



Rensselaer RISING

REVITALIZATION PLAN

CITY OF RENSSELAER
RENSSELAER COUNTY, NY
2025



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NEW YORK STATE DEPARTMENT OF STATE WITH STATE FUNDS PROVIDED
THROUGH THE BROWNFIELD OPPORTUNITY AREA PROGRAM.*



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The City from the north end of the study area looking towards the Livingston Avenue Bridge.

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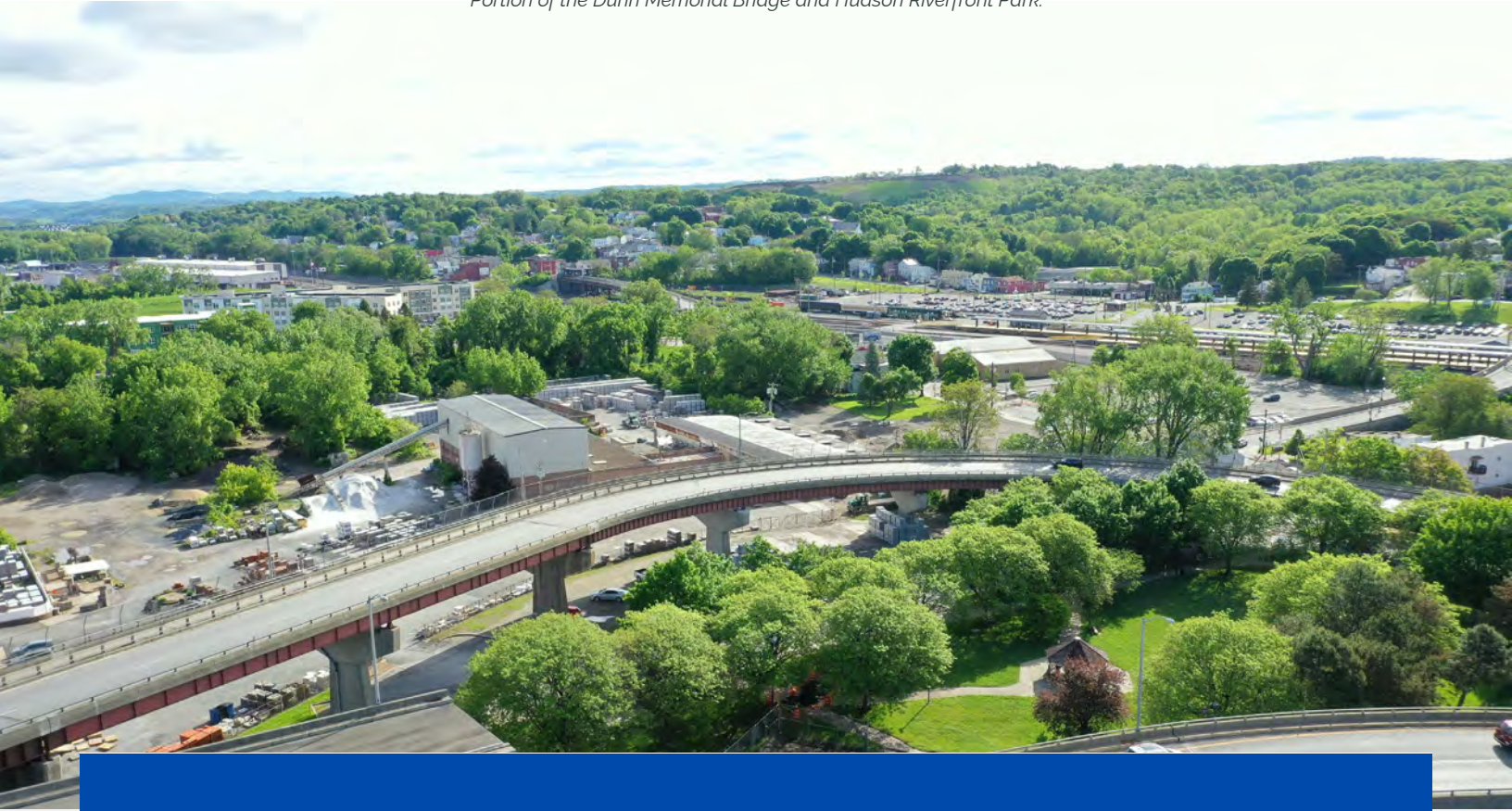
RENSSELAER RISING

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Downtown Rensselaer along Broadway.



Portion of the Dunn Memorial Bridge and Hudson Riverfront Park.

INTRODUCTION

Rensselaer Rising is a planning initiative that sets a vision for an approximately 227-acre area in the City of Rensselaer. The study area encompasses the Hudson River waterfront, the downtown business district, the Amtrak Station and its surrounding land, the Fort Crailo Neighborhood, and the Columbia Turnpike corridor. The City of Rensselaer identified the study area as a location to prioritize redevelopment and revitalization planning and developed Rensselaer Rising with the support of a New York State Department of State (NYSDOS) Brownfield Opportunity Area (BOA) Planning Grant.

The objectives and recommendations in this Plan are the result of ongoing planning efforts and extensive public outreach and will be utilized by the City and local leadership to guide public and private investment within the study area. This Plan also provides a framework for implementation to pursue funding and to make the ideas captured in the Rensselaer Rising Plan a reality.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

STUDY AREA

The Rensselaer Rising study area is a 227-acre area within the City of Rensselaer and encompasses 518 parcels. The study area is oriented around underutilized sites in the City's downtown commercial district, and along the Hudson River waterfront, as well as the key transportation hub of the Albany-Rensselaer Amtrak Station and gateways that welcome people to the City.

The eastern boundary follows East Street facing the Amtrak Station and its surrounding parcels, a key destination within the City. The study area follows the railway to the south of the station to include South Street. West of the railroad, the study area moves to include the busy Columbia Turnpike Corridor, the City's main industrial hub, as well as the historic Fort Crailo neighborhood extending to the Hudson River. Moving north, the western boundary of the study area follows the Hudson River waterfront to include the Hudson River Waterfront Park, the City's largest and most popular park and

open space destination, as well as the City's downtown core. The commercial core is made up of businesses and a mix of residential parcels, government services, and several large parcels making up the NYS Office of Children and Family Services campus, a significant employment hub in Rensselaer.

The study area was chosen due to its concentration of commercial, transportation, recreation, and residential uses in the City. It represents many key components of the City's Downtown and several of the City's major strengths, including its rail station, riverfront park, and historic neighborhood. While being a hub of downtown activity, this area also has a significant concentration of vacant and underutilized parcels that represent key opportunities for the City to build on and continue to improve its downtown area. Within this study area, the City can work to build momentum to address its barriers and challenges to development, while also highlighting what already makes the City a unique and great place to live.



LEAD PROJECT SPONSORS

Rensselaer Rising, is sponsored by the City of Rensselaer, with funding provided by the New York State Department of State (DOS) through the BOA Program.

This project was led by the City of Rensselaer with guidance and support provided by a community-based Advisory Committee ("Committee"). The Committee included residents, business owners, City representatives, and school district representatives who were vital in developing the Rensselaer Rising Plan.



Downtown Rensselaer businesses along Broadway.

VISION & GOALS

VISION STATEMENT

A vision statement is a forward-looking, aspirational statement that reflects the values and priorities of residents, as well as what they would like their community to look like in the next 10 to 20 years. It serves as the foundation upon which the Plan is built and helps to organize recommendations and goals. The Vision Statement was developed from feedback gathered through extensive work with the Advisory Committee and the public and informed the development of the plan's recommendations.

The City of Rensselaer will build on its existing unique, walkable, riverfront community to become one of the most attractive places to live in the Northeast, with a beautiful and accessible waterfront, active downtown, and convenient transportation connections both within the City, and to other regional communities. Downtown development will transform underutilized and vacant properties into a main street that is alive and vibrant, serving as a hub where civic and community entities are clustered, and business thrives. Downtown businesses will be teeming with entrepreneurs and community services aiming to attract residents, commuters, and visitors alike. Rensselaer will leverage its existing resources, including its bustling Amtrak Station, Hudson River waterfront, views of the New York State Capitol, and its many green spaces to create cohesive and attractive connections for residents and visitors to access amenities and spend more time in the City.

GOALS

While the vision statement describes the desired future outlook of the City, goals are how that vision will become a reality as it is pursued in the coming years. Five overarching goals were established for the Rensselaer Rising plan that also provide an organizational framework for the implementation plan.

1

Establish an
Identifiable and
Thriving Downtown



2

Enhance the
Hudson River
Waterfront



3

Highlight and Market
Existing Community
Assets



4

Improve Connectivity
and Promote Multi-
Modal Transit



5

Ensure Access to
Community Services



COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

Through the BOA program, communities are provided an opportunity to develop policies and recommendations that address the specific issues facing the community and implement tools to address future needs and challenges. To ensure for the successful implementation of Rensselaer Rising, and to ensure it is truly reflective of the community's vision and goals, community engagement and buy-in was key. Each phase of this project built on input gathered through collaboration between the public, business and property owners, and interested partners. Active engagement and resident input resulted in a plan that is representative of the needs of the people it serves.

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION PLAN

A Community Participation Plan was developed to ensure that the public and all interested stakeholders had opportunities to provide their input and feedback throughout the planning process in a variety of ways. The plan outlines the types of forums and outreach mechanisms were used to engage the public and community stakeholders and served as a guide throughout the process.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The City of Rensselaer established an Advisory Committee at the beginning of the process to be representative of the community and the interests of the study area. The Committee included representatives from local City staff, local business owners, residents, and local organizations.

VISIONING SURVEY

The Rensselaer Rising visioning survey was launched in January 2024. The survey was intended to gather feedback from residents on a range of topics, including the City's defining characteristics, priorities for the future, overall vision for the City, and other topics. The survey was posted to the City's website (where updates on the project were posted throughout the process) and was distributed to the public across multiple communication channels, including news media, public events, posters, and person-to-person outreach. Over the three months the survey was open, 239 survey responses were collected.

PUBLIC EVENTS

Rensselaer Rising planning and community engagement took place at several community events and Rensselaer Rising-specific workshops, along with more targeted outreach to specific groups within the community. Community events included attendance at "Rensselaer Night Out," attendance at the Rensselaer Farmers Market, the Ft. Crailo State Historic Site Centennial Celebration, and a joint event with the Albany Riverfront Collaborative. Targeted outreach included a presentation to and conversation with residents at the Spinney at Pond View senior living community, and a survey of employees at the Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) campus located in the study area. Public workshops also included an initial visioning workshop at the Rensselaer School District, and a workshop to receive input on the draft Plan at City Hall.

PROPERTY OWNER & STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

Working with the Committee, the consultant team identified stakeholders in the community. This outreach was largely focused on study area property owners, businesses, and community organizations. One-on-one in-person and virtual interviews were conducted with stakeholders, along with focus group meetings, to dive deeper into topics to further understand current uses and potential future uses of properties throughout the study area, and to provide updates on development concepts.



Members of the Advisory Committee during a working session.



Public participation at the Rensselaer Farmer's Market.



ANALYSIS OF THE STUDY AREA

The Rensselaer Rising study area shown from above.

DEMOGRAPHICS

- Rensselaer's population has decreased slightly over the past 10 years, while Rensselaer County has grown slightly.
- The City is slightly younger than the rest of the County, with a focus on young professionals.
- There is also an increase in the retirement aged population in both the County and City.
- Rensselaer is more diverse than the greater County.
- Household occupancy has been trending from homeownership to renting in the community.
- The overall financial burden of both owning and renting has decreased over time in the City.
- Considering adjustment for inflation, both the City and County of Rensselaer have experienced an increase in median income level.

LAND USE & ZONING

- There are nearly 23 acres of vacant land within the study area. These lots provide an opportunity for the community to consider their use for future residential and commercial investment.

- Over half of the study area is made up of residential use lots. Many of these are large single-family homes that have been converted to apartments.
- Commercial use parking lots are prevalent in the study area. This may provide the community with an opportunity to transform some of those spaces and consider what their most productive use may be for the area.
- Most of the parcels in the study area are zoned for Downtown Mixed Use, General Commercial, and Residential, creating a diverse grouping of uses for land within the study area.

BROWNFIELD, UNDERUTILIZED, VACANT, AND ABANDONED SITES

- The study area has 53.3 acres of land that were identified as suspected brownfields. While the sites are not concentrated in one location, many are vacant and underutilized and are located in high impact locations.
- There are around 50 acres of underutilized, vacant, and abandoned land dispersed throughout the study area.

LAND OWNERSHIP PATTERNS

- Most of the parcels within the study area are privately owned, meaning redevelopment efforts will have to involve these property owners in discussion.
- Significant portions of the parcels in the study area are owned by Amtrak, the CDTA, or New York Central Lines. These land uses are not expected to change significantly.
- 21 percent of the acreage in the study area is publicly owned. Some of the parcels owned by public entities are vacant properties, which provide an opportunity to influence their redevelopment.
- 30 property owners with multiple properties in the study area own at least one vacant property.

PARKS & OPEN SPACE

- The study area has an existing collection of open spaces that include parks, a baseball field, and some green spaces.
- While much of the community is served by these green spaces, many of the spaces are small, providing the City an opportunity to expand parks and green spaces during redevelopment.
- The City received a CDBG to begin the work of improving neighborhood parks. \$396,000 of the grant will be used for a park within the study area.
- The Empire State Trail runs through the center of the study area and the Hudson Riverfront Park.

HISTORIC OR ARCHAEOLOGICALLY SENSITIVE RESOURCES

- There are four buildings in the study area that are on the Register of Historic Places.
- Three study area buildings are eligible for State/National Register listing. Absent this designation, they are not able to reap the associated benefits.
- The study area falls within buffer areas of recorded archaeological resources, which should be considered and evaluated as part of any site development.
- Permitting and review of historic or archaeologically sensitive areas can provide challenges for redevelopment in terms of a longer time schedule but can also provide an opportunity for a community to build around as focal points of the character of a community.

Hudson River Waterfront Park at sunset.



TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS

- The study area is divided by several major roadways, off-ramps, and the Dunn Memorial Bridge. This limits safe development for pedestrians due to the heavy traffic through the community.
- The City of Rensselaer is home to the eighth busiest Amtrak station in the Country. This creates an opportunity in the study area with so many people coming in and out of the City every day via the station.
- The area is served by bus systems that connect well to the rest of the Capital Region.
- The Empire State Trail runs through the study area, connecting to Downtown Albany via the Dunn Memorial Bridge.

- NYSDOT's planned Livingston Railway Bridge will create new cycle and pedestrian access to the Empire State Trail.

INFRASTRUCTURE

- The entire study area is serviced by municipal water and sewer.
- The existing water pumps that are jointly owned by the City and the Town of East Greenbush are in need of repair.
- The City of Rensselaer is an MS4 and as a result has a Stormwater Management Plan and Law to help protect the Hudson River water quality.
- While upgrades have been made in the recent past, much of the infrastructure in the community remains in need of updating and

repair to best serve the current and future needs of the community.

NATURAL RESOURCES & ENVIRONMENTAL FEATURES

- Most of the study area falls within the Hudson River Estuary 100-year floodplain.
- The entire study area falls within what is designated as a disadvantaged community according to the New York Climate Act.
- There are no wetlands found within the study area.
- Slope and soil types in the study area will not significantly hinder future development work.



Residential neighborhood in the City.



Amtrak Station parking access.

ECONOMIC MARKET ANALYSIS

- It is projected that over 570 housing units will need to be constructed in the City by 2040 to meet demand, with most of the demand for rental housing.
- The greatest need for rental and owner units by 2040 will be for those with incomes less than \$15,000 and those with incomes falling between \$35,000 and \$50,000, respectively.
- Residents of the City of Rensselaer are budget conscious, young, focus more on convenience than consumerism, and spend less across the board than the national average.
- Creative solutions are needed to encourage more businesses or resources for residents to make purchases within the community.
- Jobs in the County are expected to increase by 10% by 2027.
- While unemployment has decreased in the County, there are certain industries with a mismatch of supply and demand for workforce in the area.

STRATEGIC SITES

The Advisory Committee reviewed the inventory of brownfield, abandoned, vacant, and underutilized sites and prioritized seven "Strategic Sites" along the City's main commercial corridors and key community gateways.



The Rensselaer Rising study area shown from above.

REVITALIZATION STRATEGY

The Revitalization Strategy and Master Plan were developed based on the vision statement to address key findings, challenges, and opportunities facing the City that emerged throughout the inventory of economic and physical conditions, along with extensive public engagement. The Master Plan includes recommended development and capital projects specifically designed to achieve the Plan's vision and goals. The Master Plan was developed in two main phases, the more immediate vision, and a long-term vision for the study area. The goals, objectives, and strategies in the revitalization strategy are outlined below.

GOAL #1: Establish an identifiable and thriving downtown through promotion of economic development & aesthetic improvements

- Objective 1.1: Revitalize vacant and underutilized sites
 - » Strategy 1.1: Advance Master Plan site redevelopment recommendations
 - » Strategy 1.2: Optimize property sales and management
 - » Strategy 1.3: Address floodplain and environmental risks
 - » Strategy 1.4: Update zoning and design standards regulations
 - » Strategy 1.5: Consider temporary alternate uses for existing spaces
- Objective 1.2: Improve downtown aesthetic improvements
 - » Strategy 1.6: Create an identifiable downtown brand
 - » Strategy 1.7: Implement a facade improvement program

GOAL #2: Enhance the Hudson River waterfront

- Objective 2.1: Improve access to the waterfront
 - » Strategy 2.1: Open and enhance primary entry to Riverfront Park
 - » Strategy 2.2: New pocket park and waterway connection
- Objective 2.2: Increase use of the waterfront
 - » Strategy 2.3: Promote and support riverfront development
 - » Strategy 2.4: Plan for long-term park enhancements
 - » Strategy 2.5: Improve and maintain riverfront amenities
 - » Strategy 2.6: Support implementation of boat launch and dock at Crailo State Historic Site

GOAL #3: Highlight and market existing community assets

- Objective 3.1: Increase awareness and marketing for the City
 - » Strategy 3.1: Create a cohesive marketing plan
 - » Strategy 3.2: Establish a formal City-wide calendar of events
 - » Strategy 3.3: Improve visibility and accessibility to historic areas
- Objective 3.2: Expand community engagement and events
 - » Strategy 3.4: Expand and promote historic and cultural events
 - » Strategy 3.5: Increase frequency of community programming and events

**Amtrak/CDTA Site
Redevelopment Rendering
(Strategic Site #1)**



Rendering of the Old City Hall Site Redevelopment (Strategic Site #3)



- Objective 3.3: Optimize visitor experience
 - » Strategy 3.6: Leverage Amtrak ridership and promote tourism
 - » Strategy 3.7: Improve train station pedestrian connections
 - » Strategy 3.8: Improve Herrick Street Bridge connection
 - » Strategy 3.9: Improve City gateways
- Objective 3.4: Promote and support the arts
 - » Strategy 3.10: Promote artist studios and makerspaces
 - » Strategy 3.11: Expand the City's mural program

GOAL #4: Improve connectivity and promote multi-modal transit

- Objective 4.1: Improve trail network connections
 - » Strategy 4.1: Create a trail connector between the Amtrak Station and Empire State Trail
 - » Strategy 4.2: Continue to work with property owners to fill gaps in the Waterfront Trail
- Objective 4.2: Upgrade pedestrian infrastructure
 - » Strategy 4.3: Implement streetscape enhancements
- Objective 4.3: Strengthen multi-modal transportation access
 - » Strategy 4.4: Improve multi-modal trail access
 - » Strategy 4.5: Support the expansion of bike share in the City

GOAL #5: Ensure access to community services, especially fresh food and groceries

- Objective 5.1: Ensure access to fresh food and groceries
 - » Strategy 5.1: Attract and develop grocery and fresh food locations
 - » Strategy 5.2: Expand and support local food access alternatives
 - » Strategy 5.3: Strengthen coordination and support for food services
- Objective 5.2: Continue to promote access to affordable housing
 - » Strategy 5.4: Pursue grant funding for affordable housing
 - » Strategy 5.5: Encourage affordable housing development
- Objective 5.3: Ensure youth and senior access to critical services
 - » Strategy 5.6: Support daycare models that serve the City population
 - » Strategy 5.7: Ensure transportation access for seniors to access the new location of the Senior Center
 - » Strategy 5.8: Increase awareness of and access to existing youth programs
 - » Strategy 5.9: Provide additional programming for youth
 - » Strategy 5.10: Increase opportunities for youth to connect from the local high school to jobs and internships

PROJECT BACKGROUND

Downtown Rensselaer businesses along Broadway.



Members of the public at the library engagement event.

THE BROWNFIELD OPPORTUNITY AREA PROGRAM

The Brownfield Opportunity Area (BOA) program was established in 2003 as a part of the NYS Superfund/Brownfield Law (GML Article 18-C, Section 970-r), to provide municipalities and community-based organizations with necessary financial and technical assistance to complete area-wide revitalization strategies and plans for communities impacted by the presence of brownfields and environmental hazards. Goals of the program include:

- Assessing the full range of community redevelopment opportunities posed by a concentration of brownfields.
- Building a shared community vision for the reuse of strategic sites and actions to achieve community revitalization.

- Coordinating and collaborating with local State, and Federal agencies, community groups, and private-sector partners to identify and implement solutions and leverage investments.

Since it was developed, the BOA program has evolved beyond only brownfields to now focus more generally on underutilized, vacant, and abandoned sites and opportunities to spur investment in these areas.

The BOA program is a multi-step process that begins with a BOA Plan, which creates a roadmap to return underutilized sites in the community to productive use. The goal of the Plan is to identify the opportunities and challenges posed by the sites, present a clear and attainable community vision, and pinpoint key redevelopment opportunities. When a BOA Plan is complete, a community may request BOA

designation by the Secretary of State. This official designation allows developers who are participating in the voluntary Brownfield Cleanup Program to receive a tax credit "bump-up" to redevelop the sites in a manner that is consistent with the community's vision and Secretary-approved plan. Designated BOAs also receive priority and preference for some State grant programs, and access to additional funding through NYS Department of State to undertake pre-development activities and Phase II Environmental Site Assessments.

BOA designation demonstrates community support for the goals outlined in the plan. This removes risk and uncertainty ordinarily associated with investment in a transitional or marginal market by assuring potential developers that their investment is part of an overall plan for the revitalization of the area.

PURPOSE OF THIS PLAN

The purpose of this plan is to identify a long-term plan for the revitalization of the City, including redevelopment and community-based projects. The Rensselaer Rising plan meets the requirements established by NYSDOS, but is also specifically tailored to the needs and priorities of the City of Rensselaer, as captured in the plan's five overarching goals.



Crailo Historic Site Park.



Portion of the Dunn Memorial Bridge entrance to the City.

Plan Terminology

Throughout this plan, several terms are used to describe strategic sites and locations within the study area. The following are some definitions of the terminology used, including how the terms brownfield, brownfield site, and suspected brownfield are used and differentiated in the context of this plan.

“Brownfield Site”

As defined by NYS Environmental Conservation Law Section 27-1405, “a brownfield site” or “site” shall mean any real property where a contaminant is present at levels exceeding the Soil Cleanup Objectives or other health-based standards, criteria, or standards adopted by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) based on the reasonably anticipated uses of the property. For a description of real property excluded from this definition see NYS Environmental Conservation Law Section 27-1405 (Section 27-1405).

“Brownfield” & “Suspected Brownfield”

More generally, brownfields are properties where expansion, redevelopment or reuse may be complicated by the presence or potential presence of a hazardous substance, pollutant, or contaminant. Within a BOA plan, the term “brownfield site” as defined in Section 27-1405 will be qualified by using “suspected” to include properties where evidence of contamination above threshold levels has not been confirmed. Known or suspected brownfield sites will be referred to as “brownfields” throughout this BOA plan.

“Vacant”

Any property that is vacant, has no apparent current use, and does not contain structures.

“Abandoned”

Any property that is vacant, has no apparent use and does contain structures

“Underutilized”

Any property that is currently used, but the use is considered to be less than the property's highest potential based on the underlying zoning. This designation is more suggestive and is based primarily on field reconnaissance, and input from the advisory committee.

GOALS

Goal 1: Establish an Identifiable and Thriving Downtown

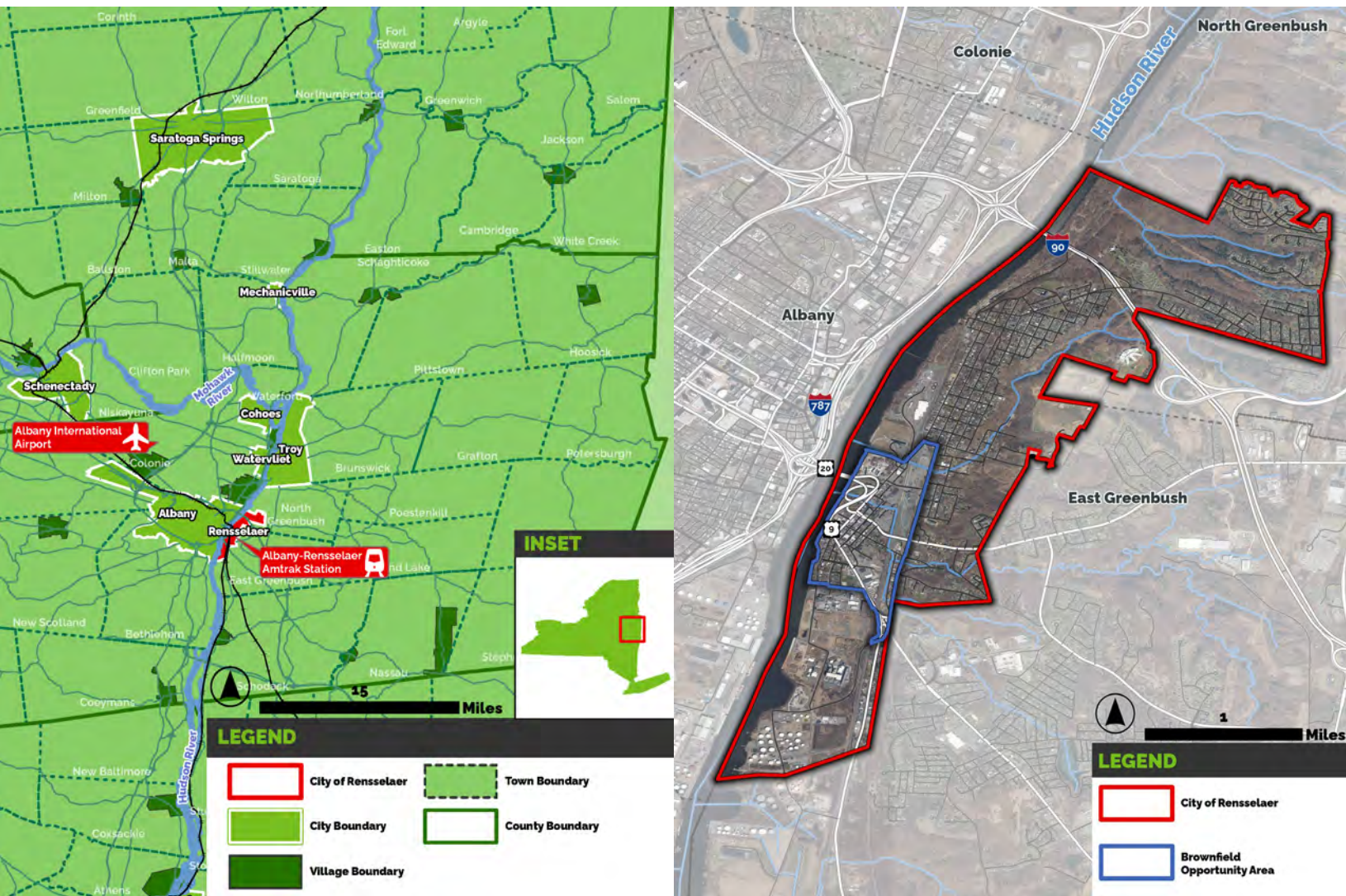
Goal 2: Enhance the Hudson River Waterfront

Goal 3: Highlight and Market Existing Community Assets

Goal 4: Improve Connectivity and Promote Multi-Modal Transit

Goal 5: Ensure Access to Community Services, Especially Fresh Food

COMMUNITY CONTEXT & REGIONAL SETTING



PROJECT LOCATION & BOUNDARIES

The Rensselaer Rising study area and City of Rensselaer are located in Rensselaer County, NY. The eastern boundary of the County runs along the New York-Vermont and New York-Massachusetts borders and extends to the Hudson River on its western boundary. The County spans from more urban centers like the City of Troy and the City of Rensselaer, to more suburban and rural communities moving east from the Hudson towards Vermont and Massachusetts. The County has a rich history dating back to 1630 and makes up a diverse territory while being bordered just to the west with the State's Capital of the City of Albany and Albany County.

The City of Rensselaer is a small city of approximately 9,210 people located in the westernmost section of Rensselaer County along the Hudson River. To the west, across the Dunn Memorial Bridge, is the City of Albany, the State's Capital, to the east is the Town of East Greenbush, and to the north are the Town of North Greenbush, and the City of Troy, the County seat.

