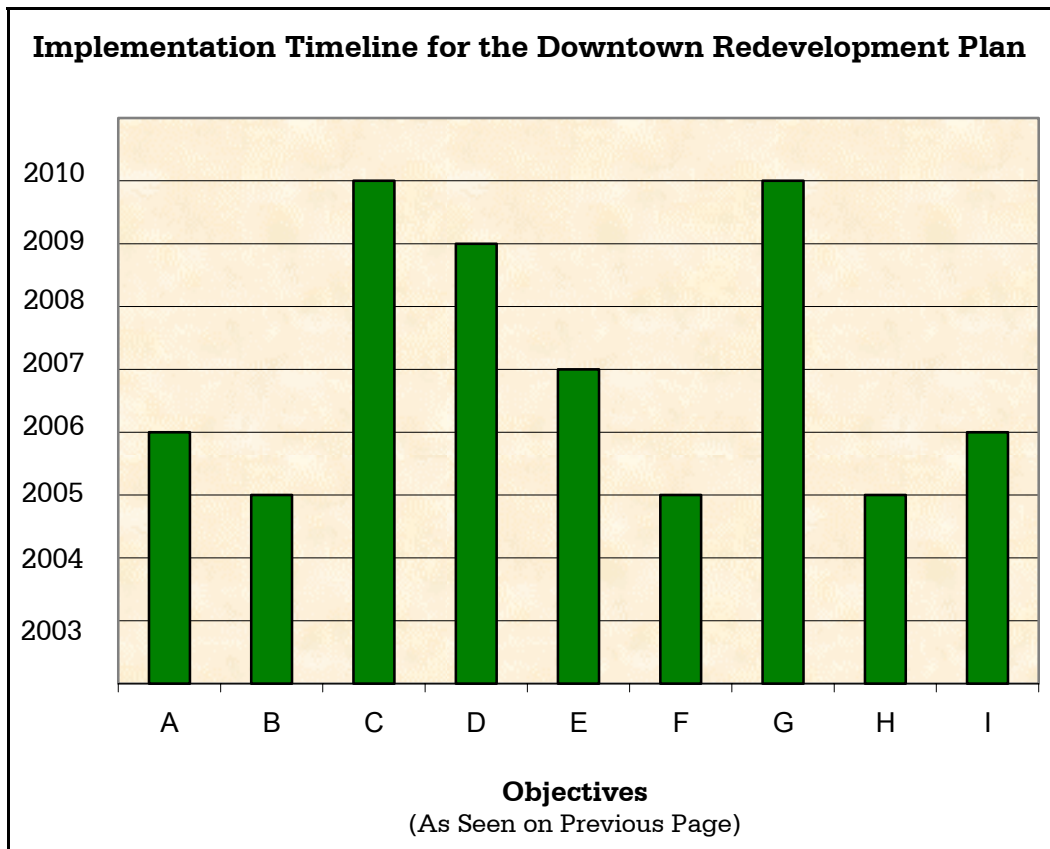
- A. Improve the safety and traffic efficiency of Broadway while ensuring adequate pedestrian areas and clearly defined crosswalks.
- B. Re-use vacant lots for uses that advance redevelopment efforts and enhance the City's existing urban form.
- C. Improve sidewalk and crosswalk facilities citywide to enhance pedestrian safety and preserve the traditional linkages from City neighborhoods to the focus areas.
- D. Restore the historic character and pedestrian scale of the Central Business District.
- E. Provide assistance to merchants and owners to improve the appearance of their property.
- F. Improve the shopping experience for residents and visitors by offering common hours.
- G. Develop areas around the train station and on the waterfront for their highest and best use.
- H. Improve opportunities for public involvement in community revitalization efforts.
- I. Support multi-modal transportation linkages throughout the Capital District that will enhance the City of Rensselaer's position as the region's central hub.

## Policy Implementation Plan and Timeline

Rensselaer has identified numerous opportunities for revitalizing its image and re-energizing city officials and administrators under one common vision in an effort to spur public and private investments in the urban fabric of the City. The Plan recognizes the importance of a comprehensive approach to redevelopment and includes a broad cross section of implementation strategies that will impact the organization and function of the City as a whole. The ultimate goal is to unite city officials and the public with the common vision of a revitalized Rensselaer.

### **Understanding the Policy Implementation Plan**

The implementation plan is designed to provide a logical progression of actions to achieve each objective identified on page 7. Each implementation objective is accompanied by a graph that represents the implementation timeline. In some instances, an implementation “step” is a finite point in time such as “Install historic street lights on Broadway.” However, many implementation steps are long-term and continuous such as “Encourage building restoration and re-use to be in conformance with the structures original architecture.” Long-term implementation items are shown on the Implementation Timeline as a point at which to begin the implementation process, not as a finite point in time. Therefore, when interpreting this section of the Plan, it is important to consider each implementation step individually as well as part of the redevelopment process as a whole.



## **A. Traffic Safety and Aesthetics on Broadway**

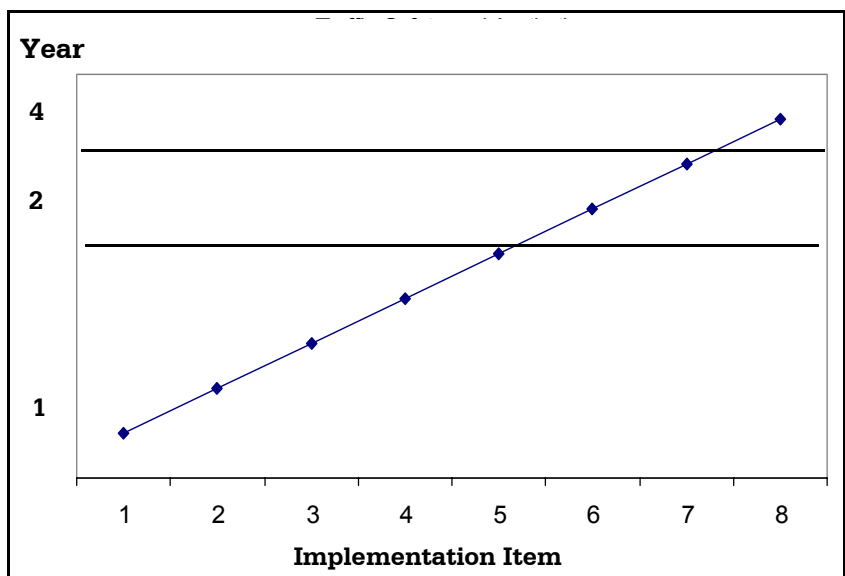
In order to advance traffic safety and aesthetic improvements on Broadway, the City must:

1. Review all projects from a comprehensive viewpoint to determine impacts to traffic flow and aesthetics.
2. Identify at the conceptual level the desired appearance and function of the Broadway Corridor.
3. Ensure that conceptual plans include the provision of street trees, new sidewalks, ornamental lighting and clearly marked crosswalks. Concept plans should include cost estimates for replacing, repairing and consolidating all of the underground infrastructure.
4. Meet with the Capital District Transportation Council (CDTC) and the public to discuss plans for the Broadway Corridor.
5. Actively pursue funding resources for implementation such as the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) or a combination of resources including Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds, the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) and City funds.
6. Review proposed plans for the Broadway Corridor with the public to build consensus.
7. Implement the improvements identified above.
8. Identify cost savings opportunities, such as shared purchasing and maintenance options with the City of Albany, to reduce the long term costs associated with the project (tree replacement, trash cans, light poles, etc.).

### **Implementation Timeline**

Traffic Safety and Aesthetics on Broadway will progress in a stepwise fashion, requiring a phased approach to implementation. Items one through four above primarily outline a concept planning phase to be completed in the first year. This will increase the competitiveness of the project when attempting to obtain funds from State and Federal resources. In year two of implementation, efforts to coordinate with the CDTC and review the

desired redevelopment plan for the Corridor will require meetings and potentially revisions to the Plan. Then, between year two and four the City will actively apply for and obtain funding to help pay for the Broadway safety and aesthetic improvements. Shared operation costs with the City of Albany will be explored in year four.



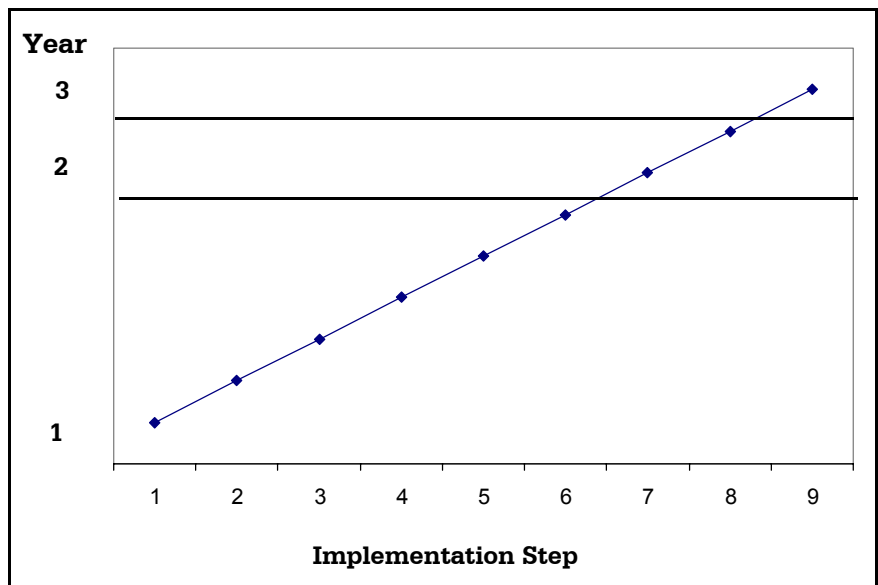
## B. Use of Vacant Lots

Vacant lots can be valuable in the redevelopment process. In order to adequately and efficiently use existing vacant lots, Rensselaer must:

1. Identify existing vacant lots on a parcel map, preferably in GIS format.
2. Determine the highest and best use for each vacant lot in accordance with the Downtown Redevelopment Plan.
3. Determine if surrounding lots should be considered for consolidation with the vacant lot.
4. Rank each lot based upon importance to the Redevelopment Plan overall and the focus area in specific.
5. Identify ownership of each lot.
6. Determine the appropriate approach for re-use, and in some cases acquisition, of each vacant lot.
7. Set up a fee system to generate funds for vacant lot acquisition.
8. Provide incentives (tax breaks, increased density, reduced parking requirements, increased height, etc.) for appropriate infill uses for vacant lots.
9. Begin to purchase, consolidate, and auction properties for redevelopment purposes.

### Implementation Timeline

Rensselaer has numerous vacant lots scattered throughout the City. This can have a negative impact on the appearance of neighborhoods, property values and tax base. The City of Rensselaer desires a strategic approach for re-using vacant lots to facilitate the redevelopment effort. In some instances, this may be as simple as creating a community garden or as



complex as consolidating numerous parcels into one large redevelopment opportunity. In order to have a clear understanding of the number of vacant lots and their relative importance to redevelopment efforts, the City must complete a report that identifies each parcel and potential future uses. Implementation items one through six outline the essential components for the Vacant Parcel Report. This process can be completed in one year with the help of an intern who has practical GIS experience. Items seven and eight will require work with the City Council to determine the appropriate fee system and incentives to be offered to private developers. This needs to be completed prior to advancement to step nine which is the purchase and transfer of key properties for redevelopment.



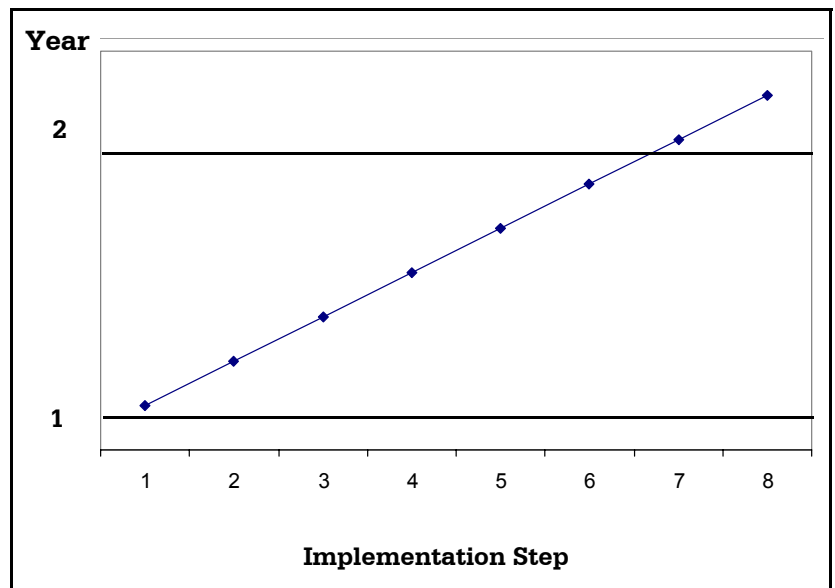
### C. Pedestrian Safety and Linkages

Rensselaer was designed to be a pedestrian friendly City. Efforts to restore its traditional urban form and support pedestrian safety and linkages are paramount to Rensselaer's future. The City must:

1. Develop a citywide survey of sidewalk conditions.
2. Determine primary pedestrian linkages to the Central Business District, the Train Station, North Broadway and the Bath Neighborhood, the Hudson Waterfront as well as other activity centers including parks, churches, and community centers.
3. Identify a prioritized sidewalk improvement program for the City supported by a GIS map that can be modified as improvements are achieved.
4. Identify appropriate materials for sidewalks in residential neighborhoods versus business districts and recreation areas.
5. Identify a consistent crosswalk treatment appropriate for business districts, neighborhoods and recreation areas.
6. Determine the potential for replacing or repairing all underground infrastructure that can be accessed during sidewalk replacement. Determine if sidewalk replacements can be part of a larger corridor redevelopment project.
7. Identify and secure funding resources for sidewalk improvements such as the TIP, City resources, and CDBG.
8. Review opportunities for the development of special assessment districts, such as Neighborhood Improvement Districts (NIDs), Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) and tax increment financing zones (TIFs) to supplement the costs associated with sidewalk replacement.

#### **Implementation Timeline**

Rensselaer is a highly walkable City, making it an attractive and navigable community for residents of all ages. As determined during the public workshop, significant improvements need to be made to the City's sidewalk system in order to enhance connectivity between key destinations and restore traditional urban character. Implementation steps one through six above should be completed as a citywide Sidewalk Conditions Study during the first



year. Identifying and securing funds should begin in year two. This process will require a multi-faceted funding strategy that may lump sidewalk replacement into a corridor-wide project or be part of a private redevelopment package. Therefore, the City will need to rank each sidewalk replacement area for importance and proceed accordingly. BIDs, NIDs and TIFs will require additional planning and organization and may not be feasible for several years. However, they are very attractive options for focusing tax revenues to specific geographic areas.

## D. Pedestrian Scale and Historic Character of the Central Business District

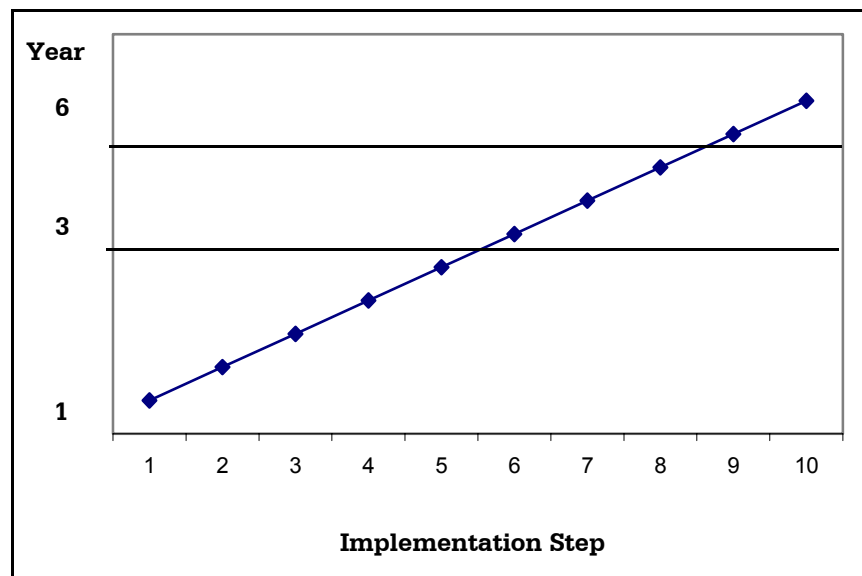
The Central Business District (CBD) is an excellent location for the development of an “urban village” that caters to retail, small office and residential uses. To achieve this, Rensselaer must:

1. Review all projects in this area from a comprehensive viewpoint.
2. Utilize the points system included in the Community Leaders Handbook to determine the appropriateness of all projects.
3. Implement a street tree planting program for the entire CBD.
4. Utilize pedestrian scaled streetlights in the CBD.
5. Encourage outdoor seating where appropriate for restaurant and related uses.
6. Maintain a consistent building frontage line on all major roads to enhance the “outdoor room” feeling associated with traditional urban areas.
7. Encourage building restoration and re-use to be in conformance with the structures original architecture.
8. Provide incentives for compliance such as tax breaks and low or no interest loans for façade improvements.
9. Allow time limited on-street parking where appropriate and encourage shared parking lots to the rear of primary structures.
10. Enhance the CBD character with permanent and rotating/seasonal public art.

### Implementation Timeline

The Central Business District (CBD) is expected to function as Rensselaer’s traditional downtown core. The area is compact, highly walkable, home to several architecturally significant structures, and in close proximity to major employers, the waterfront and the train station. This area is very similar to a village center in scale, making it one of the more

unique urban areas in the Capital District. Rensselaer should capitalize on the assets of this area to create an attractive and diverse business district that is home to small scale retail uses, walk-in services, civic buildings and housing. It is expected that this area will require six years to reach its full potential.



## **E. Providing Assistance to the Private Sector to Ensure Success**

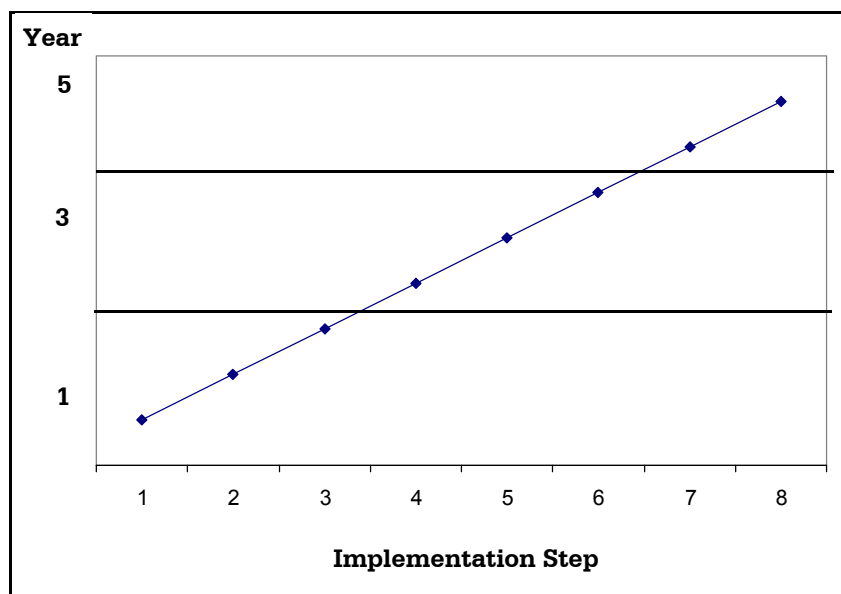
A successful redevelopment strategy requires both public and private investment. Frequently, public investment of human and financial resources are required before private interest is generated. Therefore, in order to encourage private investment in the focus areas, Rensselaer should:

1. Review all projects in this area from a comprehensive viewpoint.
2. Utilize the points system included in the Community Leaders Handbook to determine the appropriateness of any projects.
3. Encourage building restoration and re-use to be in conformance with the structures original architecture.
4. Provide fast track permitting for proposals that are in conformance with the Design Guidelines provided as part of this Plan.
5. Identify and promote federal and state funding resources for first time home-buyers and provide local incentives to those locating in the CBD, the Train Station Area or the Bath Neighborhood.
6. Develop a small business assistance center in the CBD funded through City and State resources and staffed by volunteers and City staff.
7. Hold bi-annual networking open houses to bring the existing and future business community together.
8. Work with SUNY and RPI to develop an annual education series focusing on the basics of business management, marketing and economic restructuring for local business owners.

### **Implementation Timeline**

The private sector is expected to play an integral role in the redevelopment of Rensselaer's downtown. The image that the City portrays is essential to attracting private investment. Therefore, significant effort will be required to present an investment friendly climate while at the same time maintaining and implementing the vision of

the City. Steps one through three should be implemented within the first year. Every application that requires review by the Planning Board should be examined for compliance with the point system in the Community Leaders Handbook. During the first year, the City will need to set up a framework for steps four and five. By year three, the City's Private Sector Assistance Program will be sufficiently efficient and sophisticated to accomplish steps six through eight.



## F. Improving the Shopping Experience for Residents and Visitors

Creating a vibrant business district requires dedication and cooperation. The City of Rensselaer has the opportunity to become a destination in the Capital District that caters to a specific niche focusing on retail, small office and service related uses. In order to accomplish this, the City needs to:

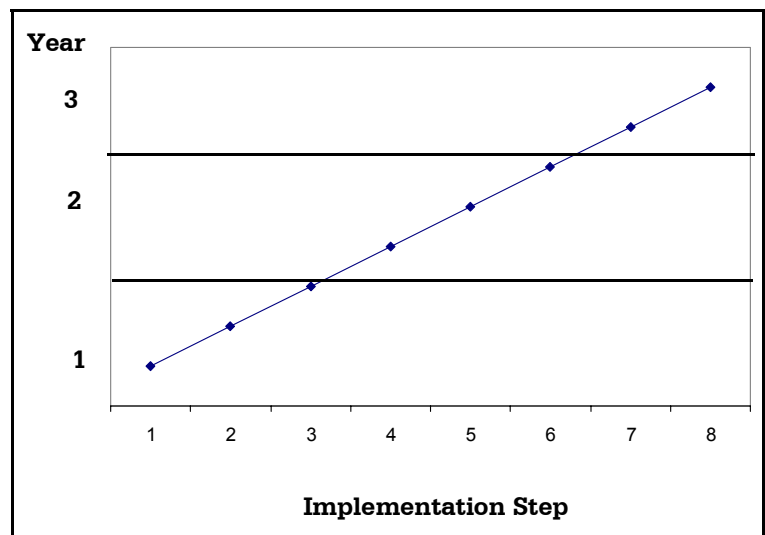
1. Determine the preferred mix of uses desired for each of the focus areas in the City. Recommendations based on market forces are listed below.

- **Central Business District:** niche retail focusing on small restaurants and bars, artisan shops, daily needs; small professional offices, civic uses and residential.
- **Train Station Area:** hotel, transit related retail and services, larger offices and residential.
- **North Broadway:** residential, retail focusing on daily needs; restaurants and bars.
- **Bath Neighborhood:** niche retail focusing on recreational supplies, restaurants and cultural outlets; small offices, light manufacturing and residential.

2. Develop a Merchant's Association and/or a downtown revitalization organization that focuses on information gathering, economic development, promotions and marketing.
3. Identify opportunities for common hours at least two days and nights a week.
4. Develop an off-street shared parking system in each focus area to support multi-stop shopping.
5. Identify opportunities for cost savings between merchants such as bulk purchasing.
6. Provide a "list of shops" map at each store, or in kiosk form at major intersections, to increase awareness and comfort of shoppers.
7. Invest in the City's place-building infrastructure which may include public art and sculpture, seasonal/promotional banners, decorative walking surfaces, etc.
8. Explore costs associated with increasing security either through the City's Police Department or private security.

### Implementation Timeline

The City of Rensselaer is well positioned to restructure its retail economy over the next three years. Two key segments, daily services and destination services, need to be promoted and enhanced. An appropriate mix of retail uses can be supported by local residents and enhanced by the regional market. Steps one through three should be completed in year one. As the number of patrons increases, steps four through six will be required for continued revitalization. The seventh step may occur earlier although the City may want to hold off on the investment until a critical mass of shop and shoppers is reached. Step eight will be required to improve the perception of safety in the long run.



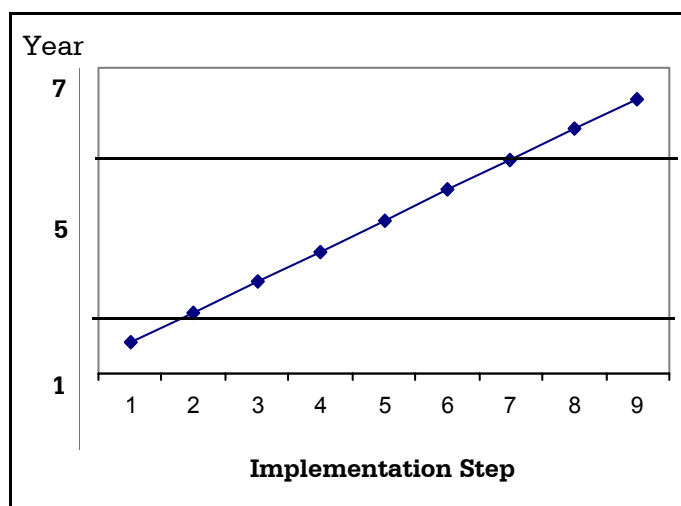
## **G. Support the Development of the Train Station and Waterfront Areas for their Highest and Best Use**

The two primary large scale economic development opportunity areas in the City of Rensselaer include the lands to the north and south of the train station and the Hudson River waterfront. In order to support the redevelopment of these areas for their highest and best use, the City should:

1. Enforce existing and future zoning, and utilize the Community Leaders Handbook were applicable, to ensure property is developed according to City recommendations.
2. Organize a Local Development Corporation (LDC), a 501c3 not-for-profit, to function as the primary real estate redevelopment agency for the City of Rensselaer, funded through CDBG, real estate and project revenues.
3. Identify and rank key parcels at the Train Station and Waterfront areas for redevelopment.
4. Utilize the LDC to support private development by obtaining key properties, providing low interest loans and marketing key redevelopment areas.
5. Use the LDC to build relationships with local and regional developers that have a proven track record for successful projects that reflect the desired build-out of the Train Station and Waterfront areas.
6. Develop partnerships with State and local governments to enhance the attractiveness and regional consistency of redevelopment projects.
7. Work with existing landowners to determine their future plans for key properties and support their efforts to either redevelop the property for highest and best use or sell the property.
8. Review all proposed plans for redevelopment for comprehensiveness and long-term feasibility.
9. Ensure all redevelopment plans include adequate public access to the waterfront, train station, and/or linkages between the two areas.

### **Implementation Timeline**

The Train Station and Waterfront areas have the greatest potential for redevelopment in Rensselaer. Every effort should be made to ensure the highest and best use of each area. The City will have one chance to truly implement its vision in these areas. The complexity of this implementation item will require perseverance and organization to ensure success. At this time, the City does not have the resources to allocate a person(s) to manage this process. Therefore, a new body, preferably a Local Development Corporation (LDC) should be utilized to spearhead this effort. Steps one and two should be completed in year one. Steps three through eight depend on many factors including market forces and availability of land. Therefore, this implementation item ,beyond steps one and two, will be implemented on a project by project basis. The City should set the goal of having this item completed by year seven although current market forces and existing land uses extend this timeline to 10-15 years.



## **H. Encouraging the Public to Participate in Community Revitalization Efforts**

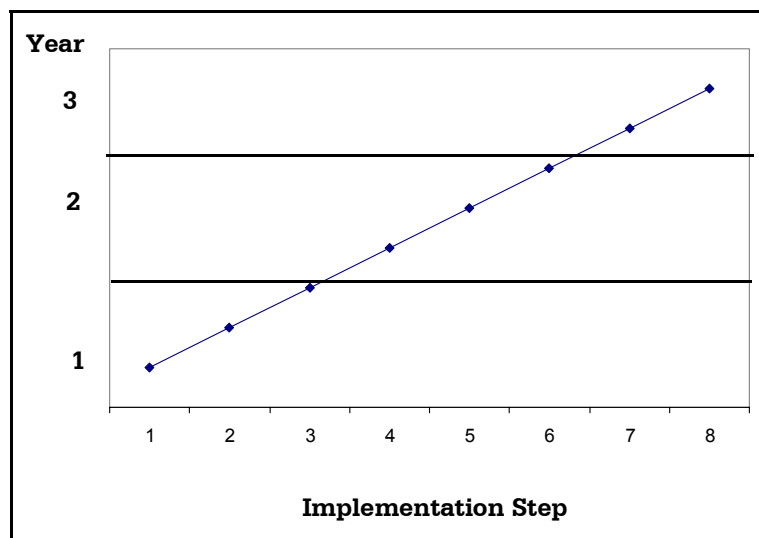
Involving the citizens of Rensselaer in the planning process is essential to building consensus and ensuring success. If a common vision is identified through the public process, the spirit of cooperation and community will be strengthened. The City should:

1. Outline existing deficiencies or gaps in the City-Community communications network.
2. Identify a range of information distribution options that will improve community awareness and encourage involvement.
3. Create a webpage that provides a monthly schedule of events.
4. Develop of Citizens' Advisory Committee (CAC) that represents the voice of the community and reports directly to the Director of City Planning.
5. Use the CAC as a grassroots information dissemination network for upcoming projects, plans, community events and merchant's festivals.
6. Bring the planning process to the neighborhoods through City Council initiated workshops.
7. Hold a volunteerism open house every six months to highlight opportunities for involvement.
8. Develop a volunteerism awards program for citizens who dedicate time to downtown redevelopment and community enhancement efforts.