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The eastern boundary follows East Street facing the Amtrak Station and its surrounding parcels, a key destination within the City. The study area follows the railway to the south of the station to include South Street. West of the railroad, the study area moves to include the busy Columbia Turnpike Corridor, the City's main industrial hub, and the historic Fort Crailo Neighborhood to the Hudson River. Moving north, the western boundary of the study area follows the Hudson River waterfront to include the Hudson River Waterfront Park, the City's largest and most popular park, and open space destination, as well as the City's downtown core between Broadway and the railroad tracks. The commercial core is made up of a mix of businesses, with residential parcels, government services, and several large parcels making up the NYS Office of Children and Family Services campus, a significant employment hub in Rensselaer.

STUDY AREA BOUNDARIES





View of Albany skyline from Rensselaer.

RELATED PLANNING STUDIES AND EFFORTS

The Rensselaer Rising Plan builds on the work and vision of several recent local, regional, and State planning initiatives. Relevant elements of those plans are summarized on the following pages.

CITY OF RENSSELAER LOCAL WATERFRONT REVITALIZATION PROGRAM UPDATE (2011)

The City continues to recognize the strong potential of the Hudson Riverfront as the focus of its long-term revitalization efforts. A significant amount of planning and investment has been undertaken along the waterfront since adoption of the original Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP) in 1986. Consequently, the City recognized the need to prepare an update to its LWRP nearly 25 years later. This effort provided the City with an opportunity to reaffirm its commitment to sustainable development, to market the riverfront potential to investors, and to discuss

opportunities for private and public partnerships. The following recommendations from the updated LWRP are important components of Rensselaer Rising:

- Create a continuous multi-use waterfront trail.
- Promote building façade improvements and infill projects within the downtown.
- Enhance pedestrian linkages between the River and downtown.
- Install pedestrian enhancements at Broadway and west on Third Avenue.
- Construct the Mill Creek Pedestrian Bridge within Riverfront Park.
- Implement Riverfront Park improvements and new fitness amenities.
- Promote water-enhanced mixed-use development along Broadway.
- Continued build-out of DeLaet's Landing apartments and retail space.
- Improve riverfront pedestrian connections to Broadway.

CITY OF RENSSELAER DOWNTOWN REDEVELOPMENT PLAN (2003-2010)

The 2003-2010 Downtown Redevelopment Plan built on the reconstruction of the Albany-Rensselaer Train Station, integrating the goals and objectives of that transit-oriented project into a larger scaled City-wide effort. The Plan focused specifically on the vision for revitalizing three key areas: the Central Business District, the Amtrak Station area, and the North Broadway/Historic Bath neighborhood (north of the Amtrak maintenance facility). The plan identified the following relevant recommendations:

- Improve safety and traffic efficiency of Broadway for pedestrians and vehicles.
- Re-use vacant lots to advance redevelopment efforts and enhance urban form.
- Restore the historic character and pedestrian scale of the downtown.
- Help merchants and owners improve their buildings and properties.
- Promote redevelopment of parcels around the Amtrak Station and waterfront for their highest and best uses.
- Support multi-modal transportation linkages to other parts of the Capital Region that will enhance the City's position as a central transportation hub, including opportunities and potential locations for ultra-light rail, green buses, and bicycle.
 - » Create an internal commuter transit system that connects future commuter lots, regional destinations, and local stops to the Amtrak Station.
 - » Develop a Parking Management Plan to reduce commuter/resident conflicts surrounding the Amtrak Station.
 - » Secure easements and/or improve linkages for pedestrian and bicycle routes to and from the Amtrak Station.
 - » Actively plan and promote non-automobile links between the City of Rensselaer and certain employment centers within the Capital Region, including the City of Albany, the SUNY East Campus, and the RPI Tech Park.
 - » Ensure that all efforts to expand the multi-modal transportation network include satellite stops or clearly marked links to downtown Rensselaer.

ADA TRANSITION PLAN (2025)

In 2024, the City of Rensselaer began its work in assessing the accessibility of its pedestrian network and developing an ADA Public Streets and Sidewalks Transition Plan. The purpose of this ADA self-

analysis and transition plan is to ensure that the City of Rensselaer's pedestrian infrastructure in the public right-of-way is accessible for everyone, including people with disabilities. This is vital in ensuring equal access to all goods and services in the City, as well as achieving the City's goals of connectivity and an improved quality of life for residents. The City, through thorough inventory and data analysis, identified and evaluated all pedestrian infrastructure in the public right-of-way including curb ramps, sidewalks, crosswalks, pedestrian signals, and pedestrian accessible transit stops. The plan also identifies a method, and timeline, to address any barriers to accessibility in the City. This plan is currently in development and is anticipated to be adopted in Spring of 2025.

OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION PLAN (2024)

In March of 2024, the City of Rensselaer completed its Open Space and Recreation Plan. The plan is intended to establish a priority-based framework for projects that increase resiliency and connectivity between existing parks, open spaces, trails, and conservation areas in the City.

The plan is guided by six goals that include:

- Protect and increase conservation of open space and natural areas.
- Maximize resiliency, moderate temperatures, and promote biodiversity through stormwater management and utilization of green infrastructure and sustainable design.
- Improve air quality through emissions reduction.
- Improve water quality and increase absorption of water runoff.
- Increase active transportation access, connectivity, and safety between parks and open spaces.
- Upgrade and expand parks and recreational amenities and programming to encourage outdoor and recreational experiences that enrich the quality of life for our community and protect scenic viewsheds and recreational lands.

To achieve these goals, the plan sets out recommendations for several key areas and sites organized into waterfront open space areas, forested areas, ravines, and creeks, open spaces in developed areas, and neighborhood parks and recreation areas. Each recommendation includes a priority level and a mixture of project types and activities to achieve the City's open space and recreation goals. This plan is intended to guide implementation of open space and recreation projects throughout the City and be integrated with other local efforts to improve quality of life for residents through outdoor recreation.

CAPITAL DISTRICT TRAILS PLAN (2019)

The Capital District Trails Plan is a plan that was developed by the Capital Region Transportation Council (Transportation Council) in 2019. The purpose of the plan was to create a comprehensive, regional trail network in the Capital District region. The plan includes recommendations for new trails, improvements to existing trails, and connections between trails to create a seamless network of pedestrian and bicycle facilities. The plan also includes recommendations for supporting infrastructure, such as parking, wayfinding, and amenities, to enhance the user experience. The Capital District Trails Plan intended to provide guidance for local communities and stakeholders to plan, develop, and implement new trails and trail improvements. Within the Rensselaer Rising study area, the plan recommended filling gaps in the waterfront trail network and connecting

CITY OF RENSSELAER NATURAL RESOURCES INVENTORY (ADOPTED JULY 2021)

The City of Rensselaer conducted an inventory of natural resources within its borders in 2021. The Plan focuses on opportunities to improve resiliency and quality of life in the City in the face of climate change and proposes a series of recommendations for the City to undertake. Education was one of the top opportunities. The Plan also recommended the near term actions of using drought resistant plants in public spaces, creating overlay zones for properties abutting bodies of water, and creating a Climate Smart Communities Task Force to promote the success of other CSC Actions.

CITY OF RENSSELAER COMPREHENSIVE PLAN (2006)

The City of Rensselaer's first Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 1969. The 2006 version built on recommendations provided in the planning documents and defined an overall vision for the community, with a focus on the period to 2025. The following recommendations from this Plan are also relevant to Rensselaer Rising:

- Create a regulatory framework (zoning, building codes, setbacks, parking) to support mixed-use redevelopment along the Hudson River waterfront.
- Establish a Local Development Corporation (LDC) to support and direct orderly development along the River, including property acquisition and incentives.
- Increase public access to the waterfront.
- Actively market Rensselaer to new and expanding businesses.

- Provide amenities and services that respond to the requirements of site locators.
- Strengthen the City's tax and employment base by encouraging appropriate industrial development in suitable locations.
- Focus on high-tech industries to complement higher educational institutions.
- Strengthen retail and service centers for residents, visitors, and workers.
- Increase regulatory protection of natural resources.
- Maximize public and accessible open spaces.
- Eliminate hazardous contamination from past land uses.
- Maintain the integrity of the City's street grid.
- Enhance the City's pedestrian scale and infrastructure.
- Ensure the availability of public parking.
- Promote bicycle use as an alternative mode of transportation
- Beautify key gateways into the City.
- Utilize regulatory measures to preserve and protect historic resources.
- Encourage building restoration and historic preservation.
- Promote and celebrate Rensselaer's historic story.
- Develop a long-term strategic parks improvement plan.
- Develop publicly owned land for active recreational uses.

ROUTE 9 AND 20 CORRIDOR STUDY (2004)

The Route 9 and 20 Corridor Study was sponsored by the Capital Region Transportation Council (Transportation Council) and the City to develop a corridor improvement plan for U.S. Routes 9 & 20 (Columbia Turnpike), which forms the southern boundary of the downtown and the Fort Crailo Historic District. The study corridor is approximately seven-tenths of a mile in length and runs from the Town of East Greenbush to the intersection of Broadway. The following plan recommendations are still relevant today:

- Re-stripe the bike lane on Route 20 to create a five-foot wide dedicated strip.
- Install raised medians on the north and south side of Broadway and Route 20.
- Install a raised median on the south side of Academy Street at Route 20.
- Install a raised median on south side of Washington Street at Route 20.

Note that while these recommendations have not been implemented in full, the State did invest more than \$1 million in 2014-15 to upgrade the Broadway

and Columbia Turnpike intersection with new curbing, handicapped accessible crosswalks, new striping, and pedestrian crossing signals. While this area is still four lanes wide and difficult to navigate for pedestrians given the amount of vehicle traffic passing through the intersection, the improvements did upgrade safety and more clearly delineate areas for walkers and bicycles.

RENSSELAER COUNTY TRAIL PLAN (2004)

The Rensselaer County Trail Plan is a plan for the development of a trail network in Rensselaer County, focused on connecting the Livingston Avenue Bridge to the Troy-Menands Bridge. The plan's goals included improving connectivity and access to recreational trails and open spaces, promoting alternative modes of transportation, such as biking and hiking, and encouraging physical activity and healthy lifestyles for residents. The plan outlined proposed trail alignments, recommendations for trail design and construction, and a strategy for securing funding and implementing the trail plan. The plan is part of a larger effort to improve quality of life and promote economic development in Rensselaer County through increased access to outdoor recreation opportunities.

PLANNING RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CENTRAL AREAS OF THE CITY OF RENSSELAER (1999)

This report offered recommendations about future land uses in the central parts of the City, which included the underutilized shoreline along the Hudson River, land surrounding the Amtrak Station, the expanded Capital View Office Park, the historic Fort Crailo neighborhood and infill properties within the City's compact and low-rise downtown business district between Third Avenue and Columbia Turnpike. Notable recommendations from this 25-year-old plan that remain relevant to Rensselaer Rising include:

- Enhance the downtown streetscape (following Complete Streets principles)
- Encourage homeownership.
- Improve building facades.
- Promote infill of vacant lots.
- Install a Hudson Riverwalk Trail.
- Promote eco-friendly mixed-use development.
- Create a waterfront master plan.
- Establish a more balanced land use scheme and incorporate more mixed-use development surrounding the Amtrak Station within the downtown.

Portion of the Dunn Memorial Bridge entrance to the City.



COMMUNITY VISION & GOALS

VISION STATEMENT

A vision statement is a forward-looking, aspirational statement that reflects the values and priorities of residents, as well as what they would like their community to look like in the next 10 to 20 years. It serves as the foundation upon which the Plan is built and helps to organize recommendations and goals. The Vision Statement was developed from feedback gathered through extensive work with the Advisory Committee and the public and informed the development of the plan's recommendations.

The City of Rensselaer will build on its existing unique, walkable, riverfront community to become one of the most attractive places to live in the Northeast, with a beautiful and accessible waterfront, active downtown, and convenient transportation connections both within the City, and to other regional communities. Downtown development will transform underutilized and vacant properties into a main street that is alive and vibrant, serving as a hub where civic and community entities are clustered, and business thrives. Downtown businesses will be teeming with entrepreneurs and community services aiming to attract residents, commuters, and visitors alike. Rensselaer will leverage its existing resources, including its bustling Amtrak Station, Hudson River waterfront, views of the New York State Capitol, and its many green spaces to create cohesive and attractive connections for residents and visitors to access amenities and spend more time in the City.

GOALS

While the vision statement describes the desired future outlook of the City, goals are how that vision will become a reality as it is pursued in the coming years. Five overarching goals were established for the Rensselaer Rising plan that also provide an organizational framework for the implementation plan.

1

Establish an
Identifiable and
Thriving Downtown



2

Enhance the
Hudson River
Waterfront



3

Highlight and Market
Existing Community
Assets



4

Improve Connectivity
and Promote Multi-
Modal Transit



5

Ensure Access to
Community Services,
Especially Fresh Food
and Groceries



Members of the public participating in the planning process.



COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

Community Participation Plan

A Community Participation Plan was developed to ensure that the public and all interested stakeholders had several opportunities to provide their input and feedback throughout the planning process in a variety of ways. The plan outlined the types of forums and outreach mechanisms used to engage the public and community stakeholders and served as a guide throughout the process. The Community Participation Plan is included in Appendix 1.

Advisory Committee

The City of Rensselaer established an Advisory Committee at the beginning of the process to be representative of the community and the interests of the study area. The Committee included representatives from local City Staff, local business owners, residents, and local organizations. Summaries of all Advisory Committee meetings are included in Appendix 1.

Kick-Off Meeting - May 3, 2023

The introductory meeting to introduce the Advisory Committee, included an overview of the NYSDOS BOA Program, the benefits the program can provide to the City, past BOA planning efforts completed by the City, and the general timeline and scope of the project.

Meeting 1 - May 23, 2023

The first Advisory Committee meeting included a walking tour of the proposed study area. The tour focused on key properties and areas, and the Committee worked to identify key issues and opportunities in the study area.

Meeting 2 - November 28, 2023

At the second meeting, the Advisory Committee discussed the findings of the draft Inventory and Analysis, reviewed the public engagement plan, discussed outreach materials and strategic sites in the study area, and finalized the study area boundary.

Meeting 3 - January 29, 2024

The third Advisory Committee meeting was focused on reviewing preliminary results from the public engagement survey, identifying the survey feedback's contribution to plan issues and opportunities, reviewing a list of stakeholders and property owners to engage with through focus groups and interviews, and planning for the first public workshop.

Meeting 4 - April 25, 2024

During the fourth meeting, the Advisory Committee reviewed the final results of the public engagement survey, the first public workshop, and the results of an initial round of stakeholder outreach. The Committee also discussed a draft Vision and Goals for the project based on feedback to date and, identified strategic sites.

Meeting 5 - September 5, 2024

The fifth meeting was focused on reviewing the results of property owner discussions and remaining public engagement activities, drafting the plan recommendations, and reviewing the draft Master Plan.

Meeting 6 - November 18, 2024

During the sixth meeting, the Advisory Committee refined strategic sites recommendations, and feedback from the public on the draft plan recommendations and master plan, and plans for the final public workshop.

Meeting 7: January 31, 2025

During the seventh meeting, the Advisory Committee provided the final round of feedback on the draft Plan and reviewed feedback from the final public workshop.

Visioning Survey

The Rensselaer Rising visioning survey was developed in collaboration by the Advisory Committee, the project consultant team, and City staff and was launched in January of 2024. The survey was intended to gather feedback from residents on a range of topics, including the City's defining characteristics, priorities for the future, overall vision for the City, and other topics. The survey was posted to the City's website (where updates on the project were posted throughout the process) and was distributed to the public across multiple communication channels, including news media, public events, posters, and person-to-person outreach. Over the two months the survey was open, 239 survey responses were collected. Of those who responded, approximately 70 percent were residents of the City of Rensselaer, 21 percent were from Rensselaer County, and just nine percent lived outside of Rensselaer County. The survey asked respondents what makes the City special, and responses included its great location in proximity to larger metropolitan centers, its waterfront access, and its small-town feel. The survey also asked participants to identify areas of improvement for the City. Many respondents throughout the survey spoke to their desire to see more restaurants, cafes, shops, and places to go, as well as the significant need for a grocery store and access to fresh foods and groceries. Others focused on the need of the City to have a more identifiable downtown area that visitors and residents will want to visit. A full summary of the visioning survey results is provided in Appendix 1.

Public Events

Rensselaer Rising planning and community engagement took place at several community events and Rensselaer Rising-specific workshops, along with more targeted outreach to specific groups within the community.

Public Visioning Workshop

A public visioning workshop was held on Thursday, March 7th, 2024 from 6:00-7:30 PM at the Rensselaer City School. The workshop began with a presentation from the consultant team that provided background on the plan and its purpose, and summarized key findings to-date. Attendees were then able to circulate among a series of boards that sought input on issues and opportunities.

Presentation to Spinney at Pond View Senior Living Community

A presentation about Rensselaer Rising was made to residents of the Spinney at Pond View on March 5th, 2024 from 11:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. Ten residents attended, many of whom had grown up or lived in Rensselaer at one time. A presentation about the project was made, and residents provided feedback on ideas for the City, what might attract more people to the area, and the City's greatest strengths.

Survey of OCFS Staff

On May 29th, 2024, during the lunch hour between 11:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m., Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) staff were surveyed. The State OCFS building is a major employer in the City, and is located centrally within the study area. With about 500 staff working there, many staff members walk on their lunch break, and/or visit local Rensselaer businesses and frequent restaurants in the City. 78 staff members completed the survey, 66 percent of whom indicated that they go out to eat for lunch in Rensselaer, and 80 percent of whom walk during their lunch breaks. Feedback from staff focused on the need for more designated walking paths for lunch breaks and the desire to see more restaurants and lunch options surrounding the office.

Albany Riverfront Collaborative Joint Meeting

On April 26th, 2024 the Rensselaer Rising project team participated in a joint meeting alongside the Albany Waterfront Collaborative and the NYS Department of Transportation to discuss the Rensselaer Rising project and the potential changes being considered regarding I-787 in the future. Because changes to the highway, bridges, and ramps of I-787 would directly impact the residents of Rensselaer and the BOA study area, the conversation revolved around these intersections and the need to plan for all scenarios. Residents of Rensselaer and Albany attended to learn about the projects and ask questions.

Crailo Historic Site Centennial Celebration

The Ft. Crailo State Historic Site celebrated 100 years with a centennial celebration on June 1st, 2024. Rensselaer Rising had a presence at the event and parade with project information and handouts about the plan.

Rensselaer Night Out

Rensselaer National Night Out, hosted by the Rensselaer Police Department, was held on August 6th, 2024. The project team had a booth at the event where families were engaged to discuss Rensselaer Rising. Young children were asked to draw pictures of what they wish to see in the City, with responses ranging from planting more flowers, to a public pool and a roller skating rink. Feedback was also gathered from parents and other attendees to help inform the Plan. The overall goals of the project were discussed with several residents.

Riverfront Park Farmers Market

Once the Committee developed a set of goals and recommendations, as well as a draft Master Plan to achieve the plan's vision, project team members had a booth at Rensselaer Riverfront Park Farmers Market on September 19th, 2024. Attendees were asked to stop by the booth during their farmers market shopping and provide feedback through visual preference surveys to help

during their farmers market shopping and provide feedback through visual preference surveys to help further inform the Master Plan development, and draft recommendations. Participants were asked to rank the draft recommendations in terms of high and low priorities. Several people stopped by throughout the three-hour market to provide their input, learn more about the project, and discuss what types of improvements they would like to see in the park and the study area generally.

Rensselaer Library Public Input Session

On October 2nd, 2024, the Rensselaer Rising team presented at a public event held at the Rensselaer Central Library about the BOA planning process, the public engagement held to-date, and the draft vision, goals, recommendations, and Master Plan. Participants were then asked to provide their feedback on the recommendations, their priorities, and their views on the draft Master Plan.

Property Owner & Stakeholder Interviews

Working with the Committee, the consultant team identified stakeholders in the community. This outreach was largely focused on study area property owners, businesses, and community organizations. One-on-one in-person and virtual interviews were conducted with stakeholders, along with focus group meetings. The property owner meetings were largely focused on understanding current uses and potential future uses on their properties, and to provide updates on development concepts. The business and community organization meetings were focused on diving deeper into key issues and opportunities and refining plan recommendations.

Draft Plan Presentation

In January 2025, the Rensselaer Rising team presented the draft Plan at a final public meeting held at City Hall. Feedback from the event was shared with the Committee to incorporate into the Final Plan.

LIST OF STAKEHOLDERS & PROPERTY OWNERS

Paul Bonaquisti, Property Owner
Bill Brayton, Property Owner
Matt Polsinello, Property Owner
Ralph Viola, Property Owner
Michael Moscatiello, Property Owner
James Ciccarello, Twin Block Real Estate
Jennifer Massey, Business Owner
Steve Obermayer, BBL Construction
Sumeet Gupta, Five Corners Development
Sandra Misiewicz, Capital Region Transportation Council (CRTC)
Kelley Kircher, NYS Department of Transportation (DOT)
Steven Segerlin, Amtrak
Jeremy Smith, Capital District Transportation Authority (CDTA)
Ethan Warren, Capital District Transportation Authority (CDTA)
Lindsey Bradt, Capital District Transportation Authority (CDTA)

Lisa Schroeder, Rensselaer Boys & Girls Club
Patrick Doyle, Rensselaer Boys & Girls Club
Richard Zazycki, Circles of Mercy
Tracy Pitcher, St. Paul's Center
Leanna Komoroske, St. Peter's Health Partners
Emily Scimeca, Capital Roots
Luca Barrett, Capital Roots
Christine Schudde, Habitat for Humanity
Tia Nunziato, Rensselaer Family Resources Center (FRC)
Shawn & Lauren VanDenHouten, Faith and Love Outreach Center
Scott Abraham, Rensselaer Market
Jisung Chun, Future Business Owner
Andrew Kretzschmar, Rensselaer County Economic Development & Planning
Jack Bonesteel, City of Rensselaer Industrial Development Agency (IDA)
Orion Parillo, Rensselaer County Regional Chamber of Commerce

ANALYSIS OF THE STUDY AREA

COMMUNITY & REGIONAL CONTEXT

The City of Rensselaer is situated in the heart of the Capital Region, across from the New York State Capitol, and along the eastern bank of the Hudson River waterfront. A small city in the region, Rensselaer is a working-class community with charming heritage areas and hilltop residential neighborhoods near all regional employment centers. It is home to the Albany-Rensselaer Rail Station, the region's principal passenger rail depot, and boasts easy vehicular and rail access to major cities, including New York City and Boston, as well as celebrated natural areas like the Adirondack and Catskill Parks. The Hudson waterfront opens up to spectacular views of the Albany skyline and provides potential for new mixed-use development and recreational activities, in addition to its active port in the City's south end.

Historically, the City was a center of industry, drawing on the economic pull of nearby Albany and on maritime and railroad connectivity. Its development pattern is defined by the City's early dependence on the Hudson River. With the confluence of the Erie and Champlain Canals and the Hudson River, the City of Rensselaer grew as an industrial city, with companies such as Huyck Mills, the Hudson River Aniline Color Works, and Bayer Pharmaceuticals leading the way. While the region has shifted away from manufacturing over the last thirty years, corroding some of the City's industrial base, today, the prominence of Rensselaer's connectivity is re-emerging thanks to a resurgence in activity at its port and the mounting popularity of passenger rail travel.

The Albany-Rensselaer Rail Station is the eighth-busiest Amtrak Station in the country, as it converges the primary east-west and north-south arterials of the Northeast rail system. The station is a popular hub for riders traveling along the "Lake Shore Limited" line from New York and Boston to Chicago, the "Ethan Allen Express" from New York City to Burlington, Vermont, the "Maple Leaf" route to Toronto, Canada, the "Empire Service" through Niagara Falls, and the daily "Adirondack" train.

In addition to rail access, the City of Rensselaer has easy vehicular access to interstate highways connecting major cities, as well as safe multi-modal connectivity to neighboring municipalities like Hudson, Albany, Troy, and Ghent via the Albany Hudson Electric Trail. The City is closely connected to downtown Albany via U.S. highway 20, allowing residents of both cities to travel easily between them. While the many major roadways in the community help connect Rensselaer quickly with the City of Albany, and the rest of the region, major arterials, off ramps, and roadways divide the downtown area, making pedestrian connectivity and access a challenge for the City.

Today, the City's downtown core has several positive features that will foster continued economic development. There are nearly 200 new market-rate apartments now available at DeLaet's Landing, with upcoming phases of commercial development for the site offering direct connections to the City's waterfront trail. Additionally, there are several ongoing residential and mixed-use projects in the City at the sites of the former McManus School, Barnet Mills, and one within the study area located at the former Harder Manufacturing location. While significant progress is being made in the community, there are still acres of developable land in the downtown that are vacant or underutilized and prime for infill.

Over the course of the 20th Century, many long-standing mills and factories were closed or abandoned leaving the City with a partial patchwork of vacant and underutilized properties. Recent infusions of State funds into Rensselaer, however, have helped to improve the completeness of the City's streetscapes through beautification of streets and roadways in the downtown core. This provides an exciting opportunity for the BOA program to utilize the building blocks of the past to continue development in the City.



DEMOGRAPHIC & ECONOMIC PROFILE

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Demographic & Economic Profile

- The City of Rensselaer has seen a decline in population over the past 60 years, unlike the surrounding County, region, and State.
- The most represented age bracket in the City is 25 to 35 ("young professionals"). Opportunities to build on and attract additional residents in this age bracket should be explored.
- Rensselaer is more diverse than the greater County, with a particularly significant Buramese population.
- Household occupancy has been trending from homeownership to renting in the community.
- The overall financial burden of both owning and renting has decreased over time in the City.
- Considering adjustment for inflation, both the City and County of Rensselaer have experienced an increase in median income level. However, the City's median income and poverty rate remain higher than in the greater County.

POPULATION

The City of Rensselaer has experienced general population decline over the past 60 years: the population fell by about 12 percent between 1960 and 2020, from 10,509 to 9,210. The drop was most significant between 1960 and 2000 when it fell below 8,000. This downturn was largely due to the significant loss of manufacturing jobs during the 1980s and 1990s when textile and other mills were downsized and shuttered. Since 2010, the population has fallen again in the City from 9,392 to 9,210.

In Rensselaer County as a whole, population grew by about 11.5 percent between 1960 and 2020 from 142,585 to 161,130. Between 1960 and 2000 the County's population grew by seven percent, adding 10,000 people. Since 2010, the population has grown by about one percent.

In the Albany-Schenectady-Troy Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), which includes Albany, Schenectady, Rensselaer, Saratoga, and Schoharie Counties, population has grown significantly between 1960 and 2020, rising about 37 percent from 657,503 people to 899,262. In the 1990s, the area saw a slight out-migration of 1.5 percent from the MSA but since 2000 the population has increased again by around three percent.

Across the entire State of New York, population has increased at a moderate pace over the last 60 years, growing at around 19.5 percent between 1960 and 2020. Since 2000, the State's population has grown by less than one percent migration of 1.5 percent from the MSA, but since 2000 the population has increased again by around three percent.

Across the entire State of New York, population has increased at a moderate pace over the last 60 years, growing at around 19.5 percent between 1960 and 2020. Since 2000, the State's population has grown by less than one percent.

AGE

The median age for the City of Rensselaer in 2020 was 37.9 years old, increasing slightly from 37.1 since 2010. Similarly, the median age for Rensselaer County in 2020 was 39.6 years old, a slight increase from 39.2 years old since 2010,

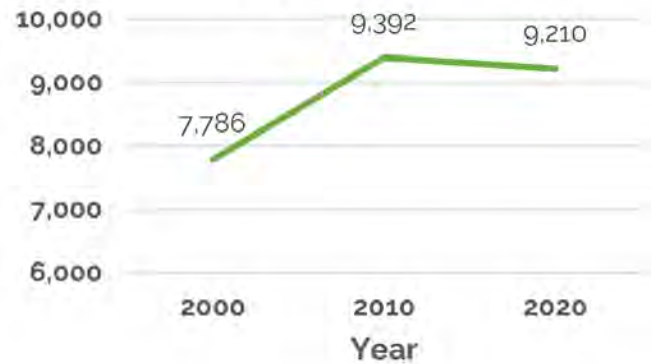
Data from 2020 shows that the age group between 25 and 39 years old is the largest in the City, representing 25 percent of the population. In comparison, the most represented age group in the County is slightly younger and falls between 15 and 29 years old, representing 21.5 percent of the population. This could show that the broader County is attractive for younger populations to live in and come to for school, while young adults living in the City of Rensselaer are taking advantage of its close proximity to Albany. Almost ten percent of the City's population is between 25 and 29 years old. This provides the community with an opportunity to continue making the City more attractive for young professionals to stay in the long term.

Looking more closely at the older (65+) populations, data for both the City and County show that there has been a consistent and gradual increase in those ages 65 to 74 years old. In 2010, the City and County had 594 and 11,150 citizens in this range, respectively (representing 6.37 percent and seven percent of their populations, respectively). Over the ten-year span, they have seen an increase to 927 and 17,170 citizens ages 65 to 74, respectively (representing 10.1 percent and 10.7 percent of their populations, respectively).