### **Implementation Timeline**

Citizen participation is essential to the success of any planning process. More importantly, it helps to educate the general public on the many issues facing the City, increasing their awareness. In addition, participation helps to build ownership which leads to increased pride. Community pride is essential to improving the image of the City as a place to locate a business, own a residence or visit for shopping. This

implementation item is intensive and requires significant upfront time investments from the City Planning Staff. However, once a solid foundation of community involvement opportunities is developed, the level of effort required will level off. Within the first year, the City should be able to complete steps one through three. Costs associated with web page production and hosting have dropped significantly over the past several years allowing communities to provide a wide range of information online. Steps four through six will require organization between the Planning Staff and the City Council members to bring the issues to each ward. This will increase awareness and communication at the neighborhood level. Steps seven and eight should be accomplished by year three. Volunteers play an integral role in community planning and downtown redevelopment. The City should be looking for people with a range of skills including small business assistance, basic computer skills, webpage assistance, marketing and promotions, youth mentoring and city beautification assistance.





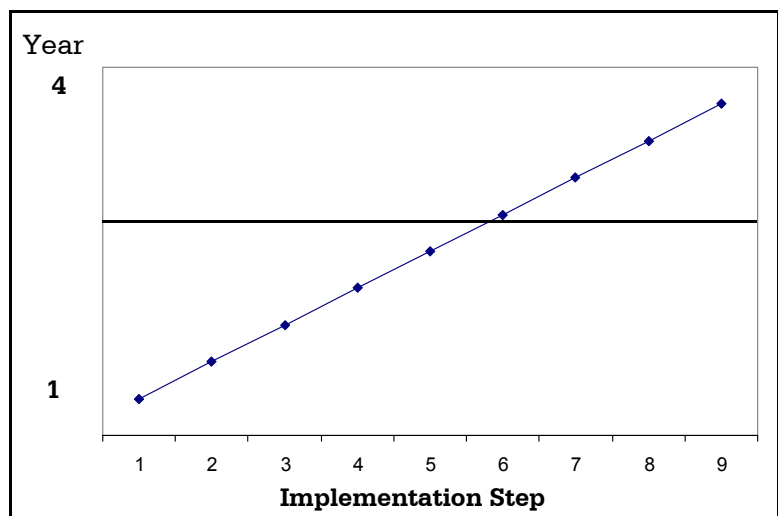
## I. Becoming the Capital District's Multi-Modal Hub

Rensselaer is positioned to function as the Capital District's transportation hub. The Rensselaer Train Station provides the foundation for the integration of additional transportation types and networks. Ultimately, this effort will bring more people to the City, support commercial and residential development, enhance the quality of life of residents and improve linkages throughout the region. In order to facilitate this effort, the City will need to:

1. Work with Capital District Transportation Authority (CDTA) to determine opportunities and potential locations for multi-modal (ultra light rail, green buses, bicycles, pedestrians and automobiles) transportation provisions at the Train Station Facility.
2. Work with the Capital District Transportation Council (CDTC) to ensure the multi-modal transportation network desired is consistent with existing regional plans.
3. The City of Rensselaer is overburdened by transportation related infrastructure. Require all infrastructure related to the multi-modal network have minimal impact to the urban fabric of the City by sharing existing rights-of-way.
4. Outline an internalized commuter transit system that connects future commuter lots, regional destinations and local stops to the Train Station.
5. Develop a Parking Management Plan to reduce commuter/resident conflicts surrounding the Train Station.
6. Secure easements and/or improve linkages for pedestrian and bicyclist routes to and from the Train Station.
7. Actively plan and promote non-automobile links between the City of Rensselaer and the region, especially the City of Albany, the SUNY East Campus and the RPI Tech Park.
8. Ensure that all efforts to expand the multi-modal transportation network includes satellite stops or clearly marked links to downtown Rensselaer.
9. Work to secure funds for public sector improvements required to facilitate this implementation item from the State and Federal Government as well as private contributions.

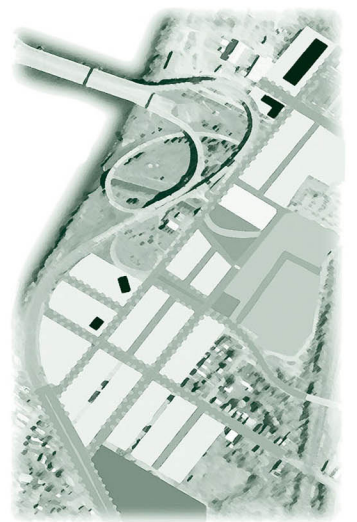
### Implementation Timeline

Rensselaer is well on its way to becoming the Capital District's transportation hub. Amtrak has experienced increased ridership at the newly developed Train Station. Future efforts will continue to improve the Train Station area as an inter-modal facility. The City of Rensselaer should continue to work with the CDTA, the CDTC and Amtrak to increase ridership and



plan for future inter-modal connections and transportation networks throughout the Capital District. Steps one through five can be completed in the first year in the form of a Inter-Modal Hub Feasibility Plan. Steps six through nine will require continued cooperative efforts to ensure a well designed inter-modal network can be woven into, and compliment, the Rensselaer's urban fabric.



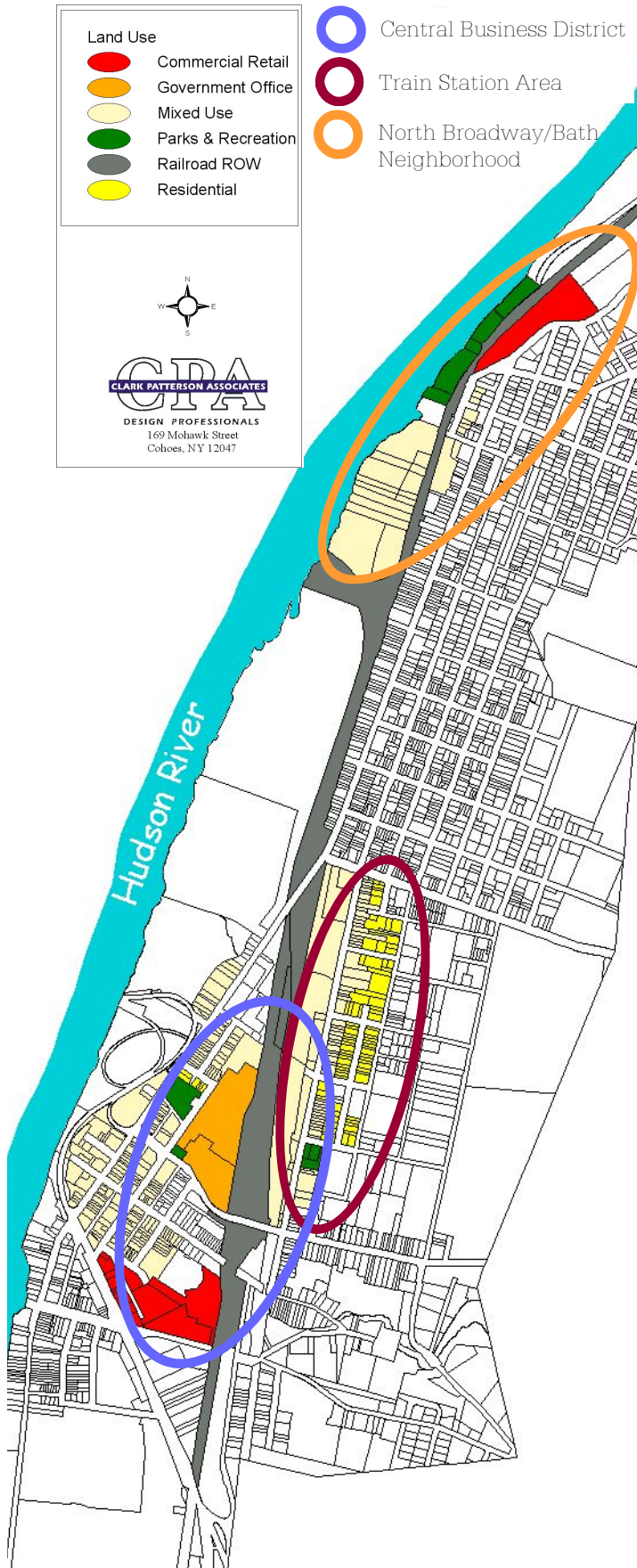


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## C H A P T E R 2

### S e c t i o n 2





Land use planning in well established urban areas requires a balance between the preservation of existing uses and the desire for redevelopment. The Downtown Redevelopment Plan provides recommendations for future land use based upon input from the advisory committee, residents and city officials gathered during the public workshop.

The Future Land Use Plan is not directly enforceable. The recommendations provided in the Plan will function as the legal foundation for future zoning revisions. Therefore, the suggested future land use plan provided in this section can not be fully realized until the official zoning map and text is updated.

As can be seen on the map to the left, the Downtown Redevelopment Plan focuses on the Central Business District, 119 acres, the Train Station Area, 240 acres, and the North Broadway/Bath Neighborhood Area, 40 acres. Areas without color shading were not discussed as part of this planning process. When the City of Rensselaer updates its Comprehensive Plan, a future land use map will be developed for the entire city. It is expected that the recommendations made in this Plan will be included in the citywide future land use plan.

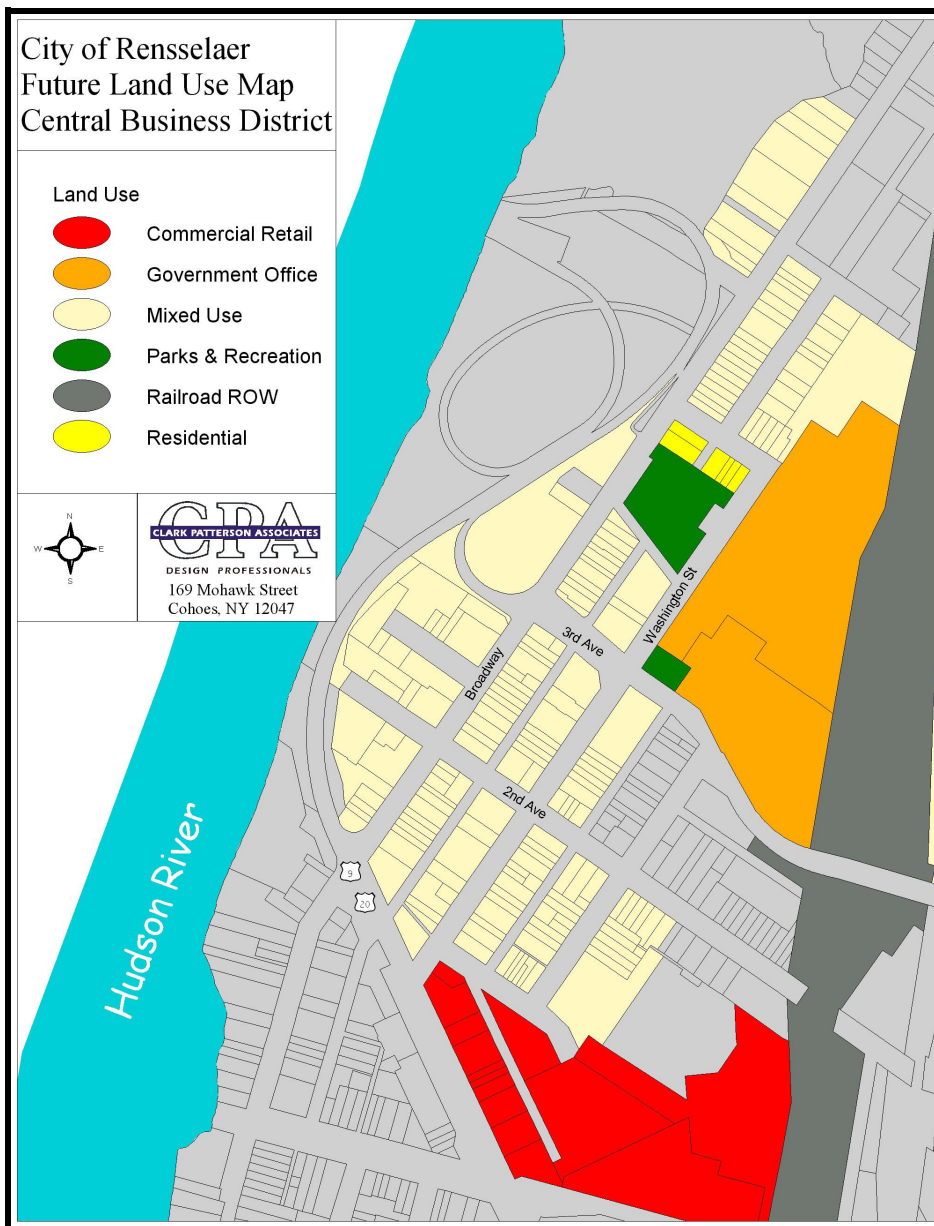
A new land use category, mixed use, was identified as appropriate for the City of Rensselaer. Areas designated as mixed use are suitable, due to existing uses as well as preferred future development, for residential commercial, civic, recreational and in some instances light industrial uses. This mixing of uses is common to the traditional city form and supports a vibrant and sustainable downtown. Performance and design factors are generally of greater importance than the use itself in mixed use areas. Therefore, design guidelines are essential to ensure the City has the ability to manage development in an equitable manner.



## Recommendations

The Central Business District (CBD) should become the core of the City and support a mix of retail, service, residential and civic uses. This area is compact and highly walkable. Land use and zoning regulations should be revised to allow for a horizontal and vertical mixing of uses in order to create a vibrant city core. The majority of the land in the CBD is defined as mixed use (beige). The area to the south (red) is defined primarily as a commercial area, supporting a mix of retail, services, and office. The orange area is primarily the NYS Division of Youth although other non-government offices are present.

For Rensselaer, the CBD has the necessary elements to sustain a vibrant downtown (i.e., connective road network, narrow streets, sidewalks, passive parks, mix of uses) . However, significant economic restructuring will be required to achieve the level of desired activity.



## Preferred Development Survey Results



Desired Broadway Design Elements

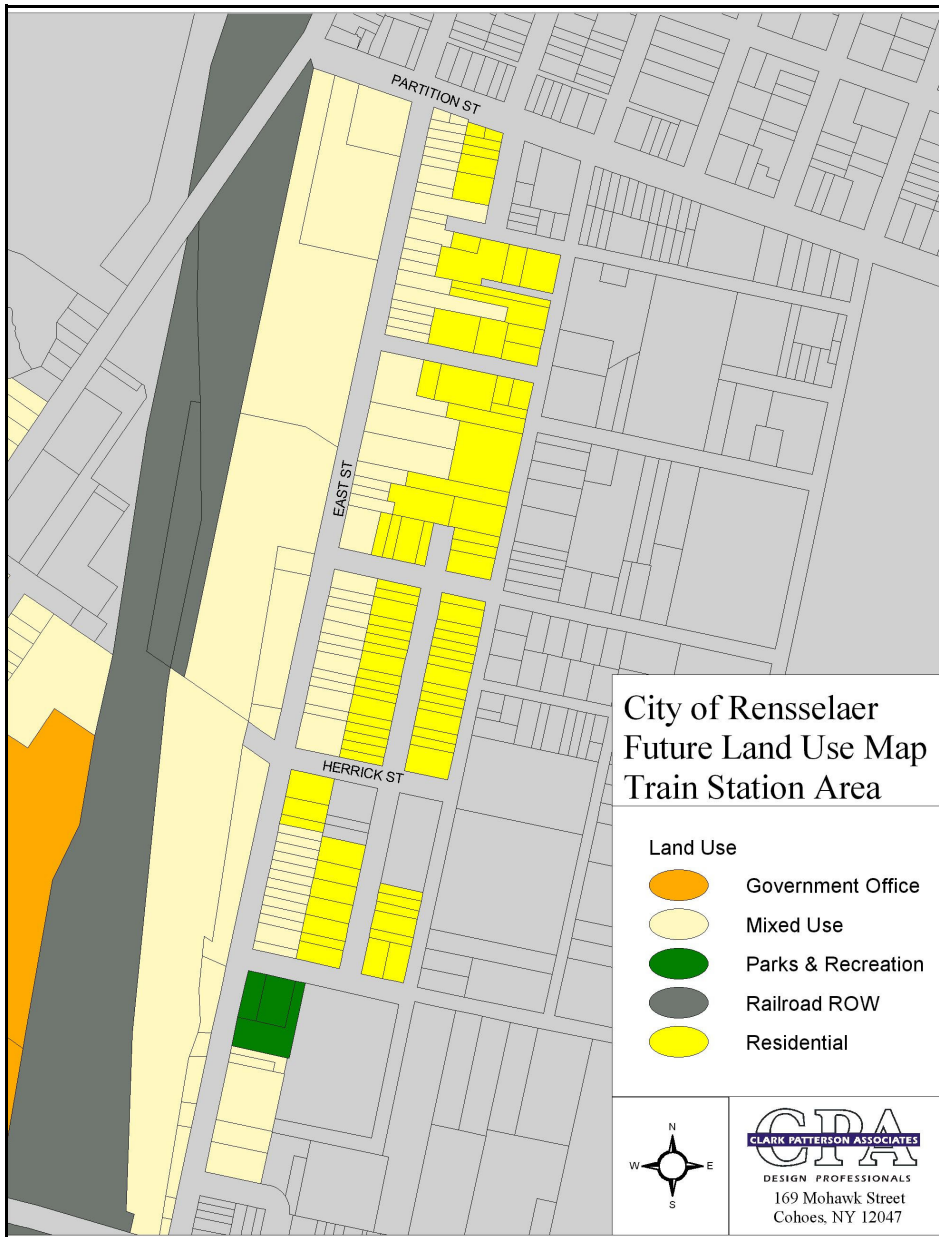


Desired New Housing Styles



Desired Commercial Design Elements





## Recommendations

The Train Station Area is seen as the future inter-modal hub for the Capital District. Therefore, land use and zoning regulations should allow for a mix of transit-oriented uses including retail, services and accommodations, offices, and residential. At the same time, the Train Station Area transitions into a long standing residential neighborhood to the east of East Street. For this reason, the properties directly bordering East Street should be mixed use (beige) in nature in order to support existing uses as well as provide a new neighborhood center. The residential neighborhoods (yellow) behind East Street should be retained and enhanced with new housing options. A mix of townhomes, condos and small lot single family homes are seen as appropriate for this area. Ultimately, the Train Station Area of the City will have a direct and identifiable link to the Hudson Waterfront via Herrick Street. This link should be enhanced visually, through the use of consistent design and landscape elements, in addition to wayfinding signage. Significant land use changes on Broadway and the waterfront will be required to realize the full potential of the Train Station area as well as the CBD.

## Preferred Development Survey Results



Desired Scale for East Street



Desired Residential/Retail Mixed Use



Desired Transit Oriented Mixed Use

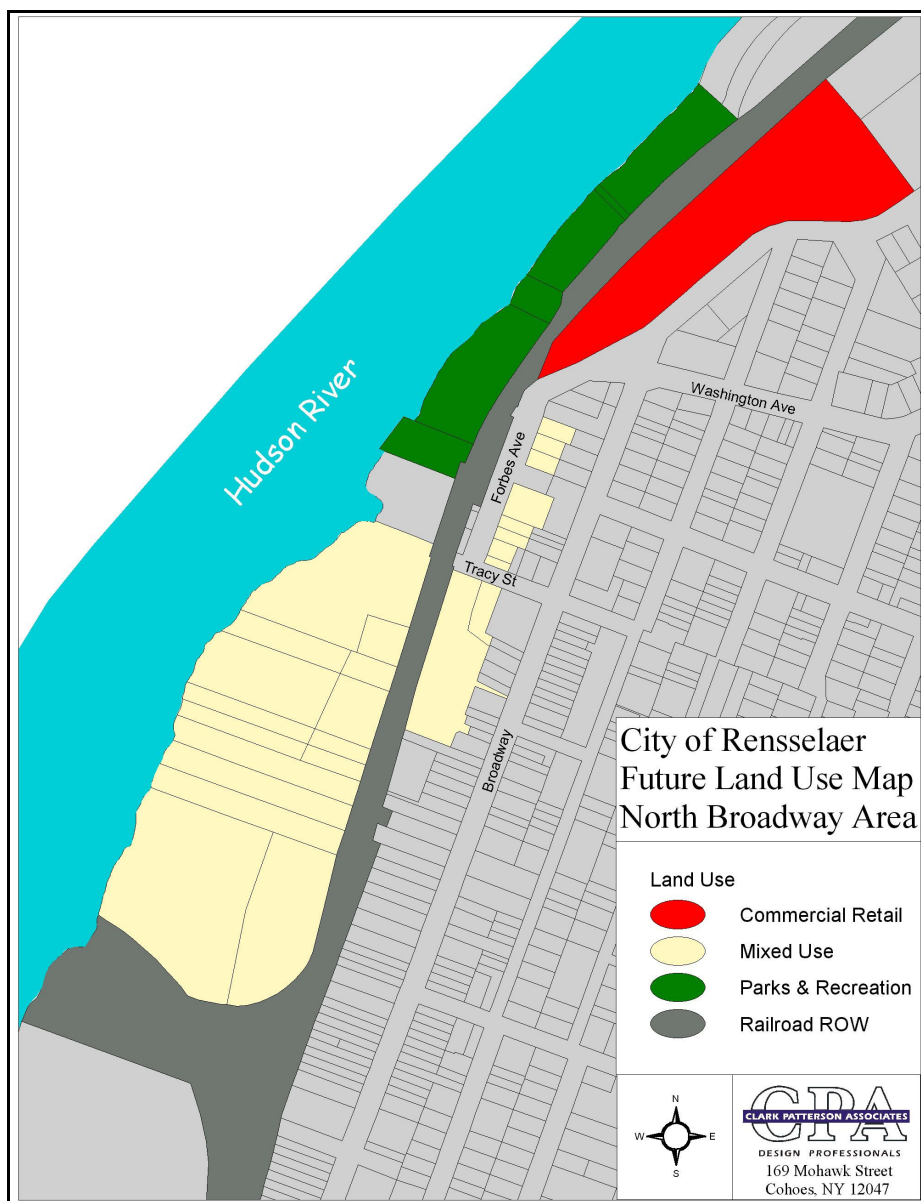


Desired Multi-Family Residential



Desired Single Family Residential





## Recommendations

The North Broadway/Bath Neighborhood Area is very unique and well positioned to take full advantage of the Hudson River waterfront. This area can build upon the existing recreational opportunities provided by the City Boat Launch by extending the waterfront recreation area to the north (green). In addition, this area is compact and retains many of the urban elements required to function as a neighborhood center. Significant acreage in this area is currently vacant and well suited for development as a mixed use (beige) extension to the existing neighborhood. Potential uses may include new residential, office, recreation related retail and possibly a small hotel. The Barnett Mills complex (red) will need significant investment for re-use. However, the structure has excellent potential to function as a mixed commercial use building that may include small offices, artisan studios, light manufacturing, such as small scale machine shops, and possibly a historic interpretive center for the City or region.

## Preferred Development Survey Results



Desirable design elements for mill redevelopment.



Desirable elements for entry signage to Bath neighborhood.



Desirable scale and variation of development in the Bath neighborhood.



The Bath Neighborhood is seen as a possible area for events and festivals associated with the heritage of the region.

The Design Guidelines below were developed based upon the input provided by the public workshop participants. They are provided specifically for mixed use and commercial areas in the Central Business District (CBD), the Train Station Area, and the North Broadway/Bath Neighborhood. City officials should make this guideline available to all developers meeting the above mentioned criteria to ensure consistency with the Vision of this Plan.

### I. Building Scale & Location

- a. New construction should have zero set-back from the street right-of-way or sidewalk when appropriate and consistent with neighboring structures. Relief from this provision may be provided for pedestrian amenities such as recessed entries or chamfered corners.
- b. New construction in the CBD and North Broadway/Bath Neighborhoods should be at least two stories or greater in height and no greater than five stories. Ideally, the height and appearance of new structures should be consistent or compliment adjacent structures except in instances where neighboring properties are not consistent with the vision of the Downtown Redevelopment Plan. Corner buildings may be taller in height due to prominent location in the district.
- c. New Construction in the Train Station Area should be at least three stories and no greater than five stories in height.
- d. New construction should extend to both side property lines except in the case when a pedestrian connection is provided to access rear parking lots.
- e. New construction or remodeling should incorporate roof lines consistent or complimentary to neighboring structures. Cornices at the top of buildings are encouraged.
- f. Primary entrances should be located on the front of the building. A secondary entrance may be provided to the rear of a structure when off-street parking is present.
- g. All sides of the building should be architecturally consistent (i.e . building materials, style, etc.) with the façade of the building

### II. Facades

- a. Building façades should reflect the turn of the century style of the City with expressed desire to maintain the Dutch heritage of the City.
- b. The pedestrian zone (2' to 10' above the sidewalk) should have a minimum of 70% clear glass.
- c. All visibly exposed sides of a new structure should have an articulated base course and cornice. The Base course should align with the sill level of the first story.
- d. The pedestrian zone should not be obscured to allow visual access to the interior of the building. Displays that do not completely obstruct visual access shall be permitted.
- e. A minimum of 35% of the façade for the upper floors should incorporate glass openings.
- f. Existing windows should not removed or changed in size unless the proposed change is part of an effort to restore the original appearance of the building.. Replacement windows should be consistent with the traditional a
- g. No external security devices (coiling shutters, accordion gates, etc) should be utilized. Alternative security systems such as lighting,, alarms, and interior barriers are to be encouraged when necessary.

### III. Materials

- a. All new construction or remodeling should utilize materials such as brick, stone, wood clapboard, fiber cement or compressed hardwood siding. Alternative materials such as vinyl siding or stainless steel are not encouraged. Larger scale materials should be limited to the rear or side of the building when visibility will be limited..
- b. Brick selected for new construction or renovation should respect the color and style of representative surrounding structures when applicable..
- c. All wood or simulated wood surfaces should be finished using either stain or paint.

### IV. Signage

- a. Signage must be located in a manner that creates a pedestrian friendly atmosphere. Methods to be encouraged are: attached to the façade of the building,, painted on the interior of the first floor façade glass, hanging signs suspended above the sidewalk, or placement on an awning.
- b. The size and location of the signs should respect the architectural elements of the building.
- c. Signs painted on the interior of storefront windows should not obstruct visual access to the interior of the building.
- d. Temporary signs should be designed and placed in a manner that does not obscure the visual access to the building.

### V. Parking

- a. Off-street parking should be placed behind or to the side of the building.
- b. Side parking should be buffered from the sidewalk or roadway by utilizing a combination of brick and wrought iron fencing (no greater than five feet in height) and landscaping. Fencing should be solid for no more than three feet from the sidewalk level.

### VI. Entrances, Awnings and Doors

- a. Multi-pane glass should be used to break up larger windows when appropriate
- b. Awnings are allowable and should be consistent with shape of the window that they are located over. For example, an arched awning can only be placed over an arched window and a flat topped arch should be used over a straight window.
- c. Awnings should have a triangular or curved profile.
- d. Awnings may not be backlit.
- e. Awning colors and materials should be consistent with the color scheme of the structure and compliment the overall appearance of the urban area.. Bright colors and materials should not be allowed.
- f. Doors should allow visual access to the interior of the building. If the door is solid, it should be painted or stained to accent the building.
- g. The primary entrance of the structure should be clearly identifiable and consistent with the architectural style of the structure.

### VII. Colors

- a. The City recommends exterior colors be consistent with the color palette developed by The Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities. This palette is available for review at the City offices or can be obtained at <http://www.spnea.org/>.

### VIII. Enforcement

- a. The City Planning Board shall conduct a consistency review of the modifications to existing or new structures within the areas identified above.
- b. In order to complete the review, a color rendering is required by applicants prior to approving any new structure or modifications of the exterior of the building.
- c. The City Code Enforcement Officer will be responsible for enforcing the conditions identified by the City Planning Board for site plan and building permit approval.



## C H A P T E R 2

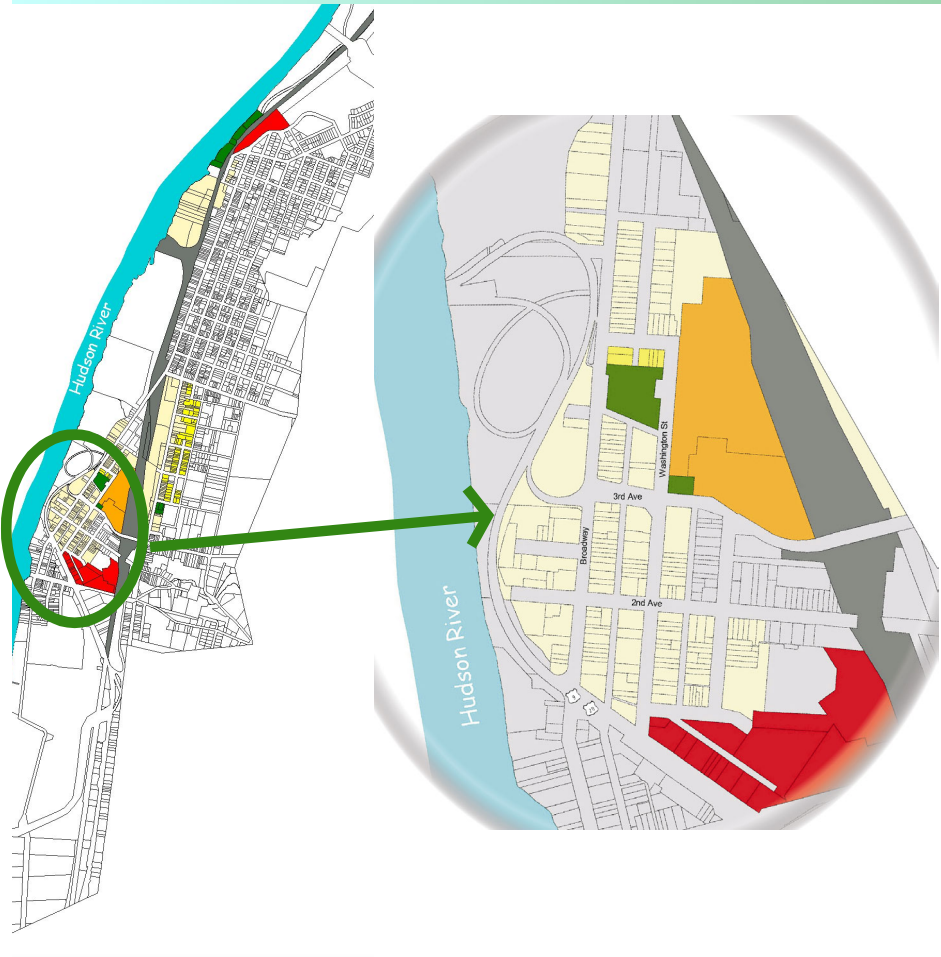
### S e c t i o n 3





# The Central Business District

## Promoting the Vision



The Central Business District (CBD) will be the City's core area, home to a mix of uses including residential, commercial, civic, and parks/recreation. The City will maintain the pedestrian friendly scale of the CBD and enhance the appearance and functionality of all public spaces. Private land owners will be encouraged, and rewarded through incentives when appropriate, to cooperatively implement the community's vision for redevelopment.

The CBD retains many of its architecturally significant structures, creating a sense of history and place. The majority of these structures should be retained, especially at key intersection locations. Other properties that have little or no architectural significance and/or are in a severe state of disrepair, should be considered prime locations for infill redevelopment.

Central Business District Use Matrix				
Land Use Area	Mixed Use	Commercial	Govern-ment/Office	Residential
Residential	☑			☑
First Floor	☑			☑
Above Ground Floor	☑			☑
Retail/Services	☑	☑		
Offices/Institutional	☑	☑	☑	
Light Manufacturing	☑	☑		
Warehouse	☑	☑	☑	

Uses with a ☑ are viewed as appropriate for the land use area.



# The Central Business District

## *Catalyst Projects*

Catalyst Projects are essential redevelopment projects that, when initiated, tend to spur (catalyze) other projects at the public and private level. In the Central Business District (CBD), many of the catalyst projects are administrative and organizational in nature, requiring limited capital investments. While downtown redevelopment should be pursued citywide, the CBD is viewed as an area that can dramatically improve with little investment or time, acting in the long run as a catalyst for the entire City. The following projects should be a top priority for the City as the redevelopment process progresses.

### **1. Main Street Program**

The City of Rensselaer's CBD requires an organized effort for revitalization. The Main Street Program provides a time tested format that has proven successful across the United States. The Program is based on four simple principles: Organization, Promotion, Design and Economic Restructuring. Typically, a community will develop a Main Street Program as a 501c3 and begin with a volunteer board of administrators. The 501c3 designation will, among other things, allow the organization to accept donations and obtain grants, purchase property, pool resources and develop a common voice and image for promotional efforts. As the program advances, it will become necessary to hire a person to manage the Main Street Program. However, it is highly dependant on dedicated volunteers for success. Funding for the Main Street program comes in the form of donations, membership dues, and various fund raising events. In some instances, municipal and political financial support is provided for the first five years. More details, training opportunities and example success stories can be found at [www.mainstreet.org](http://www.mainstreet.org).

### **2. Broadway Corridor Redevelopment Program - Phase One - \$4,500,000**

The Broadway Corridor is the primary north/south route in the City of Rensselaer. At the same time, it functions as the City's "Main Street." Therefore, it plays an integral role in the CBD's revitalization. Investments in the functionality and appearance of the corridor will achieve many goals outlined in this plan and create needed revitalization. This sense of progression is essential to attracting private investment to the CBD. Moreover, the Broadway Corridor Redevelopment Program will promote a sense of place through common urban design elements such as period lighting, common sidewalk and crosswalk materials, street trees, and signage. This project should include all sewer, water and stormwater infrastructure replacement.

### **3. Tree and Landscaping Program - \$5,000 Annually**

The Broadway Corridor Redevelopment Program will install new trees primarily on Broadway. The remainder of the CBD will need to install trees in order to create an overall sense of place and restore the City's urban forest. Bare root planting programs are becoming popular in many City's, with tree costs ranging between \$150 and \$250 each. The City, residents and merchants will need to work together to ensure the trees are watered regularly. In addition to trees, the City should start a landscaping/gardening program that allows merchants or residents to "adopt a planter" in the CBD. The City should provide planters and soil to ensure consistency throughout the CBD.

### **4. Building Rehabilitation and Façade Improvements Program - \$30,000 Annually**

In order to spur private investments in existing structures, the City should develop a Building Rehabilitation and Façade Improvements Program fund. The City will need to identify and prioritize key structures for redevelopment. Low or no interest loans should be provided to key properties, starting with the premiere structures first. Grants of up to \$5,000 can be provided in unique instances for structures that are essential to the overall redevelopment efforts.

# Central Business District

## *The Central Business District Redevelopment Plan*



The City of Rensselaer has identified a program for central business district revitalization based upon public input, market forces and existing conditions. The conceptual plan above provides an overall detail for the Central Business District Study Area. Pages 28 to 33 provide detailed concept plans for areas of specific interest identified during the public workshop.

**Timeline:** 1-6 Years

**Responsibility:** Public and Private

**Involved Entities:** The City of Rensselaer Planning Department, Rensselaer County Department of Economic Development and Planning, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYS DEC), New York State Department of Transportation (NYS DOT)

**Funding Opportunities:** NYS Environmental Protection Fund, Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), New York State Small Cities Program, New York State Clean Water/Clean Air Bond Act, NYS DOS Waterfront Rediscovery Program, Transportation Improvements Program (TIP), NYS Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF), Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF)



# Central Business District

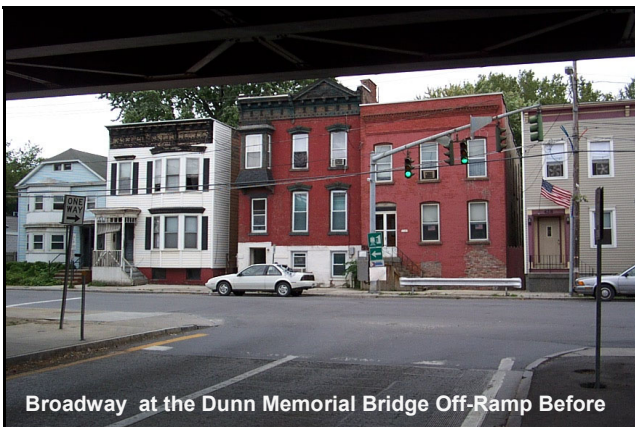
## The Broadway Corridor - Phase One



Broadway Looking South Before



Broadway Looking South After



Broadway at the Dunn Memorial Bridge Off-Ramp Before



Broadway at the Dunn Memorial Bridge Off-Ramp After

The Broadway Corridor is the primary north/south route in the City of Rensselaer making it one of the primary conduits of automobile and pedestrian traffic. The corridor, in its current condition, appears deteriorated and lacks a sense of cohesion in terms of landscape, design and architecture.

Aesthetic and functional improvements to the Broadway Corridor will play an integral role in the implementation of the Downtown Redevelopment Plan. In its current condition, the corridor is not an attractive place to invest in property, spend time shopping, or take a walk. Moreover, Broadway creates a negative perception of the City that conditions residents and visitors to “avoid” spending time downtown.

Phase One of the Broadway Corridor Program extends from the intersection of Routes 9 and 20 north to the beginning of the Broadway overpass. This segment will require a significant overhaul in order to change perceptions and spur private investments. The following components should be evaluated, replaced or restored:

1. Sewer, Water Stormwater Infrastructure
2. Sidewalks and Crosswalks
3. Street Lighting
4. Street Trees
5. Pavement and Curbing
6. Wayfinding Signage
7. Gateway Enhancements
8. Traffic Management Infrastructure (Signals, Signal Poles, etc.).

### Phase One Timeline:

2003-2005

### Cost in 2003:

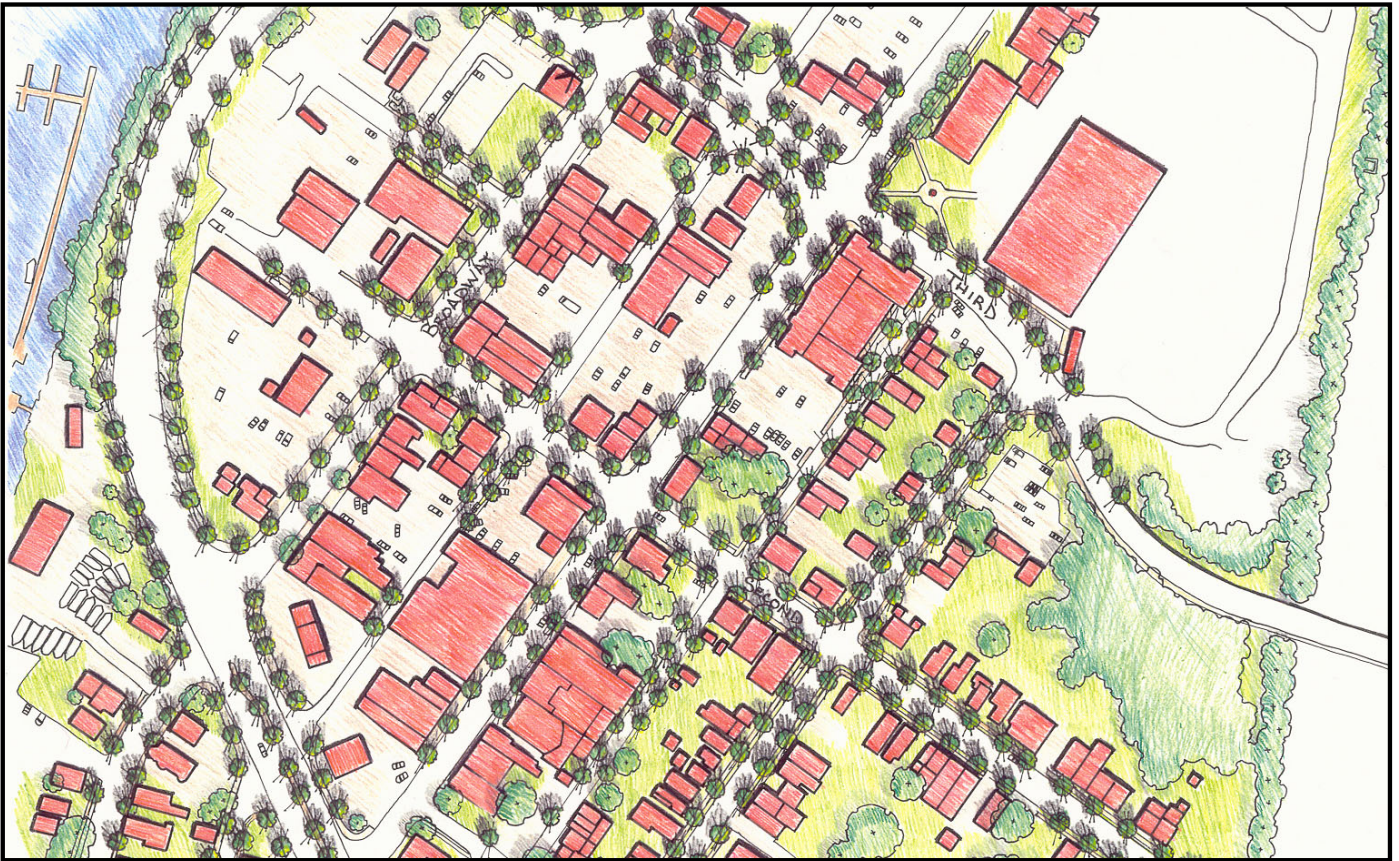
\$4,500,000\*

### Funding Options:

NYS EPF/TIP/NYS/CWSRF/DWSRF/CITY

\* Based on NYS DOT unit cost pricing. Includes design, legal and contingency.





Restoring the CBD's urban forest will improve pedestrian comfort, enhance overall appearance and develop a sense of place. Street trees play a critical role in urban areas, providing shade and windbreak for pedestrian areas. In addition, trees provide a level of safety by increasing visual friction, which encourages motorists to drive more cautiously or slowly through an area. Trees would also add a natural feel to the CBD, breaking up the hardscape (pavement, concrete and buildings) creating a more enjoyable atmosphere to spend time.

A tree planting program should be funded on an annual basis for areas of the CBD that will not be planted by the Broadway Corridor Redevelopment Program. There are many options for tree planting programs available to the City of Rensselaer. Bare root trees have become popular over the past five years and have proven successful in cities such as Ithaca and Rochester, New York. Successful tree planting programs require watering on a regular basis (e.g. daily) . Appropriate tree types for Rensselaer may include a mix of Honey Locust, Red Maple, Northern Hackberry and Chinese Elm.

**Timeline:**

Continuous

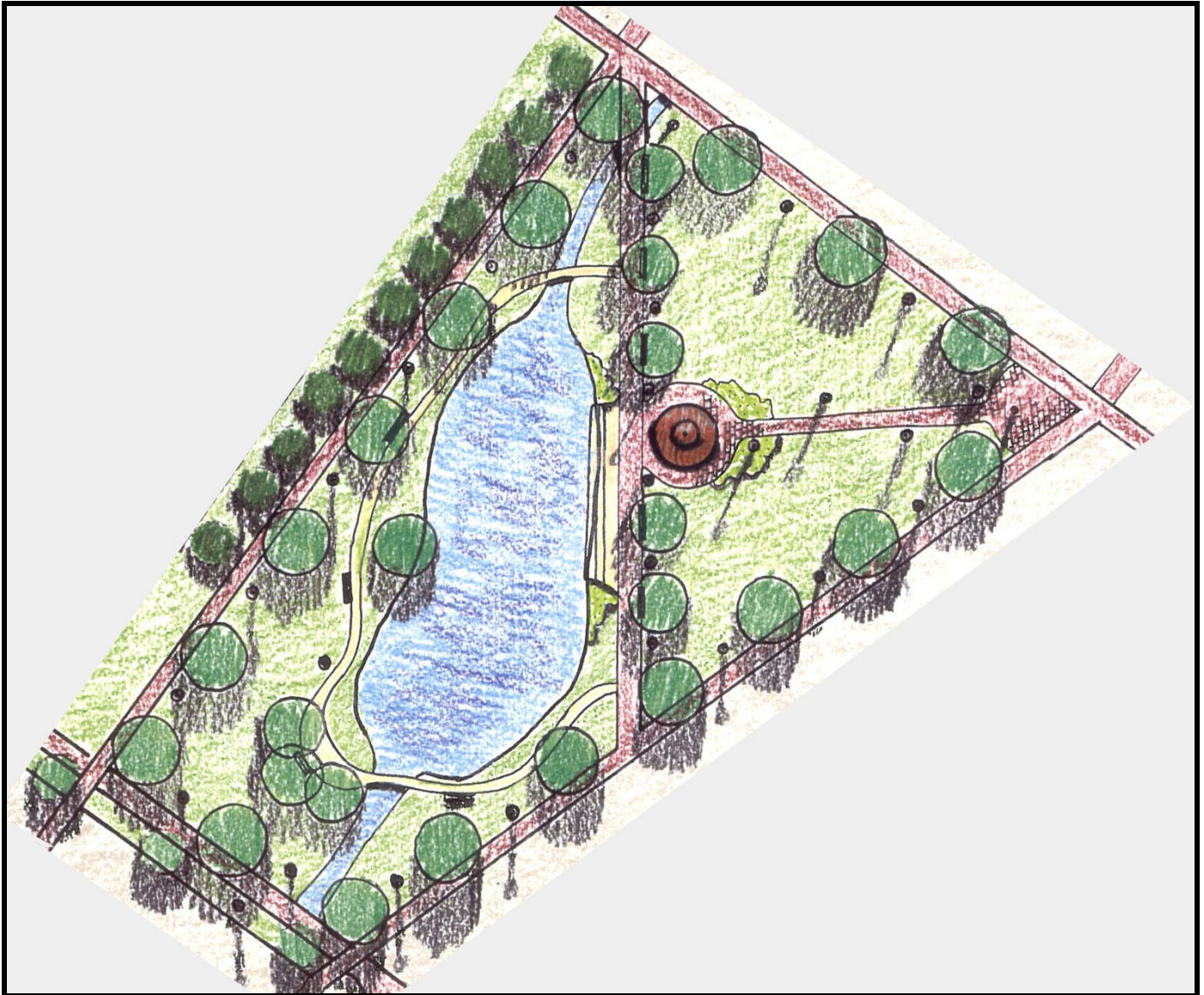
**Cost:**

\$5,000 Annually



## Central Business District

### Mill Creek Park Plan



Mill Creek Park is an excellent opportunity for the City to develop a passive park in its CBD. The property is currently privately owned and poorly maintained. The City should either purchase the property or encourage the landowner to work with the City to improve the appearance of the property and create a passive park for employees and residents to enjoy.

**Timeline:**

2004-2005

**Cost:**

\$100,000 - \$120,000\*

**Responsibility:**

City, Private or Combination

*\*Includes design and contingency. Does not include shoreline stabilization or water aeration/agitation.*

Residential Development Plan - Condominiums and Apartments



The City of Rensselaer's housing stock in the CBD is older and, in some instances, requires significant restoration and maintenance. While historic homes are an enjoyable and necessary component of the urban fabric, there is always a need for newer housing options for those who do not want the challenge of an older home. The City will need to generate an inventory of vacant properties and dilapidated structures and determine, where possible, the appropriate type and scale of infill housing.

Providing new and attractive housing that is centrally located within the CBD will help to establish the critical population mass required to support local businesses and the train station. Housing in this area will be attractive to young professionals and empty-nesters. A mix of market rate townhomes, condos and apartments is appropriate for the CBD. The concept above provides an illustrative example of a possible market rate condominium complex that would be attractive to buyers interested in downsizing, or housing with low maintenance requirements. A townhouse component, shown in the background, could be attractive to first time buyers and young professionals that need additional space without the maintenance requirements associated with a detached single family home. As shown in this concept, respecting the scale and architectural detail of the neighborhood is essential to creating an enjoyable place to live and restoring the urban fabric of the City.

**Timeline:**

2004 - 2006

**Responsibility:**

City and Private Developer

**Residential Development**

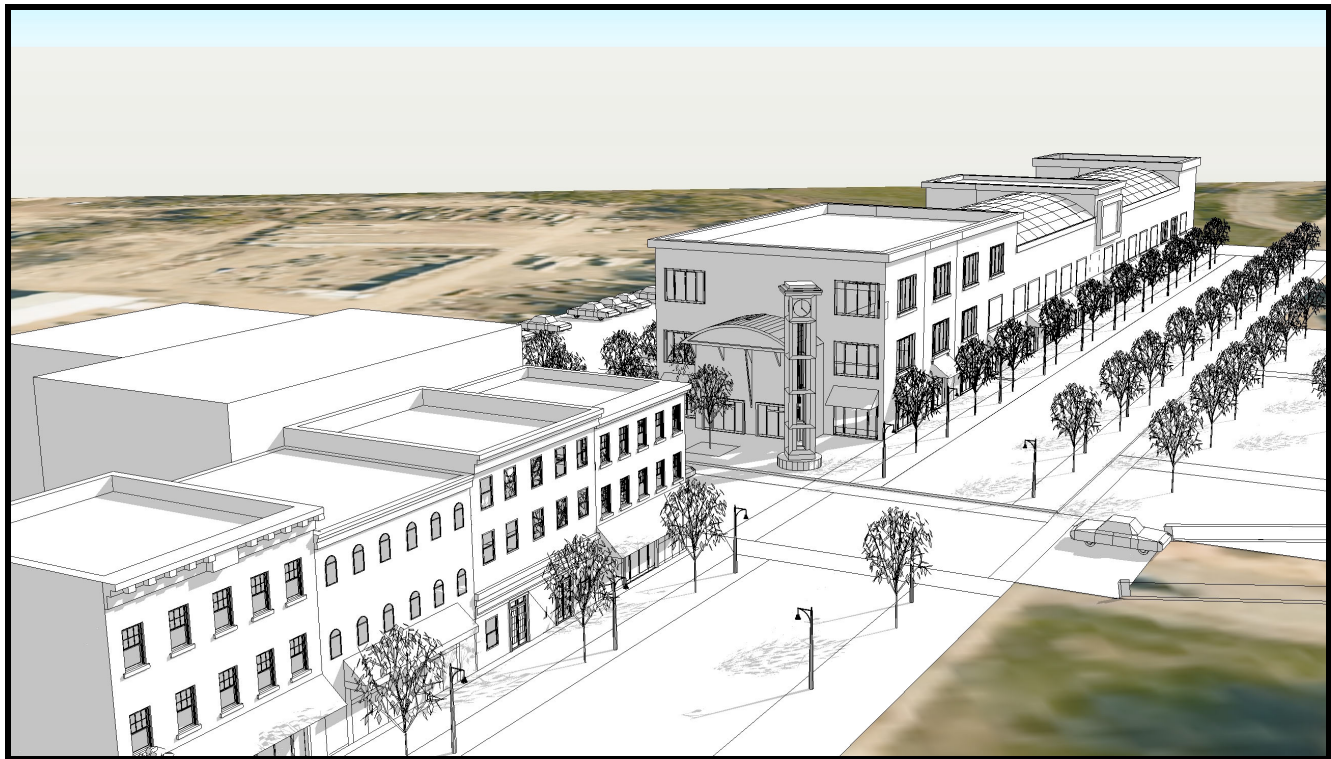
16 Apartments  
12 Townhomes  
30 – 36 Condos

Rental Range:	\$700-\$800/Month
Purchase Range in 2003:	\$150,000-\$200,000
Purchase Price:	\$100,000 - \$120,000



# Central Business District

## *Beverwyk Commons - Mixed Use Development*



The City of Rensselaer is well positioned to attract future economic development on Broadway. The opportunities generated by the new train station, future waterfront trail and proximity to Albany will come together and, with the vision of this Plan, begin to foster a business friendly climate. The Herrick and Broadway intersection is an excellent location for a mixed use redevelopment project that infuses new residential and commercial opportunities into the City. Retail and service uses will be frequented by Train Station patrons, waterfront users, residents and the daily worker population. Housing units will be attractive to young professionals, possibly two-income couples, who utilize the train for commuting to work, are employed by the State or at the SUNY East campus. Moreover, they could be marketed to the new high tech businesses moving into the region as corporate apartments. The big picture benefit of this project is that it sets the stage for continuing development onto the waterfront as the next phase. Herrick Street will continue west and this project can phase into a premiere waterfront development.

**Timeline:**

2005 - 2007

**Responsibility:**

City and Private Developer

**Residential Development**

<i>28 Apartments</i>	<i>Rental Range:</i>	<i>\$700-\$900/Month</i>
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**Commercial Development**

<i>40,000 Square Feet Retail and Office</i>	<i>Rental Range:</i>	<i>\$12 –\$14 SqFt.</i>
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### *Future City Hall*



City Hall is the primary civic structure of most cities and should be a source of pride for the community. While this is not a high priority project today, in the long run City Hall will need to be relocated to allow for future development on Broadway and the Hudson Waterfront. Therefore, as part of this plan, a conceptual relocation plan was generated to help City officials consider what a future move could look like.

The proposed location for this concept, at the intersection of Broadway and Third Avenue, is centrally located, accessible to the majority of the population and close to other civic uses. While this location is not set in stone, it does provide the City with a good example of how relocating City Hall could work in Rensselaer. In addition to providing guidance on the future location, the concept also illustrates the need for City Hall's building and grounds to be well-designed.

### **Project Timeline:**

2006-2007

### **Cost in 2003:**

\$2,500,000\*

*\*Estimate is based on projects of similar size in similar cities and villages and includes design and contingency.*

# Central Business District

## *Future City Hall*



Enlarged view of conceptual plan described on the previous page.

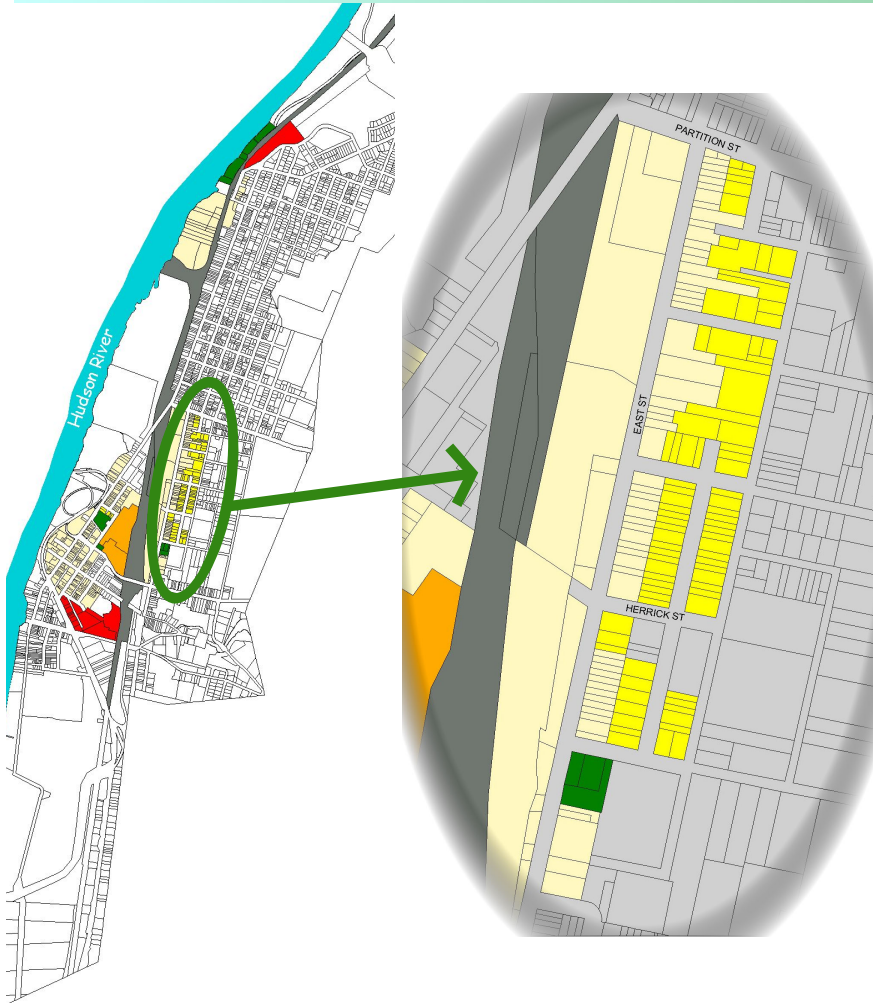
## The Train Station Area

### Promoting the Vision

One of Rensselaer's primary goals is to become the Capital District's multi-modal hub. The City will promote and encourage transit related uses within this area that also serve to create a new neighborhood center. This transition will require the City to strike a careful balance between preserving key neighborhood scale elements while allowing for larger, mixed-use developments.

The new transit oriented neighborhood center can be achieved by locating the most intense uses and highest density developments closest to the Train Station Area (East Street). The density and scale of development should decrease gradually eastward, providing a steady transition to nearby residential areas. For example, properties on East Street would be the most intensely developed (i.e., three- to five-story buildings), while Elm and Laurence Streets should be less dense (i.e., two- to three-story buildings).

Because Rensselaer is already overburdened by transit related infrastructure which include the Amtrak Repair Facility, railroad right of ways, and state and federal highways, utilizing existing rights-of-way for future infrastructure is critical. This does not include bicycle and pedestrian linkages. The goal is to retain and mend the City's urban fabric, enhance its pedestrian friendly design and strengthen connections between the train station, waterfront and CBD.



Train Station Use Matrix			
Land Use Area	Mixed Use	Residential	Train Station ROW
Residential	☑	☑	
First Floor	☑	☑	
Above Ground Floor	☑	☑	
Retail/Services	☑		
Offices/Institutional	☑		
Light Manufacturing	☑		
Warehouse	Not as primary use		
Transit Related Uses	☑		☑

Uses with a ☑ are viewed as appropriate for the land use area.



# The Train Station Area

## *Catalyst Projects*

Catalyst Projects are essential redevelopment projects that, when initiated, tend to spur (catalyze) other projects at the public and private level. In the early stages, the Train Station Area will require a mix of low and high cost projects in the both public and private sectors to spur economic development. The following projects should be a top priority for the City as the redevelopment process progresses.

### **1. Organization of a Local Development Corporation**

A local development corporation (LDC) is an effective tool for organizing and managing urban redevelopment efforts. Typically an LDC functions as a 501c3 not-for-profit with a very specific set of roles and responsibilities. In the case of Rensselaer, the LDC should be involved in identifying and acquiring key properties for redevelopment, making low interest loans and grants to prospective businesses and managing day-to-day economic development issues. Additional information about LDC's can be found in Section 1411 NYS Not-For-Profit Corporation Law.

### **2. The East Street Redevelopment Program- \$5,750,000**

The East Street Redevelopment Program, as seen on page 39 to 43, will have a dramatic impact on the appearance and function of the Corridor and increase property values over the course of time. This project's primary goal is to improve access, enhance pedestrian safety, create a sense of place and attract private investments.

### **3. Reuse of the Hart Hose Fire Company as a Restaurant**

The Hart Hose Fire Company building currently sits vacant on East Street. This unique piece of Rensselaer's history has excellent potential for reuse as a small café or bistro. The successful redevelopment of this building will spur future investments in and around the Train Station Area.