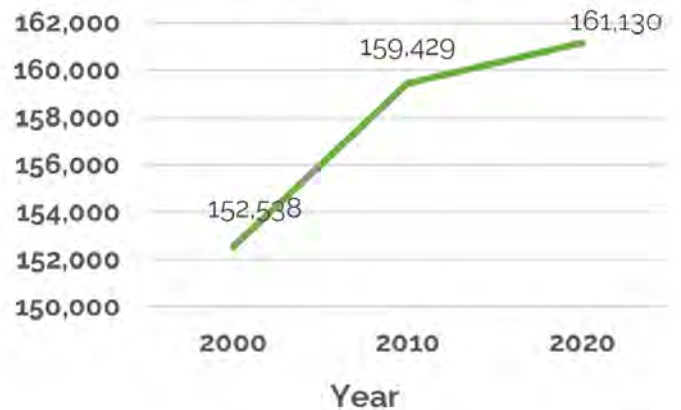
HOUSING TENURE

As of 2021, 41.9 percent of occupied households in the City of Rensselaer are owner-occupied, and 58.1 percent are renter-occupied. This is compared to 62.8 percent owner-occupied units and 37.2 percent renter-occupied units in Rensselaer County. Between 2010 and 2021, homeownership rates for both the City and County decreased, while renter-occupied units increased: the City and County homeownership rates dropped four percent and two percent, respectively, while their renter rates increased four percent and two percent, respectively.

City of Rensselaer Population



Rensselaer County Population



Homeowner Cost by Percent of Monthly Income 2011



HOUSING COSTS

Looking at owner and renter costs of living, it is notable that the percentage of households that are housing burdened (defined as paying more than 30 percent of their income on housing) is trending downwards in both categories. Based on ACS 2011 and 2021 data, in the City, the percentage of owner (with mortgage) burdened households has dropped from 28.4 percent to 16.5 percent and renter burdened households has dropped from 44 percent to 30.7 percent. In Rensselaer County, the percentage of owner burdened households (with mortgages) has dropped from 32.5 percent to 20 percent, and the percentage of renter burdened households has decreased from 47 percent to 44 percent. From this data, it could be concluded that homeowners are downsizing from homes to apartments to decrease their cost-of-living burden, or more are choosing to rent instead of purchasing homes in the first place. Housing costs have stayed relatively consistent since 2011. In the City, the median monthly cost of a mortgage was \$1,316, and today it is \$1,435.

Rent in the City has increased a bit more, with a median rent of \$820 in 2011 and \$1,005 in 2021. An increase in median income coupled with consistent housing costs may explain the decrease in housing burden. Additionally, because less households are housing burdened in the City of Rensselaer than the County, this may present an opportunity for Rensselaer to highlight its lower cost of living than other neighboring communities.

HOUSEHOLD SIZE

According to 2021 Census data, the average household size in the City of Rensselaer is 2.1, which is slightly less than the County average of 2.3. Since 2010, in both Rensselaer County and the City, household size has remained about the same. However, the household size for homeowners has dropped slightly (by less than 0.1 percent) at both the County and City level, while increasing slightly (by less than 0.1 percent) for renters. While there is not much variation in household size, this data may again indicate a shift by households towards renting instead of homeownership.

HOUSEHOLD INCOME

The median household income in the City was \$66,136 in 2021, compared to \$48,346 in 2011. This is lower than the median household income in the County at \$72,510 in 2021 and \$56,271 in 2011. Accounting for inflation, as of 2021, the City's median household income has increased about 11 percent since 2011, while the median household income in the County has increased about 4.3 percent over the same period. The poverty rate in the City of Rensselaer in 2021 was 16 percent, which is a three percent decrease since 2011, but remains higher than the County-wide poverty rate, which was 11.2 percent in 2021. Finally, in 2021 the percent of the City's labor force, aged 16 and older, that was unemployed was 2.3 percent, which was slightly lower than the County rate of 3.4 percent.

Median Household Income



RACIAL COMPOSITION

2020 Census data indicates that the percentage of population in the City of Rensselaer identifying as white or Caucasian is 69.3 percent, compared with 78.7 percent in the County. Approximately 9.3 percent of the City population identifies as Black or African American, 9.4 percent identifies as Asian, 9.5 percent identifies as two or more races, and seven percent is of Hispanic origin. It is worth noting that of the Asian population, a relatively large percentage of the City of Rensselaer speaks Asian/Pacific Island languages as well. Of the City, 7.4 percent speak Asian/Pacific Island Language, while in the County, just 1.8 percent speak these languages. Considering that 3.6 percent of the County's population is Asian, this could imply that the majority of Rensselaer County's Asian community lives within the City. While the data does not specify Asian nationalities or cultures, the Committee and stakeholders highlighted the large Burmese presence in the City. This diversity should be celebrated in the community and considered in public outreach work throughout the development process.

EXISTING LAND USE & ZONING

LAND USE

The Amtrak station, its surrounding parking, and the Herrick Street ramp are predominant land uses that segment the study area. Heading south on Broadway brings you through the Mill Creek redevelopment corridor. Riverfront Park, at the base of the Dunn Memorial Bridge, provides easy access to the Hudson River from Broadway for cyclists and pedestrians. Situated between Washington Street and the Rail Station is a four-parcel commercial site for the NYS Office of Child and Family Services (NYS-OCFS).

Overall, the study area is comprised of 518 parcels of diverse uses encompassing 227 acres of land. Much of the study area is residential (including apartments), which makes up 55.6 percent of the parcels but just 10.5 percent of the study area acreage. Residential uses are found throughout the study area with some clustered along Broadway, others around the intersection of Green Street and Second Avenue, and a large cluster in the Fort Crailo neighborhood along Riverside, Nelson, Cambridge, and Mansion Avenues. There is also a small group of residential parcels along South Street in the southeast corner of the study area. The residential parcels consist largely of single-family homes built before 1950 that have been converted to two-family apartments.

Another significant portion of the study area is comprised of commercial land, which makes up 18.5 percent of the parcels and 23 percent of the acreage in the study area. Commercial uses are found throughout the community, but most fall along Broadway and Columbia Street. Larger commercial parcels can be found above Herrick Street where the Amtrak Station resides, and between Third Avenue and Herrick Street.

Of the commercial land use in the study area, nine percent is currently designated for parking lots, and one is a small parking garage. The significant coverage of parking facilities in the study area may provide an opportunity for the community to consider the best use of those spaces and how they can fit into the community's vision and goals for the study area in the future. Notably missing in terms of commercial uses in the study area and the greater City is a grocery store. The City's only grocery store, Aldi, was previously located along Columbia Turnpike in the study area, but left in 2023.

There are 88 vacant parcels (17 percent) making up around 22.6 acres in the study area. Vacant land is scattered throughout the study area, with some falling in among residential clusters, like by Second Avenue and Green Street, and others within more commercial clusters, like along Aiken Avenue and Herrick Street. 52 percent of the vacant parcels are commercial use lots, and 43 percent are residential use lots. Two sites are public utility vacancies, and two sites are vacant industrial sites.

All other uses in the study area represent less than ten percent of the study area parcels. However, some of these uses occupy larger parcels and therefore have a larger impact in terms of overall acreage. Industrial uses make up less than one percent of the parcels but represent 5.5 percent of the study area acreage, and public services, made up largely by the corridor surrounding the railway, represent just three percent of the parcels, but 38.2 percent of the study area acreage. The same can be said for open space which makes up 2.3 percent of parcels but about 17 percent of the study area acreage.

Land Uses Within the Rensselaer Study Area

Property Type	Number of Parcels	% of Parcels	Acres	% of Area
Residential	287	55.4%	23.8	10.5%
Commercial	96	18.5%	52.3%	23.0%
Vacant Land	88	17.0%	22.6	10.0%
Public Services	15	2.9%	38.2	16.8%
Community Services	12	2.3%	3.5	1.5%
Open Space	12	2.3%	15.9	7.0%
Recreation	5	1.0%	6.3	2.8%
Industrial	3	0.6%	12.4	5.5%
Total	518	100.0%	227	100.0%

Zoning Acreage Within the Rensselaer Study Area

Zoning Type	Acreage
Downtown Mixed Use	103
General Commercial	32.6
Residential, High Density	30.7
Historic Overlay	28.5
Planned Development	17.2
Open Space	15.2
Waterfront Mixed-Use	13.8
Light Industrial	12.3
Industrial	1.9
Residential, Low Density	0.42

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Land Use & Zoning

- There are nearly 23 acres of vacant land within the study area. These lots provide an opportunity for the community to consider their use for future residential and commercial investment.
- Over half of the study area is made up of residential use lots. Many of these are large single-family homes that have been converted to apartments, consistent with the increasing renter occupancy rates in the City.
- Commercial use parking lots are prevalent in the study area. This may provide the community with an opportunity to transform some of those spaces and consider what their most productive use may be for the area.
- Most of the parcels in the study area are zoned for Downtown Mixed Use, General Commercial, and Residential, creating a diverse grouping of uses for land within the study area.
- One notably missing land use in the study area - and the greater City - is a grocery store.
- While there are design guidelines in the City's zoning code, few of them are required and, as a result, have not been consistently incorporated into new developments.

ZONING

The City of Rensselaer Zoning Code was updated in 2012 to reflect a variety of desired development patterns and expected investments in property reuse within the downtown area and along the Hudson River. The Code is divided into nine districts and a Historic Overlay District, which was added in 2016. All of the districts are represented in the study area: General Commercial (C-1), Open Space and Conservation (OS), Downtown Mixed-Use (MU-1), Planned Development District (PDD), Waterfront Mixed-Use (MU-2), Residential District #1, Residential District #2 (R-2), Light Industrial (I-1), Industrial (I-2), and Historic Overlay District.

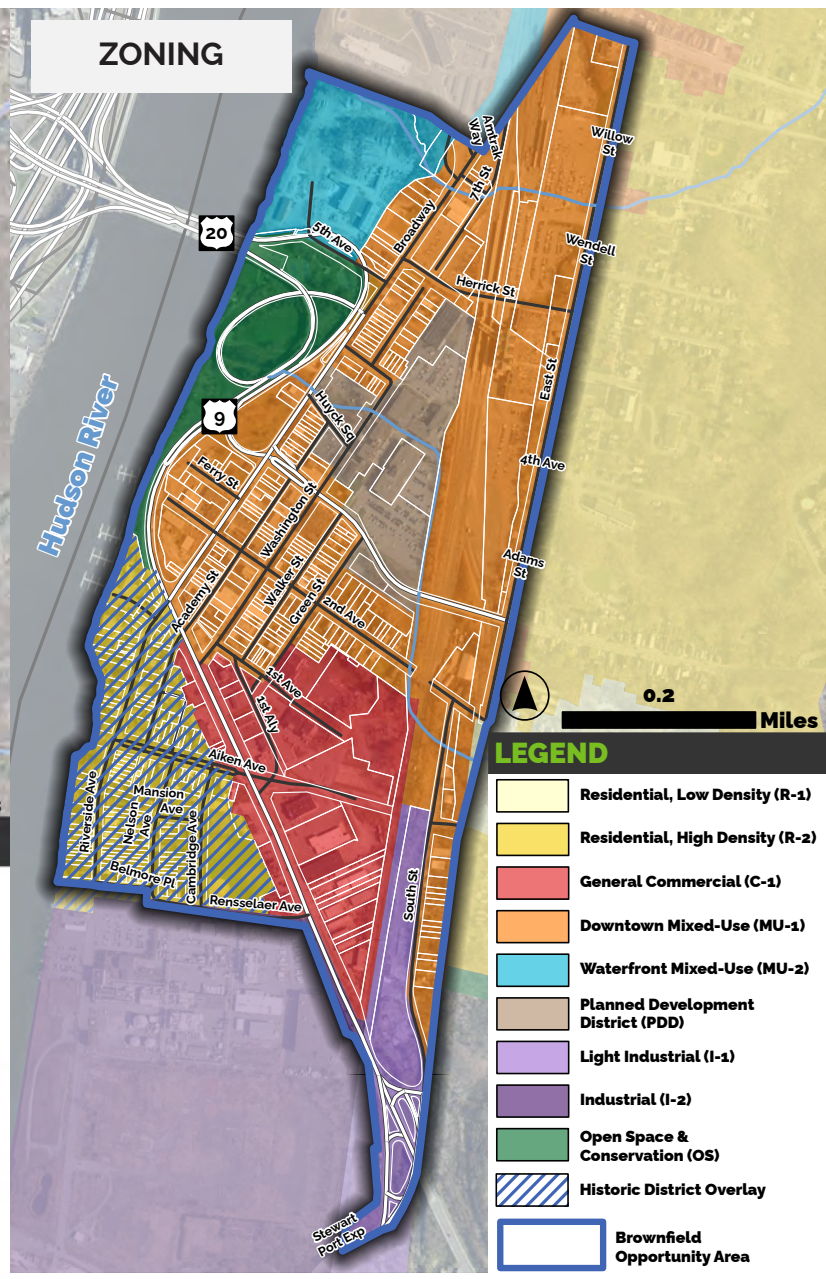
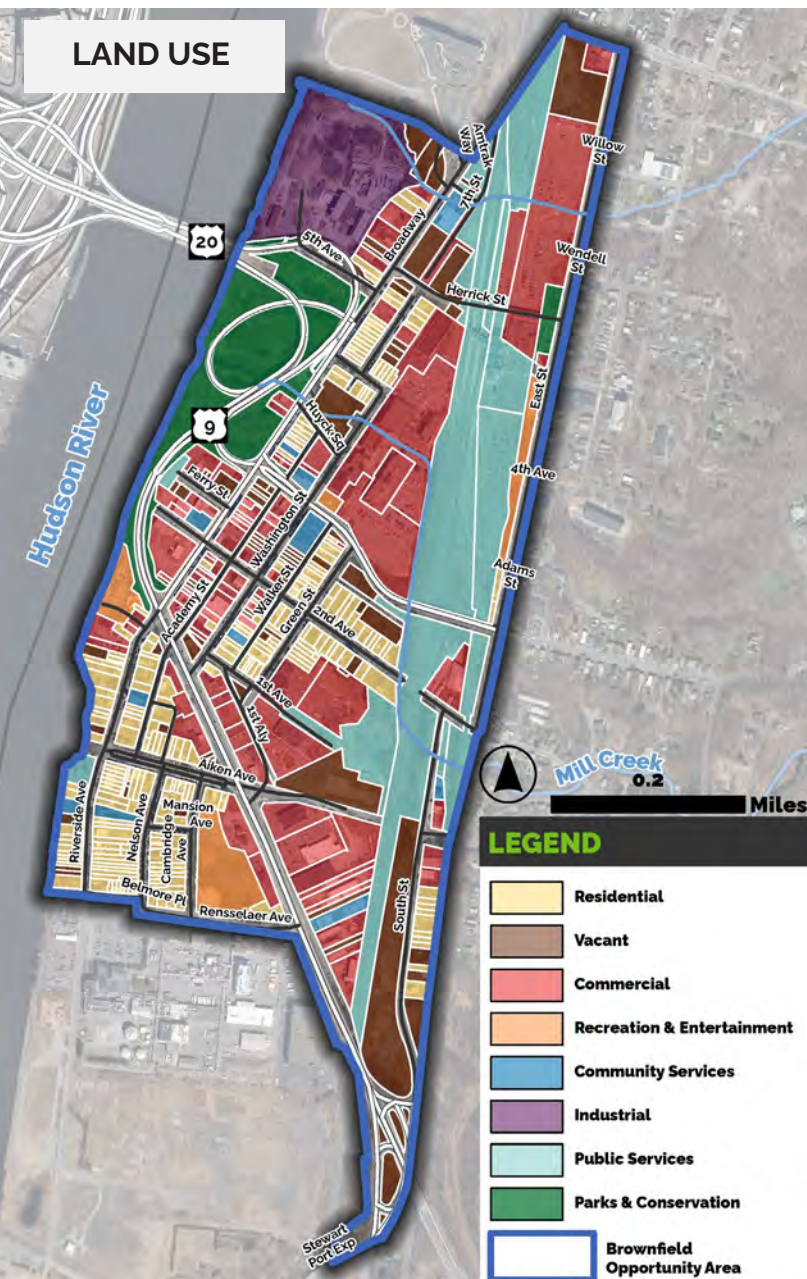
The table to the left identifies the City zoning breakdown by acreage within the study area, and the existing zoning map is also included in the following page. 45.4 percent is zoned Downtown Mixed-Use, 14.4 percent of the study area is zoned for General Commercial, 13.5 percent is Residential District #2 (R-2), 7.6 percent is zoned Planned Development District, 6.7 percent is zoned for Open Space and Conservation, 6.1 percent is Waterfront Mixed-Use, 5.4 percent is Light Industrial, 0.8 percent is Industrial, 0.2 percent is Residential District #1 (R-1), and 12.5 percent is in a Historic Overlay District.

Downtown Mixed-Use (MU-1)

Within the study area, Downtown Mixed-Use zoning falls largely through the center of the study area, stretching from Columbia Turnpike at the southern end, to Third Avenue at the base of the Dunn Memorial Bridge, and covers most of lower Broadway, East Street, and Second Avenue. Downtown Mixed-Use zoning accommodates a combination of higher-density residential and commercial uses. This zoning is intended to encourage a mix of downtown residents and a vibrant, walkable central core consistent with the historical business district that developed along lower Broadway during the late 1800s. Design standards, defined elsewhere in the Code, seek to further define the form and impact of new developments within the district. However, many of these guidelines are encouraged but not required.

Waterfront Mixed-Use (MU-2)

In the study area, Waterfront Mixed-Use zoning covers the Zappala Block property, a large industrial property located adjacent to Riverfront Park on the east side of Broadway. Zappala Block does not fit the vision ascribed for this type of district as it was already located there when the zoning district was created in 2012. The City's Waterfront Mixed-Use zoning is intended to capitalize on the City's waterfront and promote convenient public access to water and rail transportation by encouraging a mix of residential, commercial, and public recreational uses within walking distance of each other. It also encourages mixed-use development of residential units with other commercial uses to create an active waterfront, enhance the vitality of local businesses, reduce vehicular traffic, and incorporate pedestrian amenities into the site design and approval process. Finally, the code for Waterfront Mixed-Use encourages building design and wayfinding signage that enhances the proximity of the Hudson River without diminishing views for residents and visitors.



Open Space and Conservation (OS)

Rensselaer's Riverfront Park is the only area within the study area zoned as an Open Space and Conservation District. This falls adjacent to the on-ramps for the Dunn Memorial Bridge. The intention of this zoning district is to preserve the historic, scenic, recreational, and environmental value of officially designated parkland, environmentally sensitive areas, heavily wooded areas, and other open spaces that may or may not be accessible to the public. This zoning category provides areas for the development of parks, multi-use trails, and small-scale environmental interpretive sites.

Planned Development District (PDD)

The Planned Development District within the study area boundary includes the NYS Office of Child and Family Services campus and surface parking areas at Third Avenue and Washington Street. PDDs are flexible districts intended to accommodate major new development or redevelopment efforts. The PDD encourages a diversity of land uses within a single unified development plan while ensuring adequate standards for public health, safety, and general welfare.

Residential District #2 (R-2)

South of the Columbia Turnpike, the neighborhood covering the southern end of the study area, known as the Fort Crailo neighborhood, is zoned as high-density Residential District #2. The purpose of the R-2 district is to ensure that in the future, the residential and commercial development respects the scale and character of the City's existing neighborhoods. The specific intent of the district is to provide a mix of housing options, preserve the historic nature of existing neighborhoods, and provide for a walkable, pedestrian-oriented environment built around single-family and two-family residential dwellings on small City lots.

General Commercial (C-1)

Within the study area, the land between the Columbia Turnpike and South Street is zoned General Commercial. The purpose of this district is to promote well-designed large- and small-scale commercial development along the US Routes 9 and 20 corridors. It is the intent of the C-1 district to provide a welcoming gateway into the City of Rensselaer through design standards that encourage consistent building design, façade materials, and structure orientation. It also encourages signage that is consistent with the scale, context, and materials established through design standards and to create a pedestrian oriented environment through building orientation and the position of safe pedestrian accommodations, including an interconnected network of sidewalks, landscaping, and rear or side lot parking development.

Light Industrial (I-1) and Industrial (I-2)

In the southeast corner of the study area along South Street is a Light Industrial (I-1) zoned area of land. The I-1 District provides for areas in the City where such uses have primarily been concentrated and to encourage future light industrial development. A small portion of the southeast corner of the study area is zoned for Industrial (I-2) use. The Industrial zoning provides for the continuation of industrial uses in areas where they have historically been concentrated. All industrial operations must respect adjacent transitional areas through the incorporation of buffers, design guidelines, and compliance with performance standards.

Historic Overlay District (HOD)

The Fort Crailo Neighborhood within the study area is also zoned for a Historic Overlay District. The purpose of the HOD is to preserve, maintain, and enhance the integrity of designated areas within the City that are historically significant or contain significant structures. In the HOD, all permitted uses in the base zoning district that the HOD falls within are allowed.

City of Rensselaer along the Hudson River.

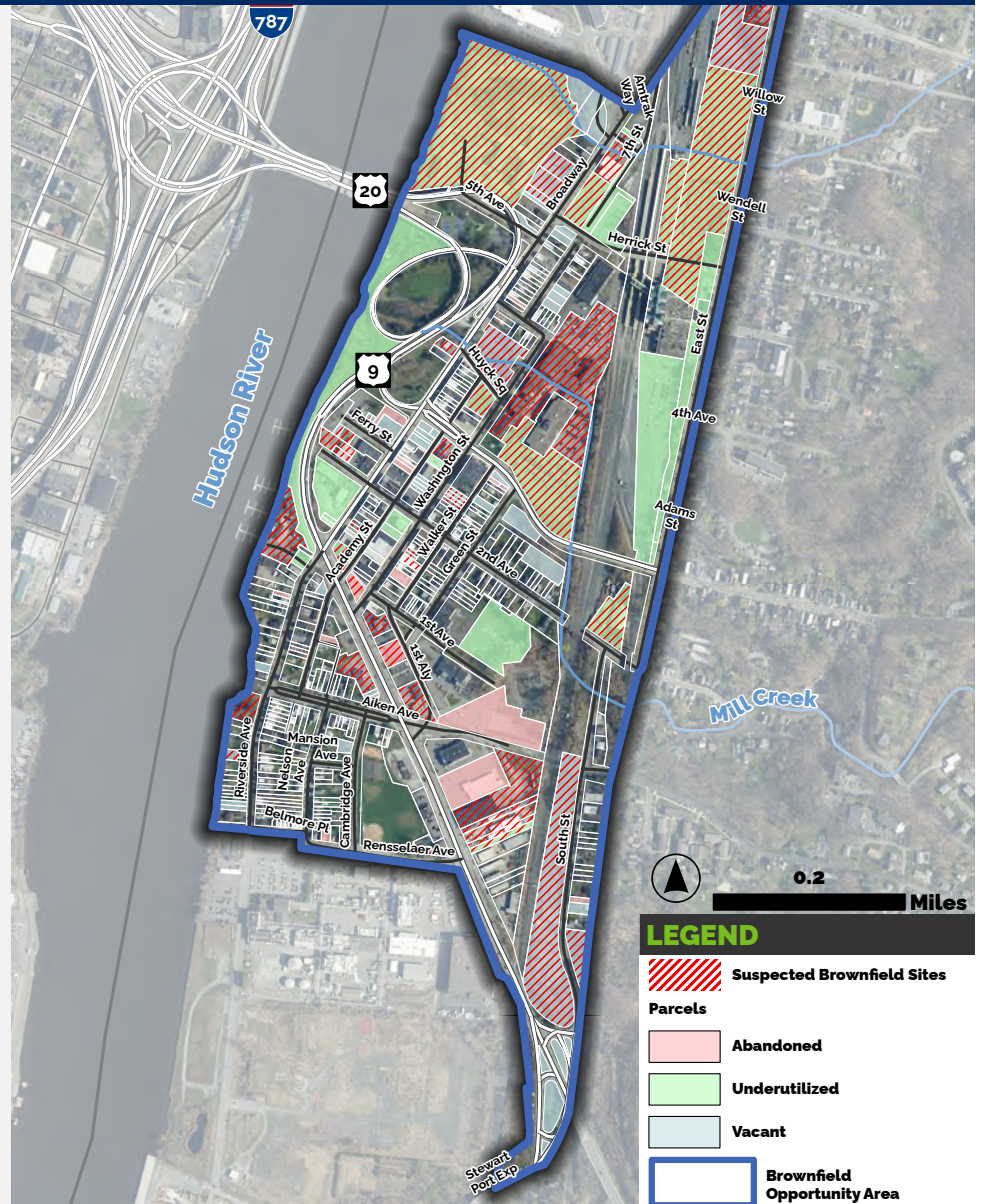


BROWNFIELD, UNDERUTILIZED, ABANDONED, AND VACANT SITES

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Brownfield, Underutilized, Abandoned and Vacant Sites

- The study area has 53.3 acres of land that were identified as brownfields. While the sites are not concentrated in one location, many are vacant and underutilized and are located in high impact locations.
- There are around 50 acres of underutilized, vacant, and abandoned land dispersed throughout the study area.



One of the primary objectives of the BOA program is to address blighted properties, including brownfields, underutilized, vacant, and abandoned sites. As defined by NYS Environmental Conservation Law, ENV Section 27-1405, "brownfield site" shall mean any real property where a contaminant is present at levels exceeding the soil cleanup objectives or other health-based standards, criteria, or standards adopted by the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) based on the reasonably anticipated uses of the property. For a description of real property excluded from this definition see NYS Environmental Conservation Law, ENV Section 27-1405. The term "brownfield site" can be qualified using "suspected" within a BOA plan to include a broader set of properties where evidence of contamination above threshold levels have not been confirmed but where redevelopment may be complicated by such real or perceived presence of contamination. Known or suspected brownfield sites will be referred to as "brownfields" throughout this BOA plan. Vacant, abandoned, and underutilized sites are properties that are undeveloped and offer strategic, near-term opportunities for redevelopment. A full list of all brownfield, vacant, abandoned, and underutilized sites is included in Appendix 2.

BROWNFIELDS

Each site within the Rensselaer study area was evaluated for the likelihood of environmental concerns. The purpose of this analysis is to create an inventory of sites that identifies known or potential environmental issues and categorizes each site according to the potential severity of contamination. These sites may be active and viable businesses, new developments, or vacant and derelict properties. The identification of "brownfield" is not intended to indicate a site that requires immediate assessment and/or remediation, or even if there is any evidence of contamination. Rather, it is intended to identify potential impediments to development based upon the documented historical use and publicly available data, and inform sites that may be eligible for BOA Pre-Development funding to spur private investment.

To identify brownfields, facility and site information, maintained at both the State and Federal level, was reviewed to determine preliminary site conditions. This included the NYSDEC Remedial Site Database, NYSDEC Bulk Storage Database, U.S. EPA Envirofacts Database, and Parcel Assessment database. After reviewing all the following resources, in total, 51 parcels totaling about 53.3 acres of land within the study area were identified as brownfields. While these properties are not concentrated in any one section of the study area, many are currently vacant or underutilized and occupy key locations along heavily trafficked roadways or the Hudson River waterfront.

There is an active resource conservation and recovery site in the southeast of the study area. The site was used by Ashland Inc. as a chemical distribution facility until operations were discontinued in 2001. The buildings and associated structures were demolished in 2009 and the 4.8-acre site is now vacant. The site is zoned industrial, and the surrounding area is predominantly residential, commercial, and light industrial. Following interim remedial measures to address soil and groundwater contamination, residual contamination is presently being addressed.

Additionally, there is an active voluntary cleanup site within the study area. The Voluntary Cleanup Program (VCP) in NYS seeks to address the environmental, legal and financial barriers that often hinder redevelopment and reuse of contaminated sites. The VCP was developed to enhance private sector cleanup of brownfield by enabling parties to remediate sites using private rather than public funds. Within the study area, the former Rensselaer Manufactured Gas Plant (MGP) is located on Washington Street and is a VCP site. Currently, it is covered and used as a parking lot and is zoned Downtown Mixed-Use and Planned Development District. Between 1870 and 1920, gas plant operations contaminated the site and resulted in contaminated groundwater and soil.

ABANDONED, VACANT AND UNDERUTILIZED SITES

Sites that are identified as vacant, abandoned, or underutilized were selected using the parcel assessment database and augmented with field reconnaissance. These sites were divided as follows:

Vacant: Any property that is vacant, has no apparent current use, and does not contain structures

Abandoned: Any property that is vacant, has no apparent use, and contains structures.

Underutilized: Any property that is currently used, but the use is considered to be less than the property's highest potential based upon the underlying zoning. For example, a vehicle storage lot situated along an active retail corridor and a multi-story mixed-use building with vacant upper floors are both considered to be underutilized. This designation is subjective and is based primarily upon field reconnaissance, and input from the Advisory Committee.

In total, the study area currently contains about 50.5 acres of vacant, abandoned, or underutilized sites. These underutilized sites present significant opportunities for redevelopment and are comprised of 54 vacant properties (15.49 acres), 15 abandoned properties (5.39 acres), and 16 underutilized properties (27.86 acres).

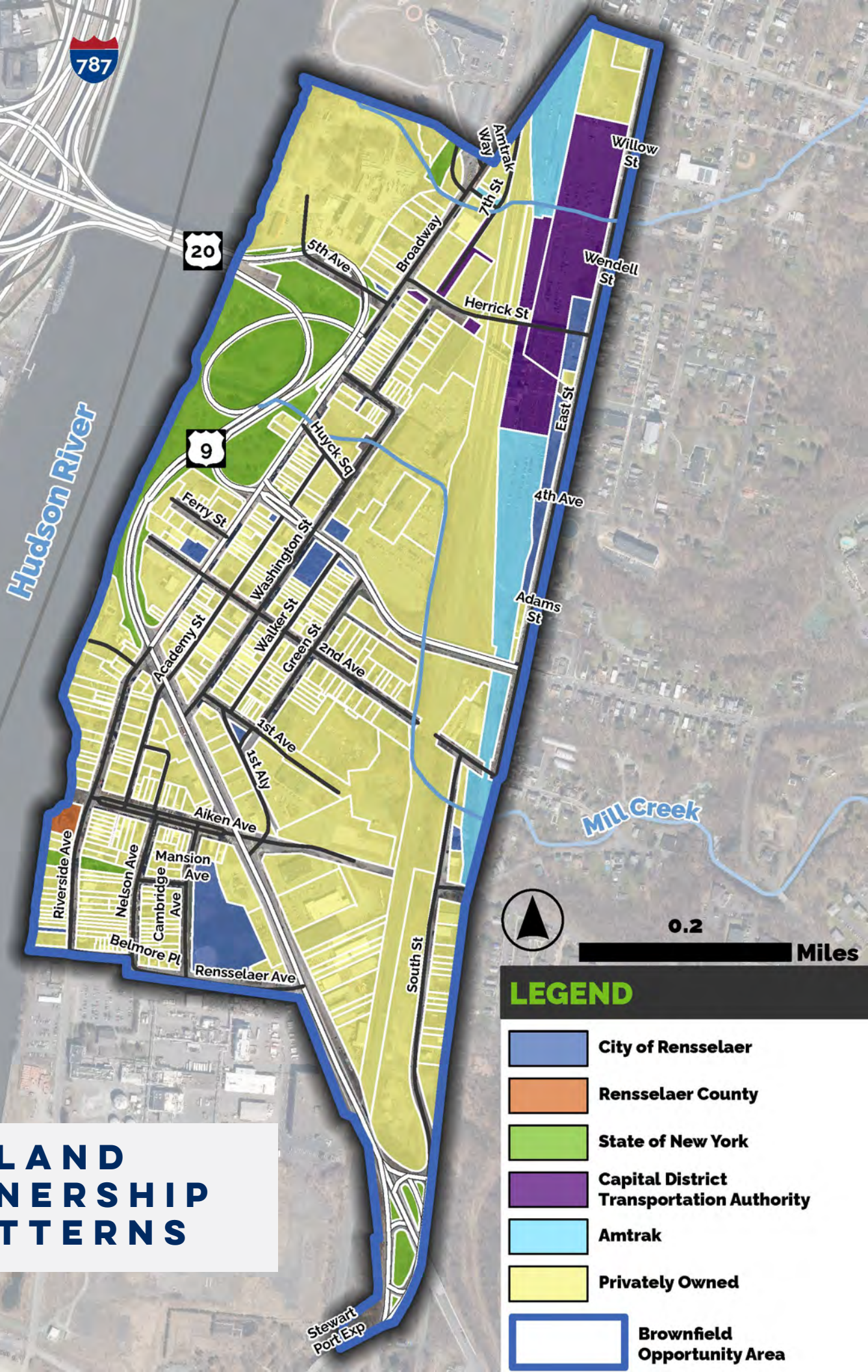
BROWNFIELDS ELIGIBLE FOR BOA PRE-DEVELOPMENT PHASE II ESA FUNDING

The criteria to be eligible for a Phase II Environmental Site Assessment in the BOA Program include the following:

- must be located within a State designated BOA
- must have been determined a "suspected brownfield site" by DOS during the BOA planning process.
- must be owned by party that is not responsible for site contamination
- may be contaminated as a result of an on-site or off-site source
- Non-municipal current owners listed may volunteer to participate in a Phase II Environmental Site Assessment
- If contaminants are found during the Phase II Environmental Site Assessment the current owner commitment will be to
 - » stop any continuing release;
 - » prevent any threatened future release; and,
 - » prevent or limit human, environmental, or natural resource exposure to any previously released contamination.

Address	Tax ID	Category	Reason for Characterization
33 Riverside Ave.	154-5-1	Brownfield	Historic Use/Current Use/Petroleum Bulk Storage Site
2 Belmore Place	154.27-1-1	Brownfield	Historic Use/Current Use
35 Riverside Ave.	143.83-9-27	Brownfield	Historic Use/Iron and Steel
321 Columbia St.	154.27-2-2.1	Brownfield	Historic Use/Current Use
319 Columbia St.	143.83-5-4	Brownfield	Historic Use/Current Use
317 Columbia St.	143.83-5-3	Brownfield	Hsitoric Use/Petroleum Bulk Storage Site
309 Columbia St.	143.83-5-2	Brownfield	Historic Use/Current Use
69 Columbia St.	143.83-4-6	Brownfield	Petroleum Bulk Storage Site
35 Columbia St.	143.75-14-2	Brownfield	Historic Use/Current Use
13 Columbia St.	143.75-9-12	Brownfield, Abandoned	Historic Use/Current Use/Petroleum Bulk Storage Site
3 Columbia St.	143.75-10-3	Brownfield, Underutilized	Petroleum Bulk Storage Site
48-50 Columbia St.	143.83-3-8	Brownfield	Petroleum Bulk Storage Site
22 Washington St.	143.75-8-7	Brownfield	Historic Use/Current Use
24 Washington St.	143.75-8-6	Brownfield	Historic Use/Current Use
26 Washington St.	143.75-8-5	Brownfield	Historic Use/Current Use
126 Broadway	143.75-10-7	Brownfield	Historic Use/Current Use
128 Broadway	143.75-10-8	Brownfield	Historic Use/Current Use
75 Broadway	143.75-11-11	Brownfield	Petroleum Bulk Storage Site
50 Washington St.	143.75-3-12	Brownfield, Vacant	Historic Use/Current Use
48 Washington St.	143.75-3-11	Brownfield, Vacant	Historic Use/Current Use
46 Washington St.	143.75-3-10	Brownfield, Vacant	Historic Use/Current Use
44 Washington St.	143.75-3-9	Brownfield	Historic Use/Current Use
3 Second Ave.	143.76-1-4	Brownfield	Historic Use/Current Use
1 Second Ave.	143.67-1-3.2	Brownfield	Hsitoric Use/Current Use
325 Broadway	143.67-1-23	Brownfield	Historic Use/Current Use
Ferry St.	143.67-1-7.1	Brownfield	Historic Use/Current Use
9 Third Ave.	143.67-7-14	Brownfield	Petroleum Bulk Storage Site
Third St.	143.76-1-11.2	Brownfield, Underutilized	Historic Use/Current Use
64-70 Washington Ave.	143.68-1-5	Brownfield	Petroleum Bulk Storage Site
89 Washington Ave.	143.67-5-1	Brownfield, Underutilized	Historic Use/Current Use
338 Broadway	143.67-3-7	Brownfield, Vacant	Historic Use/Current Use
625 East St.	143.60-3-9.1	Brownfield	Historic Use/Current Use/Petroleum Bulk Storage Site
Partition St.	143.52-4-1.1	Brownfield, Vacant	Historic Use/Current Use
544 Broadway	143.60-2-7-8	Brownfield	Petroleum Bulk Storage Site
Broadway	143.60-2-7	Brownfield, Underutilized	Petroleum Bulk Storage Site
Broadway	143.60-2-35.2	Brownfield	Historic Use/Current Use
501 Broadway	143.60-1-13	Brownfield, Vacant	Historic Use/Current Use/Petroleum Bulk Storage Site
505 Broadway	143.60-1-12	Brownfield, Vacant	Historic Use/Current Use/PBS Site
527 Broadway	143.60-1-11	Brownfield, Vacant	Historic Use/Current Use
7 Fifth Ave.	143.59-1-1	Brownfield, Underutilized	Historic Use/Current Use

LAND OWNERSHIP PATTERNS



KEY TAKEAWAYS

Land Ownership Patterns

- Most of the parcels within the study area are privately owned, meaning redevelopment efforts will have to involve these property owners in discussion.
- Significant portions of the parcels in the study area are owned by Amtrak, the CDTA, or New York Central Lines. These land uses are not expected to change significantly.
- 21 percent of the acreage in the study area is publicly owned. Some of the parcels owned by public entities are vacant properties, which provide an opportunity to influence their redevelopment.
- 30 property owners with multiple properties in the study area own at least one vacant property.

Understanding land ownership within the study area is an important step in formulating future development scenarios. Projects that occur on publicly owned properties can be easier to redevelop consistent with a desired vision than projects on privately held parcels. This is because private property owners cannot be required to conform to a specific community vision unless regulated through the existing zoning code or through other land use controls.

Within the study area, approximately 91 percent of the parcels and 79 percent of the acreage are privately owned, while the remaining ten percent of parcels and 21 percent of acreage are publicly owned by the City, Rensselaer County, and the State of New York, or are owned by the CDTA, and Amtrak. While public properties provide an opportunity for communities to drive development, some of the land in the study area has less development potential due to its more permanent uses. Amtrak owns six parcels totaling 12 acres, New York Central Lines owns six railroad parcels of 33 acres, and CDTA owns six parcels of 11.5 acres in the study area, including the Amtrak Station. The use of these portions of land, because they are largely used for railroad functions or public transit, are not expected to change significantly.

Other public properties within the study area consist of Rensselaer's Riverfront Park, Coyne Field, and a County sewer district. There are other public parcels along East Street and a handful on Lower Broadway and Washington Street, including City Hall, the Rensselaer Police Department, and an office of the NYS Office of Children and Family Services. All private and publicly owned parcels are shown on the property ownership map.

Two of the parcels owned by the CDTA, four owned by the City of Rensselaer, and eight owned by the State of New York are identified as vacant properties. This provides the municipality with opportunity to influence development on these study area properties. Additionally, there are several private property owners who own multiple vacant parcels in the study area.

Of the 70 property owners with multiple properties in the area, 30 own at least one vacant property. A cohesive redevelopment plan will require contact with and involvement of these property owners.

PARKS & OPEN SPACE

Crailo Greenspace

Coyne Field

Rensselaer Riverfront Esplanade

Riverfront Trail

Hudson Riverfront Art Park

Huyck Memorial Park

First & Green Triangle

Rensselaer Sprinkler Park

Plum Street Park

Empire State Trail

Hudson River

Mill Creek

787

20

9



0.2

Miles

LEGEND



Parks and Open Space



Trails



Proposed Trails



Hudson River Access Points



Brownfield Opportunity Area

In a community divided by several significant roadways, the City of Rensselaer has creatively used open spaces to serve the community. The study area has a collection of green spaces, including a riverfront art park, a baseball field, a memorial park, and access to the Empire State Trail, which runs through the center of the study area. In 2022, the City's Planning Department announced \$1.927 million in Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) CARES Act funding to revitalize four parks that currently serve the City's lowest income and highest density neighborhoods, one of which is in the study area, and one of which falls just outside of the boundary. This grant funded work is nearing completion. With the selection of parks, trails, and open spaces in the study area, much of the community has access to green space; however, many of the spaces could use improvement and should be considered within plans for new development. With the investment from the CDBG grant and future investment in the study area, important work has started on redeveloping the existing green spaces to better serve the community.

Hudson Riverfront Art Park

The Hudson Riverfront Art Park is a large park located between the Hudson River and Broadway under the Dunn Memorial Bridge. Pillars of the bridge are covered with murals, which were first created in the 1990s by the Rensselaer Artist Movement Society (RAMS). There is also a brand new (CDBG funded) playground for families to enjoy and a large monument commemorating that Riverfront Park is where the first Grand Slam in major league baseball took place. The Park is also the location of the Rensselaer Farmers Market. Looking forward, there are plans for a portion of the USS Albany to be stationed in the

park, across from Albany's USS Slater. This is the largest green space and parks in the study area. While centrally located in the study area and the point of significant recent upgrades, there remain opportunities to increase awareness of and access to the Park to increase utilization.

Coyne Field

Coyne Field is a baseball and softball field located between Rensselaer Avenue and Columbia Street. Also in the space are tennis courts and a playground. This provides the community with a space for youth sports and activities and is used by local baseball and softball teams.

Huyck Memorial Park

Huyck Memorial Park is a small green space on the corner of Washington Street and Third Avenue across the street from City Hall. In the center stands a Civil War Memorial erected in 1910. A tablet was added to the monument in 1920 for the World War I fatalities from the City. This space provides some break in the built landscape of the area and has a few benches for pedestrians to use.

Crailo Greenspace

The Crailo Greenspace is a small waterfront grassy park located across from the Crailo State Historic Site. Crailo is the museum of the Colonial Dutch in the Hudson River Valley. The park is a mostly grassy area with a small stone wall overlooking the water.

First and Green Triangle

The First and Green triangle is a small green space between First Avenue, First Alley, and Green Street. It is a

landscaped area with a few trees and benches located among some residential and commercial buildings. Although small, this triangle provides a break in the built environment and a refuge for pedestrians.

Empire State Trail

A portion of the Empire State Trail runs through the center of the study area. From Rensselaer, the trail makes its way through the Hudson Riverfront Art Park and across the Hudson River to Albany via the Dunn Memorial Bridge. The Empire State Trail was launched in 2017 to promote outdoor recreation in New York and now makes up 750 miles of bicyclist and walking trails across the state. This portion of the trail allows cyclists to continue via asphalt road along the Albany-Hudson Electric Trail section. While the fact that the Trail runs through the City is an incredible asset, there are opportunities to improve bicycle infrastructure along the route to improve safety and utilization. Opportunities to better connect the Trail to other community assets, such as the Amtrak Station, could also be explored.

Planned Riverfront Multi-Use Trail

The Riverfront Trail, a Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) project, is a proposal to construct an approximately one-mile new multi-use path foot trail adjacent to the Hudson River. This project was placed on hold due to the announcement of the reconstruction of the Livingston Avenue Bridge, as the bridge project overlaps with the trail. The intent is for work on this important connector to recommence once the Livingston Avenue Bridge work is complete.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Parks and Open Space

- While much of the community is served by these green spaces, many of the spaces are small, providing the City an opportunity to expand parks and green spaces during redevelopment.
 - The Hudson Riverfront Art Park is the largest open space in the study area and a huge asset given its location and waterfront location. While significant upgrades have been made in recent years, there are opportunities to further enhance the park to increase utilization.
 - The Empire State Trail runs through the center of the study area and the Hudson Riverfront Park. Its route through Rensselaer is an asset, but bicycle infrastructure and connection improvements are needed to further leverage this resource.
-



Hudson Riverfront Park entrance.



787

20

9

Hudson River

Willow St

Wendell St

Parish of St. John the Evangelist and St. Joseph complex

Herrick St

Broadway

5th Ave

Anttrak Way
7th St

East St

4th Ave

Adams St

Harder Mill

Mill Creek

Irwin, W.P. Bank Building

Aiken House

Crailo Historic Site

Ferry St

Washington St

Walker St

Green St

1st Ave

1st Aly

Academy St

Aiken Ave

Mansion Ave

Cambridge Ave

Belmore Pl

Rensselaer Ave

South St

Stewart Port Exp



0.2

Miles

HISTORIC & ARCHAEOLOGICALLY SIGNIFICANT RESOURCES

LEGEND



National Register of Historic Places - Historic District



National Register of Historic Places - Historic Buildings



National Register of Historic Places - Eligible Sites



Brownfield Opportunity Area

Four buildings in the study area are on the State and National Register of Historic Places (S/NR): the Irwin, W.P. Bank Building, Aiken House, Crailo State Historic Site, and Harder Mill. In addition, there are three sites in the study area that were determined to be eligible for S/NR designation.

The Irwin, W.P. Bank building was constructed in 1873 as the home of the East Albany Banking and Trust Co., a financial institution established by the community's leading business entrepreneur of the time. Today, the building is a local accounting and tax services firm. The building is on the corner of Broadway and Second Avenue across from the police station. While the building is well maintained as a great example of High Victorian Gothic commercial architecture, the impact of the building on its surroundings is lost slightly due to the varying look of surrounding buildings.

The Aiken House is a brick townhouse in the style of federal period architecture located on the corner of Aiken Avenue and Riverside Avenue. It was constructed in 1816 by William Aiken, the founder of the Village of East Greenbush, which would later become the City of Rensselaer. In the neighborhood, the style of the Aiken house matches other homes and a church along Riverside Avenue and Broadway. These buildings help to maintain the historic feel to the neighborhood but are mixed in with several other styles of homes on the streets as well.

Crailo State Historic Site was built in 1712 in a Dutch style and was once the focal structure of an extensive area of land controlled by the Dutch Patroon Killiaen Van Rensselaer. Today, Crailo serves as a museum of the Colonial Dutch in the Hudson River Valley. The building is on Riverside Avenue close to the Aiken House, adding to the historic feel of the neighborhood.

Finally, **Harder Mill** was constructed in 1906 for the Harder Manufacturing Company. The mill also served as the home of Albany Woolen Mills and

several other small textile-related businesses. It was last used for textile manufacturing in 1967. The building is on the corner of Green Street and First Avenue, set behind the Dollar Tree and the Rensselaer Health Center along Columbia Street. The building is now set to be renovated and made into 40 apartments.

The entire study area is within buffer areas around recorded archaeological resources. This does not mean each site in the community is archaeologically sensitive, but rather that the study area is within zones of space where there have been archaeological finds.

It should be noted that permitting and review of historic or archaeologically sensitive areas can result in a longer time schedule for redevelopment. If public funds are used, the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) must be consulted prior to project development for their review and consideration. However, additional funding opportunities also exist at the State and Federal level for S/NR-listed properties, in the form of grants, tax credits, and technical assistance. Having three sites in the study area that are eligible for the National Register is an opportunity for more support for historic sites in the community, but until they receive a full designation, they cannot yet reap the benefits of the program.

One notable requirement to be eligible for the Federal tax credit for historic buildings is that the final building use be consistent with the original use of the building. This requirement can prove to be a limitation of uses for redevelopment depending on the original building. While having historic and archaeologically sensitive areas can result in added challenges for redevelopment, historic buildings like Crailo and the Aiken House can help contribute to the community's overall character and can provide focal points for development in the area.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Historic Resources

- There are four buildings in the study area that are on the Register of Historic Places.
- Three study area buildings are eligible for S/NR listing. Absent this designation, they are not able to reap the associated benefits.
- The study area falls within buffer areas of recorded archaeological resources, which should be considered and evaluated as part of any site development.
- Permitting and review of historic or archaeologically sensitive areas can provide challenges for redevelopment in terms of a longer time schedule but can also provide an opportunity for a community to build around as focal points of the character of a community.

Hudson River

787

20

9

Albany-Rensselaer
Amtrak Station



Mill Creek
0.2

Miles

LEGEND



CDTA Bus Stop



Rail Line



Parking Lot

Annual Average Daily Traffic



< 2,000



< 5,000



< 15,000



< 35,000



Brownfield
Opportunity Area

TRANSPORTATION
SYSTEMS

Stewart
Port Exp

ROADWAY NETWORK

Surface roadways are a dominating presence in Rensselaer. While providing an ease of connection with surrounding cities, many, in their current form, challenge pedestrian circulation and leave a disjointed feel throughout the community. Additionally, current ramps and roadways in the study area limit views of and physical access to the City's waterfront.

The study area is traversed by a road network that meets the needs of the community despite being complicated by arterial ramps to the Dunn Memorial Bridge (I-787) and the north-south CSX railroad line. The most heavily trafficked roadways include the Columbia Turnpike, Broadway, Third Avenue, and the off-ramp from U.S. Route 20 to Columbia and Broadway. These mostly fall along the western edge of the study area along the waterfront. The prevalence of heavy traffic, major roadways, and the Dunn Memorial bridge in this area limit physical and visual access to the waterfront. Other sections of road in the study area that are frequently trafficked include East Street and Herrick Street, both of which fall near the Amtrak Station. In addition to impacting waterfront access, these major roadways also sever more walkable sections of the study area.

As the most heavily trafficked roadway, with more than 35,000 annual average daily traffic users, 2017-2023 crash data for Columbia Turnpike was reviewed. During that time, there were 245 crashes, including one fatal crash, and five cases of serious injury. There were 38 total injuries over the six years,

With such significant traffic flow along many of the roads making up the area, incorporating pedestrian friendly infrastructure is made more challenging. On a more positive note, the ease of access between Rensselaer and with other major cities provides an opportunity for the City to capture more visitors for longer stops in the community.

Parking

Paired with surface roadways, parking covers a significant portion of land in the community. As stated above, while ease of vehicle access can be an opportunity for communities, the disjointed look and feel of significant areas of paved roads and parking lots can prove to be a challenge.

Parking exists on large lots across the study area. The Amtrak Station has several parking lots along the parcels it owns, and NYS own several lots on the NYS-OCFS Offices Campus. The three lots surrounding the OCFS buildings cannot currently be used by the public, and NYS also leases a very large lot along Broadway next to the Boys and Girls Club for OCFS parking.

Additionally, there are several other parking lots throughout the study area along high traffic roadways like Columbia, Washington, and Broadway. Some along Columbia are within plazas or surround businesses. Along Broadway and Washington smaller lots are mixed in among small businesses and housing. There is also street parking on many of the side and neighborhood streets in the community. In study area visits, it was frequently noted that many of the parking lots in the study area are underutilized.

While ensuring adequate parking to support businesses and residents is important, large areas of parking can make the community feel disjointed and contribute to further vehicle dependence.

RAIL SERVICES

The Albany-Rensselaer Rail Station is located on East Street within the study area. It is the eighth busiest Amtrak station in the country, with services available to New York City, Montreal, Boston, Toronto, and Chicago. The nearly 40-acre Amtrak maintenance facility sits north of the study area, separating the Lower Broadway downtown business district with the northern Hudson Riverfront and North Broadway mixed-used corridor. Rail sidings are located throughout the study area, and the rail lines cross the Hudson River at the Livingston Avenue Bridge just north of the study area. A north-south railroad spur also connects the Livingston Avenue Bridge with the City of Troy to the north. At the site of the current Livingston Avenue rail bridge, the NYS Department of Transportation is in the process of a project to replace the 19th Century bridge with a new modern structure for rail crossing between Albany and Rensselaer. The new bridge will accommodate improved passenger service, while also improving access to the Rensselaer waterfront.

BUS SERVICES

The CDTA offers bus routes covering Columbia Turnpike, Broadway, Washington Avenue, and East Street. Buses help to connect residents with the City of Albany and other job and activity centers within the County and the greater region. CDTA Route 114 runs along East Street in the study area and connects to the Albany-Rensselaer Rail Station from Crossgates Mall with major stops in downtown Albany. Route 214 also runs in the study area along Herrick Street, Broadway, and Third Avenue. Route 214 connects from the Empire State Plaza to East Greenbush Tech Park via Rensselaer. While these existing routes provide an alternative mode of connection within the City and to/from points in the surrounding region, there are gaps in the network, particularly for the City's elderly and vulnerable populations that remain unaddressed.

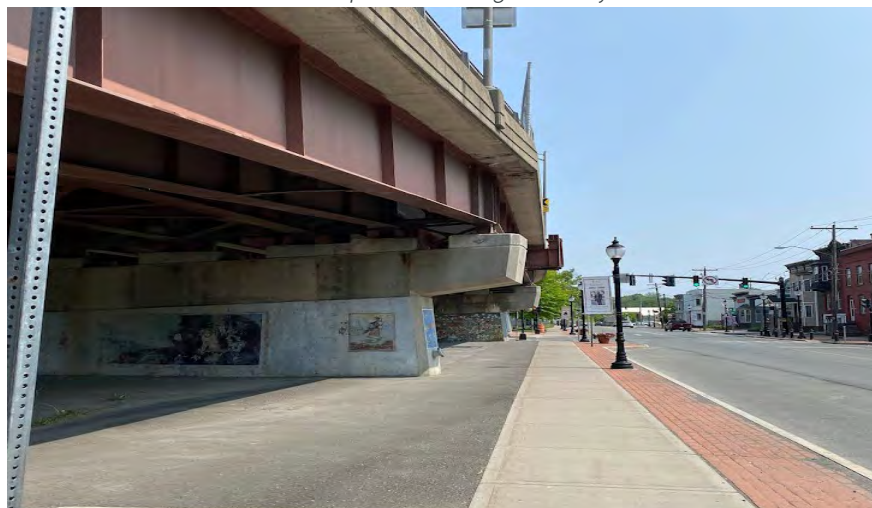
PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE FACILITIES

The City recently completed infrastructure work along Broadway, including replacing the sidewalks and curbs, installing new pavers, and stamping concrete areas for snow storage. There is a network of sidewalks in the study area that connect along most significant roadways, but continued work can be done to improve pedestrian infrastructure and access in the community.

In terms of bicycle infrastructure, in addition to the Empire State Trail noted in the "Parks and Open Space" section, there are two NYS designated bike routes in the study area - NYS Bike Routes 5 and 9, but of which partially overlap with the Empire State Trail. While denoted in name as bike routes, in many instances these routes run along or traverse heavily trafficked roadways and are not the most welcoming for bicyclist, and in particular for beginner cyclists. Also missing in the City are any bike share (CDPHP Cycle!) stations; while the area extending between the Dunn Memorial Bridge and the Amtrak is within the designated Cycle! parking zone, without physical stations in the study area, use of the system is limited.

A notable planned improvement to bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure in the City is the Livingston Avenue rail bridge modernization project. In addition to the new rail, the project will create a bicycle and pedestrian shared use path across the Hudson River, which will connect to the Empire State Trail in Rensselaer. While the bridge itself falls outside of the study area, this project will help improve pedestrian and bicycle connectivity in the study area.

Portion of sidewalk along Broadway.



Heaving panel near residences.



Pedestrian access along roadway.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Transportation Systems

- The study area is divided by several major roadways, off-ramps, and the Dunn Memorial Bridge that create pedestrian safety concerns and limit connections and physical and visual access to the waterfront.
- The presence of the Albany-Rensselaer Amtrak Station - the 8th busiest station in the US - within the study is a unique asset that can be further leveraged to attract investment in Rensselaer.
- CDTA bus service serves the City, but there remain gaps - particularly for the City's elderly and most vulnerable populations that remain underserved.
- There are opportunities to improve pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure in the study area, including streetscape enhancements and installing new bike share stations, which would complement other larger efforts outside of the study area, such as the Livingston Avenue Railway Bridge replacement project.

INFRASTRUCTURE





Note: The water and sewer utility access data presented in this map is based on information from available County tax parcel data.



0.2

Miles

LEGEND

-  Public Water & Sewer
-  No Water & Private Sewer
-  Gas & Electric
-  Brownfield Opportunity Area

The capability of the City's infrastructure, including utilities, sewers, and water systems, to accommodate both current and future development is a critical consideration when discussing the revitalization of the study area. Overall, the entire study area is serviced by municipal water and sewer. In the past several years the City of Rensselaer has been working on projects in the community to update water and sewer lines. While progress has been made, much of the infrastructure remains in need of updating and repair to best serve the current and future needs of the community. Utility information in this section and the accompanying map is based on available County parcel data. For parcels that are identified as neither having no water or sewer or public water & sewer, information was not available. One explanation may be that there are currently no hook ups for water and sewer at those locations, as the City is entirely served by public water and sewer at this time.

WATER

The City of Rensselaer purchases its water from the City of Troy. Troy draws its water from the spring-fed Tomhannock Reservoir before transferring it to the Troy Water Treatment Plant, a complete treatment facility. This process includes disinfection with chloride dioxide to protect against contamination from harmful bacteria, coagulating, sedimentation, filtration, and fluoridation at low levels to protect teeth. Finished water from the treatment plant is piped to the Rensselaer distribution system. The City has two five million gallon tanks, which allows it to meet consumer demand and provide adequate fire protection. The existing water pumps station that is jointly owned by the City of Rensselaer and the Town of East Greenbush has been in operation since 1964. The infrastructure is starting to fail, and the drives that run the pumps pushing water from Troy to Rensselaer are obsolete. The refurbishment of the pump station will be a cost split between the City of Rensselaer and the Town of East Greenbush, and to raise the funds necessary, residents are being charged a surcharge on their water bills to cover the project for two years.

SANITARY SEWERS

The City of Rensselaer is served by about 80 miles of sewer lines. The system, portions of which were first constructed over 100 years ago, collects and pumps wastewater to the Rensselaer County Sewer Treatment Plant, where it is treated and released into the Hudson River. The pipes and pump stations that collect and transport sewage in the City are getting older, and some have reached the end of their useful life. Residents are charged a maintenance fee on their water bill to allow the City to properly maintain their aging system and make necessary improvements to comply with State and Federal regulations that protect the Hudson River and other critical bodies of water.

STORMWATER

Water in the City of Rensselaer that does not soak into the ground, but instead into the City's sewer system, becomes stormwater that eventually makes its way into the Hudson River. The EPA Phase II stormwater regulations were promulgated in 1999 and identified publicly owned separate stormwater systems (MS4s), which were located within areas designated as urbanized. The City of Rensselaer was identified as an MS4 and was required to develop a Stormwater Management Plan (SWMP). As part of the SWMP, in 2007, the City adopted a Stormwater Management Law, which addresses erosion and sediment control, as well as illicit discharge detection and elimination.

The Albany CSO Pool Communities is a collaboration between the Cities of Albany, Cohoes, Troy, Watervliet, and Rensselaer and the Village of Green Island. Through this collaboration, the City of Rensselaer has conducted Hudson River water quality improvement projects for the sewer system. Six projects have been completed so far in the City. Two others have undergone a preliminary review to determine elimination. This study was completed using an engineering grant the City received in 2021.