### **4. Restoration of Walter S. Pratt Park - \$150,000**

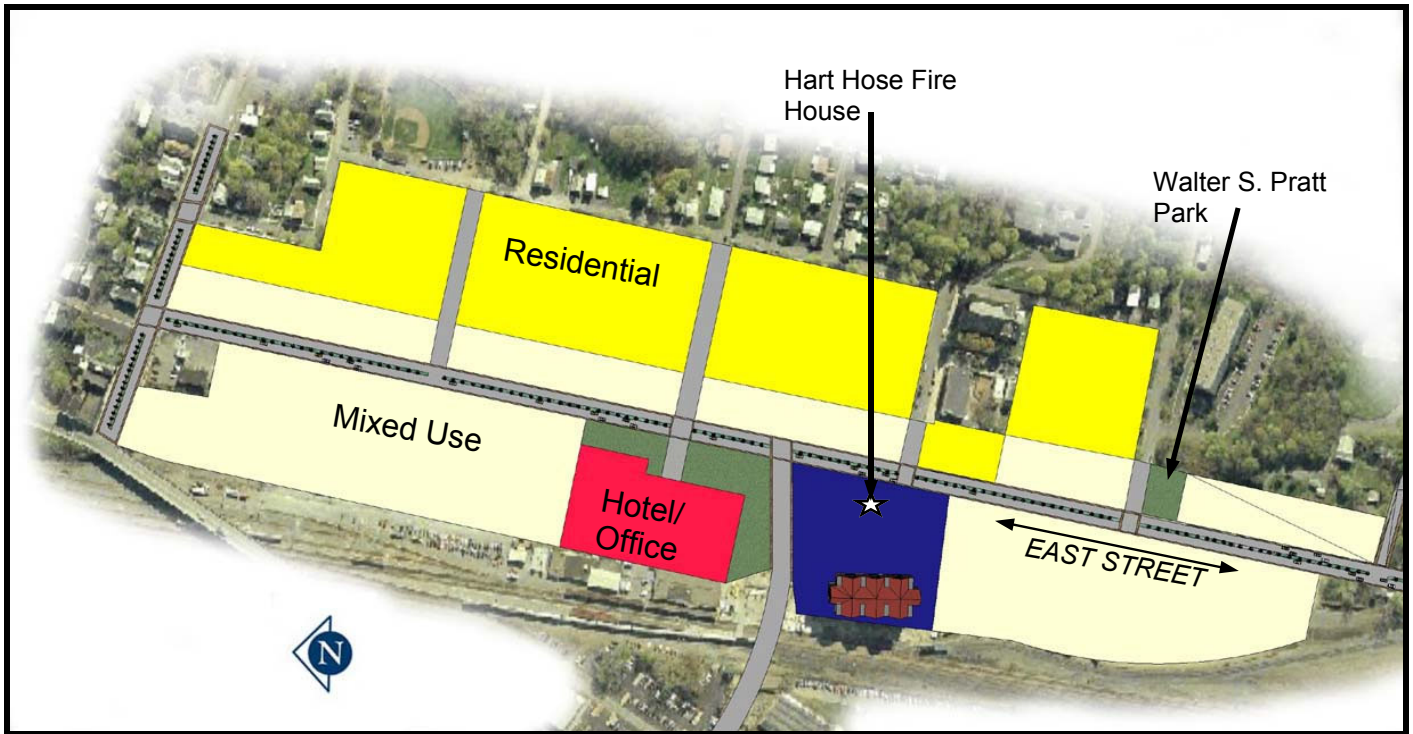
The restoration of Walter S. Pratt Park will provide needed public recreation space in the East Street neighborhood. The Park can provide passive and active recreation opportunities with minimal investment. The existing wading pool can be restored and/or rebuilt to function as a fountain.

### **5. Hotel and Office Complex**

Redevelopment in the Train Station area will require an anchor project that may include a hotel and small office center. This project will serve to increase the feasibility of future development efforts in the focus area.

# The Train Station Area

## *The Train Station Area Redevelopment Plan*



The redevelopment plan for the Train Station Area is based upon public input, current and future market demand and good urban design principles. The conceptual plan above provides an overall detail for the Train Station Area. Pages 38 to 44 provide detailed concept plans for areas of specific interest identified during the public workshop.

**Timeline:** 2-15 Years

**Responsibility:** Public and Private

**Involved Entities:** The City of Rensselaer Planning Department, Rensselaer County Department of Economic Development and Planning, NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (NYS DEC), (NYS OGS), New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (NYS SHPO), CSX, Amtrak, CDTA.

**Funding Opportunities:** NYS Environmental Protection Fund, Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), New York State Small Cities Program, New York State Clean Water/Clean Air Bond Act, Transportation Improvements Program (TIP), Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF), Drinking Water State Revolving Fund DWSRF).



# The Train Station Area

## East Street Redevelopment Plan



East Street bounds the Train Station Area on the east side and, therefore, plays an integral role in the overall function and appearance of this focus area. As many residents mentioned during the public workshop, the current condition of East Street does not encourage private investment and creates a negative perception of Rensselaer for those who use the station.

In order to facilitate future development in the Train Station Area, a significant public investment in the East Street corridor will be required. The installation of a boulevard, as seen to the left, is one option that will improve the appearance of the corridor. Requiring limited land acquisition due to the existing right-of-way width, the boulevard design should be able to handle existing and projected traffic requirements. Moreover, this type of improvement will enhance the area, establish a gateway to the City and increase property values and private interest throughout the neighborhood.

### Timeline:

2005-2007

### Cost in 2003:

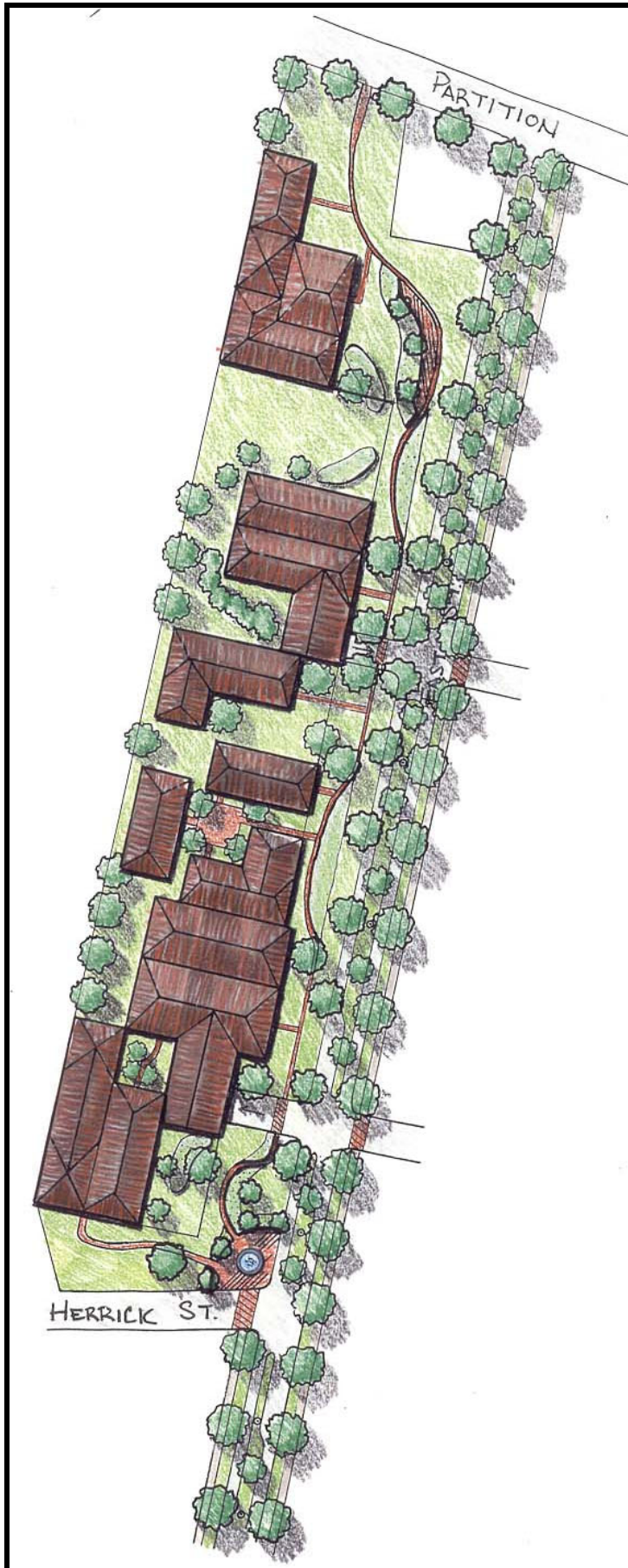
\$5,450,000\*

### Funding Options:

NYS EPF/TIP/NYS SMALL CITIES/  
CWSRF/DWSRF/CITY

*\* Estimates are based on NYS DOT unit cost pricing. Price includes design, legal and contingency.*

## The Train Station Area



### *Redevelopment Concept One - Business Park*

The Train Station Area Redevelopment Concepts one through four, exhibited on pages 39 through 43, will provide an overview of the evolution of ideas and designs for the revitalization of the study area. One of the first concepts developed for the Train Station Area was the construction of a phased office/business park that could be enhanced by the proximity to the Train Station. Many participants in the planning process felt that proximity to the train station would increase the demand for office space. In theory, this area could be attractive for small businesses or satellite offices that need to be in close proximity to the Capital District and have convenient access to New York City or Boston.

The Train Station Area has exceptional potential and requires a concerted effort to market and promote it for future development. The City will need to organize a Local Development Corporation (LDC) to help coordinate any large scale development effort. One of the primary tasks for the LDC would be to consolidate existing parcels for development and work with CDTA and Amtrak to relocate parking to other areas in the City or construct on-site parking structures.

After further review, it was determined that existing market conditions do not support significant office development. Therefore, this concept is at a minimum, 10 to 12 years out on the horizon. In addition, an office-only concept would require significant parking structures. Parking garages are expensive, with an average per spot cost of \$15,000. Therefore, building heights would need to be in excess of five stories, and 90 percent occupied to finance the costs associated with the parking structure.



## The Train Station Area

### Redevelopment Concept Two - Hotel and Office Complex



Due to the feasibility concerns raised with Concept One, the Planning Committee discussed the potential of locating a hotel with conference facilities in the Train Station Area in addition to a phased business park. This would provide an anchor for the focus area, setting the stage for future development. A hotel near the Train Station would serve two primary purposes. First, the hotel will fill a needed demand for accommodations in the Capital District given the easy access to the Train Station. Second, it will make satellite office development more attractive in the focus area due to the proximity of accommodations and the availability of a small conference center.

The market in and around the City of Albany will support the development of a business class hotel with approximately 120 rooms, 100 seat conference space and a small restaurant. As part of this complex, the first phase of office development could be considered once the hotel project is complete and regularly occupied.

This concept is more feasible in the short term due to the hotel component. However, the market for office development would still be weak and would require a long-term implementation. In addition, the same parking cost issues raised in with the Phase One concept would need to be addressed.



## The Train Station Area

### *Redevelopment Concept Three - Mixed Use*



The City of Rensselaer desires a redevelopment scenario for the Train Station Area that can be started in the short-term and continued over the course of ten years. For this reason, a third concept was developed that attempts to capture several market sectors at once. This approach, known as mixed-use development, allows office, retail, services and residential components to be integrated as is typical in most urban areas. This style of development is similar to what exists in Rensselaer today and is expressed exceptionally well in the Cities of Albany and Saratoga Springs.

The hotel, the anchor of the design, would be the first component of this development plan. The subsequent phases would allow for a mix of uses to be developed over the course of time. This concept also includes infill development on the east side of the proposed East Boulevard.

Mixed-use development is beneficial for several reasons including the potential for shared parking, the availability of residents within walking distance to shops, and a more attractive and appropriate scale of development for the City of Rensselaer. Many of the uses in the East Street neighborhood will be able to cater to transit users, residents and workers. For this type of development to succeed, the City will need to invest in the East Street Corridor in the short term.



# The Train Station Area

## Redevelopment Concept Four - Mixed Use Development Scenario Two



One of the primary concerns about developing concept level plans is the feasibility of the recommendation outlined. This is the reason why each stage of the Train Station concept plan is provided in this section. One of the key issues limiting development in the Train Station area is the availability of land and landownership. The areas identified north of the Train Station are currently used for commuter parking lots to support the train station. Redevelopment Concepts One through Three require the existing parking to be moved to the south side of the Train Station as well as the construction/continuation of an underground parking structure.

Existing land ownership issues make the property south of the train station attractive for redevelopment in the short term, allowing for the hotel and a small office complex. Additional out-parcel retail and service uses with the possibly for some residential units are possible as part of this design. The key component of this area's design will be creating a sense of place as well as managing traffic on a restrictive site. The concept proposed shows the hotel in close proximity to the Train Station with an office component attached. The out-parcel development can be phased in over the course of several years. The installation of an internalized round-a-bout will allow for access to an extension of the underground parking structure as well as the surface lots located to the rear of the out-buildings. An ingress and egress point would be needed south of the site, preferably in alignment with the Third Avenue access road.

The primary concern with this design is the placement of priority development, and the anchor that will spur future development, away from the Herrick Street Bridge and the future redevelopment areas to the north. This will essentially create an island due to the perceived and actual separation created by the Train Station. Moreover, it does not fully support the desired linkages between the Train Station, CBD and future waterfront development. Ultimately, the City desires a highly accessible urban form that ties all of the key focus areas together, creating a true Downtown.



## The Train Station Area

### *Artistic Representation of Redevelopment at Full Build-Out*



The Train Station Area, which should be considered the East Boulevard Neighborhood, has the potential to be a highly attractive, walkable mixed use center for the City of Rensselaer. The vision illustrated above is based on the design criteria desired by the City and the reconstruction of East Street as a boulevard. Moreover, it displays a truly human scaled, mixed-use development with retail and services on the ground floor and residential and office space on the upper floors. Building heights are limited to four stories to frame an outdoor room that is so important to high quality urban areas.

The City will need to revise existing zoning to accomplish any of the concept plans outlined in this section. Moreover, design guidelines or standards will need to become an integral part of the City's site plan approval process. Fast track permitting and incentive programs should be allowed to encourage developers to support the desired build-out of the City. This vision is achievable if the City makes significant strides to ensure high quality design and a developer- friendly attitude.



## The Train Station Area

### *Commuter Parking and Transportation System*



The redevelopment concept plans provided will all require significant parking management plans in order to adequately service the Train Station Area. A commuter parking lot system may be feasible to help mitigate the displaced surface lot spots. The concept provided depends on an internalized transit network that utilizes the existing railroad rights-of-way. The use of high efficiency buses or ultra light rail travel could link the Station and commuter lots. There are two lot possible off-site lot locations that stand out. Lot A could be located on the old BASF site. Lot B could be located on the existing Amtrak Repair Facility property.

Amtrak and CDTA could encourage riders to utilize these lots in the short-term by not charging for daily use. In the long term, as demand increases, a parking fee, lower than the cost for parking in the garage, should be implemented.

The commuter transportation system outlined extends to Albany, the SUNY East Campus and the RPI Tech Park. This will create a regional mass transit network that supports the City's desire to become the Capital District's Inter-Modal hub. In addition, it increases the feasibility of future redevelopment in the Train Station Area.

## The Bath/North Broadway Area

### Promoting the Vision



The Bath/North Broadway neighborhood will be the City's first premiere waterfront neighborhood. Building on the urban form of the original Bath neighborhood, this new neighborhood center will take full advantage of the Hudson waterfront. The City will need to focus on improving linkages across the train tracks, invest in beautification efforts and promote the area to private developers.

The theme identified for this area during the public workshop was a "gaslight district." Building on the City's history, this distinctive development scenario will create a sense of place that does not currently exist.

The re-use of Barnett Mills is paramount to the success of this area. While some parts of the structure are not usable and should be demolished, a large section of the structure is well suited for redevelopment. The Bath/North Broadway neighborhood is in close proximity to Interstate 90, making the Mills an attractive place for small offices.

The City should continue to improve public waterfront access in this area by extending the existing boat launch "park" northward. Small retail uses such as non-motorized boat rentals should be allowed in the recreational area as well.

Bath/North Broadway Use Matrix			
Land Use Area	Mixed Use	Commercial	Active Recreation
Residential	☑	Not as primary use	
First Floor	☑		
Above Ground Floor	☑		
Retail/Services	☑	☑	☑
Offices/Institutional		☑	
Light Manufacturing			
Warehouse			
Water Dependant Uses	☑	☑	☑

Uses with a ☑ are viewed as appropriate for the land use area.



# The Bath/North Broadway Area

## *Catalyst Projects*

Catalyst Projects are essential redevelopment projects that, when initiated, tend to spur (catalyze) other projects at the public and private level. While not all catalyst projects are capital intensive, the Bath/North Broadway area requires significant upgrades to spur private investment. In Rensselaer, the capital investments are required to increase competitiveness with surrounding towns and cities. The following projects should be considered high priority actions in order to revitalize the Bath/North Broadway neighborhood.

### **1. Barnett Mills Re-Use Feasibility Study - \$65,000**

While there have been several studies and redevelopment concepts prepared for the Barnett Mills area, it is essential that the City have a market driven analysis to promote the area to potential developers. This study should determine the market potential for a mixed commercial and cultural use structure. An Environmental Assessment Phase One should be completed as part of the study. In addition, the study should include a structural analysis of the existing buildings to determine which areas are reusable and which should be demolished. A concept plan with traffic flow and parking should also be prepared.

### **2. Bath Neighborhood Waterfront Concept Plan - \$25,000**

The Downtown Redevelopment Plan provides a preliminary concept plan for the Bath Neighborhood waterfront as part of the overall focus area plan. However, the City should have a guiding document for the development of the waterfront to the north of the City boat launch, the waterfront trail alignment, parking and additional passive recreational use areas. This will increase competitiveness for implementation funding.

### **3. Broadway Corridor Redevelopment Program - Phase Two - \$5,000,000**

Phase Two of the Broadway Redevelopment Program is essential to the overall success of downtown redevelopment efforts. As mentioned in the CBD section, the Broadway Corridor is the primary north/south automobile and pedestrian conduit in the City of Rensselaer. This project should include all above and below ground infrastructure improvements including sewer, water, storm water management, sidewalks, curbing, pavement, trees, period lights and pedestrian amenities. The City should coordinate with CDTA to locate new bus shelters at appropriate locations.

### **4. Building Rehabilitation and Façade Improvements Program - \$25,000 Annually**

In order to spur private investments in existing structures, the City should develop a Building Rehabilitation and Façade Improvements Program fund. The City will need to identify and prioritize key structures for redevelopment. Low or no interest loans should be provided to key properties, starting with the premiere structures first. Grants of up to \$5,000 can be provided in unique instances for structures that are essential to the overall redevelopment efforts.

### **5. Bath Neighborhood Improvements Program - \$1,300,000**

In order to encourage additional private development in the Bath Neighborhood, "public space" improvements along Tracey and Forbes Streets will be required. A theme to ensure that lighting, landscaping, signage and paving materials support the gaslight village concept. Any future roadway or sidewalk development as part of a private project should conform to the City's desired appearance. All streets, sidewalks and required municipal rights-of-way should be deeded over to the City after completion. A performance bond should be provided by the developer to the City to ensure all road, sidewalk, landscaping and amenities are in conformance with regulations and standards set forth by Rensselaer.

# The Bath/North Broadway Area

## *The North Broadway/Bath Neighborhood Redevelopment Plan*



The City of Rensselaer has identified a redevelopment scenario based upon public input, market forces and existing conditions. The conceptual plan above provides an overall detail for the North Broadway/Bath Neighborhood Area. Pages 48 to 50 provide detailed concept plans for areas of specific interest identified during the public workshop.

**Timeline:** 1-7 Years

**Responsibility:** Public and Private

**Involved Entities:** The City of Rensselaer Planning Department, Rensselaer County Department of Economic Development and Planning, NYS Department of State (NYS DOS), NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (NYS DEC), New York State Office of General Services (NYS OGS), New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (NYS SHPO), Army Corps of Engineers.

**Funding Resources:** NYS Environmental Protection Fund, Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), New York State Small Cities Program, New York State Clean Water/Clean Air Bond Act, NYS DOS Waterfront Rediscovery Program, Transportation Improvements Program (TIP), NYS Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF), Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF)



# The Bath/North Broadway Area

*Bath Landing - Gaslight District*



The historic Bath Neighborhood is one of the oldest established settlements in Rensselaer County. Several significant buildings are still standing with potential for renovation. Moreover, there are opportunities to improve access to the City boat launch, enhance the area for recreation, and establish new mixed use structures that respect the architectural style and scale of the neighborhood. The concept above retains significant structures while allowing for new and complimentary infill development.

## Rehabilitation and New Development Potential

### **Residential Development**

*18 Apartments*

*16 Townhomes*

*Rental Range:*

*\$600-\$800/Month*

*Purchase Range in 2003:*

*\$150,000-\$185,000*

### **Commercial Development**

*Office Space Class B - C*

*Retail Space:*

*Potential Square Footage: 10,000 - 15,000*

*Potential Square Footage: 10,000*

## The Bath/North Broadway Area

### *The Broadway Corridor Redevelopment Program - Phase Two*



The Broadway Corridor Redevelopment Program - Phase Two will have significant impacts on the functionality and appearance of the North Broadway neighborhood. Basic public investments such as sewer, water and storm water management systems will improve the quality of life for residents and increase property values over time. Additional improvements, such as the installation of street trees, sidewalks, period lighting and bus shelters, will enhance the appearance of the corridor by providing a sense of pride and revitalization as well as increased pedestrian safety.

#### **Phase Two Timeline:**

2004-2007

#### **Cost in 2003:**

\$5,000,000\*

#### **Funding Options:**

NYS EPF/TIP/NYS/CWSRF/  
DWSRF/CITY

*\* Estimates are based on NYS DOT unit cost pricing. Cost estimate includes design, legal and contingency.*

## The Bath/North Broadway Area

### *Traffic Calming on North Broadway*



The confluence of Broadway and Washington in the City of Rensselaer is a dangerous bend that motorists tend to travel through at excessive speeds. The residents of North Broadway would like to see some level of traffic calming to increase pedestrian safety and warn motorists of the upcoming bend. A speed table, pictured above, is one example of a speed reducing technique that could be successful in this area. A speed table utilizes a slight increase in grade that would slow motorists before and through the bend. Additionally, modified surface materials help to identify pedestrian crossings. The image above is provided for educational purposes and may not represent the exact treatment used at the Broadway/ Washington bend.

**Implementation:** This concept is considered part of the Broadway Corridor Redevelopment Program and therefore will be completed as part of that project.

## **Acknowledgements**







## Acknowledgements

The City of Rensselaer would like to thank the following community members for participating in the Downtown Redevelopment Planning Process as part of the Advisory Committee:

Judy Breselor	Mike Stammel
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Charles Moore

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The City of Rensselaer Planning Board  
The City of Rensselaer City Council  
The City of Rensselaer Department of Public Works  
The City of Rensselaer Police Department  
The City of Rensselaer School District  
Rensselaer County Planning Department  
New York State Department of State  
New York State Office of General Services  
New York State Department of Transportation  
New York State Department of Environmental Conservation  
New York State Division of Youth  
Capital District Regional Planning Council  
Capital District Transportation Commission  
Capital District Transportation Authority  
The Office of Senator Joseph Bruno  
The City of Albany  
Amtrak



169 Mohawk Street  
Cohoes, New York 12203  
[www.clarkpatterson.com](http://www.clarkpatterson.com)  
1-800-274-9000



726 Second Street  
Suite 2A  
Annapolis, Maryland, 21403  
[www.thomaspoint.com](http://www.thomaspoint.com)



## **APPENDICES**

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*Citywide Existing Conditions*  
*Community Prospectus & Market-Based Development Strategy*  
*CBD Building Conditions Analysis*  
*SEQRA*  
*Riverfront Park Redevelopment Plan*





## **APPENDIX A**

*Citywide Existing Conditions*



# Appendix A

## Inventory and Analysis

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**Location (Figure 1)**

The City of Rensselaer is located on the eastern side of the Hudson River in Rensselaer County, New York (Figure 1). The City of Albany lies directly west and the Towns of North and East Greenbush lie east of the City. The City of Rensselaer is accessible from the east and west via Interstate 90 and US 9 & 20 which run through the northern and southern portions of the City, respectively. Interstates 87 and 787, located in Albany County, link Rensselaer to western and northern New York.

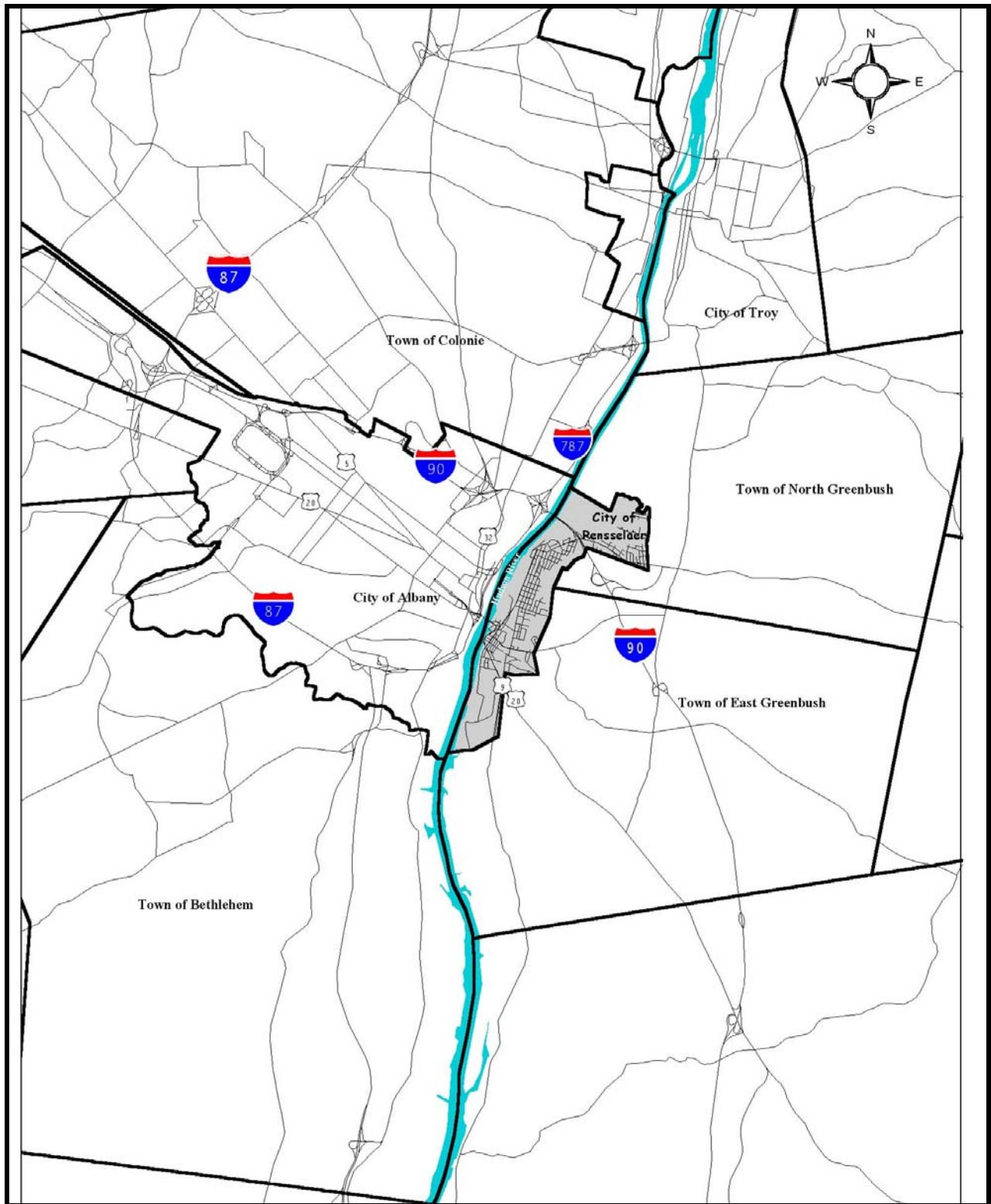


Figure 1

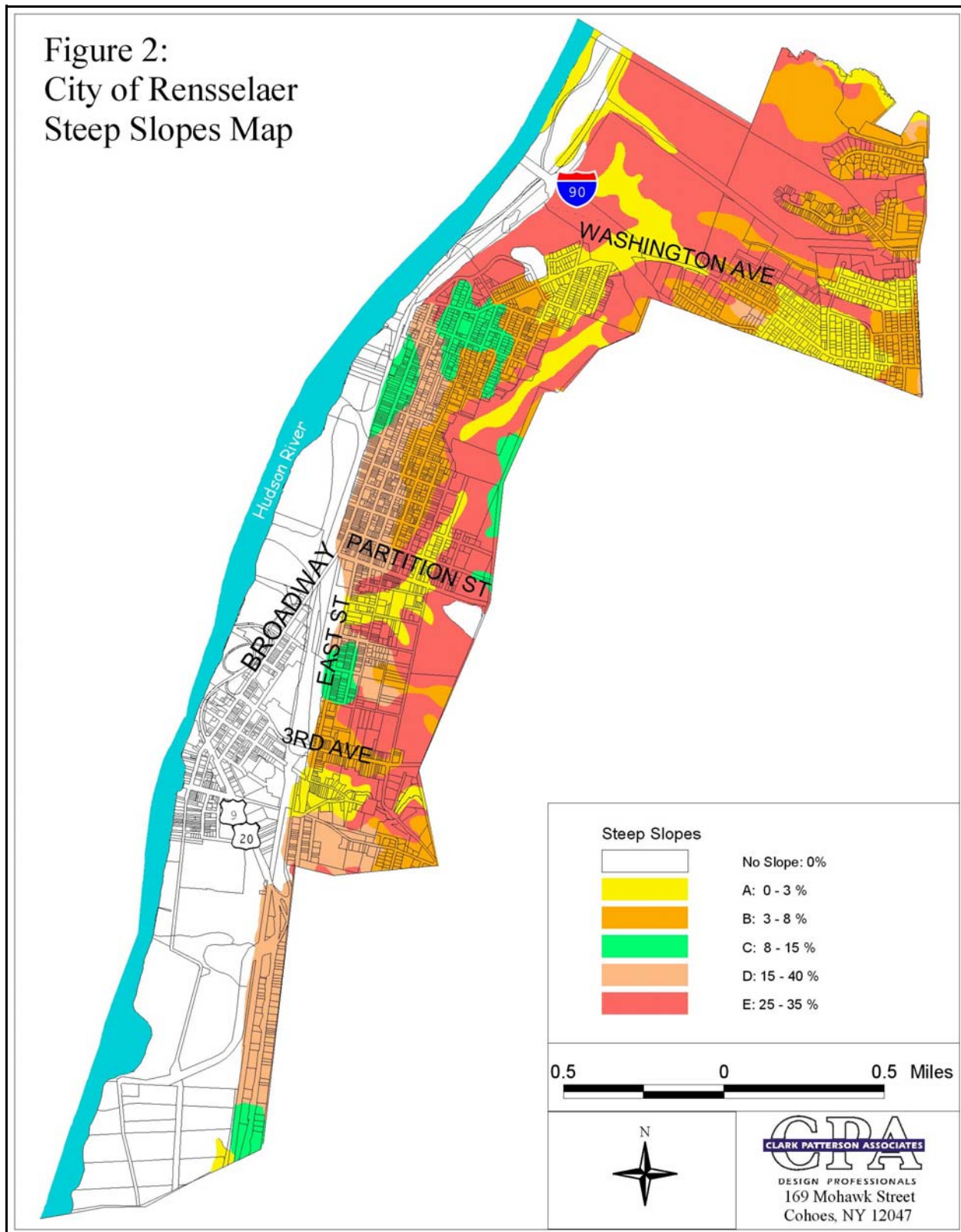
## ***Natural Features***

### **Topography and Steep Slopes (Figure 2)**

The Hudson River Valley was subject to numerous glacial movements during the time glacial Lake Albany was occupying the region. Over time, the ice margins receded northward depositing lacustrine clays and silt, which formed the terraces and hills that define region today. Figure 2, derived from the USDA's Soil Survey for Rensselaer County, provides the locations of steep slopes in the City of Rensselaer.