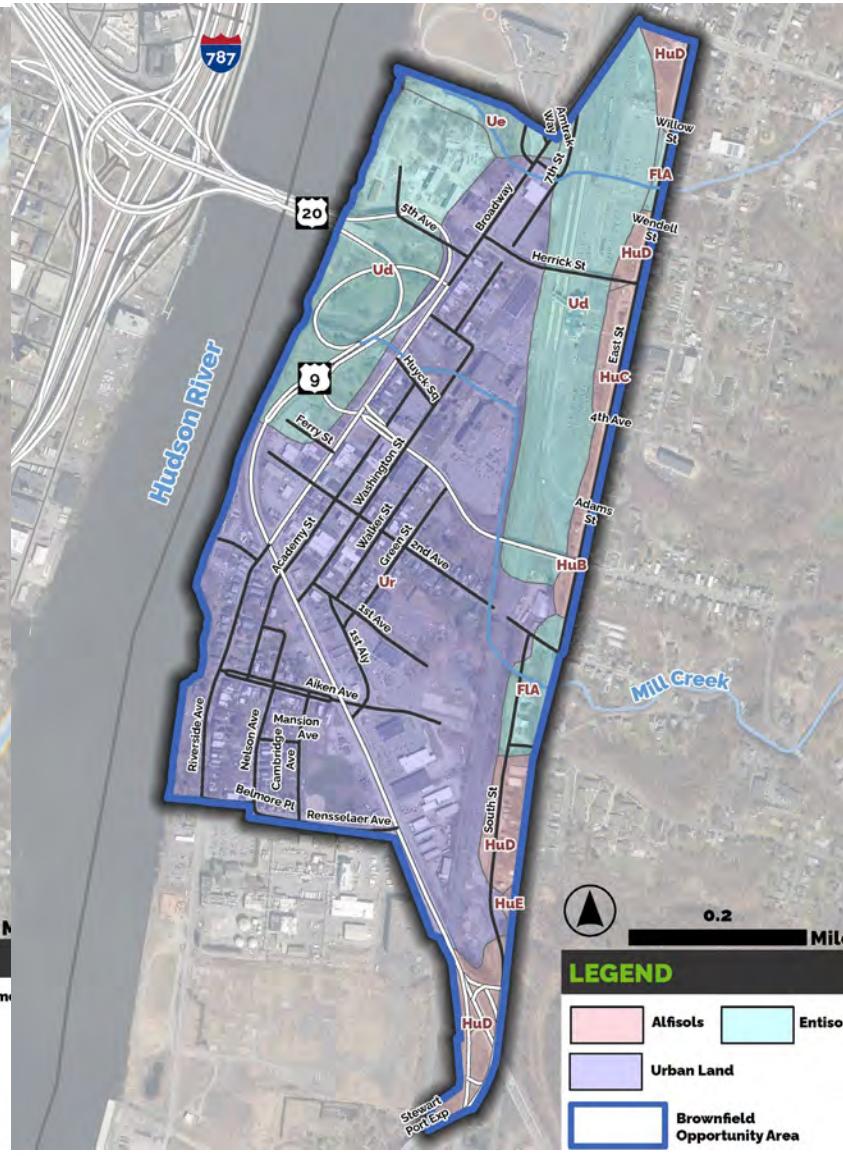
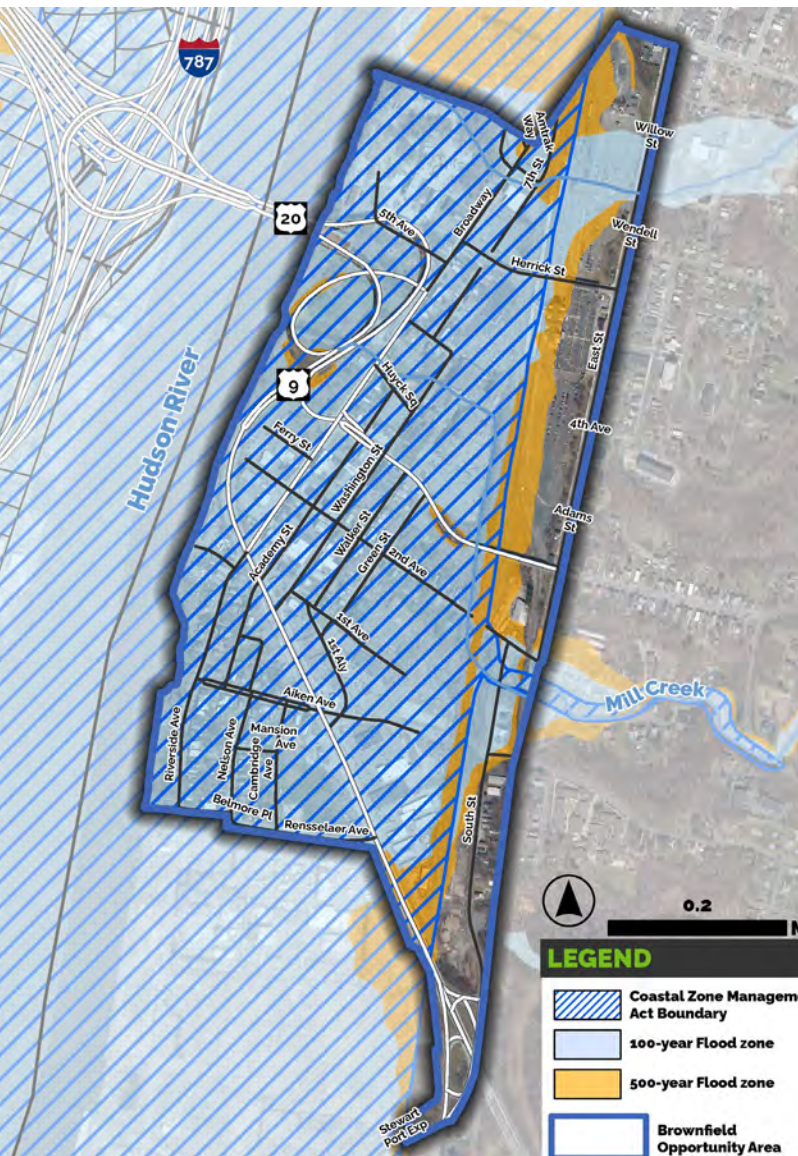
KEY TAKEAWAYS

Infrastructure

- The entire study area is serviced by municipal water and sewer. While upgrades have been made in the recent past, much of the infrastructure in the community remains in need of updating and repair to best serve the current and future needs of the community.

FLOODPLAINS

SOILS



NATURAL & ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES

The following sections and maps describe existing environmental factors within the study area that could affect development and may require potential mitigation during the site plan review and approval process for new projects.

FLOODPLAINS

The study area runs alongside the Hudson River and falls within the Hudson River Estuary, meaning that the riverfront is affected by rising and falling tides of the Atlantic Ocean. Based on a review of FEMA's flood data, about 73 percent of the study area acreage is within the 100-year floodplain, and 10.5 percent falls within the 500-year floodplain. This means the vast majority of the study area is impacted by floodplains.

Certain types of development in these areas are not prohibited, but new construction may be complicated by the possibility of flooding and a high groundwater table. New development in these areas must also comply with the floodplain regulations, "Development in the Flood Fringe," in the City's Zoning Code. Additionally, the City participates in the National Flood Insurance Program, which involves a set of building standards regarding development within the floodplain. Meeting the necessary standards for new development

within the floodplain can be costly, time-consuming, and difficult. If a property owner does not meet the base requirements, they face high flood insurance costs that can make ownership more expensive. Having such a significant amount of the study area within a floodplain presents a challenge for the City as it considers development.

SOILS

Most of the soil coverage within the study area has an urban land soil designation. This hydrologic soil group is more variable than those of loamy and sandy soils but does not cause challenges for redevelopment work. Other types of soil within the study area are loamy, which have low runoff potential and high infiltration rates even when thoroughly wet, and sandy soil areas, which consist of slightly less fine texture but also drain moderately well. In general, soil conditions do not present any significant obstacles to the community in terms of drainage capabilities.

SLOPES

Slopes do not provide a significant barrier to development within the study area: the terrain is mostly flat, with the exception of the rise in grade approaching East Street from the railroad line.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Natural Resources

- Most of the study area falls within the Hudson River Estuary 100-year floodplain, which makes development more costly, time-consuming, and challenging.
- There are no wetlands in the study area, and the slope and soil types in the study area will not significantly hinder future development work.

ECONOMIC & MARKET ANALYSIS

The purpose of the economic and market analysis is to provide market-based recommendations on potential economic drivers and future land uses within the study area. The analysis, sets realistic assumptions, and identifies the area's redevelopment potential.

ECONOMIC CONDITIONS OVERVIEW

Like many similar "rust belt" communities in the Northeast and Midwest, the economy of Rensselaer has historically relied heavily on manufacturing. Assets such as the Port of Albany-Rensselaer and the Albany-Rensselaer Rail Station help extend the reach of markets for the City's business community. Proximity to Albany has also played a part in the economic makeup of the City. Firms like Bayer Aspirin (the first manufacturers of Aspirin in the country) BASF, and Huyck Felt once thrived in Rensselaer by manufacturing and shipping their consumer goods to markets around the world.

The larger economy for the Albany-Schenectady-Troy Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) is buoyed by State employment, even at times when the national market is in a downturn. Historically, the MSA has relied on manufacturing, just as Rensselaer has. More recently, State incentives, proximity to markets, and institutions of higher learning have propelled the rise of the semiconductor industry in the area.

The College of Nanoscale Science & Engineering, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (RPI), Union College, the growth of nearby Regeneron, and the presence of the GlobalFoundries chip fab campus in Saratoga County and General Electric Research and Development in Schenectady County are engines of local economic growth that fuel regional development priorities.

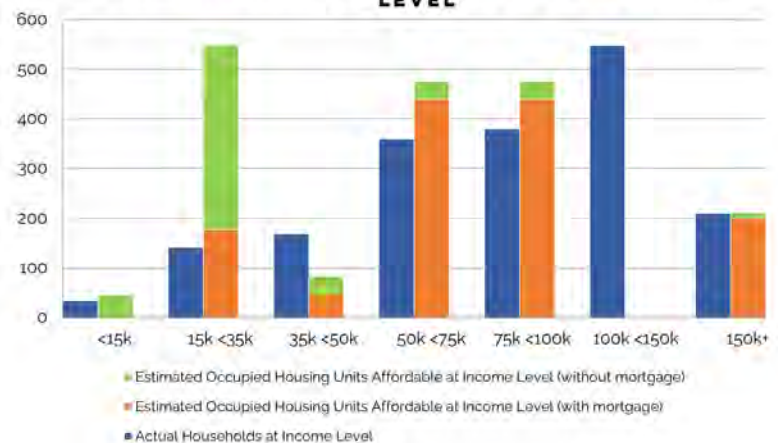
HOUSING

The housing analysis evaluates the market for various types of housing and price points in the current Rensselaer housing market and provides projections for the future. Using Census data, as well as ESRI Community Analyst and Envision Tomorrow software, the housing market analysis compares the existing rental and owner housing unit supply with the current and future (2040) demand.

CURRENT HOUSING MARKET

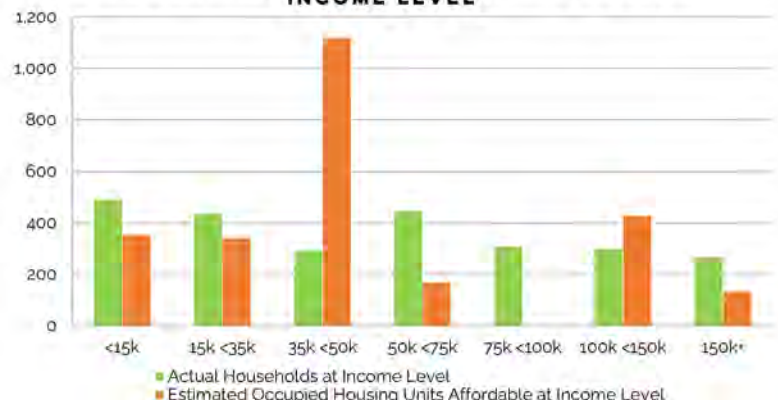
Owner household incomes (demand) were compared with occupied units affordable by income level (supply) to identify current gaps in the market. Notably, there is an insufficient supply of owner-occupied housing in the City for households earning \$35,000 to \$50,000 and \$100,000 to \$150,000 and an oversupply of units for households earning less than \$35,000 and \$50,000-\$100,000.

COMPARING OWNER HOUSEHOLD INCOMES WITH OCCUPIED UNITS AFFORDABLE AT EACH INCOME LEVEL



The same analysis of supply versus demand was conducted for renter-occupied housing. Most rental units in the City are at rates that are affordable to households earning between \$35,00 and \$50,000 per year. With an undersupply of units affordable to other income brackets, this means that many of these households are renting units that are unaffordable (for those earning less than \$35,000) or well-within their financial means (for those earning over \$50,000).

COMPARING RENTAL HOUSEHOLD INCOMES WITH OCCUPIED UNITS AFFORDABLE AT EACH INCOME LEVEL



FUTURE HOUSING MARKET

Envision Tomorrow software was used to project future housing demand and supply to identify future (2040) gaps in the City's housing market. Growth projections used in this analysis were developed based on household size trends at the City level and County-level population projections developed by Cornell Program on Applied Demographics (PAD). These projections account for changes in resident age and associated housing needs, as well as obsolete housing stock.

Following this approach, it is anticipated that there will be demand for an additional 571 housing units by 2040. Notably, 381 (67 percent) of these are projected to be rental housing and 190 are projected to be owner units. There is the greatest need for rental units for households making less than \$15,000 (not adjusted for future inflation), and the greatest need for owner units for households between \$35,000 and \$50,000 (not adjusted for future inflation). In terms of preference by housing type, preferences are expected to remain relatively steady, with most being for multifamily homes and the remaining supply generally being split between small lot and standard large lot single-family homes.

2040 Incremental Housing Demand in Rensselaer by Income Level & Tenure

Household Income	<\$15k	\$15k-\$35k	\$35k-\$50k	\$50k-\$75k	\$75k-\$100k	\$100k-\$150k	\$150k+	TOTAL
Rental Housing Needs								
Target Monthly Rent & Utilities	\$375	\$375-\$875	\$875-\$1,250	\$1,250-\$1,875	\$1,875-\$2,500	\$2,500-\$3,750	\$3,750+	-
Target Rental Units Needed to Meet Projected Demand	248	174	-	209	5	45	6	346
Surplus Rental Units	-	-	341	-	-	-	-	-
Owner Housing Needs								
Target Affordable Home Value	<\$37,500	\$37,500-\$87,500	\$87,500-\$125,000	\$125,000-\$187,500	\$187,500-\$250,000	\$250,000-\$375,000	\$375,000+	-
Target Owner Units Needed to Meet Projected Demand	5	-	273	-	83	1	32	156
Surplus Owner Units	-	173	-	65	-	-	-	-

*Incomes and costs not adjusted for future inflation

RETAIL MARKET

When reviewing the retail market in the Rensselaer study area, ESRI Business Analyst data was evaluated to better understand retail sector strengths and gaps.

The most prevalent retail sectors within the study area are eating and drinking locations and auto-related businesses. Eating and drinking establishments include a range of casual dining and restaurants, such as Skyline Diner, Illusive Restaurant and Bar, Cugino's Pizza, Son of Egg, Thai Orchid, and Dunkin'. Auto-based businesses in the study area include gas stations, auto repair, and auto sales. Other miscellaneous retail locations in the study area include a pharmacy, liquor store, dollar store, barber shops and salons, a laundromat, and the Rensselaer Bird Center. There are several retail sectors that currently do not exist within the study area; this includes apparel and accessory stores, grocery stores, furniture and home furnishing stores, and general merchandise stores.

Notably, with the closure of the supermarket Aldi, previously located along Columbia Turnpike in the study area, there are now no grocery stores in the City of Rensselaer boundaries. Road access within the City is severely limited to smaller and more convenience-based stores, leaving a significant gap in the retail market and for the City's residents.

The following is an assessment of the retail market in the City of Rensselaer based on current residents' spending and consumer habits.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Market Analysis

- It is projected that over 570 housing units will need to be constructed in the City by 2040 to meet demand, with most of the demand for rental housing.
- The greatest need for rental and owner units by 2040 will be for those with incomes less than \$15,000 and those with incomes falling between \$35,000 and \$50,000, respectively.
- Residents of the City of Rensselaer are budget conscious, young, focus more on convenience than consumerism, and spend less across the board than the national average.
- Creative solutions are needed to encourage more businesses or resources for residents to make purchases within the community.
- Jobs in the County are expected to increase by 10% by 2027.
- While unemployment has decreased in the County, there are certain industries with a mismatch of supply and demand for workforce in the area.

Consumer Segments

Tapestry segmentation is a tool used by retail site selectors and decision makers to help determine if a particular trade area has the appropriate characteristics for their business and precisely target their customers. It is a standard classification of consumers according to demographic, socioeconomic, housing, and lifestyle characteristics.

Tapestry segmentation is based on the concept that people with similar demographic characteristics, purchasing habits, and media preferences naturally gravitate toward each other and into the same communities. Every household in the U.S. falls into one of the 67 lifestyle segments. Additional information on the tapestry segments present in the City is provided below.

Notable in the tapestry segments described below are young populations, largely made up of singles or small families, likely to rent in urban areas. No one type of tapestry dominates the population, so while diverse in purchasing style and background, most represented segments seem to appreciate recreational spending whether it be on food, fashion, or the local music scene. Also worth noting is the interest across the groups in modest spending, associated with modest incomes. This should all be considered when exploring the types of businesses that would fare best in the City.

Emerald City denizens live in lower-density neighborhoods of urban areas throughout the County. Young and mobile, they are more likely to rent. Half have a college degree and a professional occupation. Incomes close to the U.S. median come primarily from wages, investments, and self-employment. This group is highly connected, using the internet for entertainment and making environmentally friendly purchases. Long hours on the internet are balanced with time at the gym. Many embrace the "foodie" culture and enjoy cooking adventurous meals using local and organic foods. Music and art are major sources of enjoyment. They travel frequently, both abroad and domestically. The Emerald City tapestry segment represents over a quarter of Rensselaer's residents.

Traditional Living residents live primarily in low-density settled neighborhoods in the Midwest. The households are a mix of married-couple families and singles. Many families encompass two generations who have lived and worked in the community; their children are likely to follow suit. The manufacturing, retail trade, and health-care sectors are the primary sources of employment for these residents. This is a younger market - beginning householders who are juggling the responsibilities of living on their own or a new marriage while retaining their youthful interests in style and fun. The Traditional Living tapestry segment represents over 20 percent of Rensselaer's residents.

Old and Newcomers features singles' lifestyles, on a budget. The focus is more on convenience than consumerism, economy over acquisition. Old and Newcomers is composed of neighborhoods in transition, populated by renters who are just beginning their careers or retiring. Some are still in college; some are taking adult education classes. They support charity causes and are environmentally conscious. Age is not always obvious from their choices. The Old and Newcomers tapestry segment represents over 20 percent of Rensselaer's residents.

Set to Impress is depicted by medium to large multiunit apartments with lower-than-average rents. These apartments are often nestled into neighborhoods with other businesses or single-family housing. Nearly one in three residents is 20 to 34 years old, and a large portion are single-person nonfamily households. Although many residents live alone, they preserve close connections with their family. Many work in food service while they are attending college. This group is always looking for a deal. They are very conscious of their image and seek to bolster their status with the latest fashion. Set to Impress residents are tapped into popular music and the local music scene. The Set to Impress tapestry segment represents 11 percent of Rensselaer's residents.

Rustbelt Traditions are the backbone of older industrial cities in states surrounding the Great Lakes. Rustbelt Traditions residents are a mix of married-couple families and singles living in older developments of single-family homes. While varied, the workforce is primarily white collar, with a higher concentration of skilled workers in manufacturing, retail, trade, and healthcare. Rustbelt Traditions represents a large market of stable, hardworking consumers with modest incomes but an average net worth of nearly \$400,000. Family oriented, they value time spent at home. Most have lived, worked, and played in the same area for years. The Rustbelt Traditions tapestry segment represents ten percent of Rensselaer's residents.

Front Porches is a blend of household types, with more young families with children and more single households than average. More than half of householders are renters, and many of the homes are older townhomes or duplexes.



**THORPE ELECTRIC IN
RENSSELAER**

Friends and family are central to Front Porches residents and help to influence household buying decisions. Households tend to own just one vehicle, but it is used only when needed. The Front Porches tapestry segment represents five percent of Rensselaer's residents.

LOCAL HOUSEHOLD SPENDING PATTERNS AND RETAIL PREFERENCES

The market potential index (MPI) for consumer products and behaviors compares the demand for a specific product or service in an area with the national demand for that product or service; an MPI equal to 100 and higher represents demand exceeding national demand. For example, an MPI of 120 implies that demand in this area is likely to be 20 percent higher than the national average.

Notable among those consumer behaviors that are more prevalent among residents in the City of Rensselaer are:

Electronics and Internet: The City exhibits higher rates of internet access, video game, and game system purchases, use of E-Readers, and use of social media to follow local groups, travel groups, medical groups, music groups, or gamers than the national average.

Health and Beauty: Residents of the City have more gym memberships, control diets for food allergies more often, and provide more services as primary caregivers than the national average.

Restaurants: Six percent more of Rensselaer residents got home delivery fast food in the last six months, as compared to the national average. 61 percent of residents in the City have gotten take-out, drive-through, or curbside fast food in the last six months.

Convenience Stores: Four percent more residents shopped at convenience stores in the last six months than the

national average, and 11 percent more spent between \$50 and \$100 at a convenience store in the last 30 days than the national average. 66 percent have shopped at a convenience store in the last six months.

Financial: Residents tend to have one to two credit cards, non-interest checking accounts, and use credit unions. The City also exhibits low monthly credit and debit card expenditures, and 73 percent have savings accounts.

Sports and Leisure: Residents of the area more frequently participate in sports like mountain biking, bowling, kayaking, frisbee, hunting, ice skating, running, motorcycling, roller skating, rock climbing and Yoga, than the national average. They also attend more college basketball, football, and high school sporting events, and watch more golf, college basketball and NASCAR than average. Fifty percent have dined out in the last year, over a third attended movies within the last six months, and thirty percent cook for fun.

Of note, MPI findings for the City reflect spending habits surrounding convenience, food, entertainment, and technology while also prioritizing health and fitness. The higher convenience store and fast-food spending may be reflective of the types of businesses that are prevalent in the City. These findings are also consistent with the consumer segments that are most prevalent.

Similar to the MPI, the spending potential index (SPI) compares spending of City residents to national trends. An index of less than 100 indicates that average spending by local consumers is lower than the national average. In Rensselaer, those goods and services with the highest retail SPI include video game software, dating services, video game accessories and software, televisions, video cassettes and DVDs, toys and games, tickets to sporting events and concerts, and smoking products. However, the SPI for all goods and services is less than 100, indicating that the average spending by residents is lower than the national average.



Local residences within the study area.

EMPLOYMENT

Employment in the City of Rensselaer totals 4,867 people as of 2022 and has grown by 4.0 percent from 4,674 since 2017. The largest industries in the City today are health care and social assistance (693 people), retail (622 people), and public administration (497 people), and the highest paying industries are utilities (\$98,750), wholesale trade (\$72,750), and educational services (\$62,955). Since 2022, there has also been growth in the public administration and retail industries in the City, while health care and social assistance employment has slightly declined. Of the City residents, 21.5 percent are local, State, or Federal government workers. This is likely due to the City's proximity to the State Capitol, and the Office of Children and Family Services offices located within City.

The job growth experienced in the City exceeds the rate of growth at the County (2.4 percent) and national level (3.8 percent). Jobs in the County are expected, however, to increase by another ten percent by 2027, providing an opportunity for the City of Rensselaer to be a source of this growth. Additionally, while the number of jobs has increased in the County, the labor force participation rate decreased between 2017 and 2022; this is notable and may indicate a disconnect between job availability and placement.

At the County level, the top industries are government, health care and social assistance, and manufacturing. Other significant industries include educational services, transportation, and construction. Transportation and warehousing, manufacturing, administrative support and waste management are the top growing industries in the County. As redevelopment is considered in the City of Rensselaer, County-wide industry trends are helpful in determining the kind of growth that may be beneficial within the study area.

Employment Location Quotient

Location quotients (LQs) compare the concentration of an industry within a specific area to the concentration of that industry nationwide. If an LQ is equal to 1.0, then the industry has the same share of its area employment as it does in the nation. An LQ greater than 1.0 indicates an industry with a greater share of the local area employment than is the case nationwide.

In Rensselaer County, industries with the highest LQ, showing a high saturation of the industry in the County, are utilities and educational services, which each have LQs of over 3.0. Public administration in the County falls well above 1.0 as well. In addition, the construction and retail industries have an LQ of exactly 1.0. With Rensselaer County, the high LQs for retail and educational services, this may indicate that such industries thrive in the County. It is important to note however, that while the retail industry may be prevalent in the County, the above discussion of spending patterns indicated that residents in the City are more hesitant to spend at retail locations. These are important considerations for the City in determining the future of the study area and what types of industry may be most beneficial.

The lowest LQ industries in the County are waste management and remediation services, wholesale trade, information, finance and insurance, real estate, professional scientific and technical services, management of companies and enterprises, and arts, entertainment, and recreation, all with LQs under 0.6. Industries with a LQ less than 1.0 provide an opportunity for communities to pursue investment in job creation. If the concentration of those businesses are lower in a community than the national average, it may indicate a demand for more of those services in an area. The City of Rensselaer, in considering redevelopment within the study

area, can leverage this knowledge to encourage development of low LQ industries. This could also make the City a more attractive destination or employment hub within the larger County for unique industries.

Workforce Supply and Demand

While unemployment had decreased slightly over time in the County, from 5.8 percent in 2017 to 5.6 percent in 2022, there are certain industries with a mismatch of supply and demand for workforce in the area. In Rensselaer County, there is a higher demand for employees with either no formal education or a high school diploma than there is availability of workforce. Similarly, those with bachelor's degrees are in high demand for positions. Alternatively, there is higher population than demand for jobs requiring graduate degrees and associate degrees. This may indicate an opportunity for new graduates, or those entering the workforce from high school, to find positions in the County. A demand for workers such as this may urge people to live and stay in places like the City of Rensselaer as they find jobs and establish roots.

Engagement at the Rensselaer Farmer's Market.





**STUDY AREA
STRATEGIC
SITES**



0.2 Miles

LEGEND

**Strategic Sites**

**Brownfield Opportunity Area**

The Advisory Committee reviewed the inventory of brownfield, abandoned, vacant, and underutilized sites and prioritized seven “Strategic Sites” along the City’s main commercial corridors and key community gateways.

STRATEGIC SITE 1: 615 EAST STREET

615 East Street is the easternmost of the study area’s strategic sites. The 7.43-acre underutilized, brownfield property (Parcel 143.60-3-9.1) is owned by the CDTA and located adjacent to the Amtrak Station. It is currently used as two surface parking lots for the Amtrak Station and remains underutilized for large stretches of the year. There are about six days throughout the year however, namely around major holidays, that the lots are fully utilized by travelers.

There are no current plans to redevelop the site, but the CDTA is generally interested in enhancing connectivity throughout the region and is open to development that would support this broader goal at the site. As part of the development, however, existing parking would likely need to be maintained to ensure Amtrak Station access is not impacted.

This underutilized property, with immediate proximity to the Amtrak Station, downtown, and local neighborhoods, represents a key opportunity for new mixed-use infill development to serve visitors and residents.



STRATEGIC SITE 2: 500 BROADWAY

To the west of Strategic Site 1 is Strategic Site 2 (Parcel 143.60-2-8), a 0.8-acre underutilized, brownfield on the corner of Herrick Street and Broadway. The property is currently leased to New York State and used as surface parking for staff at the Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) campus. Potentially partially due to the shift to hybrid work at OCFA, today, this parking lot is consistently underutilized throughout the year.

The current owner purchased the land in 2018, along with the three former mill buildings that comprise the main OCFS campus and several parking lots. Similar to Strategic Site 5,

The existing underutilized parking lot is not in keeping with the vision and goals for the Broadway corridor as a hub of activity in the City’s downtown. This prime location near the Amtrak station and several downtown businesses and residences offers the potential for transformative mixed-use infill development.



STRATEGIC SITE 3: 505 BROADWAY

Across the street from Strategic Site 2 is Strategic Site 3, 505 Broadway (Parcel 143.60-1-12). The 0.54-acre vacant, brownfield property was the former City Hall site for Rensselaer before it moved in 2007. The former City Hall was put up for auction and purchased by the current owner in 2010 and was subsequently demolished in 2022.

Since the building was demolished, the lot has remained vacant. The property owner, who also owns a major adjacent waterfront parcel, expressed an interest in developing a multi-use building at the site but does not have current or active plans to do so. The property's location across the street from Strategic Site 2 and in the downtown core, along with property owner's interest in seeing the site redeveloped, signifies an opportunity to explore a more complementary, pedestrian-oriented mixed-use at this site. This parcel, along with Strategic Site 2, could help establish a more cohesive transitional area between the recent DeLaet's Landing development, the Amtrak Station, and the City's downtown.



STRATEGIC SITE 4: 264 BROADWAY

Further south along Broadway, on the corner of Broadway and Third Avenue is 264 Broadway, a vacant 0.08-acre property (Parcel 143.76-1-11.2). This land had several former commercial uses in the past and was most recently a motorcycle shop that was unfortunately lost in a fire. The current owners are planning a mixed-use development with retail on the bottom floor, apartments above, and parking spaces for tenants in the rear. The project has been planned and is intended to be designed consistently with the Broadway streetscape, however, elevated construction costs have slowed implementation of the plan.

This vacant property, with its corner location, ease of access to I-787, proximity to local businesses, and a willing property owner, represents an opportunity for new infill development. This could further help support the re-establishment of the streetwall along Broadway, the downtown's key commercial corridor.



STRATEGIC SITE 5: THIRD AVENUE

Located just east of Strategic Site 4 is Strategic Site 5, a large 3.4-acre property. It is an underutilized, brownfield that is currently used as a parking lot for the OCFS offices and is under the same ownership as Strategic Sites 2 and 6. The property is located along Third Avenue, a well-used connecting road to I-787 that brings visitors and residents through the City. As a result, this property and the parcel across the road, Strategic Site 6, serve as a key entrance to the downtown. While this parking lot is utilized on weekdays by OCFS staff, the lot remains severely underutilized during the evening and weekends as it is not available for public access or parking.

The property owner's current lease with NYS will be up in 2026 and the City intends to continue conversations with the State and continue attempting to make contact with the property owner to assess potential uses of this site. To the City's knowledge there are no planned changes of use to this site currently. However, its large size and location at a strategic entryway to the City's downtown make it a prime opportunity for infill development.

STRATEGIC SITE 6: 58 GREEN STREET

Much like Strategic Site 5, and located directly across from it, the 0.42-acre 58 Green Street (Parcel 143.75-5-1) is an underutilized parking parcel. It serves as overflow visitor parking for the OCFS offices and remains underutilized through most parts of the year. As discussed above, this and Strategic Site 5 are located at a key entryway to the downtown and provide a prime opportunity for development that highlights drivers' arrival into the City's downtown. With the same property owner as Strategic Sites 2 and 5, outreach continues to initiate discussions of alternate uses for parts of this property that remain underutilized.

STRATEGIC SITE 7: 13 COLUMBIA TURNPIKE

The final strategic site is 13 Columbia Turnpike (Parcel 143.75-9-12). Located between Washington and Academy Street, the parcel has long been an abandoned gas station and is also a brownfield due to its long-term auto-oriented use. The property recently changed hands, and the property owner is interested in redeveloping the site. The property is largely paved, and structures from the former gas station remain on the site.

Located along Columbia Turnpike close to a major gateway to the City and the downtown, this location was identified as key site due to its location, proximity to downtown, and the willingness of the property owner to discuss reactivating the property. While there are no set plans for the site right now, property improvements would be an important step in building momentum along the currently auto-oriented corridor.

BUILDING INVENTORY

A building inventory of the existing structures found on the strategic sites is included in the building inventory map and site profiles in **Appendix 3**. The purpose of the inventory is to better understand the built environment in the study area and to help inform recommendation around reuse, redevelopment, and new development.



Map of City used during engagement event.



Historic Fort Crailo neighborhood.



Downtown Rensselaer.



REVITALIZATION STRATEGY

The Revitalization Strategy and Master Plan outlined in this section were developed based on the vision statement to address key findings, challenges, and opportunities facing the City that emerged throughout the inventory of economic and physical conditions, along with extensive public engagement. The Master Plan includes recommended development and capital projects specifically designed to achieve the Plan's vision and goals. The Master Plan was developed in two main phases, the more immediate vision, and a long-term vision for the study area. It was determined that long-term planning is vitally important as a part of this project because of the ongoing discussion of changes to I-787 in the region. Several of the alternatives being considered by New York State DOT (NYSDOT) for the highway involve changes to the Dunn Memorial Bridge, some of which involve entirely removing it from its current location. The long-term vision takes this potential change into consideration, and provides development recommendations for the surrounding area, as well as the Hudson Riverfront Park. The recommendations included below are organized around the five goals that were identified as priorities by the Committee and include both the recommended development and capital projects depicted on the Master Plan, as well as supporting programs and policies.

RENSSELAER RISING MASTER PLAN

LEGEND

Strategic Sites

- 1A** AMTRAK STATION PARKING TO GROCERY AND MIXED-USE BUILDING CONVERSION
- 1B** AMTRAK STATION PARKING TO RESIDENTIAL CONVERSION
- 2** OCFS PARKING TO DAY CARE AND HOUSING CONVERSION
- 3** OLD CITY HALL SITE MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT
- 4** OCFS CAMPUS PARKING TO RESIDENTIAL CONVERSION
- 5** VACANT SITE RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITY
- 6** FORMER GAS STATION SITE MIXED-USE REDEVELOPMENT

Other Opportunities

- A** IMPROVE TRAIN STATION PEDESTRIAN CONNECTIONS
- B** MULTI-MODAL EMPIRE STATE TRAIL TO AMTRAK CONNECTIONS
- C** IMPROVE HERRICK STREET BRIDGE CONNECTION
- D** NORTHERN BROADWAY GATEWAY IMPROVEMENTS
- E** IMPROVE DIRECT CONNECTION BETWEEN PARK AND BROADWAY
- F** NEW POCKET PARK AND WATERWAY CONNECTION
- G** THIRD AVENUE STREETScape IMPROVEMENTS
- H** COLUMBIA AND BROADWAY GATEWAY IMPROVEMENTS
- I** COLUMBIA STREET STREETScape IMPROVEMENTS
- J** COLUMBIA AND SOUTH STREET GATEWAY IMPROVEMENTS
- K** CRAILO HISTORIC SITE IMPROVEMENTS

Planned Projects



LONG-TERM VISION (IF I-787 EXIT IS REMOVED)

LEGEND

Strategic Sites

- 1A** AMTRAK STATION PARKING TO GROCERY AND MULTI-USE BUILDING CONVERSION
- 1B** AMTRAK STATION PARKING TO RESIDENTIAL CONVERSION
- 2** OCFS PARKING TO DAY CARE AND HOUSING CONVERSION
- 3** OLD CITY HALL SITE MIXED USE DEVELOPMENT
- 4** OCFS CAMPUS PARKING TO RESIDENTIAL CONVERSION
- 5** VACANT SITE RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITY
- 6** FORMER GAS STATION SITE MIXED-USE REDEVELOPMENT
- 7** LONG-TERM WATERFRONT DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES
- 8** LONG-TERM AMTRAK STATION PARKING TO RESIDENTIAL CONVERSION

Other Opportunities

- A** IMPROVE TRAIN STATION PEDESTRIAN CONNECTIONS
- B** MULTI-MODAL EMPIRE STATE TRAIL TO AMTRAK CONNECTIONS
- C** IMPROVE HERRICK STREET BRIDGE CONNECTION
- D** NORTHERN BROADWAY GATEWAY IMPROVEMENTS
- E** RIVERFRONT PARK AMPHITHEATER AND RECREATION AMENITIES
- F** NEW POCKET PARK AND WATERWAY CONNECTION
- G** THIRD AVENUE STREETScape IMPROVEMENTS
- H** COLUMBIA AND BROADWAY GATEWAY IMPROVEMENTS
- I** COLUMBIA STREET STREETScape IMPROVEMENTS
- J** COLUMBIA AND SOUTH STREET GATEWAY IMPROVEMENTS
- K** CRAILO HISTORIC SITE IMPROVEMENTS
- L** LONG-TERM COLUMBIA STREET MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENTS

Planned Projects



GOAL #1



ESTABLISH AN IDENTIFIABLE AND THRIVING DOWNTOWN THROUGH PROMOTION OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & AESTHETIC IMPROVEMENTS

A key to encouraging economic development in a City's downtown corridor is having an identifiable downtown where new development is focused, supported, frequented by residents, and encouraged to thrive. During the Rensselaer Rising planning process, efforts were made to work in partnership with property owners in the study area to identify and help encourage opportunities for private investment in, and improvements to, underutilized sites in the study area. To support this investment, the City and its partners will need to further support and encourage development by ensuring that zoning and infrastructure can support redevelopment, helping to address environmental risks of development, and branding the City's downtown through aesthetic improvements.

Objective 1.1: Revitalize Vacant and Underutilized Sites

The City's vision for its downtown is one of thriving activity and business with places for residents and visitors to shop, dine, and spend time. An important component of achieving this vision is to reimagine and remediate vacant and underutilized sites in the study area to attract new businesses, restaurants, and amenities to the downtown. The focus of this revitalization will be on infill construction and rehabilitation of dilapidated properties to restore the historic character and pedestrian scale of the downtown business district. Several other strategies can also be used to support revitalization of the City's downtown, including

addressing the methodology for how tax-foreclosed properties are managed, supporting development by addressing floodplain and environmental risk, updating zoning and land use regulations, and considering more short-term and temporary uses for existing underutilized spaces.

Strategy 1.1: Advance Master Plan Site Redevelopment Recommendations

Infill development refers to the construction or renovation of land that has been neglected, underused, or left vacant within a community or targeted area. It can take place wherever land is not being fully utilized compared to the surrounding activities. By developing these vacant or underutilized sites, communities can meet housing, retail, and space needs, while also enhancing the overall streetscape.

A closely related concept is adaptive reuse, which involves transforming an existing building for a new purpose, different from its original design, while often preserving its historical or architectural value. This approach maintains the building's heritage while making it relevant to contemporary needs. Both infill development and adaptive reuse can enhance community vitality by making efficient use of existing infrastructure and buildings.

It should be noted that the recommendations outlined below reflect a vision for their reuse activation and do not reflect planned or proposed projects.

Short-Term Site Revitalization Recommendations

Strategic Site 1

Strategic Site 1 presents a transformational opportunity for transit-oriented development that could address the City's housing and grocery store needs. On the parcel immediately adjacent to the Herrick Street Bridge, a mixed-use building

featuring a grocery store and other small storefronts along Herrick Street at street level and apartments above is envisioned. This proposal would retain the existing parking capacity by decking it beneath the development. A full-service, 50,000-60,000-SF grocery store at this location would be conveniently near established neighborhoods, the Amtrak Station, and those visiting or traveling through the Station. The parcel was uniquely identified as a priority site for a grocery store due to the additional market demand from the hundreds of thousands of riders that use the station year. Whether Amtrak or CDTA staff, riders on a layover, or visitors to the region, access to a grocery store within walking distance would further boost demand, in addition to meeting the critical needs of City residents. Above the ground floor retail, three floors of residential are envisioned, bringing in 240 much-needed apartments to the City.

The vision for the second parking site (to the north of the parcel noted above) is to do a similar new construction, with parking retained on the lowest level of the parcel and 300 residential units proposed above it. These residential units are envisioned as condominiums to promote home ownership and provide a diversity of housing types, while apartment units are available at the neighboring site. This concept would provide additional housing opportunities, and improve the appearance of what is an often-underused parking area.

At both sites, a linear park promenade would front the buildings to create a landscaping buffer between the street line and the building, while adding additional aesthetic improvements to the Amtrak Station area. This landscaping would also include a sidewalk to serve as a connector for residents and visitors between the development, the Amtrak Station, and the Herrick Street Bridge to connect to downtown.

STRATEGIC SITE #1 CONCEPT

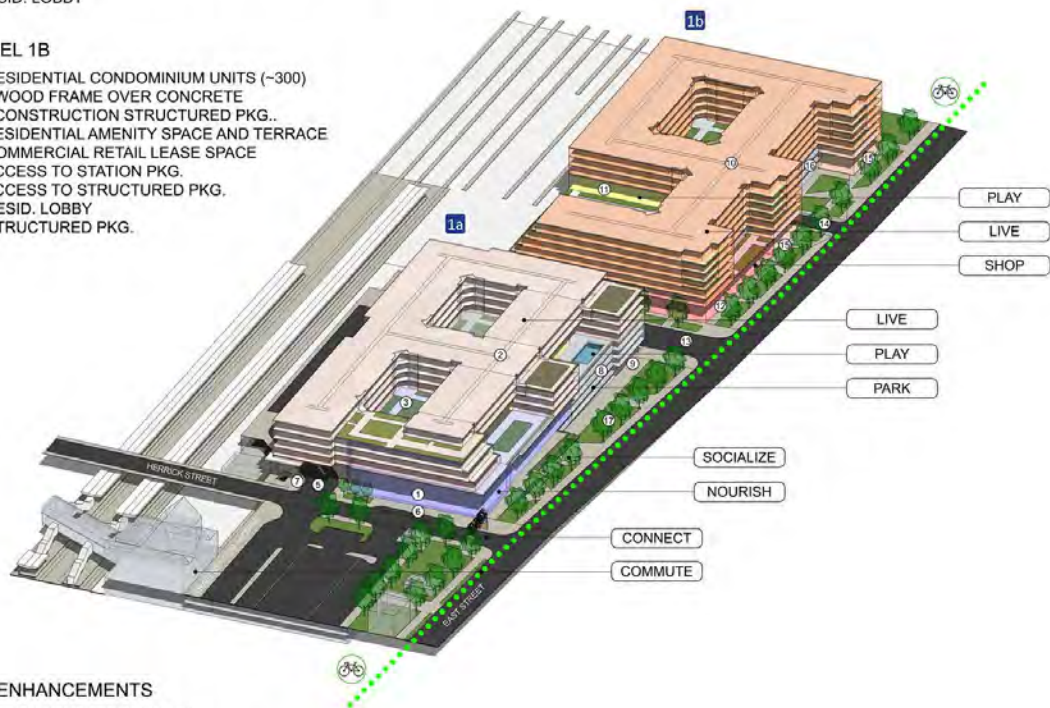


PARCEL 1A

1. 50-60K GROCERY STORE
2. MULTIFAMILY RESIDENTIAL APT UNITS (~240)
WOOD FRAME OVER CONCRETE CONSTRUCTION
STRUCTURED PKG.
3. RESIDENTIAL AMENITY SPACE AND TERRACE
4. COMMERCIAL RETAIL LEASE SPACE
5. ACCESS TO GROCERY STORE SURFACE PKG.
6. GROCERY STORE FRONT DOOR / DROP OFF
7. PUBLIC ACCESS VERT. STAIR CONNECTOR FROM STATION
LOWER LV. PKG AREA AND TRACK PLATFORMS.
8. STRUCT. PKG.
9. RESID. LOBBY

PARCEL 1B

10. RESIDENTIAL CONDOMINIUM UNITS (~300)
WOOD FRAME OVER CONCRETE
CONSTRUCTION STRUCTURED PKG.
11. RESIDENTIAL AMENITY SPACE AND TERRACE
12. COMMERCIAL RETAIL LEASE SPACE
13. ACCESS TO STATION PKG.
14. ACCESS TO STRUCTURED PKG.
15. RESID. LOBBY
16. STRUCTURED PKG.



SITE ENHANCEMENTS

17. LINEAR PARK PROMENADE
(COMMUNITY CONNECTOR TO
TRAIN STATION AND EMPIRE STATE TRAIL)

Strategic Site 2

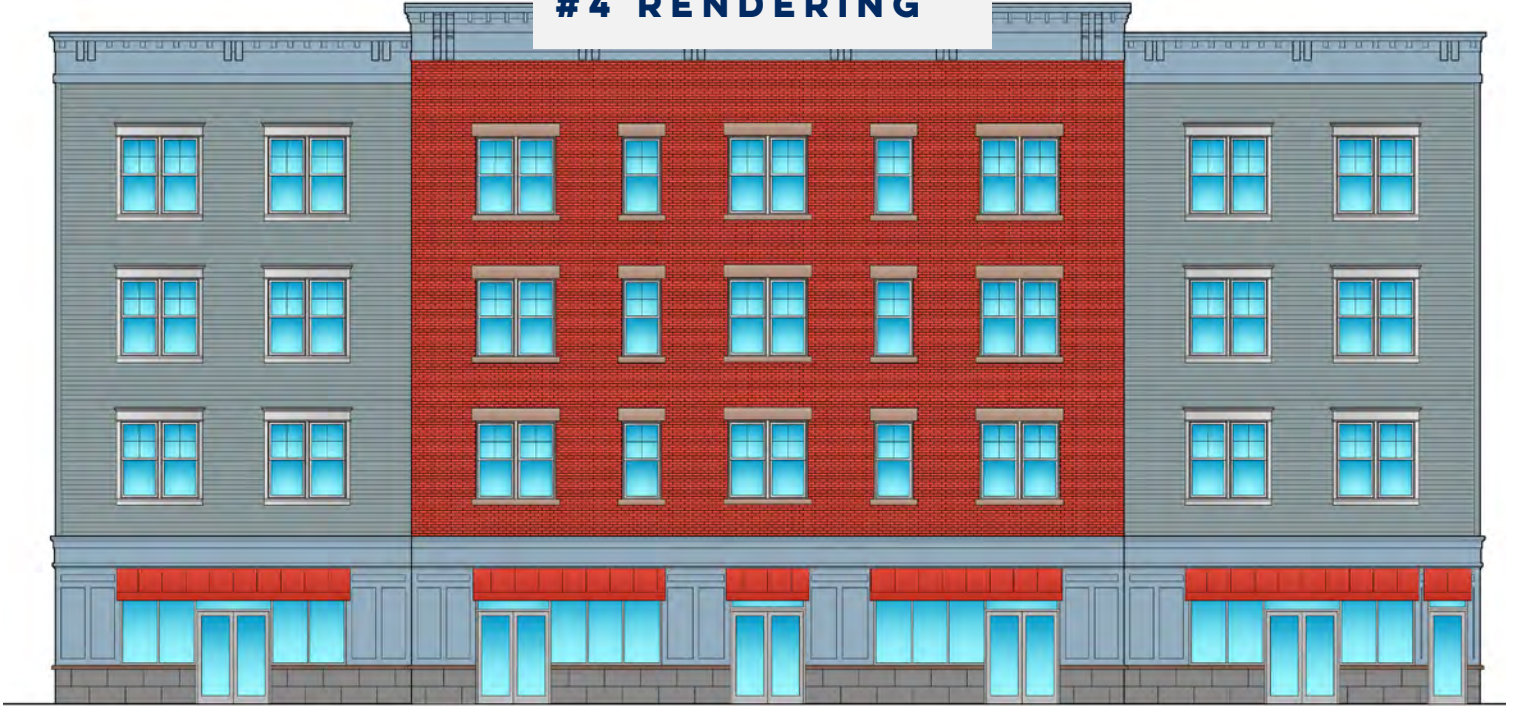
Next to the Rensselaer Boys and Girls Club, is a large, underutilized parking lot currently designated as a part of the OCFS campus and parking areas. This site provides great reuse potential as a conversion to a mixed-use building, built to the streetwall, filling this void in the Broadway streetscape. The proximity to the Boys and Girls Club, which already provides programming and care for youth, as well as several other recommended reuse opportunities, present an opportunity for this redevelopment to further serve current and new residents of the City with both housing opportunities within the downtown core and a day care facility.

Strategic Site 3

The former Rensselaer City Hall Site, located on Broadway and facing the Herrick Street Bridge, is currently a vacant parcel. Conveniently located near the Hudson Riverfront Park, the Amtrak Station, DeLaet's Landing, and several local businesses, this property is a prime location for infill development. The vision for this site is a mixed-use building with storefronts on the lowest level and 20 residential units above. Parking for this site would be located at the rear of the building. This concept also includes an extensive landscaping buffer along the street to activate the storefronts, enhance the streetscape, and provide comfortable pedestrian access to the retail and housing. The mixed-use infill development would help fill a critical gap in the streetscape, extending activity between active businesses to the south and the residents of DeLaet's Landing to the north. The new construction would also be a significant aesthetic improvement, blocking current views of the industrial parcel to its rear for those approaching Broadway from the Amtrak Station.



STRATEGIC SITE #4 RENDERING



264 BROADWAY
RENSSELAER, N.Y.

Strategic Site 4

On the corner of Third Avenue and Broadway sits Strategic Site 4, a vacant lot located in close proximity to several developing properties, businesses, and just a block away from Hudson Riverfront Park. This property is in a prime location for mixed-use development to provide new storefronts for local businesses, as well as apartment units above. The vision for this site is being pursued by the property owner and includes a series of small ground floor retail spaces and three floors of residential above. Parking in the rear would ensure that the design aligns with the historic built structure of the neighboring properties, filling a current gap in the streetwall.

Strategic Sites 5 & 6

Much like at the parcels surrounding the Amtrak station, there is opportunity at Strategic Sites 5 and 6 to upgrade underutilized parking areas to develop additional residential units. This would not only work to provide additional housing but would also continue to develop the streetwall of a major thoroughfare within the study area (Third Avenue).

Strategic Site 7

Recently acquired by a new property owner, the Strategic Site 7 owner is exploring new opportunities for this important Columbia Turnpike property that serves as a gateway into the City's Broadway corridor from the Dunn Memorial Bridge. The vision at this site is a new mixed-use development that fronts along Columbia, creating as a more welcoming entrance to the City. This development should correspond with streetscape enhancements recommended along Columbia Turnpike, as well as the recommended gateway improvement at Columbia and Broadway discussed later.

Long-Term Revitalization Recommendations

The long-term vision for the study area includes recommendations for additional mixed-use development along Columbia Turnpike and Broadway. If the Dunn Memorial Bridge were to move or change, the nature of Columbia Turnpike could change, with the frequency of traffic along the road shifting, depending on which reconfiguration of the bridge is decided by NYSDOT. With this in mind, some of the auto-oriented uses along Columbia Turnpike could shift to accommodate a more downtown mixed-use development. New development along the corridor should be situated to re-establish a streetwall, to the extent possible. This type of development could expand the City's downtown core to include these sections of Columbia Turnpike.

Along Broadway, if the Dunn Memorial Bridge's ramps are removed and relocated, there would be additional opportunities to support mixed-use infill development along the west side of the roadway. These opportunities should continue to be explored to support existing Broadway businesses and create new business opportunities. New development should fill the existing streetwall gaps, incorporate creative connections and balconies to take advantage of views of the Riverfront Park, waterfront, and Albany skyline, and parking should be located on lower floors of buildings and in internal courtyards to minimize their visual impact.

Building on the shorter term recommendations of pursuing mixed-use development on Strategic Site 1, the long-term vision for the study area recommends similar residential new development along the parking parcels to the south of the Station, which are owned by Amtrak. Given the higher existing parking demand on this parcel, its redevelopment is identified as long-term strategy to consider as a location for additional housing units.

This may also respond to changing demand for housing in the future as the City grows.

Strategy 1.2: Optimize Property Sales and Management

To further ensure that future development in the study area corresponds with the goals and vision of the City, an effective method for managing City-owned and tax-foreclosed properties will be essential. Currently, the City utilizes an auction system to manage properties. In the past, this system resulted in the sale of properties to owners who do not help to promote the goals of the City, leaving behind blighted or underutilized properties.

Alternative methods to consider include a rigorous application process for potential property owners to understand their intention with the property and to prevent repeated tax and mortgage foreclosures, further deterioration, and blight. In this system, property sales could be prioritized to owner occupants or could require business plans for the purchase of commercial buildings.

In addition to ensuring property sales align with the goals of Rensselaer, collaboration with local agencies like the City of Rensselaer Industrial Development Agency (IDA) is vital to incentivize development and foster public-private partnerships. The IDA has existing programs that provide incentives for developers to support financing of new projects, which the City should continue to leverage to draw development that is in line with its goals.

Strategy 1.3: Address Floodplain and Environmental Risks

While the Hudson River waterfront serves as a significant asset to the City of Rensselaer, bringing both recreational and economic opportunities to the community, it also poses a potential environmental risk

to economic development. The vast majority of parcels within the study area, fall within the 100-year or 500-year floodplain. While the City has not experienced such an event in recent history, being within the floodplain means that additional insurance is required for businesses, residents, and new developments. This can increase costs associated with constructing building or operating facilities within the study area.

In early 2024, the City was alerted that FEMA was updating the City's floodplain mapping. When FEMA produces new floodplain mapping, the communities are notified and have 90 days to appeal/comment on the new mapping. Appeals and comments should be based on real evidence such as an existing hydraulic/hydrology study for an area. If the floodplain mapping remains extensive, the City could consider updating their standing with the Community Rating System (CRS) program. This does not change the map, but does change the risk assessment of individual sites and can help reduce insurance premiums.

The City should also promote the use of green infrastructure, including options like rain gardens, permeable pavements, and green roofs on publicly controlled lands, and encourage or mandate these measures on privately owned lands. This would help to promote stormwater management through design and greening of public spaces and overly grey infrastructure within the floodplain. Further, this green infrastructure would serve as a benefit to the City's overall aesthetic appeal by increasing the greenery downtown.

Finally, the City should use regulation to protect buildings and land, by strengthening the building code and zoning regulations for stormwater management for private developments. The City could also require that new developers provide a stormwater plan.

Strategy 1.4: Update Zoning and Design Standards Regulations

Zoning Codes serve as powerful regulatory tools to guide the look and feel of a community. Ensuring that the City's zoning allows for the types of buildings and uses identified in the Master Plan will be critical to the recommended site revitalizations being realized. In the near-term, the City should evaluate the existing Zoning Code in consideration of the short-term Master Plan vision. Updates to the Zoning Code will also be vital in preparing for major long-term changes to the Dunn Memorial Bridge and the impacts that would have to the Columbia Turnpike and Broadway corridors. The long-term vision should correspond with a Zoning Code that supports and encourages it.

Additionally, modifications to the Zoning Code should seek to strengthen the existing design guidelines. While the existing Code makes many recommendations on design standards, many of these components of the Code are not required, using "should" language instead of "shall". Making the simple change from "should", to "shall" for certain standards helps ensure development incorporates these components. These regulatory tools, when applied and enforced, can promote development that is not only consistent and functional, but also aesthetically pleasing.

Strategy 1.5: Consider Temporary Alternate Uses for Existing Spaces

To improve the aesthetics and economic vitality of the downtown area, the City should consider repurposing some existing spaces for temporary alternate uses. Within the study area, parking and roadways cover a significant portion of land. While ease of vehicle access can be a benefit for communities, the disjointed look and feel of large areas of paved roads and parking lots can prove to be a hindrance. Additionally, many storefronts within the downtown core currently remain vacant, adding to the disjointed look and feel of the area.

The City should repurpose some of its surface parking lots and paved areas for more engaging, community-focused uses. By converting these underutilized spaces into vibrant hubs of activity, the City could stimulate economic growth and attract more people to spend time in the downtown core. Repurposing surface parking lots offers potential for new creative forms of activated spaces. These spaces could host pop-up outdoor markets or community events that foster local entrepreneurship and bring more foot traffic to the area, encouraging both residents and visitors to explore downtown. Temporary pedestrian-only

zones on side streets could further enhance the experience by creating inviting spaces for street festivals, outdoor dining, and farmers' markets.

With increased foot and vehicle traffic to the City, however, parking will still be necessary for residents and visitors. Opportunities to consolidate and share parking could help address this need while reducing the acreage of land devoted to parking. The City should continue to pursue conversations with the property owner of the OCFS surface parking lots to come to an agreement allowing the public to utilize parking lots when staff are not present, on evenings and weekends to increase utilization and allow for the transformation of other existing parking lots.

Beyond parking lots, vacant storefronts can also be leveraged to promote local culture and atmosphere in the downtown. Collaborating with property owners of currently vacant storefronts to install public art displays would create an attractive and engaging environment, elevating the visual appeal of the area.

City of Rensselaer homes.



Objective 1.2: Improve Downtown Aesthetic Improvements

Another component of a thriving downtown is establishing a clear identity that lets visitors and residents know where they are and what amenities surround them. Throughout the planning process, public input identified a lack of a clear identity for the downtown as a major challenge to the City's success. It was also discussed several times that although there are several great examples of historic architecture in the City, many of the buildings in the downtown are lacking a consistent aesthetic appeal. The following strategies, along with several others discussed later in this section, including implementing streetscape enhancements and supporting arts programming, could all contribute to improving the overall aesthetics of the downtown to make it a more appealing place for residents and visitors to spend time.

Strategy 1.6: Create an Identifiable Downtown Brand

The City should implement a comprehensive downtown branding strategy to promote local events, businesses, and attractions. This branding strategy should include a clearly identifiable logo and colors for downtown Rensselaer. The logo should be included on signs placed throughout the downtown to welcome visitors. A well-branded downtown in Rensselaer would also include consistent themes in signage, street furniture, and public art to create an aesthetically pleasing and navigable environment. There could also be seasonal elements to the branding that are interchanged throughout the year. All wayfinding signs, informational signs, and public artwork should be aligned with the branding strategy to maintain a cohesive visual identity.

Strategy 1.7: Implement a Façade Improvement Program

The City should also pursue a façade improvement program with a focus on historic preservation. This program should encourage renovations that retain and emphasize the architectural heritage of downtown buildings. Aligning renovations with the area's historical context will help preserve and further develop the unique identity of the City, while contributing to the revitalization of the downtown area. A focus on preservation of the historic character, alongside modernizing a branding and marketing campaign for the downtown can reinforce the City's cultural identity.



Downtown Rensselaer building facades.

GOAL #2



ENHANCE THE HUDSON RIVER WATERFRONT

One of Rensselaer's greatest strengths is the Hudson River waterfront, which runs along the western boundary of the City and the study area. The river provides both waterfront access and a gorgeous view of the Albany skyline. Within the study area, the waterfront also is a key focal point of the City's largest park, which has public access to the water via a boat launch. There are opportunities to enhance access and use of the waterfront. The recommendations that follow in this section focus on improving access to the waterfront, supporting riverfront development, and protecting this great City resource.