Steep slopes generally indicate areas where development should be avoided due to unstable soils. In Rensselaer, areas of steep slope (greater than 15 percent) can be found in the eastern and northeastern portions of the City and in the area between Broadway and 3<sup>rd</sup> Street. The majority of the City has slopes ranging from zero to 15 percent. The area directly adjacent to the Hudson River generally has no slope, which makes these areas conducive to any type of development.

Figure 2:  
City of Rensselaer  
Steep Slopes Map





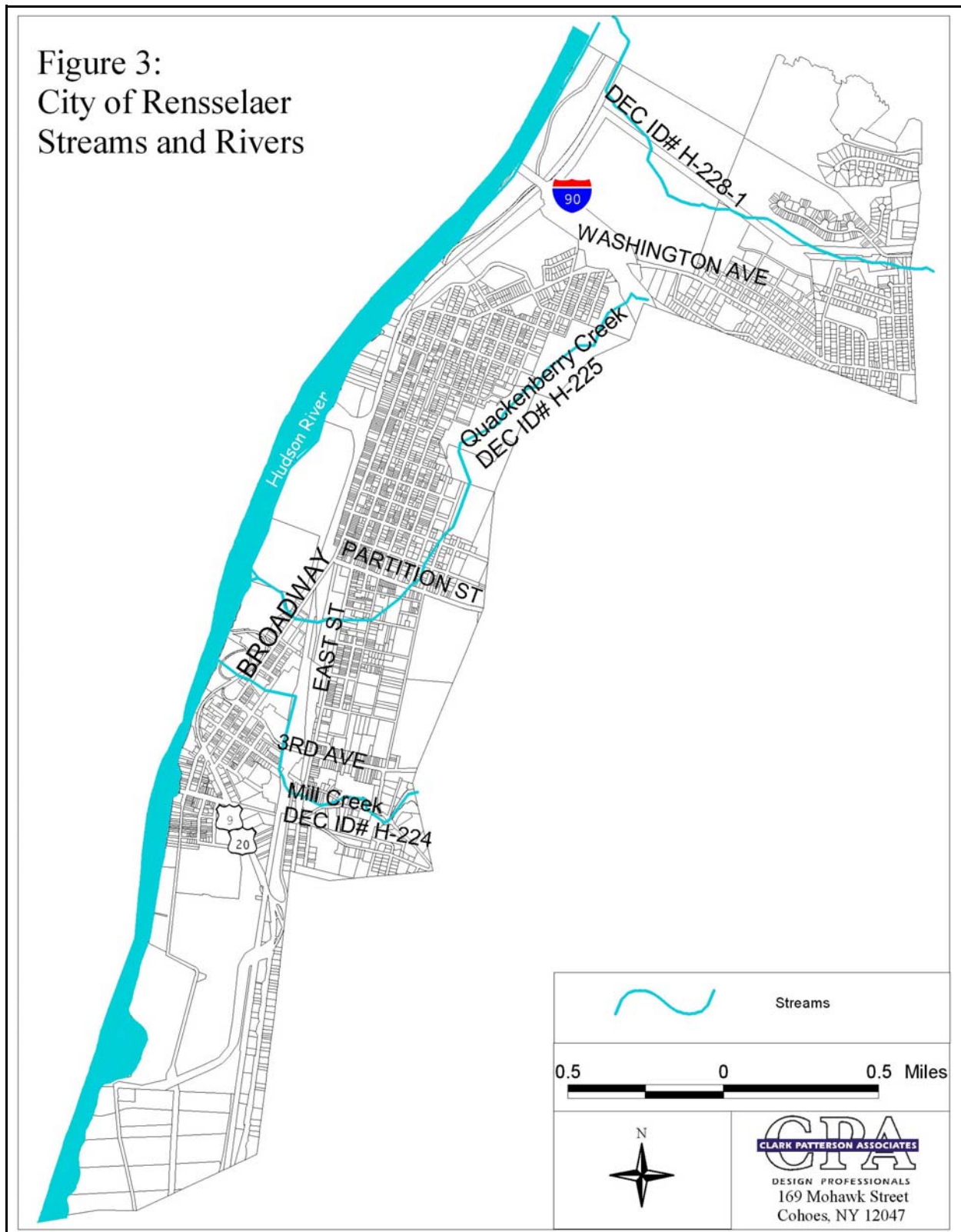
### **Watersheds, Lakes and Streams (Figure 3)**

A watershed is defined as the area of land that drains into a particular water body. The City of Rensselaer drains west into the Middle Hudson River basin. The Hudson River, which serves as the City's western boundary, is the main surface water body in Rensselaer. The Hudson River begins at Lake Tear of the Clouds in the Adirondacks and terminates at the Atlantic Ocean in New York City.

The major streams in the City of Rensselaer include:

- *Mill Creek* (DEC Water Index #H-224): Located in the center of the City, Mill Creek drains into the Hudson River. Mill Creek is designated as a Class C water body, and therefore, is suitable for recreational use. A study of the creek conducted by the Department of Environmental Conservation's Region 4 Fisheries Office in 1934 concluded that the water body was heavily polluted and contaminated with raw sewage. A more recent study of the creek has not been conducted since then to determine if conditions have changed.
- *Quackenberry Creek* (DEC Water Index -225): Located in the northeastern section of the City, Quackenberry Creek also drains into the Hudson River. Quackenberry Creek is designated as a Class C water body, and therefore, is suitable for recreational use. A study conducted in July 1991 by the Department of Environmental Conservation's Region 4 Fisheries Office noted the presence of American Eel, Brown Trout, Common Shinner, Black Nose Dace, Creek Chub, White Sucker, Rock Bass, Pumpkin Seed, Blue Gill, and Blue Black Herring.
- *Unnamed Creek* (DEC Water Index H-228-1): Located in the north of the city, this unnamed creek also drains into the Hudson River. It is designated as a Class C water body and is suitable for recreational use, with fish propagation being the principle use. Studies of the creek conducted in 1934 and 1955 indicated the presence of warm water fish, including minnows, suckers and American eel.

Figure 3:  
City of Rensselaer  
Streams and Rivers





### **Floodplains** (Figure 4)

The City of Rensselaer has 100-year floodplains generally located along the bank of Hudson River, Quackenberry Creek, and Mill Creek. In the southern section of the City the 100-year floodplain for the Hudson River extends east to East Street, and in the northern section of the City it extends to the railroad embankment.

### **Wetlands**

The New York State Department of Conservation (NYSDEC) regulates wetlands that are 12.4 acres or greater. There are no NYSDEC wetlands located in the City of Rensselaer. However, federally regulated wetlands not categorized by the NYSDEC may exist in the City. In order to avoid costly fines and penalties, developers should contact the NYSDEC Regional Office 4 for permitting information if any wetlands exist on a proposed site.

Figure 4:  
City of Rensselaer  
Floodplains Map

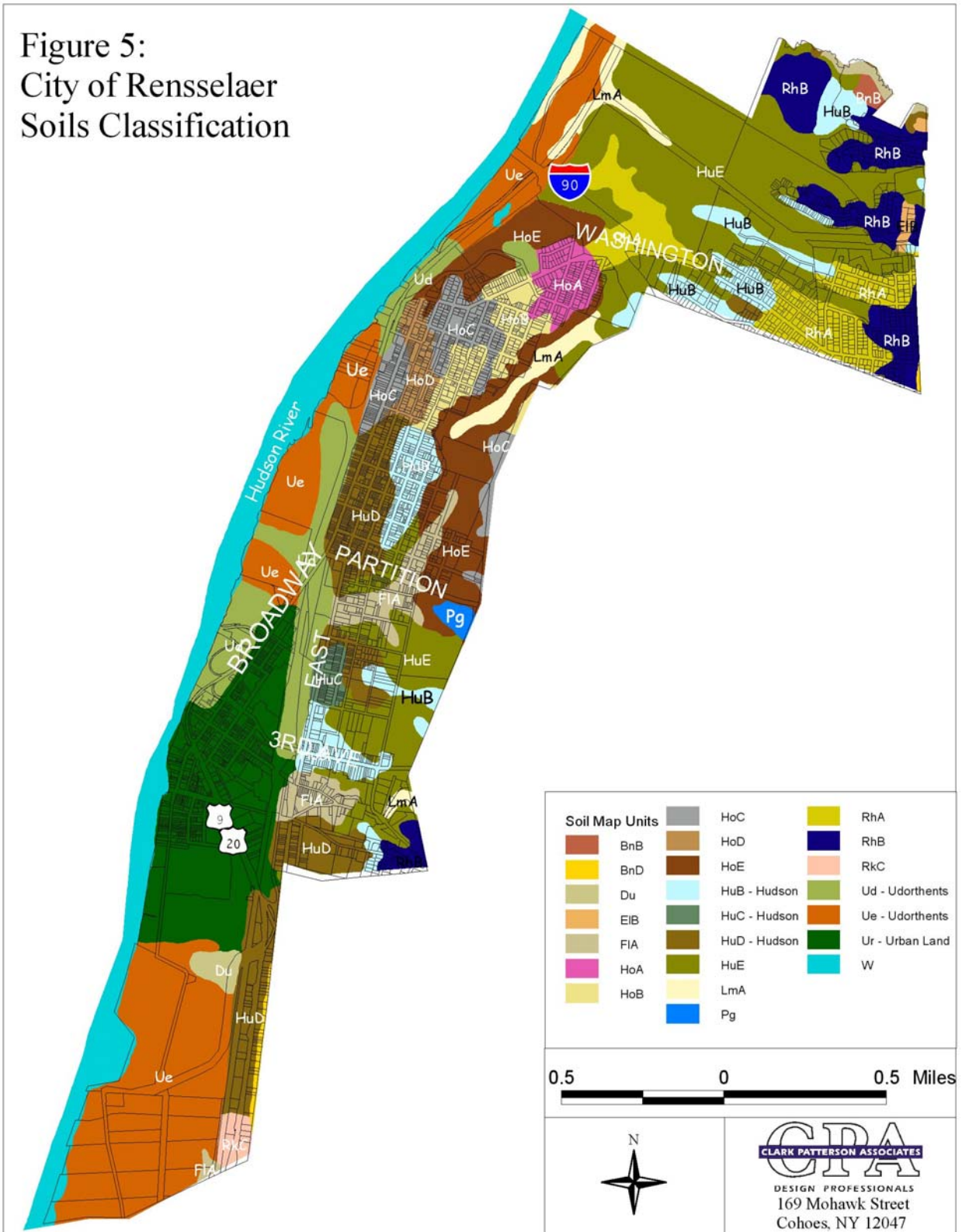




## **Soils (Figure 5)**

According to the General Soils Map created by the United States Department of Agriculture for Rensselaer County, Rensselaer's soils are mainly categorized as Udorthents, Urban, Hoosic and Hudson (see map). The eastern portion of the City, located between the Hudson River and Broadway is classified as Udorthents. This soil classification is generally deep, sandy, and moderately well drained. The soil in Rensselaer's Central Business District, located between Broadway, East Street, Partition Street and US Route 9 & 20, is classified as Urban. This soil classification consists of heavily built-up residential and commercial areas, 90 percent of which is covered with streets, buildings, and parking lots. The soils in northern section of the City, Partition Street to the northern and eastern City line, are classified as Hudson and Hoosic. The Hudson and Hoosic soil classifications are also, generally deep and well drained.

Figure 5:  
City of Rensselaer  
Soils Classification



## ***Community Services***

### **Fire, Police and Ambulance Facilities**

The City of Rensselaer's police department, located at 505 Broadway, provides local police service to 7,761 residents. Rensselaer's police department is comprised of 21 full-time police officers.

The City of Rensselaer Fire Department includes both paid and volunteer staff. Although other communities in the Capital District have begun instituting a similar approach, Rensselaer's use of paid and volunteer staff has been a longstanding policy in the Fire Department. Currently there are 12 full-time and three part-time paid personnel and approximately 20 active volunteers. The Fire Department currently operates out of three firehouses:

- Mink's Firehouse at 959 Broadway;
- J. and Ring Hose Company at 31 Second Avenue;
- James Hill Hook and Ladder at 42 Partition Street.

The Fire Department has four engines (pumper trucks) in active use. In addition to responding to fire emergencies, the Fire Department is also the first response team for medical emergencies in the City.

Ambulance service is provided to the City via Rensselaer Volunteer Ambulance as well as Empire Ambulance, which is a private service provider. Rensselaer Volunteer Ambulance contracts with Empire to provide emergency medical service from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m., Monday through Friday.

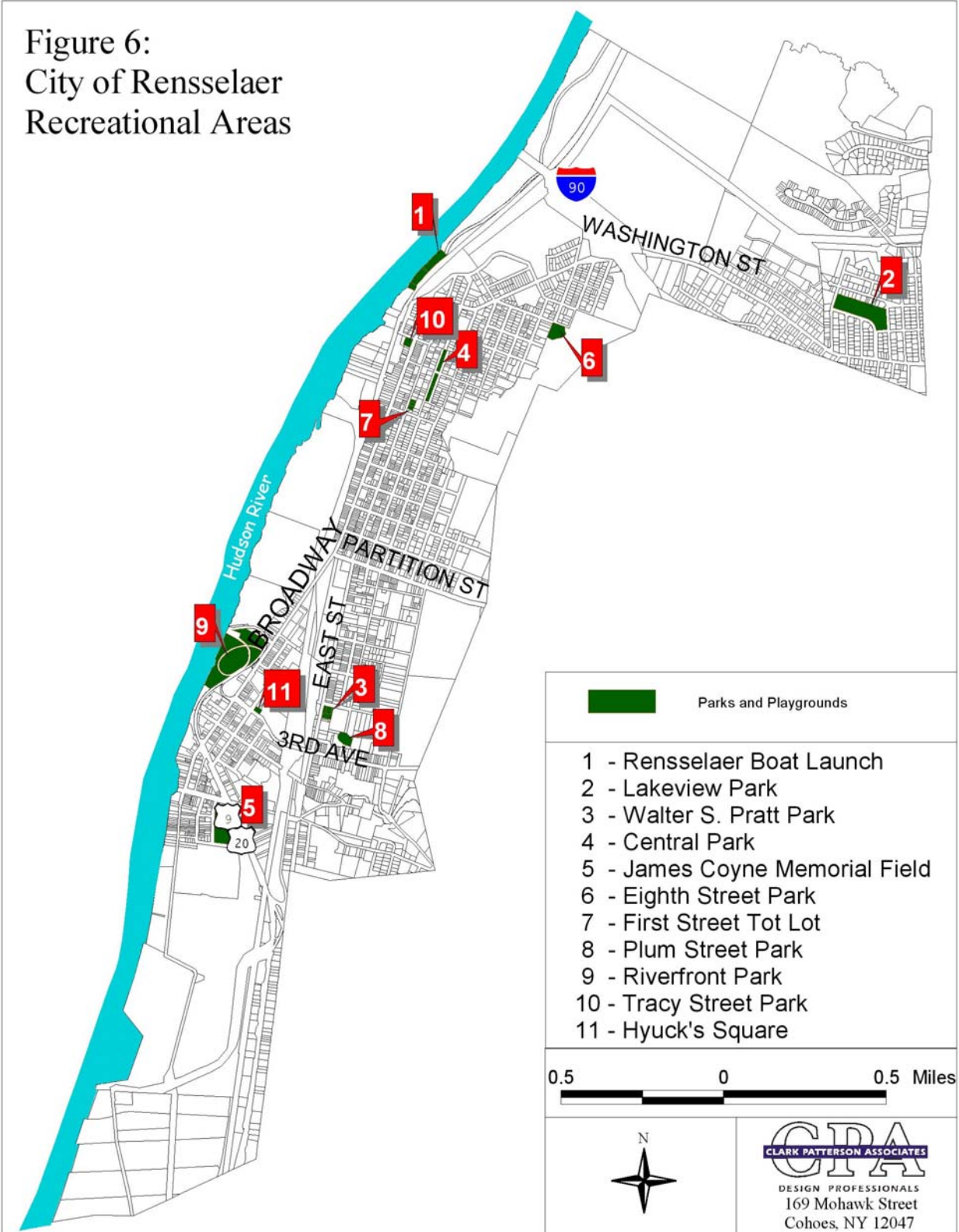
### **Educational Facilities**

The Rensselaer City School District maintains two City schools. Currently, the City's school district has 1,055 students enrolled in grades K – 12. The Van Rensselaer Elementary School, located at 199 Washington Ave, enrolls 495 students in grades K – 5. The Rensselaer Middle High School, located at 555 Broadway, enrolls 560 students in grades 6 – 12.

### **Parks and Recreation (Figure 6)**

The City of Rensselaer manages 11 parks, 7 playgrounds, 12 basketball courts, and 6 tennis courts. The City's Department of Public Works maintains the parks and facilities and the Youth Bureau sponsors and provides programs and activities. Other community recreational facilities are located in the City, including the Boys and Girls Club of Southern Rensselaer County and the Rensselaer Community Center. Both provide a wide variety of recreational and educational services to the community.

Figure 6:  
City of Rensselaer  
Recreational Areas





## **Transportation Network (Figure 7)**

Since the primary mode of transportation in Rensselaer is the automobile, Rensselaer maintains a well-organized road network. The City's grid patterned street system is compatible with its urban character. A linear street grid provides pedestrians and motorists with many possible paths to reach their destination.

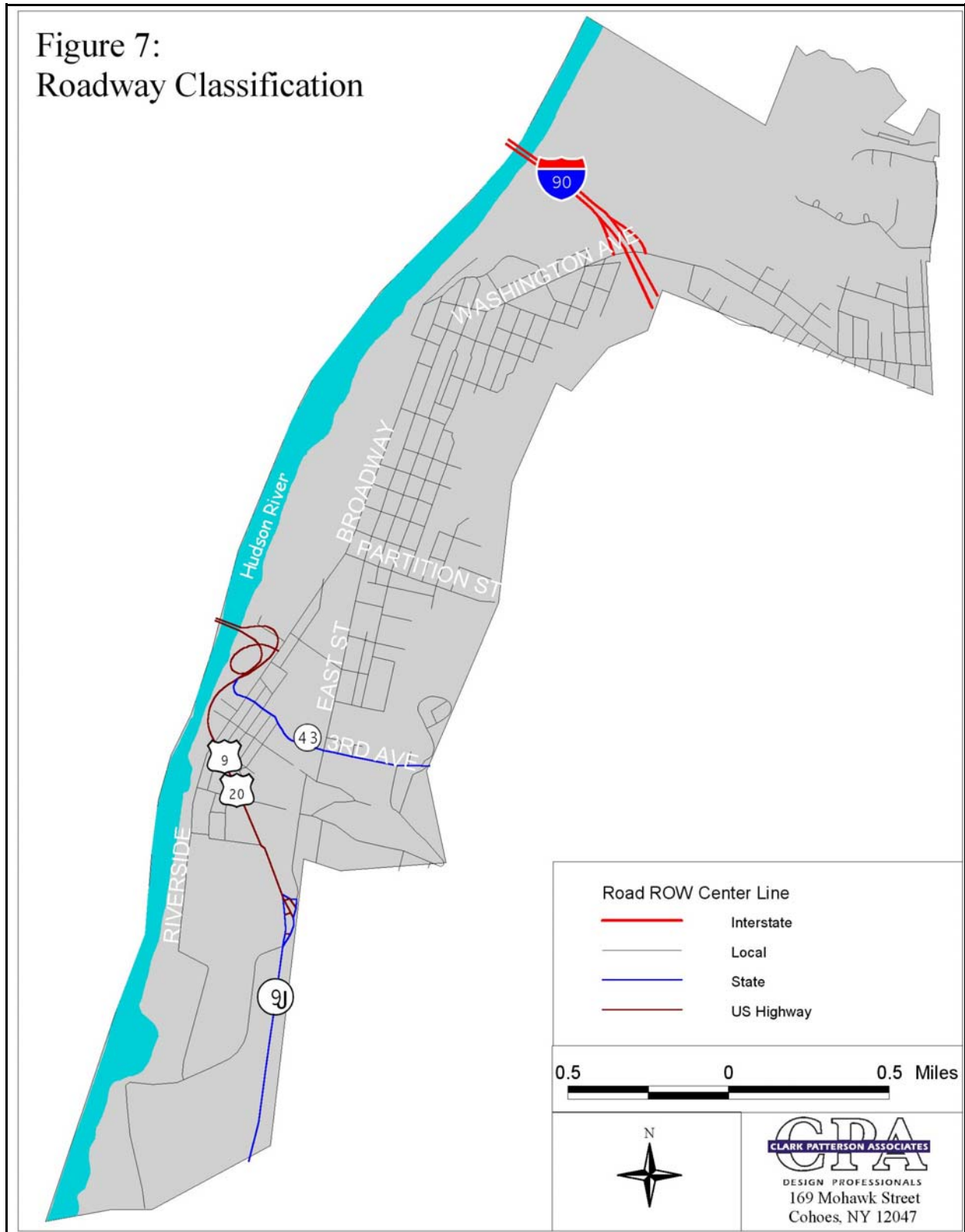
Streets, regardless of design and pattern, are generally classified according to administrative authority and function; that is who owns and maintains them and what type of uses they are designed to handle. It is important to understand both classifications in order to evaluate and plan for future improvements associated with development.

Rensselaer's road network is owned and maintained at three municipal levels: City; State and Federal. Examples of City roads include Broadway, which is a major north-south arterial in Rensselaer, as well as Washington and Partition Streets. The State is responsible for Routes 9J and 43. Federal roads in the area include Interstate 90, which runs east-west across the northern section of the City, and US 9 & 20, which is the City's main route into the City of Albany.

There are also three functional categories of roads in Rensselaer, including:

- **Highways:** These roadways provide fast access into and out of a municipality, typically characterized by limited access. Interstate 90, which provides accessibility to points east and west of the City, is an example of a highway in this area. Exit #7 on Interstate 90 is located in the northern section of the City.
- **Arterials:** These roadways are designed to accommodate both through traffic and access to residential and commercial uses located on and adjacent to the corridor. Routes 43 and 9 & 20 are examples of this classification.
- **Major Access:** These roadways generally accommodate traffic from residential and commercial areas and direct it to the arterials. Roads in this category include Broadway, 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue, Partition Street and Washington Street.

Figure 7:  
Roadway Classification



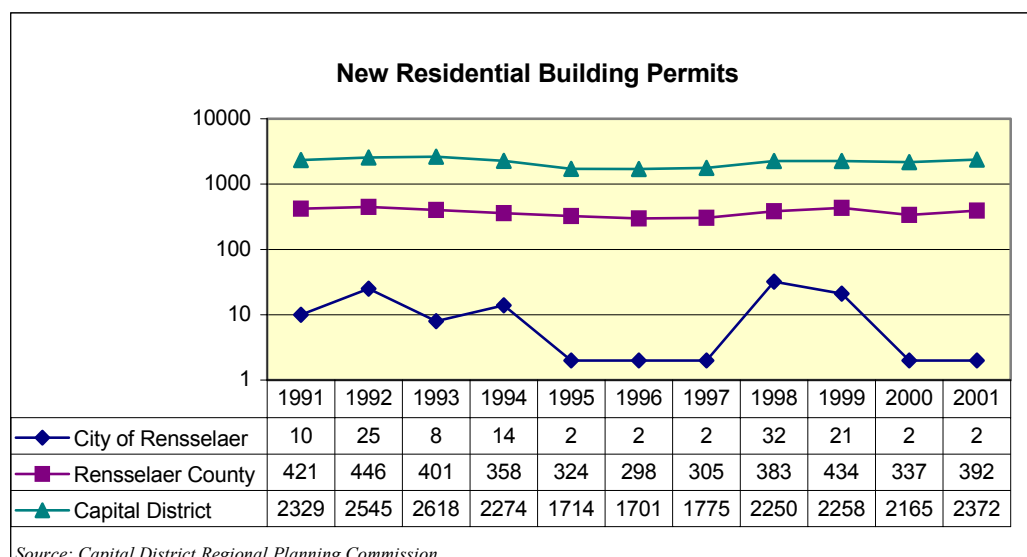
## Development

### Trends

Examining new residential building permits is a good indicator of development in a given area. The chart below graphically depicts the number of new residential building permits issued per year over the past decade in the City of Rensselaer, Rensselaer County and the Capital District, which includes Albany, Rensselaer, Saratoga, and Schenectady counties. It is important to note that data for new residential permits was interpolated in 1996, 1997 and 2001. Consequently the chart below does not fully depict building activity over the last decade in the City of Rensselaer. Significant development has occurred in the northeastern part of the City, which was annexed from North Greenbush over the last two decades. Partridge Run, a 59 single-family home development, was built in 1997. Between 2001 and 2002 over 430 new dwelling units, including condominiums and single-family detached homes, were built in Mansions at Tech Parks I and II, Evergreen and Patroon Pointe. Additional development in Patroon Pointe is expected to continue through 2003. The City estimates that no more than six permits for new residential construction were issued annually in the older city neighborhoods over the last five years.

Although housing demand is difficult to predict, Rensselaer should consider where future development should be located as well as what form it should take to respond to any new residential development demand. The City should strive to ensure that the goals and objectives of this plan are achieved. Planning locations for future development can be beneficial to the City for several reasons including:

- Reduced costs for service extensions and improvements;
- Efficient use of existing sewer and water capacity;
- Re-use of existing abandoned or dilapidated structures;
- Increased opportunity for future commercial development in areas accessible to residents;
- Framework for future community services including park locations and infrastructure expansion.



### **Existing Land-Use (Figure 8)**

Figure 8 provides the City of Rensselaer's Existing Land Use Map based on the County Assessor's property classification. The table below provides the breakdown of land uses currently present in Rensselaer. This information is based on data maintained by the Rensselaer County Office of Real Property.

In all, there are 3,195 parcels representing approximately 2,933 acres in the City of Rensselaer. Rensselaer's assessed land value is \$27,819,468, while the total assessed value (including structures and improvements) is \$178,840,302.

Rensselaer Property Classification		Number of		Assessed	Assessed
Property Code	Property Class	Parcels	Acreage	Land Value	Total Value
100	AGRICULTURAL	0	0	0	0
200	RESIDENTIAL	2175	375	\$9,868,350	\$56,017,781
300	VACANT	657	961	\$3,307,800	\$3,497,400
400	COMMERCIAL	250	391	\$7,087,550	\$41,429,113
500	RECREATION AND ENTERTAINMENT	11	44	\$372,000	\$482,800
600	COMMUNITY SERVICE	41	169	\$1,812,000	\$19,516,900
700	INDUSTRIAL	16	284	\$2,277,596	\$15,329,805
800	PUBLIC SERVICE	25	629	\$2,962,672	\$42,424,703
900	WILD, CONSERVATION, FOREST	20	80	\$131,500	\$141,800
TOTAL		3195	2933	\$27,819,468	\$178,840,302

*Source: Rensselaer County Office of Real Property, 2001*

### ***Residential***

Approximately 12 percent of Rensselaer's total acreage is assessed residential (375 acres). In general, residential development is located in the northern and central sections of the City. Residential development in these sections of the City tend to maintain high-density patterns. Parcel sizes are approximately 4,000 square feet and typically contain two-story structures. According to the 2000 US Census, the City of Rensselaer has an aging housing stock. The bulk of the City's residences were constructed prior to 1939 (56 percent). Residential development in the northeastern section of City has followed a more suburban pattern with respect to design and scale. Homes in this area are located on larger lots with a street pattern made up of collectors and arterials.

### ***Commercial***

In the City of Rensselaer 250 parcels are classified as commercial. Commercial development makes up approximately eight percent of the City's land uses and approximately 23 percent of the City's total assessed property value. Since commercial uses tend to demand less in public services than residential uses, maintaining an appropriate balance between residential and commercial land is critical to minimizing the tax burden placed on City residents. Rensselaer should



continue to attract commercial development in the City in order to maintain a balanced tax base.

### ***Industrial (Figure 9)***

Sixteen parcels, encompassing 284 acres, are classified as industrial uses in Rensselaer. The majority of industrial property is located in the southern section of the City. The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation has identified five, inactive hazardous waste disposal sites located on industrial property within the City of Rensselaer. They include the former City of Rensselaer Landfill, Sterling Drug site, and three locations on the BASF site. Figure 9 provides the locations of the City's Inactive Hazardous Waste Disposal Sites.

### ***Vacant***

Vacant land represents 20 percent of the property in the City of Rensselaer. The 657 parcels classified as vacant encompass 961 acres of land. Vacant parcels in the northern edge of the City and along the northern banks of the Hudson River may represent development opportunities for the City to explore.

### ***Parks and Open Space***

Parks and recreation areas are important components of a community's public facilities. As with any City, parks in Rensselaer provide an opportunity for people to interact with their neighbors, gather in large groups for events, and participate in a variety of recreational activities. Additionally, parks provide green and open space areas that provide scenic and environmental benefits to the community. The City of Rensselaer maintains both recreational parks and fields as well as urban pocket parks. Pocket parks are a great way to provide open space in areas of the City that have limited green spaces.