Objective 2.1: Expand Access to the Waterfront

Riverfront Park in Rensselaer offers a rare public connection to the Hudson River, as well as spectacular views of the City of Albany; however, due to the limitations on visual and physical access and circulation created by the Dunn Memorial Bridge access ramps, the park is underutilized and its ability to economically benefit the downtown is greatly limited.

This Plan recommends two main strategies for improving both the visual and physical connection between downtown Rensselaer and Riverfront Park: opening and enhancing the primary entry to the Park; and enhancing the areas adjacent to Mill Creek to carry the presence of the waterfront park across Broadway and into the heart of downtown Rensselaer.

Strategy 2.1: Open and Enhance Primary Entry to Riverfront Park

The current entry from Broadway into Riverfront Park is nearly hidden. The south side is severely constricted by the dense vegetation that currently hides Mill Creek and on the north side by the presence of the bicycle and pedestrian ramp that carry the Empire State Trail up to the ramp that connects to the Dunn Memorial Bridge, providing pedestrian and bicycle access to Albany. Views and desirable connections into the park are then further limited by the overhead ramps themselves and the placement of the parking lot in the direct line of sight and threshold between Broadway and the park. The concept for improving this entry includes the following recommendations:

- Create bumpouts with decorative planters on both sides of Broadway and across the Mill Creek Bridge with a mid-block crossing to calm traffic, draw further attention to the park entrance, provide a safer and more direct pedestrian connection to the downtown, and limit on-street parking that could block important views of the park entry and Mill Creek.
- Install tall gateway piers to boldly announce Riverfront Park and add to the sense of place while also framing the park entry.
- Add a prominent pedestrian entry and path that visually and physically connects visitors to Riverfront park.
- Include a small plaza along the street that includes wayfinding information and provides amenities to celebrate and support the connection to the Empire State Trail.
- Narrow and define the vehicular entry and relocate the parking to the area beneath the ramps that is hidden from Broadway views where it is least obstructive and maximizes the use of valuable park area.
- Create a vibrant and sculptural play area that celebrates the waterfront connection and draws visitors into Riverfront Park. Use blue playground surfacing to create a visual waterscape and artificial turf to line it so as to create a vibrant and seamless ground surface from one side of the vehicular ramps to the other. Consider sculptural play elements such as giant cattails, fish, and others.
- Incorporate long seating that frames the connection and supports activities in the gateway area.

The area below the ramps where they are closest to Broadway and also lowest is currently underutilized but offers tremendous potential for attracting notice and increasing park use by way of its visual proximity to the thousands of drivers who pass by on Broadway every day. The concept for visually and physically activating this portion of the park includes:

- Strengthen the streetscape connection and create a vibrant mural on the ground that helps to brighten the space. Consider abstract patterns that draw on the area's Dutch heritage.
- Install festive lighting that will support twilight events in this space such as food festivals, craft markets, small concerts and other pop-up venues.
- Add games and amenities, such as large scale picnic tables, corn hole, and ping pong, that will increase use and support events in this space.
- Include a space in this gateway area for regular food truck use and/or local restaurant use to offer lunch options in the park and increase pedestrian activity and economic opportunity for the downtown.



Strategy 2.2: New Pocket Park and Waterway Connection

Mill Creek currently runs below the NYS Child and Family Services building and connects out to the Hudson River by way of Riverfront Park, offering a tremendous opportunity to strengthen the connection between downtown Rensselaer, Riverfront Park, and the Hudson River. Hidden behind dense vegetation and overrun with invasive phragmites, the channelized waterway functions more as a barrier to connection than as the vital attraction that it could be. This Plan recommends enhancing the areas adjacent to Mill Creek to create a stronger and more welcoming connection between downtown Rensselaer and Riverfront Park. Recommendations include:

- Selectively remove vegetation to open up views of Mill Creek and integrate it into a River Walk that connects the downtown to the Hudson River.
- Naturalize the waterfront edge with native shrubs, grasses, and wildflowers to create a dynamic landscape that will attract visitors and enhance flood resilience
- Reduce parking to create park areas and desirable walkways on both sides of Mill Creek between Broadway and the downtown
- Enhance this area as Mill Creek Park with tables and chairs, swinging benches, waterfront views and experiences, and other amenities that will encourage nearby workers to have lunch and further venture into the downtown, while also increasing downtown Rensselaer's appeal for local businesses.
- Include opportunities for downtown wayfinding.

Objective 2.2: Increase Use of the Waterfront

Strategy 2.3: Promote and Support Riverfront Development

A long-term goal for Rensselaer is to encourage development along waterfront sites and properties as they become available. While there are some new developments and businesses along the waterfront currently, they are not locations frequented by the public due to access limitations, or, often times, a lack of knowledge that they are even there. As opportunities become available in the future, the City should prioritize encouraging development at waterfront sites and encourage that pedestrian amenities, such as benches, waste bins, boardwalks, and pedestrian-scale lighting are included in private development proposals on or adjacent to the Hudson riverfront. The City could also require that, at a minimum, developers provide the City with a 25-foot right of way along the river to accommodate segments of waterfront trails and other public waterfront facilities like boat launches, fishing piers, and overlooks. Finally, the City should work with willing private property owners to consider transitioning light industrial activities and non-conforming land uses to more appropriate locations in the City, freeing up riverfront properties for mixed-use housing and commercial development.

Strategy 2.4: Plan for Long-Term Park Enhancements

In addition to more immediate planning for the City's waterfront, planning for future changes to key infrastructure, like the Dunn Memorial Bridge, and the Livingston Avenue Bridge, is vital. Long-term changes to these bridges will impact access points to the City, as well as increase pedestrian and bike traffic. Enhanced connections through the Livingston Avenue Bridge improvements and the long-term potential of the Dunn Memorial Bridge being relocated could transform the riverfront in Rensselaer into a lively central corridor, promoting sustainable transportation options and increasing access for residents and tourists. The long-term vision included in the Master Plan identifies several long-term improvements along the waterfront that could be prioritized if the Dunn Memorial Bridge was relocated or removed. This includes adding an amphitheater that would offer stunning waterfront views of the Albany skyline, speak to the desire for more arts programming in the City, and attract more visitors to the Park. Any future improvements to the park should also incorporate resiliency measures to withstand flooding and increase biodiversity along the waterfront.

Strategy 2.5: Improve and Maintain Riverfront Amenities

Finally, in addition to short-term and long-term planning, the City should continue to maintain and improve existing riverfront amenities. As one of the City's greatest assets, the Hudson Riverfront should be protected and maintained. These maintenance and improvement activities should include updating and regularly maintaining park murals. There are several existing murals throughout the park that are a highlight of the downtown area. Additional maintenance and improvements can include regularly maintaining pedestrian amenities and facilities and sponsoring, with partners, regular clean-up days to remove debris and litter from the shoreline. This will help to promote local buy-in for riverfront preservation.

Strategy 2.6: Support implementation of boat launch and dock at Crailo State Historic Site

The Crailo State Historic Site, located in the Historic Fort Crailo neighborhood in the southernmost part of the BOA study area, is an important historic and cultural site for the city and greater region. To improve connectivity and access, and enhance amenities, the site is seeking to add a public boat launch and dock at its riverfront park. This would provide an additional public access point to the waterfront and encourage additional use and visitation. The City should work closely with the historic site to further develop and implement this plan.



GOAL #3



HIGHLIGHT AND MARKET EXISTING COMMUNITY ASSETS

During the Rensselaer Rising planning process, the committee, the public, and stakeholders had several thoughtful discussions about what changes are needed in the City to propel it towards its goals. Often, these discussions highlighted that Rensselaer already has several great amenities to offer residents and visitors, but that the public often does not know about them. Between its proximity to other major cities, comparative affordability, ease of access to major transportation hubs like the Amtrak station, its small size making travel throughout the City accessible, a large riverfront park with frequent events and programming, and several small businesses throughout the downtown, Rensselaer has great strengths already that need to be highlighted. While additional work is needed to draw economic development to the downtown, highlighting what already exists in the City could further contribute to this as well. Through strategic branding, marketing, publicizing of events, and building on the existing culture of arts that is starting to blossom in the City, Rensselaer can better emphasize what already makes the City great.

Objective 3.1: Increase Awareness and Marketing for the City

Strategy 3.1: Create a Cohesive Marketing Plan

The City of Rensselaer already has many existing community assets, including community events, local businesses, and recreational amenities. Despite these offerings, there is a need to communicate these assets more effectively to residents and visitors. Currently, the challenge lies not in a complete lack of quality programming, but in limited visibility and outreach. This recommendation to develop a comprehensive branding

and marketing strategy aims to highlight and amplify what is already great about Rensselaer, to increase engagement, foster a stronger sense of community, and further attract new development and programming.

A cohesive marketing plan should celebrate and leverage the City's unique identity and assets to create a narrative of who Rensselaer is. This can enhance the appeal of the City to potential residents, businesses, and tourists. By positioning Rensselaer as a vibrant community with attractive amenities for living, working, shopping, and recreation, the City can help differentiate itself from neighboring areas. The marketing plan should focus on conveying a consistent message and visual identity across all promotional materials including the City website, social media, and outreach. This is a City-level recommendation that should work alongside the Strategy 1.6 downtown Rensselaer branding, described above.

Strategy 3.2: Establish a Formal City-Wide Calendar of Events

An essential component of the marketing strategy will be the development of a formal City-wide calendar of events. This calendar would serve to house local events, highlight local businesses, and promote community activities. This centralized communication platform could help engage the community, and a structured calendar will help organize and promote the City's offerings, creating greater awareness of local opportunities. If initiated by the City, this type of platform could later be expanded to a more extensive social media presence.

Strategy 3.3: Improve Visibility and Accessibility to Historic Areas

The City's Crailo State Historic Site and surrounding neighborhood are gems that rival the charm of historic, cobblestone streets of the neighboring City of Troy, but awareness of this neighborhood is limited. The City should work to improve visibility and

accessibility to historic areas, such as the Fort Crailo neighborhood, by designing and implementing a clear and defined gateway to the neighborhood. Visible and defined entry points can help to establish a sense of place and increase public awareness of the historic significance of the area.

Objective 3.2: Expand Community Engagement and Events

As discussed above, the City of Rensselaer already hosts valuable events and programming. However, to support the comprehensive City-wide marketing strategy and increase attendance at existing events, the City should work to expand the offerings available to residents and visitors. This objective aims to build on current successes by creating more diverse and targeted events, increasing visibility, and providing new opportunities for residents of all ages to connect and build community.

Strategy 3.4: Expand and Promote Historic and Cultural Events

The City should focus on developing programs and events that highlight Rensselaer's unique history and cultural heritage. Hosting events such as historic walking tours, mural tours, and cultural festivals can foster a deeper connection with both residents and visitors. These activities would provide an engaging way for people to experience Rensselaer's story, creating lasting impressions and encouraging repeat visits.

Strategy 3.5: Increase Frequency of Community Programming and Events

Finally, increasing local community programming for all ages will provide residents with more opportunities to engage, socialize, and participate in City life. By expanding on its programming and cultural offerings, the City can better leverage its assets to increase community engagement, enhance its public image, and build a vibrant, connected City.

Objective 3.3: Optimize Visitor Experience

As the eighth busiest Amtrak station in the U.S., the Albany-Rensselaer Rail Station attracts hundreds of thousands of train travelers annually. This presents a unique opportunity to position Rensselaer not just as a transit stop, but as a destination along Amtrak routes. The City's broader goal extends beyond the station—Rensselaer aims to become a key destination within the entire Capital Region. Its proximity to larger cities like Albany and Troy further enhances its potential to draw visitors from the surrounding area.

Strategy 3.6: Leverage Amtrak Ridership to Promote Tourism

To achieve this objective, the City should capitalize on the Amtrak station to direct visitors to local attractions and businesses. Strategies could include installing wayfinding signs, maps, restaurant and attraction guides, and interactive kiosks within the Station. Additionally, ensuring easy access to local transportation options will enable visitors to connect seamlessly with amenities throughout the City. These types of connections are discussed further under Goal 4. Beyond the station, the City should install wayfinding signage and maps at other strategic locations and transit points in the study area to guide visitors to attractions, businesses, trails, and multi-use paths.

Strategy 3.7: Improve Train Station Pedestrian Connections

As discussed above, the City must further leverage Amtrak ridership to attract visitors from the Station out into the City of Rensselaer, either during layovers or as a destination along the rail line. One way to draw visitors out of the station is to improve the pedestrian connections at and around the station itself. Currently, when a visitor exits the train station, they are greeted immediately by a substantial paved lot with unclear directions for

a pedestrian to safely cross and access the surrounding area. While there is a pedestrian pathway out of the Station and to East Street, it passes through a busy parking lot where riders are picked up or dropped off for their train. By clarifying pedestrian access at the station and creating clear entry and exit for people walking around, pedestrians may be more willing to exit the Station and walk to local amenities, especially if paired with the above recommendations of wayfinding at and around the Station. Adding additional landscaping at the Station would also serve to make it a more hospitable and welcoming environment for pedestrians.

Strategy 3.8: Improve Herrick Street Bridge Connection

The Herrick Street Bridge serves as the main connector between the City's downtown corridor and the Amtrak Station. Currently, it lends itself largely to vehicle traffic and does not serve as an inviting pedestrian bridge drawing Amtrak riders to the downtown core of Rensselaer. Some simple improvements along this bridge could help encourage pedestrian use and help to draw riders from the train station into the City. Simple changes like artistic, painted additions to the pathway and planters along the bridge could quickly make it a more enjoyable space to walk and spend time on. Other suggestions that came up during the process include murals along the bridge or historic information about the City to read as you walk.



Strategy 3.9: Improve City Gateways

A City's gateways are a person's first impression when visiting a community. They can communicate the City's personality and its values. The City should continue to enhance its gateways to create a welcoming entry experience.

At the northern end of Broadway in the study area, an inviting gateway would strengthen the connection between DeLaet's Landing and downtown, increasing economic opportunity for downtown businesses and opening attractive connections and destinations for residents and visitors alike. New welcome signage at the gateway would announce the arrival to downtown Rensselaer and the addition of a median would help to calm traffic as drivers enter an area with higher pedestrian activity. Recommended improvements include monument signage, a planted median, improved crosswalks, enhanced greenspace and benches, and a small plaza with downtown wayfinding, bike racks, and benches.

From points south, Columbia Turnpike serves as two main entry points to the City of Rensselaer (at both the Columbia and Broadway intersection and the Columbia and South Street gateway). As visitors enter Rensselaer off the Dunn Memorial Bridge, there is currently no clear entrance into the City or clear indication that you are merely steps away from the City's downtown. Similarly, at Columbia and South Street, there is no clear and defined gateway to indicate that you are entering the City. Creating inviting gateways at these locations, in addition to the above discussed northern Broadway gateway, would establish three clear points of entry into the City's downtown and capture the majority of those traveling into or through the City. Consistent aesthetic upgrades at each gateway with a focus on the City's heritage, historical design elements, and appealing green spaces, would help to catch the eye of visitors and introduce the City as a welcoming place to spend time.

NORTH BROADWAY POCKET PARK CONCEPT

**Objective 3.4: Promote and Support the Arts**

The City of Rensselaer has an interest in expanding on the region's art scene by supporting and promoting the arts within the community. There is already an extensive mural program in the City focused around the Hudson Riverfront Park that could be used as a starting point for a robust and supportive arts culture throughout the City. Additionally, Rensselaer's strategic location on the Amtrak rail line that connects with New York City and the rest of the State and region creates an opportunity for the City to attract artists seeking affordable studio and gallery spaces outside of larger cities. As studio and housing costs continue to rise in urban centers, Rensselaer could position itself as a cost-effective, accessible alternative along the rail line that supports and promotes the arts.

Strategy 3.10: Promote Artist Studios and Makerspaces

A City efforts to encourage artist studios and makerspaces could help to build a foundation for sustained

economic growth by inviting a creative workforce that would also contribute to the local culture and community. Two recently planned projects within the study area will provide new studio spaces, as well as a new gallery and event space, further supporting this promotion of the arts and creating focal points within the City for artistic expression.

Strategy 3.11: Expand the City's Mural Program

The City should continue to maintain and further develop the series of 135 murals located in the Hudson Riverfront Park. Continuing investment in the City's public art and programming will support both local and visiting artists, drawing residents and tourists to leverage the arts as an economic driver. Expanding the mural program beyond Hudson Riverfront Park into other areas of Rensselaer could also work to visually connect neighborhoods, foster community identity, and increase public engagement with the arts.

GOAL #4

IMPROVE CONNECTIVITY AND PROMOTE MULTI-MODAL TRANSIT

A strength of Rensselaer is its compact size, at just 3.2 square miles, and the study area represents an even more compact portion of the City. This means that residents and visitors should be able to travel easily anywhere within the study area without a private auto, and the downtown should support and encourage walkability. Additionally, the City is close to several other cities, like Albany and Troy, and has easy access to major highways that connect it to the rest of the region. This strength should be supported by expanded multi-modal transit connections that allow residents and visitors to travel easily within the City and to quickly connect to the rest of the Capital Region.

Objective 4.1: Improve Trail Network Connections

The City of Rensselaer contains several trail systems, including a waterfront trail that runs along the Hudson to the north of the study area and the Empire State Trail (EST), which runs through the study area. These are huge assets, but are underutilized due to gaps in the system and the absence of safe, inviting bicycle infrastructure. The City should continue to pursue improvements to the trail network in Rensselaer.

Strategy 4.1: Create a Trail Connector between the Amtrak Station and Empire State Trail

The presence of both the EST and the Amtrak Station are unique assets that bring travelers and riders to the City. The Amtrak Station is located just a few blocks away from the EST. A connection between these two regional transportation amenities

would support multi-modal transit opportunities and provide people an opportunity to bike to and from the Station and easily travel along the EST when visiting the City, and could potentially attract more Amtrak riders to travel to Rensselaer to access the EST. As shown in the Master Plan, the trail connection is recommended in the form of a side path on the City-owned parcel that runs along East Street, adjacent to the Amtrak Station and parking garage. Plantings and landscaping along this trail would also create a visual buffer between the auto-oriented uses of the parking lot and Third Street, further supporting a more welcoming urban environment. Approximately 0.2 miles south of the Amtrak Station, the route would turn onto the low-traffic Adams Street before connecting to the EST on 3rd Avenue.

Strategy 4.2: Continue to Work with Property Owners to Fill Gaps in the Waterfront Trail

Establishing a continuous trail along the Hudson River waterfront has been the focus of multiple City and regional trail plans. While work has advanced and there are portions of the trail in the study area and greater City, gaps remain. The City should continue to engage with property owners to explore opportunities to fill gaps either through access easements or on-road connectors. Requiring a public right-of-way along the waterfront as part of all new development (noted in Strategy 2.3) will also help support this recommendation.

Objective 4.2: Upgrade Pedestrian Infrastructure

Many people that come to the City come for a single activity, such as going to the Amtrak Station, the Riverfront Park, or a business, but many will drive in and leave after completing their single planned errand or activity. The City hopes to encourage people to spend more time downtown, visiting local businesses, and taking advantage of community assets and amenities.



Herrick Street Bridge to Amtrak Station.



Historic Fort Crailo neighborhood block.



Commercial building along Broadway.

Strategy 4.3: Implement Streetscape Enhancements

Improving streetscapes by adding street trees, landscaping, and better lighting can enhance the visual appeal of a downtown area. Well-designed streetscapes can help create attractive and inviting spaces that encourage pedestrian activity and community interaction with their spaces. The City has over the years implemented attractive upgrades to the Broadway corridor, including installing decorative pavers, lights, and street trees. Additional improvements are needed to other auto-oriented corridors.

The most critical roadway in need of improved pedestrian infrastructure is the Columbia

Turnpike (Route 20). In 2004, the City of Rensselaer conducted a plan for the corridor that included recommendations for raised medians with significant landscaping, wide bike lanes, historic lighting, and other aesthetic improvements. While some of the recommendations in the plan have since been implemented, many of the significant changes remain incomplete. Implementing these streetscape enhancements would help to improve the overall look of the corridor, but also serve as a more welcoming entry to the downtown. The improvements would also serve as traffic calming measures to slow the vehicular traffic and allow for safer and more accessible cyclist and pedestrian connections.

Similar streetscape enhancements are recommended along Third Avenue, which is part of the EST in the study area and serves as another major connection to the Dunn Memorial Bridge, bringing significant traffic through the City. A landscaped median and improvements for pedestrians and cyclists could help improve the aesthetics of the roadway and create a more cohesive downtown area. Improving this corridor could further support the City in encouraging visitors to stop and spend more time in the downtown.

ROUTE 20 CORRIDOR CONCEPT



STREETSCAPE IMPROVEMENT EXAMPLES



Objective 4.3: Strengthen Multi-Modal Transportation Access

With several forms of transit within the study area, the City needs to ensure there are reliable and accessible connections between the various modes, including the Amtrak station, CDTA buses, CDPHP Cycle! bike share program.

Strategy 4.4: Improve Multi-Modal Transit Access

Safe, accessible, multi-modal transit connections should be prioritized between new anticipated mixed-use and residential development, and key areas like downtown, parks, trails, and the waterfront. The City should ensure that new development includes plans to enhance access to existing public spaces and transit options surrounding the development.

Strategy 4.5: Support the Expansion of Bike Share in the City

While portions of Rensselaer (the Dunn Memorial Bridge and the Amtrak Station) are within the CDPHP Cycle! zone, there are no stations within the study area, limiting use. The City has been in conversation with the CDTA to install CDPHP Cycle! stations in the City, including one at the Amtrak Station. The City should continue these conversations and work to expand the number of stations in the City as new development comes on line.

GOAL #5

ENSURE ACCESS TO COMMUNITY SERVICES, ESPECIALLY FRESH FOOD & GROCERIES



groceries, and household items. This not only serves as a major limitation for residents in need of these services, but also could constrain future development of housing and related amenities if the area does not meet the needs of potential residents.

Strategy 5.1: Attract and Develop Grocery and Fresh Food Locations

The City, with the IDA, has been proactively looking for a new grocery retailer since Aldi's departure. However, the changing market of grocery and supermarket delivery systems limits the potential for a City to attract a full service store as people shift to online grocery ordering and alternative forms of shopping. As a result, the City will need to explore creative strategies to attract a new supermarket. Working with supermarket chains to build a case for the local market, such as highlighting the potential additional demand from Amtrak riders, as noted under Strategy 1.1, is one such approach.

Strategy 5.2: Expand and Support Local Food Access Alternatives

To address the immediate need for food and groceries for residents who may not be able to travel out of the

City to surrounding grocery stores and supermarkets, there are several steps the City should take. There is an existing farmers market that runs in the summer in Hudson Riverfront Park which provides access to fresh fruits and vegetables and some other necessary items, but the Farmers Market does not currently have an indoor location for the winter. The City should work with the farmers market and other local organizations to identify an indoor location for the market and identify potential demand and supply of vendors for a year-round market. The City should also work with the CDTA to explore opportunities to improve transit access between City residents and existing grocery stores located in nearby communities.

Other community-driven food access initiatives could include:

- Pop-up grocery locations in high-traffic areas.
- Bodega programs to stock fresh foods and household products.
- Continued support of community gardens to supplement fresh food supply seasonally.
- Encourage more food trucks in the downtown area.
- Institute free food fridges in the downtown commercial corridor to improve immediate and emergency access to essential groceries.

Quality of life is significantly impacted by access to community services and programs. Community services, whether provided by a government or non-profit can keep residents safe, build a sense of community, and increase education and enrichment opportunities for everyone. In Rensselaer, as in many communities, there is serious demand for access to fresh food and groceries, affordable housing, and programming for youth and seniors.

Objective 5.1: Ensure Access to Fresh Food and Groceries

One of the most pressing issues facing the City of Rensselaer is critical need for food access. The recent loss of Aldi supermarket when it moved out of the City has left Rensselaer without a full service supermarket within the city limits and has limited access to fresh food,

Strategy 5.3: Strengthen Coordination and Support for Food Services

There are multiple community organizations in Rensselaer and the surrounding region that provide critical services to City residents, including food services. The City should continue communication among existing food pantries and community providers to foster better coordination and streamline support and resources while it pursues long-term food access options.

Objective 5.2: Continue to Promote Access to Affordable Housing

With underutilized properties within the study area prime for mixed-use and residential development and a number of planned developments both within and just outside of the study area in Rensselaer, there are many housing units either currently being developed in the City or that could be in the near future. As new housing develops in the area, although Rensselaer's cost of housing is currently lower than some of the surrounding communities, it will be essential that housing remains affordable for current and future residents. It is also important that these affordable housing units are quality housing that allow for a high quality of life for residents.

Strategy 5.4: Pursue Grant Funding for Affordable Housing

For those who may own homes or are tenants of landlords who own homes in the area, the City should pursue funding for local housing rehabilitation and homebuyer assistance programs targeted to deteriorated and blighted homes within the study area. The implementation section of this report includes several funding sources that could be used to support this strategy.

Strategy 5.5: Encourage Affordable Housing Development

The City's IDA and Planning Department should partner to encourage, or mandate, the inclusion of affordable units in new housing developments. This initiative can be supported by providing incentives to developers or financing solutions to ensure projects are financially viable. The City IDA already uses many of these tools, which can be further leveraged to support additional affordable housing units. Additionally, as part of any future Zoning Code update, a component could include bonuses or incentives for affordable housing.



Example of creative fresh food access alternatives.

Objective 5.3: Ensure Youth and Senior Access to Critical Services

Strategy 5.6: Support Daycare Models that Serve the City Population

Ensuring that children in Rensselaer have safe and affordable access to daycare is essential to supporting local families. Without dependable, affordable daycare options, parents often face the difficult choice of juggling childcare responsibilities or leaving the workforce, which reduces the local employment pool. In recent years, many daycare facilities have closed both locally and regionally, leaving families struggling to find available services or forced to travel long distances to secure a spot in an open center. There are local and regional organizations that are focused on addressing this issue that can help residents find daycare and navigate subsidies. The City should work with these existing organizations to ensure that residents have information and access to this critical service.

Strategy 5.7: Ensure Transportation Access for Seniors to Access the New Location of the Senior Center

Since the City of Rensselaer's senior center moved out of the downtown, access is more limited for many seniors living in Rensselaer. There is clearly a need to transport seniors to this new location to ensure they have access to existing programming. The City recently secured funding to explore alternative transportation services for seniors to critical resources. Once this study is completed, the City should work to implement the recommendations to ensure this access gap is addressed.

Strategy 5.8: Increase Awareness of and Access to Existing Youth Programs

The Rensselaer City School District provides students access to extensive programming, including sports, theater, and extracurricular activities. The Rensselaer Boys and Girls Club, located within the study area, is also an incredible resource for Rensselaer's youth. Its facilities, programs, and after school programs allow kids to be active and enriched in a safe, supportive environment. More should be done to improve advertising of existing programming in the City through consistent and clear communication between the City, local youth organizations, the school district, and residents. Consideration of the transportation access needs of these facilities should be factored into alternative transit access planning to ensure that access is not a limiting factor.

Strategy 5.9: Provide Additional Programming for Youth

In addition to improving awareness and access to existing youth programming, there is a need for additional programming and activities for the City's youth, and specifically the need for more places for youth to hang out and socialize in safe, but unstructured environments outside of school and extracurricular programming. This consideration should remain in the forefront of the City's mind in decision making as new development is proposed on underutilized sites in the study area. Some of the vacant storefronts present in the study area could potentially be activated with more youth-focused businesses and activities.

Strategy 5.10: Increase Opportunities for Youth to Connect from the Local High School to Jobs and Internships

The City should work with the school district to develop a program to connect students with local jobs and internships with local employers.. This would help to foster pride among youth in their community and could help to retain more students after graduation.



Rensselaer Boys & Girls Club.



The Doane Stuart School in Rensselaer.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

IMPLEMENTATION

The purpose of Rensselaer Rising is to develop a community vision to revitalize the study area, identify barriers to achieving that vision, and develop strategies to overcome those barriers to make the vision a reality. The success of the Rensselaer Rising plan will depend on the commitment of local leaders, businesses, property owners, and agencies, continued public engagement, access to and availability of funding, and successful partnerships.

Many of the strategies outlined in this plan have been in process for years and, in some cases, will take several more years to fully realize. Some have yet to be initiated and will require grant funding and/or policy changes to accomplish them. Pursuing regional, State, and Federal grants requires patience and a keen awareness of timing. The City will also want to consider the logical order for projects, and grant applications to prepare for upcoming grant cycles, and the type of work that needs to be completed. Project timelines can also be challenging to manage if funding is provided in phases, especially with costs rising across industries. Keeping these dynamics in harmony over the course of multi-year projects is a delicate balancing act.

Leadership, committees, and volunteers will also change over time. Establishing programs, policies, and systems that can be transferred seamlessly through those changes is critical, as is maintaining realistic expectations.

This section establishes a concise and actionable implementation plan for advancing the Rensselaer Rising strategies described in the above section. The implementation table, below, identifies key next steps, partners, and potential funding sources, as well as a reasonable timeframe for implementation. Following the implementation table are expanded implementation strategies for priority projects identified by the Committee and the public during the planning process.