Currently, Rensselaer maintains 11 parks. They include, James Coyne Memorial Field, Riverfront Park, Central Park, Eighth Street Park, Lakeview Park, Fort Crailo Park, the Rensselaer Boat Launch, East Street Park that features a baby pool the First Street Tot Lot, and parks located at Plum and Tracy Streets.

Figure 8:  
City of Rensselaer  
Existing Land Use Map

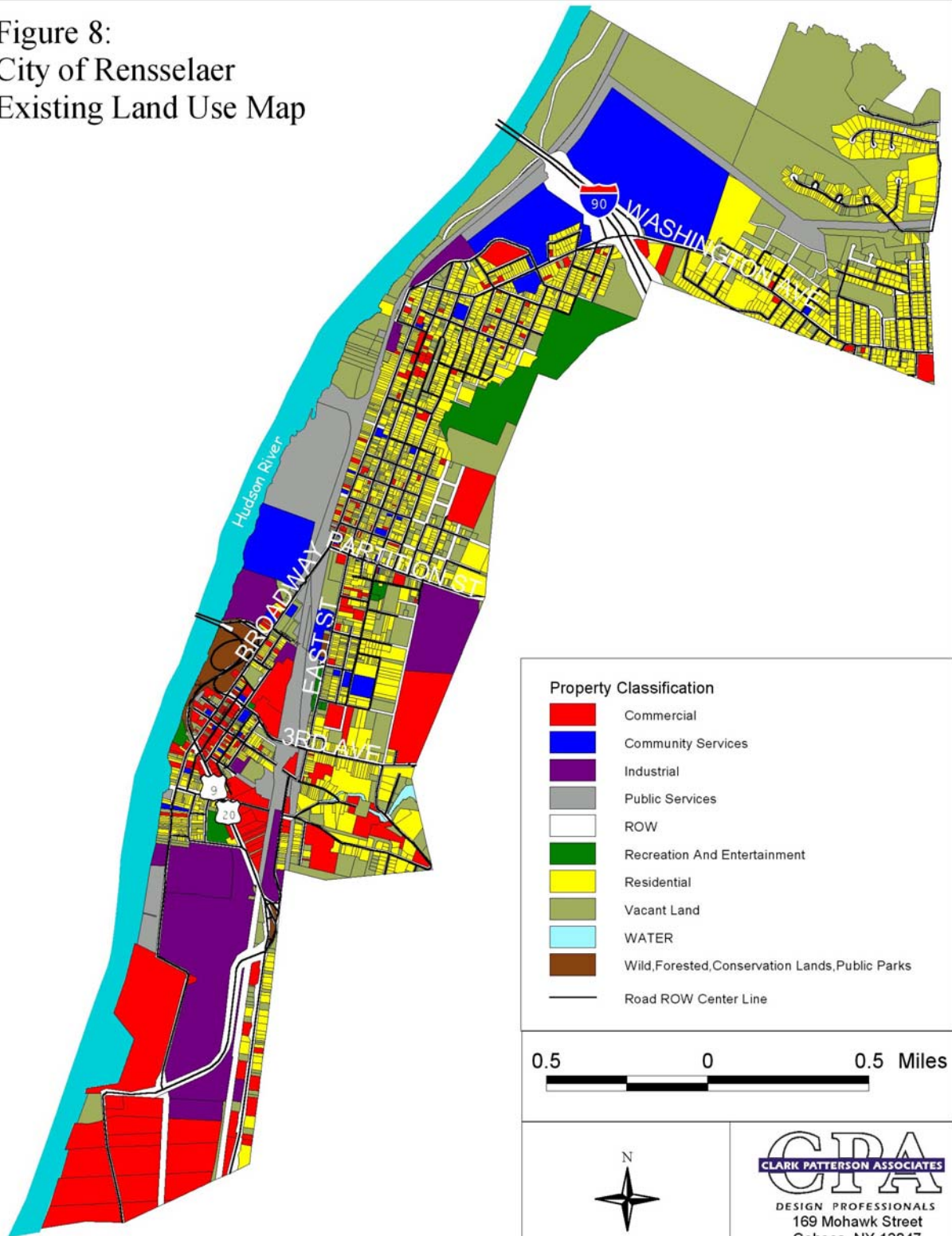


Figure 9:  
City of Rensselaer  
Inactive Hazardous Waste Sites

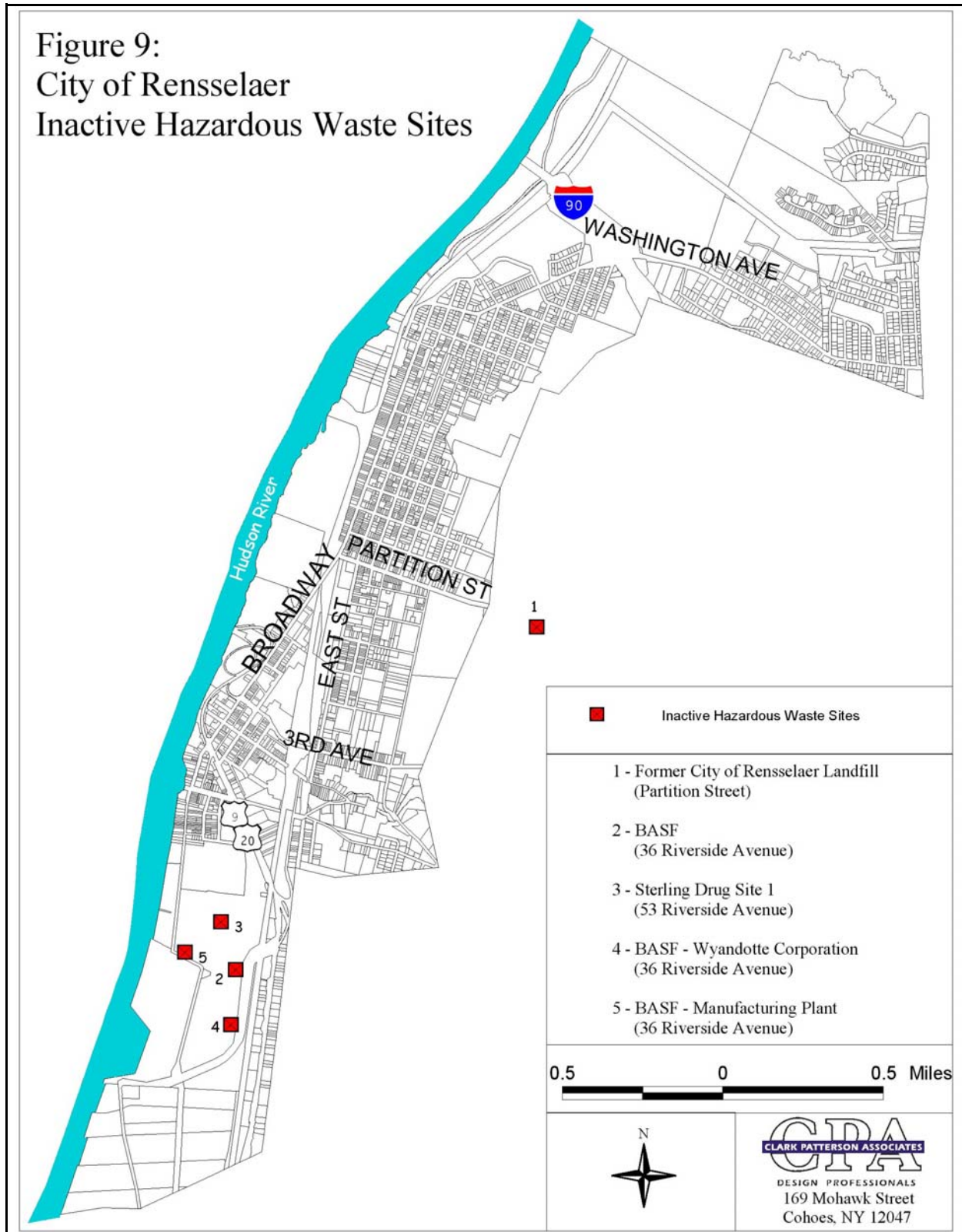
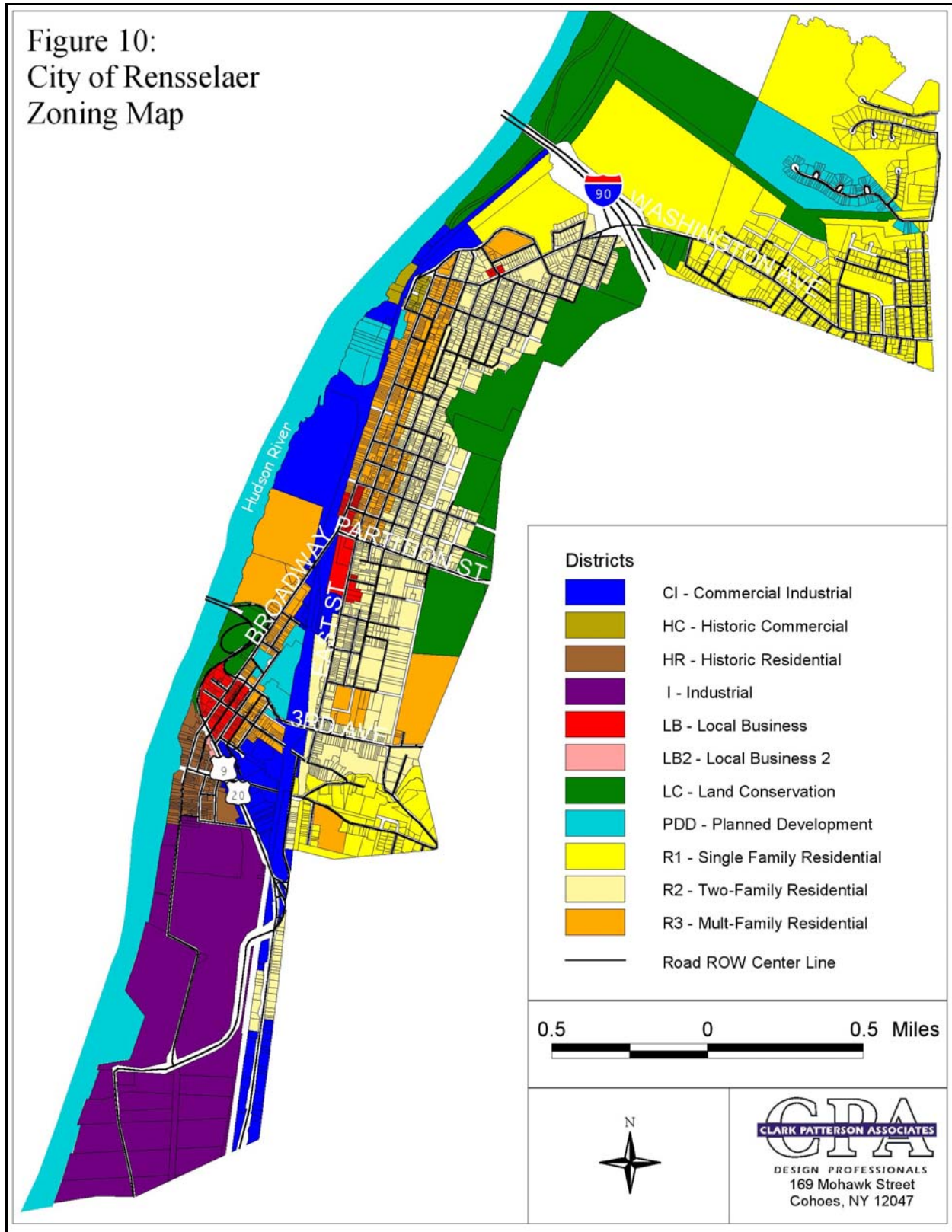


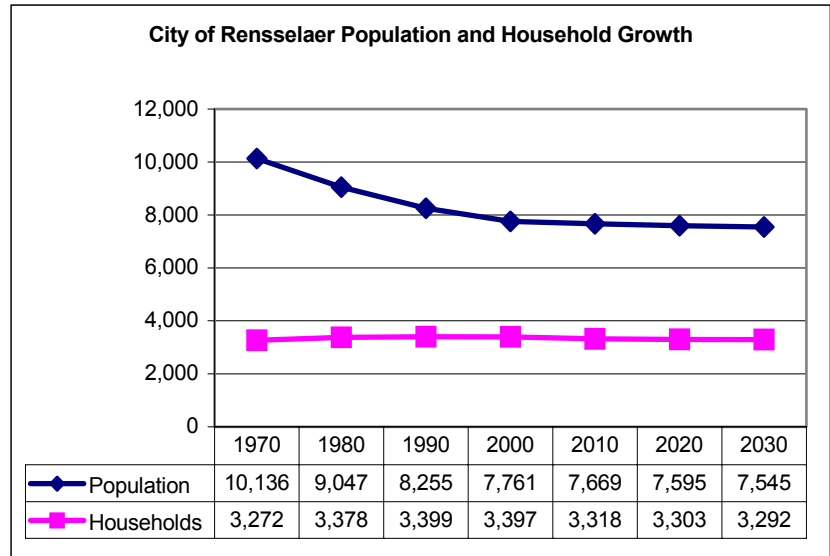
Figure 10:  
City of Rensselaer  
Zoning Map





## Population Characteristics

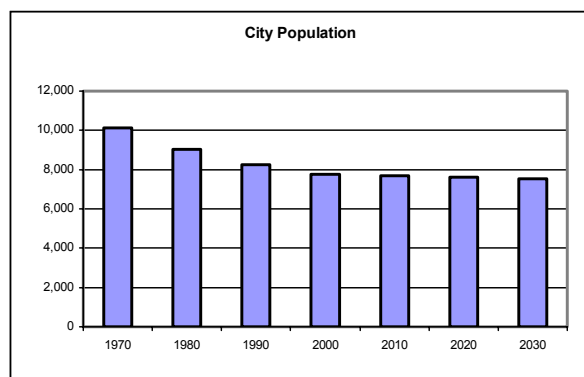
Demographic composition is a collection of population characteristics that defines a community. Future policies, land use, and development practices often depend largely on a community's population growth or decline, age distribution, educational attainment, transportation commuting trends, places of work and occupation, changes in income, and household characteristics. The information provided in this section was gathered from the US Census Bureau and the Capital District Regional Planning Commission.



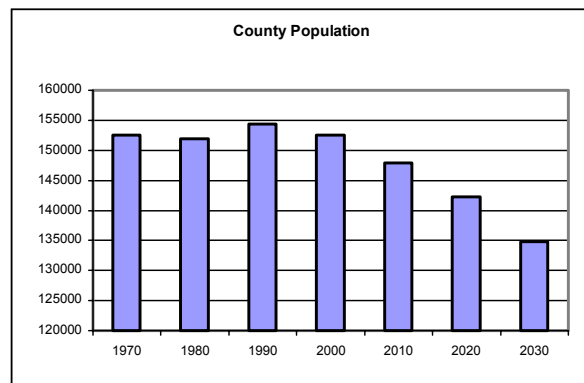
*Source: 2000 US Census.*

## Population

Population data for the City of Rensselaer from 1970 to 2030 reveals that the number of City residents has steadily declined since 1970. Rensselaer's greatest population reduction occurred between 1970 and 1980 when it decreased by 11 percent. Population-forecasting figures estimate the City will lose approximately 1 percent per year through 2030. Household size has dropped from 2.42 persons per household in 1990 to 2.28 in 2000, which is consistent with national trends. Over the last three decades, the number of households in the City of Rensselaer has remained relatively steady from 1970 to 2000. However, household projections anticipate that the number of households will slowly decline over the next 30 years.

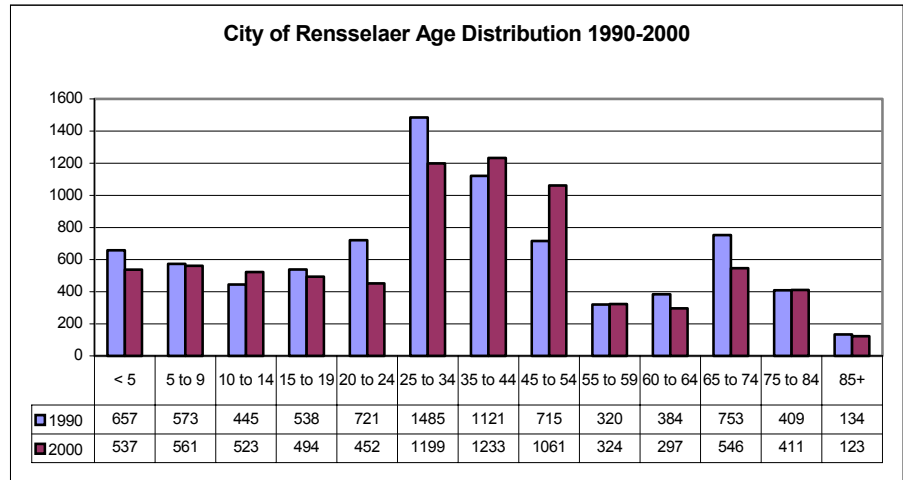


*Source: 2000 US Census.*



## Age

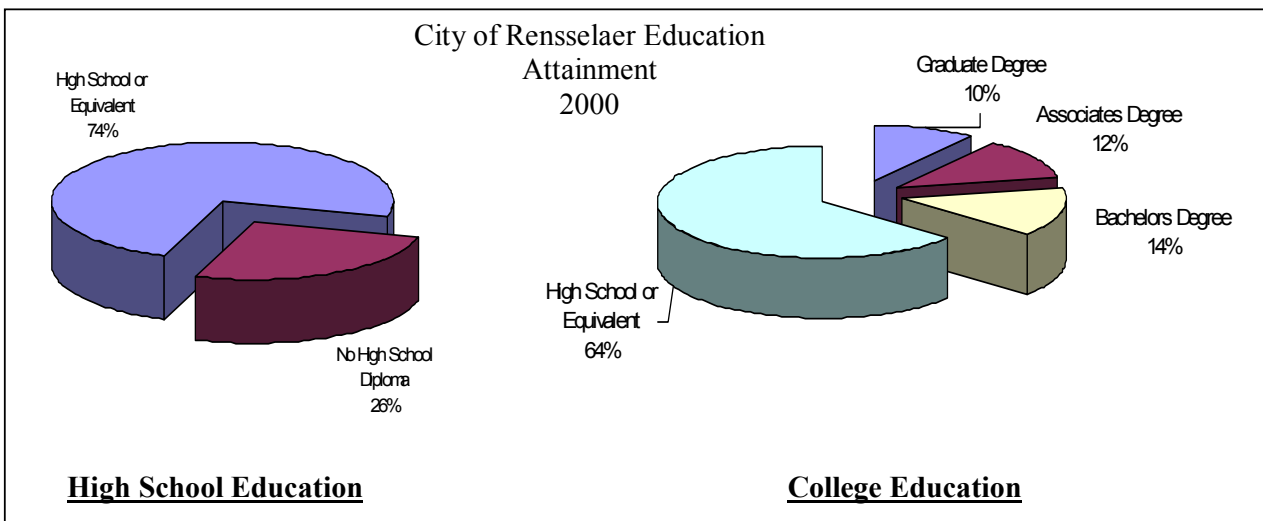
Analyzing age distribution provides important information that will help a community adequately accommodate its residents with sufficient public services. The City of Rensselaer's median age in 2000 was 35



years. The figure below indicates that the City's greatest population change occurred in the 45 to 54 age cohort, a 48 percent increase over the past ten years. The student portion of the population, the 5 to 9, 10 to 14, and 15 to 19 age cohort, remained steady over the 10-year period. On the other hand, the elderly population (>65), and pre-school aged children (<5), experienced a slight decrease between 1990 and 2000. For example, the 65 to 74 age cohort decreased by 27 percent, and the <5 age cohort decreased by 18 percent. While some of these decreases in age cohorts have occurred due to the overall decrease in City population, Rensselaer should examine the impacts of lost population in these key age groups and determine why the reductions are occurring.

## Education

The graphs below, derived from the 2000 US Census, reveal that 74 percent of Rensselaer's population earned a high school diploma or attained a general education diploma (GED). Of those who completed high school, 12 percent earned



Source: 2000 US Census.

an associates degree, 14 percent achieved a bachelor's diploma, and 10 percent earned a graduate degree.

### **Employment Characteristics**

In 2000, the unemployment rate in Rensselaer County was unchanged from its 1990 rate of 4 percent, well below the national rate of 5.3 percent. Thirty three percent of County's residents worked within Rensselaer County while 66 percent worked outside the County. The personal automobile was the chosen means of transportation to work, 73 percent, with approximately 15 percent of Rensselaer's residents carpooling. The majority of the City's residents experienced an average travel time to work of 19 minutes.

### **Major Employers**

One of the major employers for Rensselaer County is New York State, employing 1,868 County residents. The City of Albany, located west of the City of Rensselaer, is the major employer of the Capital District, and subsequently acts as the primary indicator of economic health in the County and Region. The table to the right indicates that government, education, and health service employers are the main industry sectors in the County. Employers, such as Northeast Health, Seton Health System, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Rensselaer County, and New York State, rely on residents of the County as their labor pool source.

### **Employment by Industry**

The City of Rensselaer's employment

Place of Work		
Work in County of Residence		33.7%
Work Outside County of Residence		66.3%
Means of Transportation to Work		
Personal Automobile	2701	73.0%
Carpooled	552	14.9%
Public Transportation	209	5.6%
Bicycle		
Walked	162	4.4%
Other Means	13	0.4%
Worked at Home	64	1.7%
Average Time to Work (Minutes)	19.3	
Time to Work (Minutes)		
<5	108	3.0%
5-9	457	13.0%
10-14	830	23.0%
15-19	862	24.0%
20-24	547	15.0%
25-29	221	6.0%
30-34	338	9.0%
35-39	17	0.5%
40-44	39	1.0%
45-59	85	2.0%
60-89	77	2.0%
90+	56	1.5%

*Source: 2000 US Census.*

Rensselaer County Percent of Employed Persons by Sector	
Industry Sector	% of Employed Persons
Service - Health	17.6%
Government	16.1%
Service - Education	7.9%
Government - Education	20.4%
Service - Business	4.8%
Retail	6.5%
Retail & Distribution	3.0%
Service - Human	2.3%
Insurance	3.6%
Construction	4.9%
Manufacturing	9.8%
Finance	2.3%
Transportation	0.3%
Greenhouses	0.2%
Retail Service	0.2%
TOTAL	100.0%

*Source: Rensselaer County Chamber of Commerce*

by industry for the year 2000 is outlined in the table on the next page. Public administration (17.6 percent), education/health service (17.3 percent), and retail trade (11.8 percent) were the City's top employment sectors. This information reflects the industries in which Rensselaer residents are employed. This is not a breakdown of the industries present in the City, however.

Today, many Upstate New York communities have experienced a decline in the number of manufacturing and agricultural jobs.

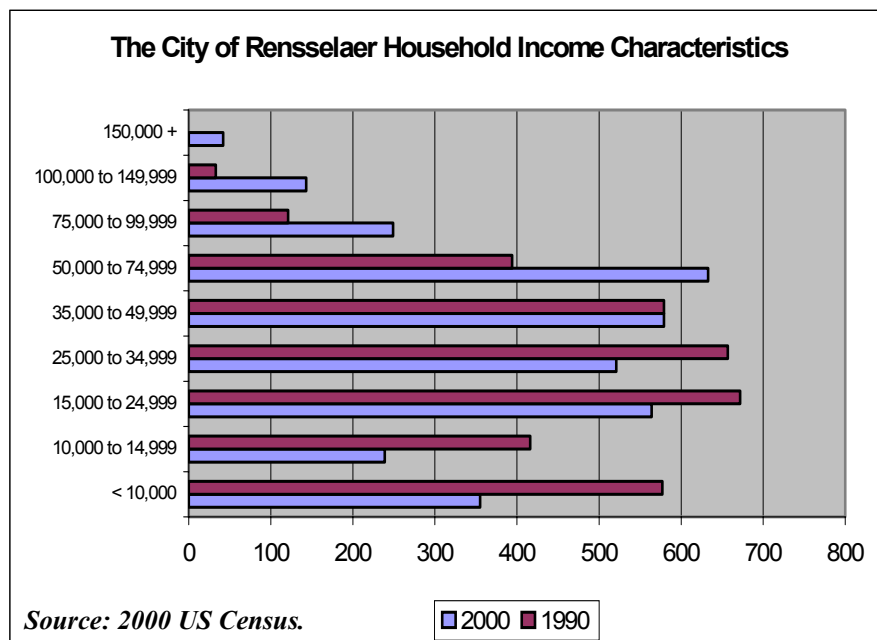
Rensselaer is no exception. US Census figures show that the number of City residents employed in manufacturing jobs declined between 1990 and 2000, dropping from 11 percent to 8.4 percent. The agricultural sector has seen similar decreases, dropping from 35 residents in 1990 to 4 in 2000. This decrease indicates that the agricultural industry in this region is shrinking. The trend of declining agricultural workers in New York State is also due, in part, to the consolidation of farming operations. The sector that has seen an increase in workers is the education and health industry. In 1990, Rensselaer residents employed in that sector increased from 14 percent in 1990 to 17 percent in 2000.

City or Rensselaer Employment By Industry	Number Employed	Percent of Employed Persons
Agriculture and Mining	4	0.1%
Construction	251	6.7%
Manufacturing	315	8.4%
Wholesale Trade	61	1.6%
Retail Trade	445	11.8%
Transportation	257	6.8%
Information	90	2.4%
F/I/R/E	248	6.6%
Sevices	269	7.2%
Education/Health Service	650	17.3%
Recreation/Entertainment	281	7.5%
Other Services	226	6.0%
Public Administration	661	17.6%
TOTAL		100.0%

Source: 2000 US Census

### **Household Income Characteristics**

Household income is a measure of reported wages earned by an entire household. Household incomes, which should be confused with family income, incorporate the earnings of related and unrelated individuals in a dwelling. A household can consist of a single person, a family, a non-traditional family, or non-related persons.





The City of Rensselaer's median household income was \$25,729 in 1990 and \$34,730 in 2000. Although the City's household income appears to have increased significantly over the last decade, an adjustment for inflation reveals a much more modest increase. When adjusted to 2000 dollars, the median household income in 1990 is equal to \$34,459, indicating near stagnant household income increases for City residents. The latest US Census shows that the City of Rensselaer experienced a 60 percent increase in number of households earning \$50,000 to \$74,999. However, this comparison does not factor in the effects of inflation and may not reflect a real increase in income levels within the City. It should be noted that in 2000, the highest percentage of residents were in the \$50,000 to \$74,999 income range, whereas the largest percentage of residents fell into the \$15,000 to \$24,999 income category in 1990.

According to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), three-person households in the Albany-Schenectady-Troy MSA that earn less than or equal to \$39,950 per year are considered low-income. Households earning less than or equal to \$25,000 per year are considered very low-income. Extremely low-income households earn less than or equal to \$15,000 per year. Based on 2000 U.S. Census figures, approximately 901 households (47 percent) in Rensselaer earn less than or equal to \$39,950, and therefore, are classified as low-income residences. Twenty-seven percent of the City's households (512) are considered very low income, while 30 percent are considered extremely low income (188 households).

### **Housing Characteristics**

Generally, residential development is the primary land use in municipalities across the U.S. After all, part of the "American Dream" is owning a home. The City of Rensselaer is no exception. According to Rensselaer County's Real Property Tax Service, 2,175 of the City's total 3,195 lots are considered residential land uses (68 percent).

<b>Housing Units</b>		
Occupied	3397	91.5%
Vacant	316	8.5%
<b>Year Structure Built</b>		
1999 to March 2000	26	0.7%
1995 to 1998	65	1.7%
1990 to 1994	99	2.7%
1980 to 1989	285	7.6%
1970 to 1979	230	6.2%
1960 to 1969	289	7.8%
1940 to 1959	637	17.1%
1939 or Older	2095	56.2%
<b>Median Year Structure Built</b>		
<b>Tenure</b>		
Owner Occupied	1690	49.7%
Renter Occupied	1707	50.3%
<b>Units in Structure</b>		
1, Detached	1459	39.2%
1, Attached	131	3.5%
2	1195	32.1%
3-4	373	10.0%
5-9	224	6.0%
10-19	33	0.9%
20 +	302	8.1%
Mobile Home or Trailer	9	0.2%
Boat, RV, van, etc.	0	0.0%

*Source: 2000 US Census.*

Rensselaer's housing stock is largely comprised of single-family detached houses (39.2 percent) and two-family houses (32.1 percent). A majority of the City's housing units were constructed earlier than 1939. Older housing stock presents the City

with opportunities and challenges. While older homes often have architectural details and integrity that are very appealing and worth preserving, they can detract from the area if the homes have not been maintained well or kept up to code.

Approximately 92 percent of Rensselaer's housing units were occupied, according to the 2000 US Census. Approximately 50 percent of all units are renter-occupied and 50 percent are owner-occupied. The breakdown of owner-occupied versus renter-occupied properties can offer insight into the condition of the housing stock and provide insight into the types of programs that will be needed to address any housing issues currently facing the City. The large number of rental units may indicate that there is a wide variety of housing options available in the City. Affordable housing is an important asset to attracting businesses and prospective employees. Given the close proximity to the State Capital, a major employer in the region, the City can offer prospective residents a wide variety of housing choices.

However, the relatively high percentage of renter-occupied housing units may indicate an issue with absentee landlords and the negative impacts that can arise as a result. Generally, absentee landlords are a concern for communities because they lack a strong connection to the tenants that occupy their rental units or the community in which the properties are located. Consequently, buildings may become run down and lack sufficient maintenance, which can negatively impact the surrounding neighborhood's appearance and housing values. The City must assess whether its concerns about its housing stock's quality and maintenance are linked to the type of occupancy (renter versus owner) and determine strategies to address those concerns.



## **APPENDIX B**

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*Community Prospectus & Market-Based Development Strategy*





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### Community Prospectus Overview

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### Market-Based Development Strategy

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Representing the cross roads of New York State, Albany and its surrounding area was an important transshipment point on the Erie Canal for goods traveling between Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse, and New York City. Albany's location on the Erie Canal made it very successful and attractive to businesses and people. Surrounding municipalities thrived on Albany's success. Up until the late 1700's the City of Rensselaer was known as East Albany. Today, with the decline of industry and manufacturing in Upstate New York, the Albany area has marketed itself as a center for technology and research. The City of Rensselaer looks to take advantage of its proximity to and join in the success of the City of Albany.

The City of Rensselaer's market area extends far beyond its municipal borders. Located on the eastern side of the Hudson River, in Rensselaer County, the City is one of four counties in the Capital District, which include Albany, Schenectady and Saratoga. The City, County, and Capital District constitute market areas for different types of goods and services.

Rensselaer is looking to utilize its assets for future success. These assets include a compact and safe Downtown, newly constructed \$60 million train station, long linear waterfront, and proximity to the City of Albany. Such places hold the key to Rensselaer's future as a self-sustaining, family-centered, 24-hour city.

This Investor's Prospectus presents key information about Rensselaer's market areas to facilitate public and private investment. Residents, business owners, local officials, and stakeholders can use this document to assist the community in attracting future development.

## Transportation and Access

- Albany International Airport is the major air center for the Capital Region, Northeastern New York, and Western New England. Rensselaer is approximately 13 miles east of the airport.
- Albany International Airport serves over 3 million passengers a year, with 135 flights daily.
- The Airport offers scheduled commuter service from all three New York City airports (Kennedy, La Guardia, and Newark) and Boston. Flying time to Boston or New York is approximately 45 minutes.
- The Rensselaer train station, located in the heart of the City, is the ninth busiest rail station in the U.S. and serves more than 1 million passengers annually.
- The train station is one of the few areas in the country where passengers can travel in all four directions by train.
- The Capital District Transportation Authority is the primary operator and manager of the Capital Region's bus services. The CDTA bus fleet of 231 vehicles serves a 4-county service area that encompasses some 2300 square miles. Over 750,000 people live in the service area.
- CDTA's 44 regular routes are centralized in a 150 square mile urbanized area. Close to 40,000 customer boardings take place each weekday on regular route buses.
- Rensselaer is well situated within the regional road network. Interstate 90, which runs through the northern section of the city, is one of the major east-west routes

across the U.S. There is local access on U.S. Routes 9 and 20, which carry traffic across the Hudson River on the Dunn Memorial Bridge and connect with Interstate 787. U.S. 9 is a north-south route that parallels the Hudson River.

- Current parking projections call for the addition of 470 new parking spaces around the train station (150 office, 60 hotel room, 24 hotel restaurant, 24 hotel conference, 15 retail, 197 train station) .

## Key Opportunities

- Downtown could support a 100,000 square foot, 120 room, business class hotel, located adjacent to the Rensselaer Train Station.
- A public-private residential development approach could create 40 single-family homes, 46 duplex units, and approximately 60-180 apartments adjacent to the Rensselaer Train Station.
- Rensselaer's vacant storefronts in the downtown could accommodate small businesses that market specialized products.
- Commuter parking lots located to the north and south of the train station could free up prime development land around the train station for mixed uses.

## Safety

- Rensselaer ranks among the Capital Region's safest cities. The New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services shows Rensselaer to have a relatively low crime rate.
- Rensselaer's compact and walkable street layout provides pedestrians with safe and accessible routes to their destinations.
- Improving the appearance of gateways in and out of Rensselaer will help to improve its image, change perceptions and create a more navigable city.
- A proposed parking study will address Rensselaer residents concern over the increased demand for parking around the train station and in Central Business District.

## Retail

- Rensselaer County retail sales have increased each year over the past four years. In recent years, Rensselaer County has experienced an overall growth rate of 12 percent in total sales.
- The City's rental rates for commercial establishments are \$6-\$13 per square foot.

### *Key Opportunities*

- Recent area enhancements include the development of an Eckerd store and an Aldi's stores, recent construction of a \$60 million± train station, development of two state office buildings, and plans for a cogeneration facility (\$1 billion).
- Downtown could support the yearly addition of 2,000-4,000 square feet of new retail space in renovated buildings. Specific retail opportunities include eating and beverage establishments and specialty retail stores.
- The development of antique stores, interior decorating and design products and services, and specialized services that fit a downtown "village" environment.
- Transit Oriented Development surrounding the Rensselaer train station would provide the much needed mix of residential, commercial, and office uses.

## Sports and Entertainment

- Although Rensselaer is not home to any sporting or entertainment venues, the city is located directly across from the City of Albany, which is home to the Pepsi Arena entertainment complex and a number of museums and art venues.
- The Pepsi Arena, located directly across the Hudson River in Albany, is home to the Albany River Rats of the American Hockey League, the Albany Attack of the National Lacrosse League, the Albany Conquest of the Arena Football League 2, and the Sienna Saints of the Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference. In addition, the Arena serves as host to a wide variety of national touring musical performers. The Arena has averaged 165 events per year.
- The Egg, a world class performing arts complex located at the Empire State Plaza, and the recently renovated Palace Theatre host a wide variety of chamber music and dance concerts, cabaret, lectures, multimedia presentations, solo performers and a majority of educational programming.
- The City of Albany is home to two major museums: The New York State Museum and the Albany Institute of History and Art.

### *Key Opportunities*

- Proximity to the City of Albany provides an excellent location for pre- and post-venue gatherings for sports fans, theatre patrons and concertgoers.
- The City's waterfront orientation provides an opportunity to penetrate the regional market in terms of eating and beverage establishments.



## Visitor Market

- The Rensselaer train station, located in the heart of the City, is the ninth busiest rail station in the U.S. and serves more than 1 million passengers annually.
- Average annual occupancy for hotels in the Rensselaer area's 842 hotel rooms, including Albany and Rensselaer County, was 69-71 percent in the 1990's.
- The Fort Crailo Historic site tells the story of the early Dutch inhabitants of the upper Hudson Valley through exhibits highlighting archeological finds from the Albany Fort Orange excavations, special programs, and guided tours of the museum.

## Key Opportunities

- A proposed, one-mile riverfront trail along the Hudson River would connect Rensselaer's Central Business District to the waterfront. Walkers, runners, in-line skaters and cyclists could use the trail.
- Attracting tourists to the Erie Canal locks by taking advantage of the growing movement among Albany officials and historical preservationists to restore the locks of the 175-year-old canal as a cultural and historic site.
- Newly constructed 80,000 square foot Rensselaer train station is a major gateway to the Capital Region and attempts should be made to encourage passengers to remain in Rensselaer for the duration of their visit.
- The future market for a 100,000 square foot, 120-room, business class hotel adjacent to the Rensselaer train station to capture passengers who travel by train.

## Education

- University at Albany (SUNYA), Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (RPI), Sienna College and sixteen other colleges give Rensselaer and the Capital Region a strong college-age demographic.
- The University at Albany's East Campus business incubator, located just south of Rensselaer's city boundary, provides an array of services to Capital Region entrepreneurs.
- The University at Albany annually attracts more than \$90 million in external research funding.

## Key Opportunities

- With thousands of students graduating each year, Rensselaer has the opportunity to retain some of these higher educated potential employees in the Capital Region.

## Office Development

- Rensselaer's overall market area includes approximately 7.6 million square feet of top quality, "A" space representing 40 percent of all the office space in the region.
- Between 1997 and 2002, the City of Rensselaer absorbed roughly 1.4 million square feet of office space.

## Key Opportunities

- The office market near the Rensselaer train station has good potential for 150,000 square feet of A-B class office space.
- The Rensselaer Waterfront is well suited for a mix of office, retail and residential uses.
- Rensselaer could support the addition of 5,000-10,000 square feet of office space per year in the Central Business District.

## Employment

- In 2000, public administration (17.6%), education/health service (17.3%), and retail trade (11.8%) were the city's top employment sectors.
- One study named the following commercial activities with potential for success in Rensselaer: specialized retailers and dining and entertainment establishments.

### *Key Opportunities*

- Austin-based International Sematech, a semiconductor research consortium, is building a \$403 million research and development center at the University at Albany. Hundreds of new jobs are expected with estimated average salaries topping \$80,000.
- The University at Albany is building a \$200 million R&D center, and semiconductor equipment maker Tokyo Electron Limited is planning a \$300 million R&D center at the university. The Japanese maker of equipment, which used to manufacture computer chips, will bring more than 300 research jobs to the state University at Albany in the spring.
- Tokyo Electron Limited, known as TEL, could potentially attract 900 manufacturing jobs and build a manufacturing plant in the region.

## Residential Market

- New residential amenities include a waterfront trail connecting the City's Boat Launch Park, Riverfront Park and Central Business District.
- Rensselaer currently has low housing values: more than three-fourths of the owner-occupied units in the City have values under \$100,000.

### *Key Opportunities*

- Downtown could support higher density residential development along the waterfront as well as in the Central Business District that includes 200-300 units.
- A market exists for townhouses (16) and condos (40-48 units) ranging from \$100,000 - \$200,000 that could provide a mix of housing types for young professionals and empty nesters.

## Quality of Life

- The City was awarded a New York State Department of State grant for a Comprehensive Waterfront Revitalization Plan, which is comprised of a Downtown Redevelopment Plan, Waterfront Trail, and a Sewer Separation Study.
- A proposed comprehensive street tree-planting program will look to improve the image and marketability of the Central Business District. Investing in the urban forest will help to create a more attractive downtown.
- The City is moving forward with a multi-phased infrastructure replacement program for the City.

## **Planning Organizations:**

### **City of Rensselaer Planning and Development Agency**

(518) 465-1693

Contact agency for expanding or relocating businesses, information about financing assistance and land use and zoning regulations, and securing commercial or office space in the Central Business District.

### **Rensselaer County Bureau of Economic Development and Planning**

(518) 270-2914

Economic Development Department provides various incentives including taxable and tax-exempt financing, access to the Rensselaer County Job Development Program's revolving loan fund, and tax abatement and job training programs.

### **Capital District Regional Planning Commission (CDRPC)**

(518) 453-0850

A regional non-profit planning commission created to perform and support comprehensive planning work and promote sound and coordinated development in the Capital Region. CDRPC functions as the Region's aviation system planner, crime control coordinator, data and information center, Economic Development District, and Foreign-Trade Zone administrator.

## **Other Business Organizations:**

### **Rensselaer County Chamber of Commerce**

(518) 274-7020

### **Troy Riverspark Visitor Center**

(518) 270-8667

### Development Strategy: Rensselaer Study Area

The three focus areas of the downtown study are, as well as the waterfront, all have distinct characters and different potentials for development and redevelopment. While the City may market itself as an attractive location for new development, different types of developers will be interested in different parts of the City.

Exhibit 1 summarizes the different types of real estate opportunities that exist within these areas. While there are overlaps among these locations and there are parts of the city where the distinctions are unclear, these distinct market positions will be important in the redevelopment process.

Exhibit 1

#### Commercial Development Sectors, Rensselaer Study Area

Location	Market Position	Development Strategy	Time Frame
Central Business District	Regional Urban Village	Main Street style program development.	1-5 years
North Broadway	Commercial Neighborhood	Renovation and infill development.	Ongoing
Rail Station Properties	Transit Oriented Center	Transit-related development incl. air rights.	5-10 years
Waterfront	Mixed-use Riverfront	Public-private partnerships on large tracts.	10 years

Source: Thomas Point Associates, Inc.

Because of the complex nature of the needs and opportunities, ranging from Main Street style development to large-scale public-private partnerships, the City needs a development entity that can guide and manage the redevelopment process. While Rensselaer is a small city and the addition of a new position represents a big commitment, there is a need for this type of expertise. The potential benefits associated with successful development far outweigh the relatively modest costs.

The immediate focus should be on residential and commercial projects to renovate the historic parts of the City, around the Amtrak Station, along North Broadway and in other parts of the downtown. At the same time the City should focus on in-fill development to create new townhouse opportunities throughout the area. This will seem difficult at first but the situation will change as Rensselaer's image in the region changes.

The retail situation also varies according to the different part of the City. Exhibit 2 on the following page identifies the principal retail targets for each of the distinct sub-areas. It will be a challenge to attract new stores and services but it can be done.



## Exhibit 2

### Types of Establishments With Strongest Potential, By Market Sector

<i>Type of Establishment:</i>	Downtown Core	Waterfront	Rail Station Area	Other Commercial
<b>Restaurants:</b>				
Fine Dining	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Ethnic Restaurants	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Quick Service Restaurants (QSR)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Kiosks/Carts	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Specialty Food/Groceries</b>				
Bakery/Café	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Coffee	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Outdoor Market/Bazaar	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Tobacco	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Wines and Cheeses	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
<b>Retail Stores</b>				
Antiques	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
Art Gallery	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
Apparel	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Accessories	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Books, Papers	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Convenience	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Cosmetics, Specialty Beauty Products				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
CD's and LP's---Recycled				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Crafts	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
Drug				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Gifts, Cards	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Jewelry	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
Liquor				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Music	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Nature Store		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Sporting Goods, Clothes: Specialized				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Video sales, rental				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Vintage Clothing	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
<b>Retail Services</b>				
Auto Detail			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Banking	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Brokerage	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
Daycare				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Film Processing				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Finance Companies		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Laundry/ Tailoring			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Legal Services			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Luggage			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Medical/Dental Clinics	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Repairs: Consumer products				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Salons: Nails, Hair, Etc	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Shoe Repairs	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Transportation Services			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

Source: Thomas Point Associates, Inc.

There are special opportunities associated with the traffic that the Amtrak Station generates. The City should attract these types of uses (Exhibit 3) to the vicinity of the Station.

### Exhibit 3

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## **Transit-Related Commercial Development, Rensselaer Study Area**

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Auto Detailing  
Business Services  
Communications: Phones, Electronics  
Convenience Store  
Executive Office Suites  
Hotel/Motel for business travelers  
Laundry  
Luggage  
Restaurants  
Services: Finance, Insurance, other  
Transportation Service (limousine)

---

Source: Thomas Point Associates, Inc.

Because of its central location in the region there will be opportunities to build accommodations of various types into the strategy. The City should evaluate and find room for each of these types of products:

- Bed and Breakfast
- Boatel.
- Hostel (youth, elderly).
- Hotel.
- Motel.

There is little or no market at present for office space but there will be opportunities in the future, as the City's image in the region changes. We can see several types of office products oriented to different segments of the market:

- Renovation of old buildings: Professional offices, back offices.
- Infill: new construction at small scale for medical and other professionals.
- New site development: general occupancy office space for large floor users.

There may be opportunities in the future for public attractions and special facilities, such as a museum, aquarium, convention center. The potential to build any facility of this type will depend on how regional plans, particularly in downtown Albany, develop over the next decade.

## Implementation, Evaluation and Phasing

Development and redevelopment in the study area of the City of Rensselaer should follow a priority plan with specific actions staged beginning as soon as possible and continuing for several decades and longer.

The City can take the lead, working with citizens, merchants and developers on a series of tasks. In general there are four types of actions (Exhibit 4).

### Exhibit 4-4

#### Action Areas for Project Development

Organizational Strategy	Creation of citizen-based planning and programming effort.
Predevelopment Planning	Analysis of alternatives, feasibility, acquisition and design.
Project Development	Final agreement, construction and start-up.
Management and Operation	Project programming and operation.

Source: Thomas Point Associates, Inc.

While the initial actions will require the commitment of time and money by the City, one goal of the overall effort should be to generate public revenue from redevelopment, through taxes, and to generate direct income through the City's participation in public-private partnerships.

Market research indicates that there is support for immediate development and long-term projects. Exhibit 5 identifies criteria for evaluating different types of projects.

### Exhibit 5

#### Project Feasibility: Criteria for Evaluation

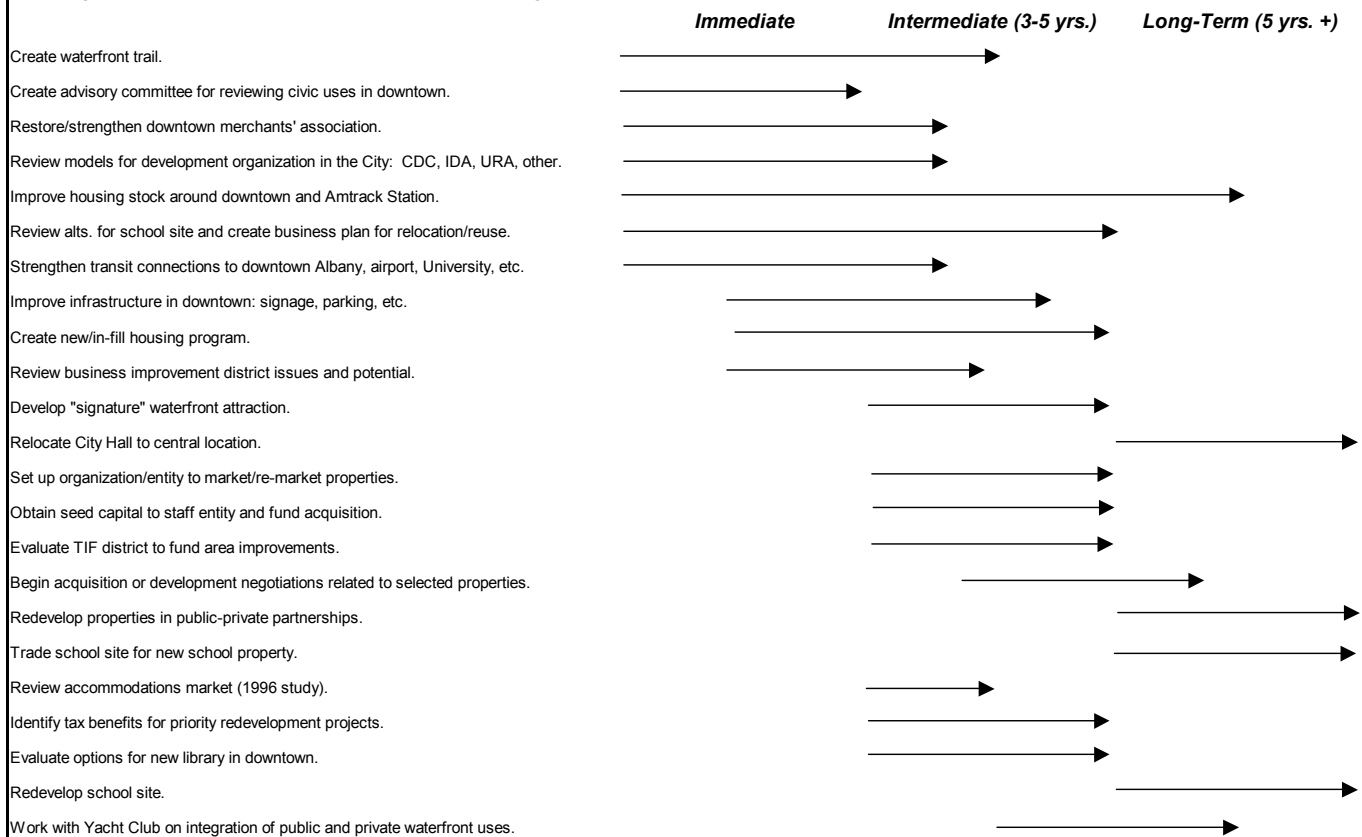
- Public Objectives
- Site Development Factors
  - Compatibility with surroundings
- Market Support
- Capital Requirements
  - Sources, availability
- Phasing Potential
- Regulatory Environment

Source: Thomas Point Associates, Inc.

There are many specific actions that one can identify within these general categories. The schedule of priority phases (Exhibit 6 on the following page) identifies the flow of actions, from immediate to long-term program efforts.

## Exhibit 6

### Priority Actions and Phases, Rensselaer Study Area



Source: Thomas Point Associates, Inc.

## Residential Development Issues and Approach

The City is encouraging the development of cooperative and other types of housing in the study area, near the Amtrak Station. Several important points about the housing market in Rensselaer help to explain current conditions and development potentials:

- The City has a high proportion of rental housing (46 percent of all units) and a reasonably high occupancy rate in all units (91.5 percent).
- While the City is centrally located in the growing region, its housing stock is surprisingly old: almost 60 percent was built before 1940.
- Rents and sales prices make housing in the City attractive, in spite of the age of most units and, in some cases their deteriorated condition.
- There is almost no high-end or luxury housing in the City.

With respect to the specific residential development products that the City is considering, the market is favorable in some respects. The Albany area is a good market for multi-family apartments. Occupancy at some older properties is running at 98 percent right now. Rensselaer itself is a good market for rental apartments.

- Tri-City Rentals owns the 144-unit Capital View Apartment complex (east of the Train Station). The complex has no vacancies. The 1-bedroom units (625 square feet) rent for \$600 per month and the luxury 2-bedroom/2-bath units (1,100 SF) rent for \$770. A project with higher rents would have to provide higher quality materials and amenities.
- The Mansions at Technology Park (Exit 8) offer 250 multi-family apartment units in two-story buildings on 27 net acres; there are one- and 1.5-bath units renting in the \$900-\$1,100 range in great demand. Features include interior garages and a clubhouse. The market is professionals (doctors, lawyers) and some empty nesters. The Mansions in Delmar are similar.
- DCG manages a property near Hudson Valley Community College in Troy. The two-bedroom townhomes (1,200 SF) rent for \$850 per month. The same company is planning a 275-unit 4-story residential project in Cohoes, near Riverwalk. The new 190-unit River's Edge, the expansion of Riverwalk, offers 1-bedroom units (600-750 SF) at \$785, two-bedrooms (800-1,000 SF) at \$850, and three-bedrooms (1,000-1,150) at \$1,200. The monthly premium for units that offer a view of the river is \$200.

The elderly population is a big factor in the market and is increasing with time. The median age in Rensselaer is 35.8 years. The proportion of the population that will be moving into the 65+ age group over the next few years is significant: in 2000, 18 percent of the City population was in the age group 45-59 years. However, new apartments in Rensselaer should appeal to the entire market, including seniors, but not exclusively to seniors.



The townhouse product would work well in the downtown. It has good street qualities and scale and can fit into the Rensselaer context, from a design and development viewpoint. Price will be a factor until one reaches a neighborhood threshold, and then prices will appreciate quickly and create opportunities for better phases. Townhouses also fit well into an infill and redevelopment strategy, and allow for risk reduction strategies like phasing.

High-rise condos would be difficult in the study area in the immediate future. The market lacks this kind of product and it has never been popular in Albany. Rensselaer is not the place to start it. The first high-rise residential project in the area should be in Albany, not in Rensselaer. The lack of infrastructure to support condos right now is a factor.

In summary, the housing market in Rensselaer is limited in diversity but healthy and there are opportunities. There are good signs, in general. The greatest attention should be to continuing upgrade of housing in the core area: clean-up, fix-up, demolition and redevelopment, and in-fill. Townhouses and rental apartments have strong potential. The elderly market is big and growing. There are diverse opportunities but the City should

## **Conclusion**

Various kinds of residential, retail and office projects are possible now in Rensselaer and more opportunities will arise as the City's image changes and there is recognition of the value of the location.

Redevelopment will bring appreciation in land values. The value of land on the industrial waterfront in Troy is now about \$60,000-70,000 per acre, significantly higher than it was just a few years back. Values of this level will start to drive industry away from the waterfront and the downtown and replace it with offices, stores and housing.

There may be a need for an urban renewal entity that can acquire property and direct its redevelopment. There is no such agency here now, although the IDA has eminent domain powers. In any case the implementation of the types of projects that are possible will require a formidable organization with real estate development skills.

*(The Market-Based Development Strategy included here is an excerpt from the City of Rensselaer's Market Analysis, which is on file with the City of Rensselaer.)*

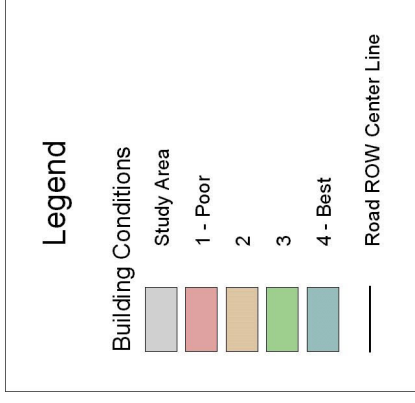


## **APPENDIX C**

*CBD Building Conditions Analysis*



# The City of Rensselaer Central Business District Plan Facade Analysis

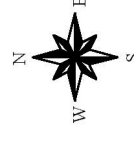


1 = Facade contains cracks, chipped paint, wood boards and looks weathered.

2 = Dirty, chipped paint, and unmaintained facade.

3 = Chipped brick or paint, minimal maintenance required.

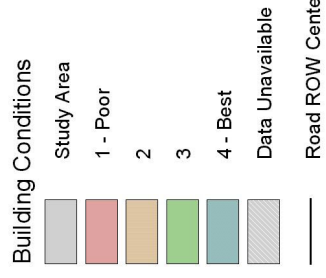
4 = Unblemished facaded, excellent condition.





# The City of Rensselaer Central Business District Plan Landscaping Analysis

## Legend

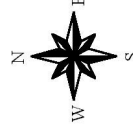


1 = Overgrown vegetation, including bushes/shrubs, empty planters, unmaintained landscaping.

2 = Grass is not maintained, planters require attention.

3 = Grass is maintained, but bushes/shrubs require trimming.

4 = Grass, bushes/shrubs are maintained regularly, planters are filled with plants.










DESIGN PROFESSIONALS  
169 Mohawk Street  
Cohoes, NY 12047



# The City of Rensselaer Central Business District Plan Lighting Analysis

## Legend

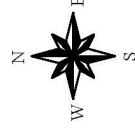
Building Conditions	
	Study Area
	1 - Poor
	2
	3
	4 - Best
	Data Unavailable
	Road ROW Center Line

1 = Unmaintained fixtures. Fixtures are bent, tilted, missing bulbs or contain cracked glass.

2 = Fixtures are missing bulbs, tilted, and require painting.

3 = Fixtures are maintained but need to be cleaned.

4 = Excellent condition. Traditional lighting fixture.

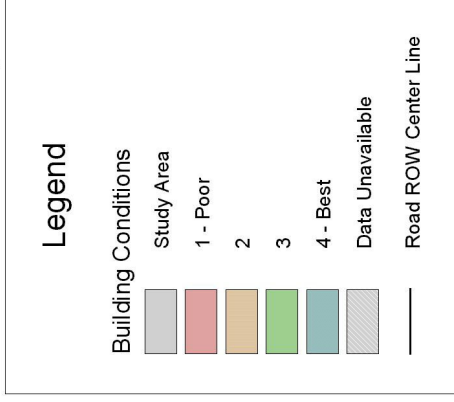


DESIGN PROFESSIONALS  
169 Mohawk Street  
Cohoes, NY 12047

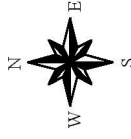




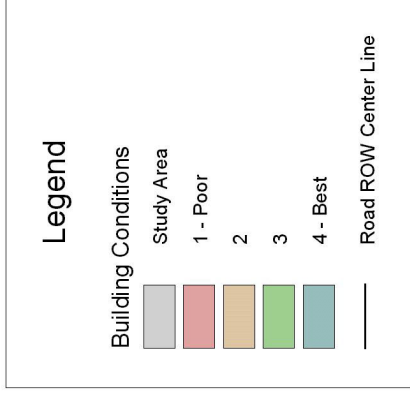
# The City of Rensselaer Central Business District Plan Stairs/Entrances Analysis



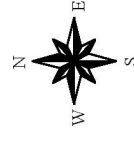
- 1 = Stairs are cracked, tilted, weathered, or covered with vegetation, railings are bent or missing, and entrance contains broken windows.
- 2 = Stairs are cracked and uneven, and entrance contains chipped paint.
- 3 = Stairs/entrances are maintained but require improvement
- 4 = Excellent condition.



# The City of Rensselaer Central Business District Plan Structural Analysis










- 1 = Cracked foundation, leaning structure, or bowing walls.
- 2 = Noticeable brick cracking and chipping.
- 3 = Minimal cracking or bowing.
- 4 = Excellent structural condition.



# The City of Rensselaer Central Business District Plan Windows Analysis

## Legend

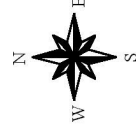
Building Conditions	
	Study Area
	1 - Poor
	2
	3
	4 - Best
	Data Unavailable
	Road ROW Center Line

1 = Cracked or boarded window panes, chipped or rotted frames.

2 = Rotting frames and chipped paint, weathered conditions.

3 = Chipped paint.

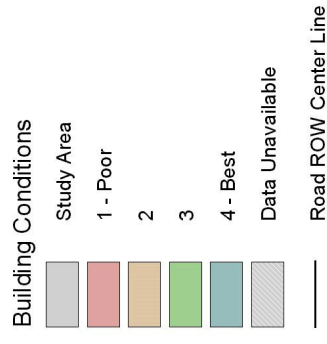
4 = Windows are maintained. No chipping of paint or rotted frames.



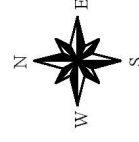


# The City of Rensselaer Central Business District Plan Overall Building Conditions

## Legend



Overall building conditions are based on the average of facade, windows, structural and stairs/entrance analysis.





## **APPENDIX D**

*SEQRA*



**617.20**  
**Appendix A**  
**State Environmental Quality Review**  
**FULL ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT FORM**

**Purpose:** The full EAF is designed to help applicants and agencies determine, in an orderly manner, whether a project or action may be significant. The question of whether an action may be significant is not always easy to answer. Frequently, there are aspects of a project that are subjective or unmeasurable. It is also understood that those who determine significance may have little or no formal knowledge of the environment or may not be technically expert in environmental analysis. In addition, many who have knowledge in one particular area may not be aware of the broader concerns affecting the question of significance.

The full EAF is intended to provide a method whereby applicants and agencies can be assured that the determination process has been orderly, comprehensive in nature, yet flexible enough to allow introduction of information to fit a project or action.

**Full EAF Components:** The full EAF is comprised of three parts:

- Part 1:** Provides objective data and information about a given project and its site. By identifying basic project data, it assists a reviewer in the analysis that takes place in Parts 2 and 3.
- Part 2:** Focuses on identifying the range of possible impacts that may occur from a project or action. It provides guidance as to whether an impact is likely to be considered small to moderate or whether it is a potentially-large impact. The form also identifies whether an impact can be mitigated or reduced.
- Part 3:** If any impact in Part 2 is identified as potentially-large, then Part 3 is used to evaluate whether or not the impact is actually important.

**THIS AREA FOR LEAD AGENCY USE ONLY**

**DETERMINATION OF SIGNIFICANCE -- Type 1 and Unlisted Actions**

Identify the Portions of EAF completed for this project:



Part 1



Part 2



Part 3

Upon review of the information recorded on this EAF (Parts 1 and 2 and 3 if appropriate), and any other supporting information, and considering both the magnitude and importance of each impact, it is reasonably determined by the lead agency that:



A. The project will not result in any large and important impact(s) and, therefore, is one which will not have a significant impact on the environment, therefore a negative declaration will be prepared.



B. Although the project could have a significant effect on the environment, there will not be a significant effect for this Unlisted Action because the mitigation measures described in PART 3 have been required, therefore a **CONDITIONED negative declaration** will be prepared.\*



C. The project may result in one or more large and important impacts that may have a significant impact on the environment, therefore a **positive declaration** will be prepared.

\*A Conditioned Negative Declaration is only valid for Unlisted Actions

Adoption of the City of Rensselaer Downtown Redevelopment PI

Name of Action

City of Rensselaer

Name of Lead Agency

Mike Bridgeford

Common Council

Print or Type Name of Responsible Officer in Lead Agency

Title of Responsible Officer

Signature of Responsible Officer in Lead Agency

Signature of Preparer (if different from responsible officer)

*Mayhew Pth*

6-30-03  
Date



## PART 1--PROJECT INFORMATION

### Prepared by Project Sponsor

NOTICE: This document is designed to assist in determining whether the action proposed may have a significant effect on the environment. Please complete the entire form, Parts A through E. Answers to these questions will be considered as part of the application for approval and may be subject to further verification and public review. Provide any additional information you believe will be needed to complete Parts 2 and 3.

It is expected that completion of the full EAF will be dependent on information currently available and will not involve new studies, research or investigation. If information requiring such additional work is unavailable, so indicate and specify each instance.

Name of Action

Location of Action (include Street Address, Municipality and County)

Name of Applicant/Sponsor

Address

City / PO

State

Zip Code

Business Telephone

Name of Owner (if different)

Address

City / PO

State

Zip Code

Business Telephone

Description of Action:

## Please Complete Each Question--Indicate N.A. if not applicable

### A. SITE DESCRIPTION

Physical setting of overall project, both developed and undeveloped areas.

1. Present Land Use:      Urban                  Industrial                  Commercial                  Residential (suburban)                  Rural (non-farm)
- Forest                  Agriculture                  Other

2. Total acreage of project area:                  acres.

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE	PRESENTLY	AFTER COMPLETION
Meadow or Brushland (Non-agricultural)	acres	acres
Forested	acres	acres
Agricultural (Includes orchards, cropland, pasture, etc.)	acres	acres
Wetland (Freshwater or tidal as per Articles 24,25 of ECL)	acres	acres
Water Surface Area	acres	acres
Unvegetated (Rock, earth or fill)	acres	acres
Roads, buildings and other paved surfaces	acres	acres
Other (Indicate type)	acres	acres

3. What is predominant soil type(s) on project site?

- a. Soil drainage:                  Well drained                  % of site                  Moderately well drained                  % of site.
- Poorly drained                  % of site

- b. If any agricultural land is involved, how many acres of soil are classified within soil group 1 through 4 of the NYS Land Classification System?                  acres (see 1 NYCRR 370).

4. Are there bedrock outcroppings on project site?                  Yes                  No

- a. What is depth to bedrock                  (in feet)

5. Approximate percentage of proposed project site with slopes:

0-10%          %          10- 15%          %          15% or greater          %

6. Is project substantially contiguous to, or contain a building, site, or district, listed on the State or National Registers of Historic Places?                  Yes                  No

7. Is project substantially contiguous to a site listed on the Register of National Natural Landmarks?                  Yes                  No

8. What is the depth of the water table?                  (in feet)

9. Is site located over a primary, principal, or sole source aquifer?                  Yes                  No

10. Do hunting, fishing or shell fishing opportunities presently exist in the project area?                  Yes                  No

11. Does project site contain any species of plant or animal life that is identified as threatened or endangered? Yes No

According to:

Identify each species:

12. Are there any unique or unusual land forms on the project site? (i.e., cliffs, dunes, other geological formations?)

Yes No

Describe:

13. Is the project site presently used by the community or neighborhood as an open space or recreation area?

Yes No

If yes, explain:

14. Does the present site include scenic views known to be important to the community? Yes No

15. Streams within or contiguous to project area:

a. Name of Stream and name of River to which it is tributary

16. Lakes, ponds, wetland areas within or contiguous to project area:

b. Size (in acres):

17. Is the site served by existing public utilities?                      Yes                      No
- a. If **YES**, does sufficient capacity exist to allow connection?                      Yes                      No
- b. If **YES**, will improvements be necessary to allow connection?                      Yes                      No
18. Is the site located in an agricultural district certified pursuant to Agriculture and Markets Law, Article 25-AA, Section 303 and 304?                      Yes                      No
19. Is the site located in or substantially contiguous to a Critical Environmental Area designated pursuant to Article 8 of the ECL, and 6 NYCRR 617?                      Yes                      No
20. Has the site ever been used for the disposal of solid or hazardous wastes?                      Yes                      No

**B. Project Description**

1. Physical dimensions and scale of project (fill in dimensions as appropriate).
- a. Total contiguous acreage owned or controlled by project sponsor:                      acres.
- b. Project acreage to be developed:                      acres initially;                      acres ultimately.
- c. Project acreage to remain undeveloped:                      acres.
- d. Length of project, in miles:                      (if appropriate)
- e. If the project is an expansion, indicate percent of expansion proposed.                      %
- f. Number of off-street parking spaces existing                      ;                      proposed
- g. Maximum vehicular trips generated per hour:                      (upon completion of project)?
- h. If residential: Number and type of housing units:
- |            | One Family | Two Family | Multiple Family | Condominium |
|------------|------------|------------|-----------------|-------------|
| Initially  |            |            |                 |             |
| Ultimately |            |            |                 |             |
- i. Dimensions (in feet) of largest proposed structure:                      height;                      width;                      length.
- j. Linear feet of frontage along a public thoroughfare project will occupy is?                      ft.
2. How much natural material (i.e. rock, earth, etc.) will be removed from the site?                      tons/cubic yards.
3. Will disturbed areas be reclaimed                      Yes                      No                      N/A
- a. If yes, for what intended purpose is the site being reclaimed?
- b. Will topsoil be stockpiled for reclamation?                      Yes                      No
- c. Will upper subsoil be stockpiled for reclamation?                      Yes                      No
4. How many acres of vegetation (trees, shrubs, ground covers) will be removed from site?                      acres.

5. Will any mature forest (over 100 years old) or other locally-important vegetation be removed by this project?

Yes No

6. If single phase project: Anticipated period of construction: months, (including demolition)

7. If multi-phased:

a. Total number of phases anticipated (number)

b. Anticipated date of commencement phase 1: month year, (including demolition)

c. Approximate completion date of final phase: month year.

d. Is phase 1 functionally dependent on subsequent phases? Yes No

8. Will blasting occur during construction? Yes No

9. Number of jobs generated: during construction ; after project is complete

10. Number of jobs eliminated by this project .

11. Will project require relocation of any projects or facilities? Yes No

If yes, explain:

12. Is surface liquid waste disposal involved? Yes No

a. If yes, indicate type of waste (sewage, industrial, etc) and amount

b. Name of water body into which effluent will be discharged

13. Is subsurface liquid waste disposal involved? Yes No Type

14. Will surface area of an existing water body increase or decrease by proposal? Yes No

If yes, explain:

15. Is project or any portion of project located in a 100 year flood plain? Yes No

16. Will the project generate solid waste? Yes No

a. If yes, what is the amount per month? tons

b. If yes, will an existing solid waste facility be used? Yes No

c. If yes, give name ; location

d. Will any wastes not go into a sewage disposal system or into a sanitary landfill? Yes No



e. If yes, explain:

17. Will the project involve the disposal of solid waste?      Yes      No

a. If yes, what is the anticipated rate of disposal?      tons/month.

b. If yes, what is the anticipated site life?      years.

18. Will project use herbicides or pesticides?      Yes      No

19. Will project routinely produce odors (more than one hour per day)?      Yes      No

20. Will project produce operating noise exceeding the local ambient noise levels?      Yes      No

21. Will project result in an increase in energy use?      Yes      No

If yes, indicate type(s)

22. If water supply is from wells, indicate pumping capacity      gallons/minute.

23. Total anticipated water usage per day      gallons/day.

24. Does project involve Local, State or Federal funding?      Yes      No

If yes, explain:

**25. Approvals Required:**

Type

Submittal Date

City, Town, Village Board

Yes

No

City, Town, Village Planning Board

Yes

No

City, Town Zoning Board

Yes

No

City, County Health Department

Yes

No

Other Local Agencies

Yes

No

Other Regional Agencies

Yes

No

State Agencies

Yes

No

Federal Agencies

Yes

No

**C. Zoning and Planning Information**

1. Does proposed action involve a planning or zoning decision?

Yes

No

If Yes, indicate decision required:

Zoning amendment

Zoning variance

New/revision of master plan

Subdivision

Site plan

Special use permit

Resource management plan

Other

2. What is the zoning classification(s) of the site?

3. What is the maximum potential development of the site if developed as permitted by the present zoning?

4. What is the proposed zoning of the site?

5. What is the maximum potential development of the site if developed as permitted by the proposed zoning?

6. Is the proposed action consistent with the recommended uses in adopted local land use plans? Yes No

7. What are the predominant land use(s) and zoning classifications within a ¼ mile radius of proposed action?

8. Is the proposed action compatible with adjoining/surrounding land uses with a ¼ mile? Yes No

9. If the proposed action is the subdivision of land, how many lots are proposed?

a. What is the minimum lot size proposed?

10. Will proposed action require any authorization(s) for the formation of sewer or water districts?      Yes      No

11. Will the proposed action create a demand for any community provided services (recreation, education, police, fire protection?

Yes      No

a. If yes, is existing capacity sufficient to handle projected demand?      Yes      No

12. Will the proposed action result in the generation of traffic significantly above present levels?      Yes      No

a. If yes, is the existing road network adequate to handle the additional traffic.      Yes      No

**D. Informational Details**

Attach any additional information as may be needed to clarify your project. If there are or may be any adverse impacts associated with your proposal, please discuss such impacts and the measures which you propose to mitigate or avoid them.

**E. Verification**

I certify that the information provided above is true to the best of my knowledge.

Applicant/Sponsor Name

Date

Signature

Title

If the action is in the Coastal Area, and you are a state agency, complete the Coastal Assessment Form before proceeding with this assessment.

## PART 2 - PROJECT IMPACTS AND THEIR MAGNITUDE

### Responsibility of Lead Agency

#### General Information (Read Carefully)

- ! In completing the form the reviewer should be guided by the question: Have my responses and determinations been **reasonable**? The reviewer is not expected to be an expert environmental analyst.
- ! The **Examples** provided are to assist the reviewer by showing types of impacts and wherever possible the threshold of magnitude that would trigger a response in column 2. The examples are generally applicable throughout the State and for most situations. But, for any specific project or site other examples and/or lower thresholds may be appropriate for a Potential Large Impact response, thus requiring evaluation in Part 3.
- ! The impacts of each project, on each site, in each locality, will vary. Therefore, the examples are illustrative and have been offered as guidance. They do not constitute an exhaustive list of impacts and thresholds to answer each question.
- ! The number of examples per question does not indicate the importance of each question.
- ! In identifying impacts, consider long term, short term and cumulative effects.

#### Instructions (Read carefully)

- a. Answer each of the 20 questions in PART 2. Answer **Yes** if there will be **any** impact.
- b. **Maybe** answers should be considered as **Yes** answers.
- c. If answering **Yes** to a question then check the appropriate box(column 1 or 2)to indicate the potential size of the impact. If impact threshold equals or exceeds any example provided, check column 2. If impact will occur but threshold is lower than example, check column 1.
- d. Identifying that an Impact will be potentially large (column 2) does not mean that it is also necessarily **significant**. Any large impact must be evaluated in PART 3 to determine significance. Identifying an impact in column 2 simply asks that it be looked at further.
- e. If reviewer has doubt about size of the impact then consider the impact as potentially large and proceed to PART 3.
- f. If a potentially large impact checked in column 2 can be mitigated by change(s) in the project to a small to moderate impact, also check the **Yes** box in column 3. A **No** response indicates that such a reduction is not possible. This must be explained in Part 3.

1	2	3
Small to Moderate Impact	Potential Large Impact	Can Impact Be Mitigated by Project Change

#### Impact on Land

1. Will the Proposed Action result in a physical change to the project site?

NO                      YES

#### Examples that would apply to column 2

C	Any construction on slopes of 15% or greater, (15 foot rise per 100 foot of length), or where the general slopes in the project area exceed 10%.	Yes	No
C	Construction on land where the depth to the water table is less than 3 feet.	Yes	No
C	Construction of paved parking area for 1,000 or more vehicles.	Yes	No
C	Construction on land where bedrock is exposed or generally within 3 feet of existing ground surface.	Yes	No
C	Construction that will continue for more than 1 year or involve more than one phase or stage.	Yes	No
C	Excavation for mining purposes that would remove more than 1,000 tons of natural material (i.e., rock or soil) per year.	Yes	No



	1 Small to Moderate Impact	2 Potential Large Impact	3 Can Impact Be Mitigated by Project Change	
c Construction or expansion of a sanitary landfill.			Yes	No
c Construction in a designated floodway.			Yes	No
c Other impacts:			Yes	No
2. Will there be an effect to any unique or unusual land forms found on the site? (i.e., cliffs, dunes, geological formations, etc.)				
NO YES				
c Specific land forms:			Yes	No

### Impact on Water

3. Will Proposed Action affect any water body designated as protected? (Under Articles 15, 24, 25 of the Environmental Conservation Law, ECL)

NO YES

**Examples** that would apply to column 2

c Developable area of site contains a protected water body.			Yes	No
c Dredging more than 100 cubic yards of material from channel of a protected stream.			Yes	No
c Extension of utility distribution facilities through a protected water body.			Yes	No
c Construction in a designated freshwater or tidal wetland.			Yes	No
c Other impacts:			Yes	No

4. Will Proposed Action affect any non-protected existing or new body of water?

NO YES

**Examples** that would apply to column 2

c A 10% increase or decrease in the surface area of any body of water or more than a 10 acre increase or decrease.			Yes	No
c Construction of a body of water that exceeds 10 acres of surface area.			Yes	No
c Other impacts:			Yes	No

1	2	3
Small to Moderate Impact	Potential Large Impact	Can Impact Be Mitigated by Project Change

5. Will Proposed Action affect surface or groundwater quality or quantity?

NO YES

**Examples** that would apply to column 2

C	Proposed Action will require a discharge permit.	Yes	No
C	Proposed Action requires use of a source of water that does not have approval to serve proposed (project) action.	Yes	No
C	Proposed Action requires water supply from wells with greater than 45 gallons per minute pumping capacity.	Yes	No
C	Construction or operation causing any contamination of a water supply system.	Yes	No
C	Proposed Action will adversely affect groundwater.	Yes	No
C	Liquid effluent will be conveyed off the site to facilities which presently do not exist or have inadequate capacity.	Yes	No
C	Proposed Action would use water in excess of 20,000 gallons per day.	Yes	No
C	Proposed Action will likely cause siltation or other discharge into an existing body of water to the extent that there will be an obvious visual contrast to natural conditions.	Yes	No
C	Proposed Action will require the storage of petroleum or chemical products greater than 1,100 gallons.	Yes	No
C	Proposed Action will allow residential uses in areas without water and/or sewer services.	Yes	No
C	Proposed Action locates commercial and/or industrial uses which may require new or expansion of existing waste treatment and/or storage facilities.	Yes	No
C	Other impacts:	Yes	No

1	2	3
Small to Moderate Impact	Potential Large Impact	Can Impact Be Mitigated by Project Change

6. Will Proposed Action alter drainage flow or patterns, or surface water runoff?

NO YES

**Examples** that would apply to column 2

<input type="checkbox"/> Proposed Action would change flood water flows	Yes	No
<input type="checkbox"/> Proposed Action may cause substantial erosion.	Yes	No
<input type="checkbox"/> Proposed Action is incompatible with existing drainage patterns.	Yes	No
<input type="checkbox"/> Proposed Action will allow development in a designated floodway.	Yes	No
<input type="checkbox"/> Other impacts:	Yes	No

#### IMPACT ON AIR

7. Will Proposed Action affect air quality?

NO YES

**Examples** that would apply to column 2

<input type="checkbox"/> Proposed Action will induce 1,000 or more vehicle trips in any given hour.	Yes	No
<input type="checkbox"/> Proposed Action will result in the incineration of more than 1 ton of refuse per hour.	Yes	No
<input type="checkbox"/> Emission rate of total contaminants will exceed 5 lbs. per hour or a heat source producing more than 10 million BTU's per hour.	Yes	No
<input type="checkbox"/> Proposed Action will allow an increase in the amount of land committed to industrial use.	Yes	No
<input type="checkbox"/> Proposed Action will allow an increase in the density of industrial development within existing industrial areas.	Yes	No
<input type="checkbox"/> Other impacts:	Yes	No

#### IMPACT ON PLANTS AND ANIMALS

8. Will Proposed Action affect any threatened or endangered species?

NO YES

**Examples** that would apply to column 2

<input type="checkbox"/> Reduction of one or more species listed on the New York or Federal list, using the site, over or near the site, or found on the site.	Yes	No
--	-----	----

1	2	3
Small to Moderate Impact	Potential Large Impact	Can Impact Be Mitigated by Project Change

- |  |                              |
|--|------------------------------|
| <div> <div>C</div> <div>Removal of any portion of a critical or significant wildlife habitat.</div> </div>                               | <div>Yes</div> <div>No</div> |
| <div> <div>C</div> <div>Application of pesticide or herbicide more than twice a year, other than for agricultural purposes.</div> </div> | <div>Yes</div> <div>No</div> |
| <div> <div>C</div> <div>Other impacts:</div> </div>  | <div>Yes</div> <div>No</div> |

9.

Will Proposed Action substantially affect non-threatened or non-endangered species?

NO

YES

Examples that would apply to column 2

- |   |                              |
|---|------------------------------|
| <div> <div>C</div> <div>Proposed Action would substantially interfere with any resident or migratory fish, shellfish or wildlife species.</div> </div>                          | <div>Yes</div> <div>No</div> |
| <div> <div>C</div> <div>Proposed Action requires the removal of more than 10 acres of mature forest (over 100 years of age) or other locally important vegetation.</div> </div> | <div>Yes</div> <div>No</div> |
| <div> <div>C</div> <div>Other impacts:</div> </div>   | <div>Yes</div> <div>No</div> |

IMPACT ON AGRICULTURAL LAND RESOURCES

10.

Will Proposed Action affect agricultural land resources?

NO

YES

Examples that would apply to column 2

- |   |                              |
|---|------------------------------|
| <div> <div>C</div> <div>The Proposed Action would sever, cross or limit access to agricultural land (includes cropland, hayfields, pasture, vineyard, orchard, etc.)</div> </div>                                 | <div>Yes</div> <div>No</div> |
| <div> <div>C</div> <div>Construction activity would excavate or compact the soil profile of agricultural land.</div> </div>   | <div>Yes</div> <div>No</div> |
| <div> <div>C</div> <div>The Proposed Action would irreversibly convert more than 10 acres of agricultural land or, if located in an Agricultural District, more than 2.5 acres of agricultural land.</div> </div> | <div>Yes</div> <div>No</div> |

	1 Small to Moderate Impact	2 Potential Large Impact	3 Can Impact Be Mitigated by Project Change	
C The Proposed Action would disrupt or prevent installation of agricultural land management systems (e.g., subsurface drain lines, outlet ditches, strip cropping); or create a need for such measures (e.g. cause a farm field to drain poorly due to increased runoff).			Yes	No
C Other impacts:			Yes	No

#### IMPACT ON AESTHETIC RESOURCES

11. Will Proposed Action affect aesthetic resources? (If necessary, use the Visual EAF Addendum in Section 617.20, Appendix B.)  
                     NO                      YES

**Examples** that would apply to column 2

C Proposed land uses, or project components obviously different from or in sharp contrast to current surrounding land use patterns, whether man-made or natural.			Yes	No
C Proposed land uses, or project components visible to users of aesthetic resources which will eliminate or significantly reduce their enjoyment of the aesthetic qualities of that resource.			Yes	No
C Project components that will result in the elimination or significant screening of scenic views known to be important to the area.			Yes	No
C Other impacts:			Yes	No

#### IMPACT ON HISTORIC AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES

12. Will Proposed Action impact any site or structure of historic, prehistoric or paleontological importance?  
                     NO                      YES

**Examples** that would apply to column 2

C Proposed Action occurring wholly or partially within or substantially contiguous to any facility or site listed on the State or National Register of historic places.			Yes	No
C Any impact to an archaeological site or fossil bed located within the project site.			Yes	No
C Proposed Action will occur in an area designated as sensitive for archaeological sites on the NYS Site Inventory.			Yes	No



1  
Small to  
Moderate  
Impact

2  
Potential  
Large  
Impact

3  
Can Impact Be  
Mitigated by  
Project Change

C Other impacts:

Yes No

#### IMPACT ON OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION

13. Will proposed Action affect the quantity or quality of existing or future open spaces or recreational opportunities?

NO YES

**Examples** that would apply to column 2

C The permanent foreclosure of a future recreational opportunity.

Yes No

C A major reduction of an open space important to the community.

Yes No

C Other impacts:

Yes No

#### IMPACT ON CRITICAL ENVIRONMENTAL AREAS

14. Will Proposed Action impact the exceptional or unique characteristics of a critical environmental area (CEA) established pursuant to subdivision 6NYCRR 617.14(g)?

NO YES

List the environmental characteristics that caused the designation of the CEA.

**Examples** that would apply to column 2

C Proposed Action to locate within the CEA?

Yes No

C Proposed Action will result in a reduction in the quantity of the resource?

Yes No

C Proposed Action will result in a reduction in the quality of the resource?

Yes No

C Proposed Action will impact the use, function or enjoyment of the resource?

Yes No

C Other impacts:

Yes No

1	2	3
Small to Moderate Impact	Potential Large Impact	Can Impact Be Mitigated by Project Change

#### IMPACT ON TRANSPORTATION

15. Will there be an effect to existing transportation systems?  
NO YES

**Examples** that would apply to column 2

C	Alteration of present patterns of movement of people and/or goods.	Yes	No
C	Proposed Action will result in major traffic problems.	Yes	No
C	Other impacts:	Yes	No

#### IMPACT ON ENERGY

16. Will Proposed Action affect the community's sources of fuel or energy supply?  
NO YES

**Examples** that would apply to column 2

C	Proposed Action will cause a greater than 5% increase in the use of any form of energy in the municipality.	Yes	No
C	Proposed Action will require the creation or extension of an energy transmission or supply system to serve more than 50 single or two family residences or to serve a major commercial or industrial use.	Yes	No
C	Other impacts:	Yes	No

#### NOISE AND ODOR IMPACT

17. Will there be objectionable odors, noise, or vibration as a result of the Proposed Action?  
NO YES

**Examples** that would apply to column 2

C	Blasting within 1,500 feet of a hospital, school or other sensitive facility.	Yes	No
C	Odors will occur routinely (more than one hour per day).	Yes	No
C	Proposed Action will produce operating noise exceeding the local ambient noise levels for noise outside of structures.	Yes	No
C	Proposed Action will remove natural barriers that would act as a noise screen.	Yes	No
C	Other impacts:	Yes	No

1	2	3
Small to Moderate Impact	Potential Large Impact	Can Impact Be Mitigated by Project Change

#### IMPACT ON PUBLIC HEALTH

18. Will Proposed Action affect public health and safety?  
NO YES

C	Proposed Action may cause a risk of explosion or release of hazardous substances (i.e. oil, pesticides, chemicals, radiation, etc.) in the event of accident or upset conditions, or there may be a chronic low level discharge or emission.	Yes	No
C	Proposed Action may result in the burial of "hazardous wastes" in any form (i.e. toxic, poisonous, highly reactive, radioactive, irritating, infectious, etc.)	Yes	No
C	Storage facilities for one million or more gallons of liquefied natural gas or other flammable liquids.	Yes	No
C	Proposed Action may result in the excavation or other disturbance within 2,000 feet of a site used for the disposal of solid or hazardous waste.	Yes	No
C	Other impacts:	Yes	No

#### IMPACT ON GROWTH AND CHARACTER OF COMMUNITY OR NEIGHBORHOOD

19. Will Proposed Action affect the character of the existing community?  
NO YES

**Examples** that would apply to column 2

C	The permanent population of the city, town or village in which the project is located is likely to grow by more than 5%.	Yes	No
C	The municipal budget for capital expenditures or operating services will increase by more than 5% per year as a result of this project.	Yes	No
C	Proposed Action will conflict with officially adopted plans or goals.	Yes	No
C	Proposed Action will cause a change in the density of land use.	Yes	No
C	Proposed Action will replace or eliminate existing facilities, structures or areas of historic importance to the community.	Yes	No
C	Development will create a demand for additional community services (e.g. schools, police and fire, etc.)	Yes	No

	1 Small to Moderate Impact	2 Potential Large Impact	3 Can Impact Be Mitigated by Project Change	
C Proposed Action will set an important precedent for future projects.			Yes	No
C Proposed Action will create or eliminate employment.			Yes	No
C Other impacts:			Yes	No

20. Is there, or is there likely to be, public controversy related to potential adverse environment impacts?

NO

YES

**If Any Action in Part 2 Is Identified as a Potential Large Impact or If you Cannot Determine the Magnitude of Impact, Proceed to Part 3**

## Part 3 - EVALUATION OF THE IMPORTANCE OF IMPACTS

### Responsibility of Lead Agency

Part 3 must be prepared if one or more impact(s) is considered to be potentially large, even if the impact(s) may be mitigated.

**Instructions** (If you need more space, attach additional sheets)

Discuss the following for each impact identified in Column 2 of Part 2:

1. Briefly describe the impact.
2. Describe (if applicable) how the impact could be mitigated or reduced to a small to moderate impact by project change(s).
3. Based on the information available, decide if it is reasonable to conclude that this impact is **important**.

To answer the question of importance, consider:

- ! The probability of the impact occurring
- ! The duration of the impact
- ! Its irreversibility, including permanently lost resources of value
- ! Whether the impact can or will be controlled
- ! The regional consequence of the impact
- ! Its potential divergence from local needs and goals
- ! Whether known objections to the project relate to this impact.





## **APPENDIX E**

*Riverfront Park Redevelopment Plan*



## **Riverfront Park Redevelopment Plan**

### **Rensselaer, New York**

The City of Rensselaer is home to the most unique and untapped waterfront in the Capital District. With over two miles of potential linear trail and three waterfront parks, the City is well positioned to re-connect its urban fabric to the economic, recreational, and environmental benefits provided by the Hudson River. Rensselaer desires a consistent and well-planned capital improvements program focused on the redevelopment of key areas of its waterfront. The first section of waterfront trail, extending from the southern property line of the Rensselaer Middle and High School to the Livingston Avenue Bridge, is in the planning stages. Conceptual planning for areas north of the bridge has been presented to the City and is in the feasibility analysis stage. In addition, the City is working with the Fort Crailo neighborhood to determine the best alternative for connecting it to Riverfront Park with a heritage trail that would improve access to the Fort Crailo National Landmark.

One of the key components of the City's waterfront redevelopment efforts is Riverfront Park. Located in the heart of Rensselaer's Central Business District, this park provides both passive and active recreational outlets for residents and visitors alike. Riverfront Park is viewed as the primary gateway for people to access the City's one-of-a-kind waterfront. However, in its current condition, the Park instills a sense of inaccessibility. Moreover, many of its recreational resources (basketball and tennis courts, baseball diamond, etc.) are in poor condition and require rehabilitation. Finally, Riverfront Park is an island within the City, lacking waterfront linkages to the north and south. Rensselaer would like the Park to function as the primary waterfront node, linking the Central Business District to the neighborhoods, Fort Crailo and the Boat Launch Park in the historic Bath Neighborhood. Ultimately, Rensselaer views their waterfront as part of a regional system link to communities in Rensselaer and Albany County.

A conceptual Improvements Plan is provided for Riverfront Park in this appendix. Provided below is a list of the proposed redevelopment projects.

1. Waterfront Trail Improvements – Improve waterfront trail in Riverfront Park to include new surfaces, benches and lighting.
2. Interpretive and Restroom Facility with an Educational Station – Construct a multi-function facility near the Clearwater dock.
3. Mill Creek Bridge Construction – Install a new bridge to span Mill Creek and connect to the southern portion of Riverfront Park allowing future connection to the Fort Crailo Neighborhood.
4. Restored Baseball Field and Stands – Improve existing baseball facility by rehabilitating the in-field and installing new stands.
5. Improved Riverfront Park Parking Area – Repave and strip parking lot.
6. Beverwyk Plaza Gateway Park – Improve existing park to function as a Gateway to Riverfront Park and enhance its usability as a passive area.
7. Improved Tennis and Basketball Court – Restore existing tennis and basketball courts.
8. Fifth Avenue Reconstruction and Gateway Establishment – Reconstruct Fifth Avenue to function as a Gateway to Riverfront Park with improved sidewalks, historic lighting, entry signage and markers, curbing and drainage.
9. Mill Creek Park Restoration – Restore Mill Creek Park to become a functional neighborhood park with direct linkages to Riverfront Park.





*Prepared By*



**169 Mohawk Street  
Cohoes, NY 12047  
(518) 238-2197**