Eligible for Pre-Development BOA Funding

Upon receiving BOA designation by the New York State Secretary of State, Rensselaer will become eligible for Pre-Development funding through the DOS BOA program. The implementation table identifies pre-development actions that are eligible for BOA funding that will advance priority strategies identified in this plan. Eligible activities for pre-development funding include:

- Development and implementation of marketing strategies
- Development of plans and specifications
- Real estate services
- Building conditions studies
- Infrastructure analysis
- Zoning and regulatory updates
- Environmental, housing and economic studies, analyses and reports
- Public outreach

Downtown Revitalization Initiative

In addition to the other funding programs identified for the priority strategies, the City, in fall 2024, applied for Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI) funding, a State Program that funds a range of projects up to \$10 million.

The application process for this program is intensive, and the program is competitive, but the City is well-positioned to compete for these funds because of the planning and project development undertaken through the Rensselaer Rising process.

DRI projects can be both public and private projects. If the City is chosen as a DRI community, the first phase would be a six-month planning process to identify projects for funding, followed by the final State project slate selection.

IMPLEMENTATION TABLE

Goal 1: Establish an Identifiable and Thriving Downtown

Strategy	Key Next Steps	Potential Funding Sources	Potential Project Partners	Short- Or Long-Term Action & Time Frame
Objective 1.1: Revitalize Vacant and Underutilized Sites				
1.1 Advance Master Plan Site Redevelopment Recommendations 615 East Street Amtrak station parking to grocery and mixed-use building conversion.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to engage with CDTA about development options. Pursue DRI project funding if awarded grant. Phase II ESA (and remediation, as needed) Archaeology survey of site Financial feasibility analysis and financing plan Continued engagement with public, CDTA, and Amtrak. Market sites as option for full-service grocery stores or supermarkets. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NYSDOS BOA Pre-Development USEPA NYS DRI National Grid 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City CDTA Amtrak City IDA 	Long-Term Action 3-5 Years
1.1 Advance Master Plan Site Redevelopment Recommendations 500 Broadway OCFS parking to day care and housing conversion.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue outreach to property owner about possible reuse of property. Phase II ESA (and remediation as needed) Archaeology survey Site plan development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NYSDOS BOA Pre-Development USEPA NYSESD NYS DRI 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City Property Owner Local developers City IDA 	Long-Term Action 3-5 Years
1.1 Advance Master Plan Site Redevelopment Recommendations 505 Broadway Old City Hall site mixed-use development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to engage with property owner Phase II ESA (and remediation as needed) Archaeology survey Advance site plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NYSDOS BOA Pre-Development NYSESD NYS DRI National Grid 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City Property Owner City IDA 	Short-Term Action 2-3 Years
1.1 Advance Master Plan Site Redevelopment Recommendations 264 Broadway Vacant site mixed-use development opportunity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to engage with property owner Financial feasibility analysis and financing plan Advance site plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NYSDOS BOA Pre-Development NYS DRI National Grid 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City Property Owner City IDA 	Short-Term Action 1-2 Years
1.1 Advance Master Plan Site Redevelopment Recommendations Third Avenue & 58 Green Street OCFS campus parking to residential conversion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue outreach to property owner about possible infill development Phase II ESA (and remediation as needed) Archaeology survey Site plan development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NYSDOS BOA Pre-Development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City Property Owner City IDA 	Long-Term Action 3-5 Years

Strategy	Key Next Steps	Potential Funding Sources	Potential Project Partners	Short- Or Long-Term Action & Time Frame
1.1 Advance Master Plan Site Redevelopment Recommendations 13 Columbia Turnpike Former gas station site mixed-use redevelopment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to engage with property owner Phase II ESA (and remediation as needed) Archaeology study Structure demolition Site plan development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NYSDOS BOA Pre-Development NYS DRI National Grid 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City Property Owner 	Short-Term Action 2-3 Years
1.2. Optimize Property Sales and Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reevaluate tax-foreclosure auction process. Establish rigorous application process for potential property owners. Review local alternatives for property sales 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City City IDA 	Short-Term Action 1-2 Years
1.3. Address Floodplain and Environmental Risks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue work with FEMA to update floodplain mapping Conduct floodplain assessments for key downtown properties Consider updating CRS program standing City zoning code updates for stormwater management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NYSDOS BOA Pre-Development NYSDOS LWRP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City County FEMA NYSDEC 	Long-Term Action 3-5 Years
1.4. Update Zoning and Design Standards Regulations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secure funding Public outreach City zoning code amendments/updates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NYSDOS BOA Pre-Development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City Planning Commission 	Short-Term Action 1-2 Years
1.5. Consider Temporary Alternate Uses for Existing Spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Connect with property owners about willingness to host alternate uses on/in their space Establish temporary pedestrian-only zones on side streets Collaborate with businesses and stakeholders downtown to support local events in these spaces. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City Property/ Business Owners Farmers Market 	Short-Term Action First Year
Objective 1.2: Improve Downtown Aesthetics				
1.6 Create an Identifiable Downtown Brand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secure funding Public Engagement Establish "Downtown Rensselaer" logo and slogan in line with character of City Implement branded signage and materials in the downtown core Develop seasonal branding materials. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NYSDOS BOA Pre-Development Market NY NY Main Street 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City City Historian Property/ Business Owners Public 	Short-Term Action First Year
1.7 Implement a Façade Improvement Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City Zoning Code amendments Identify funding support for a downtown façade improvement program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NY Main Street NYSDOS BOA Pre-Development National Grid 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City City Historian Property/ Business Owners 	Short-Term Action 1-2 Years

Goal 2: Enhance the Hudson River Waterfront

Strategy	Key Next Steps	Potential Funding Sources	Potential Project Partners	Short- Or Long-Term Action & Time Frame
Objective 2.1: Improve Access to the Waterfront				
2.1 Open and Enhance Primary Entry to Riverfront Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Move summer farmers market from inside the park to the street along Broadway Add games and amenities under cover of bridge Implement streetscape enhancements, including bump outs, mid-block crossing Add wayfinding information Narrow and define vehicular entry Relocate parking area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NYSDOS BOA Pre-Development NY Main Street NYSOPRHP EPF NYSDOS LWRP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City Farmers Market NYSDOT 	Short-Term Action 1-2 Years
2.2 New Pocket Park & Waterway Connection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contact property owner to discuss access to property Remove invasive vegetation Enhance Mill Creek Park and Connection through Hudson Riverfront Park 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NYSORHPEPF NYSDOS LWRP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City Property Owner 	Long-Term Action 3-5 Years
Objective 2.2: Increase Use of the Waterfront				
2.3 Promote and Support Riverfront Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update Zoning Code in preparation of properties becoming available along the waterfront Continue to engage industrial waterfront property owners to explore relocation opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NYSDOS BOA Pre-Development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City City Planning Commission 	Long-Term Action 5+ Years
2.4 Plan for Long-Term Park Enhancements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stay in contact with NYSDOT about plans for I-787 and the Dunn Memorial Bridge Ensure Zoning Code updates take long-term changes to the bridge into consideration. Advocate for I-787 bridge alternatives that support the needs and interests of Rensselaer. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City Public Property/ Business Owners NYSDOT 	Long-Term Action 5+ Years
2.5 Improve and Maintain Riverfront Amenities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish volunteer clean-up days of the Hudson river shoreline Establish a mural maintenance program 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City Property/ Business Owners Public volunteers 	Short Term Action First Year
2.6 Support implementation of boat launch and dock at Crailo State Historic Site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with the Crailo State Historic Site to identify any additional funding and implementation needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> OPRHP LWRP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City Crailo State Historic Site 	Short-Term Action First Year

Goal 3: Highlight and Market Existing Community Assets

Strategy	Key Next Steps	Potential Funding Sources	Potential Project Partners	Short- Or Long-Term Action & Time Frame
Objective 3.1: Increase Awareness and Marketing of the City				
3.1 Create a Cohesive Marketing Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public engagement Establish branded colors, logo, slogan Update City website, social media, and materials to reflect branding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NYS DOS BOA Pre-Development Market NY 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City Public Local property/business owners Community organizations 	Short-Term Action First Year
3.2 Establish a Formal City-Wide Calendar of Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicate with businesses and local organizations to collect information on upcoming and regular events Identify all City-run and organized events Establish a visual and engaging calendar and identify where it will be hosted on the City's website and where else it can be hosted. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Market NY 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City Public Local property/business owners Community organizations 	Short-Term Action First Year
3.3 Improve Visibility and Accessibility to Historic Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design Historic Crailo Neighborhood gateway entrance Install entryway 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NYS DOS BOA Pre-Development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City Neighborhood residents 	Short Term Action 2-3 Years
Objective 3.2: Expand Community Engagement Events				
3.4 Expand and Promote Historic and Cultural Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborate with existing regional historic events in neighboring communities like Troy and Albany Identify key historic markers and themes to associate with programming Work with local historical organizations to establish historic cultural events 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City Public City Historian Local historical organizations Community organizations Property/business owners Neighboring communities 	Short-Term Action 1-2 Years
3.5 Increase Frequency of Community Programming and Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify new programming needs in collaboration with local community organizations and school district Expand program offerings and advertise existing programming Update City-wide calendar with events 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City Local property owners/businesses Local community organizations School District Senior Center 	Short-Term Action 1-2 Years

Strategy	Key Next Steps	Potential Funding Sources	Potential Project Partners	Short- Or Long-Term Action & Time Frame
Objective 3.3: Optimize Visitor Experience				
3.6 Leverage Amtrak Ridership to Promote Tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify signage locations and typology for station and key access points outside the station Coordinate with CDTA and Amtrak to update wayfinding signage and implement wayfinding kiosks Develop signage specifications & install signage Launch and support 'Ambassador Program' to have individuals at the Amtrak station serve as guides and resources to connect people to City amenities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NYSDOS BOA Pre-Development Market NY 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City CDTA Amtrak 	Short-Term Action 1-2 Years
3.7 Improve Train Station Pedestrian Connections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with CDTA and Amtrak to provide additional pedestrian amenities to riders at the Amtrak Station/parking lot Clarify existing pedestrian crossing and access Add planting and landscaping 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City CDTA Amtrak 	Short-Term Action 1-2 Years
3.8 Improve Herrick Street Bridge Connection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify aesthetic improvement styles including plantings, paint, murals, or historic information. Install improvements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NY Main Street 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City CDTA Amtrak 	Short-Term Action First Year
3.9 Improve City Gateways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinate with landowners Identify signage locations and typology based on the new City-wide marketing strategy Install signage, plantings, and traffic calming measures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NYSDOS BOA Pre-Development NY Main Street Program CRTC TIP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City Planning Commission Property owners CRTC NYSDOT 	Short-Term Action 2-3 Years
Objective 3.4: Promote and Support the Arts				
3.10 Promote Artist Studios and Makerspaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue coordination with property owner on artist studio and gallery space progress Promote marketing of new development and highlight its desired impacts on the City 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NYSDOS BOA Pre-Development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City Property Owners 	Short-Term Action 1-2 Years
3.11 Expand the City's Mural Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain an inventory of the City's murals & update as new public art is added Contact property owners to identify locations for new murals Reengage the Rensselaer Artist Movement Society (RAMS), who's responsible for the Hudson Riverfront Park murals to add additional murals Connect local artists using new studio spaces with opportunities to create murals in line with the City's marketing and branding goals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NYS Council on the Arts NYS DRI 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City Property Owners Local Artists 	Short-Term Action 1-2 Years

Goal 4: Improve Connectivity and Promote Multi-Modal Transit

Strategy	Key Next Steps	Potential Funding Sources	Potential Project Partners	Short- Or Long-Term Action & Time Frame
Objective 4.1: Improve Trail Network Connections				
4.1 Create a Trail Connector Between the Amtrak Station and Empire State Trail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secure funding Develop plans and specifications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NYSDOS BOA Pre-Development NYSDOT TAP CRTC TIP NY Main Street Program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City Planning Commission CRTC NYSDOT Amtrak 	Short-Term Action 1-2 Years
4.2 Continue to Work with Property Owners to Fill Gaps in the Waterfront Trail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to engage with waterfront property owners Advance concept development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NYSDOS BOA Pre-Development LWRP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City Property Owners 	Short-Term Action 2-3 Years
Objective 4.2: Upgrade Pedestrian and Bicycle Infrastructure and Public Spaces				
4.3 Implement Streetscape Enhancements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revisit Route 20 Corridor improvement plan Utilize implementation recommendations from plan Identify similar improvements for Third Avenue streetscape 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NYSDOS BOA Pre-Development NY Main Street Program CRTC TIP NYSDOT TAP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City NYSDOT CRTC Local Businesses/Property Owners 	Long-Term Action 3-5 Years
Objective 4.3: Strengthen Multi-Modal Transportation Access				
4.4 Improve Multi-Modal Transit Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain communication with Amtrak and CDTA, City about anticipated changes to transit options in the City Incorporate accommodations for transit access/connections into Zoning Code updates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NYSDOS BOA Pre-Development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City NYSDOT CDTA County Amtrak Property owners 	Long-Term Action 3-5 Years
4.5 Support the Expansion of Bike Share in the City	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to engage CDTA Identify priority initial station installation locations Promote the new locations Monitor progress Continue to work with CDTA to add more stations 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CDTA (CDPHP Cycle!) NYSDOT Amtrak 	Short Term Action 1-2 Years

Goal 5: Ensure Access to Community Services, Especially Fresh Food and Groceries

Strategy	Key Next Steps	Potential Funding Sources	Potential Project Partners	Short- Or Long-Term Action & Time Frame
Objective 5.1: Ensure Access to Fresh Food and Groceries				
5.1 Attract and Develop Grocery and Fresh Food Locations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> See strategy 1.1 for 615 East Street Market appropriate properties for supermarket location Continue outreach to local grocery providers about location to the City 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NYSDOS BOA Pre-Development NYS DRI HHFI Food Access & Retail Expansion Fund 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City City IDA CDTA 	<p>Long Term Action</p> <p>3-5 Years</p>
5.2 Expand and Support Local Food Access Alternatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with the Farmers Market, Boys and Girls Club, and other community organizations to identify an indoor location for farmers market Work with local community organizations to implement bodega fresh food and household product programs Communicate with property owners on potential for pop-up grocery locations Complete the NYSERDA Clean Mobility planning project Apply for NYSERDA Clean Mobility implementation funding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> St. Peter's Health Partners' Creating Healthy Schools and Communities Capital Roots Healthy Stores Program NYSERDA Clean Mobility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community based organizations City County Property owners/business owners. St. Peter's Health Partners Capital Roots 	<p>Short-Term Action</p> <p>First Year</p>
5.3 Strengthen Coordination and Support for Food Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a regular meeting between organizations providing food services Create a calendar of food pantry and food access events currently being held in the City and make that information available on the updated City website and at local organizations/public spaces. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City Community-based organizations 	<p>Short-Term Action</p> <p>First Year</p>
Objective 5.2: Continue to Promote Access to Affordable Housing				
5.4 Pursue Grant Funding for Affordable Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apply for grant funding to support housing rehabilitation and homebuyer assistance programs Clearly communicate funding options for local property owners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NYS HCR NYSESD Pro-Housing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City Property Owners County 	<p>Short-Term Action</p> <p>2-3 Years</p>
5.5 Encourage Affordable Housing Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluate feasibility of incentive programs like tax rebates or expedited permitting Zoning Code amendments Communicate with City IDA on current offerings and incentives for affordable housing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NYSDOS BOA Pre-Development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City City IDA Property Owners 	<p>Short Term Action</p> <p>1-2 Years</p>

Strategy	Key Next Steps	Potential Funding Sources	Potential Project Partners	Short- or Long-Term Action & Time Frame
Objective 5.3: Ensure Youth and Senior Access to Critical Services is Maintained and Improved				
5.6 Support Day Care Models that Serve the City Population	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish regular communication with Rensselaer County Social Services, OCFS, and the local Child Care Resource and Referral Agency Ensure information on local childcare facilities is readily accessible at public buildings and on the City website 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City County OCFS Brightside Up, Inc. Child Care Providers Commission on Economic Opportunity (CEO) 	Short Term Action 1-2 Years
5.7 Ensure Transportation Access for Seniors to Access the New Location of the Senior Center	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete the NYSERDA funded planning study Apply for implementation funding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NYSERDA Clean Mobility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City Senior Center NYSERDA CDTA 	Short Term Action First Year
5.8 Increase Awareness of and Access to Existing Youth Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborate with CDTA to ensure that transit is available for families to bring students to youth services Ensure safe pedestrian access to youth service locations like the Boys and Girls Club 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City CDTA School District Community Based Organizations 	Short Term Action First Year
5.9 Provide Additional Programming for Youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborate with local community based organizations to identify opportunities for expanded programming 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City School District Community Based Organizations 	Short Term Action First Year
5.10 Increase Opportunities for Youth to Connect from the Local High School to Jobs and Internships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborate with School District and local employers to identify internship opportunities. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City School District Local businesses/ employers 	Short Term Action 1-2 Years

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES FOR PRIORITY PROJECTS

Following are implementation approaches, including timeframe and funding strategies for projects that were identified as priorities by the Advisory Committee, City leadership and staff, partner organizations, and the public. The City should revisit and adjust these priorities as work is implemented, community needs change, feedback from the community shifts, or new grant funding opportunities arise.

STRATEGY 1.1: ADVANCE MASTER PLAN SITE REDEVELOPMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

Construction costs and interest rates in recent years have skyrocketed, which have stalled rehabilitation and new construction projects in the City and across the broader region and beyond. As a result, the City can take a role in supporting some of the up-front costs of redevelopment by addressing some of the financial barriers that may be

keeping developers from constructing in the City now. If awarded, DRI funding can help further support these projects as well.

Funding for strategic sites identified in this plan can be pursued independently and collectively. For many State funding sources, the City will need to be involved and will serve as the lead applicant, the grant administrator, and the fund recipient. In addition to State and Federal programs that require the City's involvement, developers can pursue projects with private capital. Given the number of properties that could benefit from an influx of funding for their redevelopment in the study area, a multifaceted approach to funding is recommended for 2025. Two strategies are outlined below, depending on whether the City is selected as a DRI Round 8 community.

If Rensselaer is selected as a DRI Round 8 Community	If Rensselaer is not selected as a DRI Round 8 Community
<p>January 2025: DRI funding awards announced.</p> <p>Spring 2025: Six-month planning process will begin to identify private and public projects for funding.</p> <p>Summer 2025: Apply for BOA Pre-Development funding to support property owners to cover soft costs of DRI projects.</p> <p>December 2025: BOA Pre-Development funding awards announced.</p> <p>Spring 2026: Detailed design, plans, and specifications are developed using BOA Pre-Development funding.</p> <p>Fall 2027: Construction of DRI projects begins.</p>	<p>Summer 2025: Apply for BOA Pre-Development funding to support property owners to improve project readiness for future grant applications.</p> <p>December 2025: BOA Pre-Development funding awards announced.</p> <p>Spring 2026: Kick off BOA Pre-Development work. Property owners would be paired with architects to develop project scopes, plans, renderings, and cost estimates. These efforts not only increase property owners' understanding of their project scope and costs, they make grant applications more competitive and increase the likelihood of getting loans.</p> <p>Summer 2026: Reapply for DRI using materials developed through the Pre-Development grant</p>

STRATEGY 1.6: CREATE AN IDENTIFIABLE DOWNTOWN BRAND; AND STRATEGY 3.1: CREATE A COHESIVE MARKETING PLAN STRATEGIES

1.6 and 3.1 are interconnected strategies that were prioritized by the Rensselaer Rising Advisory Committee, the public, and the City. Implementation will require building on and expanding partnerships with local organizations and businesses, and will require an overhaul of current City websites, social media, and branding. A funding and implementation approach is outlined below that leverages the City's future BOA designation to support initiation.

Summer 2025: Apply for BOA Pre-Development funding to develop a branding and marketing strategy.

Fall 2025: It is recommended that the City develop a promotional package that highlights the BOA study area, strategic sites, and the various economic benefits that accrue to properties within these areas. These could include tax credits or elevated status when seeking grant funding. The brochure could also highlight the strategic location and community amenities available to businesses and residents that locate within the community.

During this time, the City should also begin developing contacts and information for a City-wide calendar of events. This will require frequent communication with local organizations, business owners, and City staff to ensure events are clearly communicated and updated in a central location on the City's website. This can also be shared with other organizations to house on their websites as well.

December 2025: BOA Pre-Development funding awards announced.

–Spring-Fall 2026: Develop a branding and marketing strategy for the City. This can begin with public engagement and a brand survey to help develop a brand, logo, and City slogan.

Winter 2026: Marketing and Branding Rollout. Once the brand and key marketing pieces have been created, the plan should be rolled out. The City should as a first step update its website and social media accounts that it hosts to correspond with the determined branding. The roll out could include a press release and conference, installing branded signage, and promotion.

STRATEGY 5.1: ATTRACT AND DEVELOP GROCERY AND FRESH FOOD LOCATIONS; AND STRATEGY 5.2: EXPAND AND SUPPORT LOCAL FOOD ACCESS ALTERNATIVES

Access to fresh food and groceries was identified as one of the City's most critical needs across all forms of public engagement, conversations with the Advisory Committee, and from the City. Increasing access to this service is a key priority of this plan and for the City. Because this is both a critical immediate need, which also requires a long-term solution, both short- and long-term implementation approaches are necessary to increase access to fresh foods and household items for residents of the City. The City should follow a four-pronged approach to increase food access.

1. Increase communication and coordination between community organizations already providing access to food, groceries, and household items within the City.
2. Explore creative solutions to increasing grassroots food access with local non-profit organizations.
3. Develop a plan to help transport people to local grocery stores outside of the City limits.
4. Pursue development of a full-service supermarket/ grocery location within the City.

Winter/Spring 2025:

- Initiate planning process for transport of residents to community services using NYSEDA Clean Mobility Planning Grant.
- Re-engage local non-profits and community organizations to coordinate existing food services and identify a location for an indoor farmers market.
- Identify funding opportunities through Capital Roots and St. Peters Creating Healthy Schools and Communities for stocking fresh foods and household products in bodegas within the City.
- If DRI grant funding is awarded, continue pursuing development of grocery location at Strategic Site 1.
- Work with City IDA to build a case for the local Rensselaer market to appeal to grocery chains, highlighting the demand of Amtrak riders, critical need, and development opportunities at properties within the study area.

Sumer 2025: Apply for Clean Mobility Program Demonstration Funding to be used for implementation of transportation access for residents to community services.

A P P E N D I X 1

RENSSELAER BOA NOMINATION PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PLAN

Draft
November 27, 2023

INTRODUCTION

This Public Engagement Plan ("Plan") aims to identify an approach to gather input and feedback from the community and stakeholders, educate and inform the public about the plan, and build support for a successful revitalization effort. The Plan is intended to help clarify: (1) the responsibilities of the City of Rensselaer, the LaBella Associates consultant team, and the Steering Committee; and (2) the methods by which the public will be informed of and engaged in the Rensselaer BOA planning effort. The Plan identifies a variety of forums and outreach mechanisms to engage all interested persons in the development and preparation of the BOA Nomination Study.

INVOLVED STAKEHOLDERS

For the project's duration, the Steering Committee will strive to interact with many different groups of people from various backgrounds. These groups will likely include:

- **Elected and government officials:** These individuals perform various tasks, including representing the community's interests, administering local statutes, and receipt/ownership of all work products. Because of these factors, they must actively engage throughout the planning process. Elected and government officials to be involved will include (but not be limited to) the Mayor of Rensselaer and Common Council, Planning Department, and Public Works Department. Other government officials in the planning process include County and State representatives and State agencies (e.g., NYS Department of State (DOS)).
- **Community groups, organizations, and non-profits:** These groups serve many functions in the community. These groups can be informal or formally recognized entities. The Steering Committee will work together to identify groups that work in the City of Rensselaer and the surrounding area that may have a direct interest in the Rensselaer BOA plan.
- **Property and business owners:** The Rensselaer BOA planning process will include discussions regarding current and future land use and reuse policies and concepts. As a result, property and business owners (direct stakeholders) associated with lands identified in the study will be encouraged to participate in the planning process actively.
- **Developers:** The Rensselaer BOA planning process will include discussions with interested and prospective developers. These discussions will allow project consultants to ground truth, generate interest, and provide an opportunity for developers to engage in facilitated dialogue and actively participate in the planning process.

- **General public:** There will likely be topics raised during the planning process that will require the community's input. To facilitate this communication process, a specific number of public events will be held to discuss the BOA and the future of the sites contained within the study area. The public should be involved to provide valuable insight, gain information on the study, and provide input and ideas about a vision to local leaders and the Steering Committee.

STEERING COMMITTEE

The Steering Committee ("Committee") has been established to assist in the preparation of the Rensselaer BOA Nomination Study. Committee members include:

- Thomas Hulihan, City of Rensselaer
- Joseph Kardash, Rensselaer Central School
- Amy Lolik, City of Rensselaer
- Madeline Rizzo, Rensselaer IDA
- Mayor Mike Stammel, City of Rensselaer
- Penelope Vavura, Port of Albany
- Fred Weakley, Planning Commission Member
- Jeshua White, Resident
- Richard Zazycki, Circles of Mercy
- Maggie Zmuda, Resident

The Committee will serve in an advisory capacity to contribute, review, and provide comments on documents and presentations prepared in association with the study. A Steering Committee "kickoff meeting" was held in May of 2023 to explain the BOA Program and the project's intent and scope, conduct a walking tour of the study area, and to solicit initial input on the study. Additional Steering Committee meetings will be held throughout the planning process. Analyses of the study area, identification of the plan's vision and goals, review of strategic sites (abandoned and underutilized properties) and developing and reviewing building and site reuse plans will occur at each meeting. The Steering Committee will be the primary group guiding the preparation of all planning documents. The Steering Committee will also play an important role in interfacing with the public, including answering questions, sharing draft materials, and promoting public engagement events.

PUBLIC OUTREACH COMPONENTS

Public involvement is a central component that will build trust and directly influence the outcome and success of the project. Communicating project goals to stakeholders will therefore be an essential consideration. The Rensselaer BOA planning process will include a variety of tools and proactive methods to ensure that all interested parties receive adequate notice of project events and vital project benchmarks and are made aware of draft materials that require review.

The following tools and methods will be used to achieve this public engagement goal:

Surveys

A short Visioning Survey will be made by the project consultants (via Survey Monkey) to introduce the project to the larger community, gather public input, and receive initial feedback regarding current and future land use. In addition, the Visioning Survey will ask members of the Rensselaer community questions regarding their likes and dislikes in the City, adequacy of amenities and services, ideas for investment, and a community vision. A poster or flyer with a QR code will be made available to introduce the project to the community and invite them to complete the survey. The flyer will be distributed at key community centers, areas of high population density, and to local businesses. Hard copies of the Visioning Survey will be available at City Hall and the Rensselaer Public Library.

Stakeholder Interviews

Key persons identified by the Steering Committee will be interviewed throughout the Rensselaer BOA planning process. Interviews will be conducted by telephone and virtually. The results of these interviews will be summarized. Stakeholder outreach may include residents, property owners, business owners, local and regional developers, community groups/organizations, and non-profits.

Public Events

Public events will occur at critical milestones during the planning process, including project start/visioning, strategic site recommendation development, and the draft and final plan presentations to heighten awareness of the project and gather community interest. In addition, to expand public outreach and engagement, an effort will be made to hold these events at existing public events.

Project Visioning

A public workshop ("Visioning Workshop") will be held to inform meeting attendees of the overall planning process and engage the public to explore issues and opportunities facing the community. Together, we will discuss their vision for the future of the BOA study area. The meeting will involve a public presentation of the BOA program, Rensselaer's BOA history, preliminary existing conditions analysis, and the vision and goals from the 2022 BOA Nomination Study.

The hope is to hold the event at a high traffic indoor location such as the Rensselaer Public Library or Rensselaer City Hall. The Visioning Workshop will overlap with the launch of a public visioning survey, which will be provided to the City for website posting and will be distributed to local businesses and community service locations.

Following a public visioning workshop, public feedback received during the workshop and through the survey will be reviewed with the Committee. During this meeting the Committee will collaborate to develop a Vision Statement and list of plan Goals. The Vision and Goals will serve as the launching point for the document and will be refined based on public and Committee feedback.

Draft Master Plan Public Review

Once a Conceptual Master Plan is created to depict the BOA study area, subareas, and strategic site development programs, the Plan will be shared with the public in-person and or online in the form of boards, posters, and online materials. To maximize public feedback, materials will be available at multiple high traffic, high impact locations within and adjacent to the study area, including businesses (e.g., Son of Egg, Cugino's Pizza), community service locations (e.g., Boys and Girls Club, Circles of Mercy), and public facilities (e.g., Rensselaer Public Library, Amtrak Station).

Draft Nomination Plan Presentation

A public meeting will be held to share the Nomination Plan and solicit input. Public notices will be prepared, and the project website will be updated to summarize comments received. The City Planning Department will then make a presentation of the Plan to the Common Council to ensure Common Council buy-in and incorporate any necessary changes before adoption and designation.

Additional Outreach Strategies

City Website

Information on the planning process will be posted on the City's website (<https://rensselaer.ny.gov/>) and on the planning department's website (<https://www.rensselaerplanning.com>). The websites will help to:

- Share content with the public (i.e., project scope, maps, concepts and plans, pictures, links, etc.);
- Public outreach (i.e., public workshop announcements, self-guided site tours, etc.); and
- Obtain public input (each post/page will include information on how to provide comments)

Print and Digital Media

Information related to the planning process will be published in the local print media, such as the Times Union and the Troy Record, and in the Rensselaer City Newsletter. In addition, notices of all public meetings will be published in the local print media and Newsletter, including information on the time and location of all meetings, resources for obtaining additional information on the Rensselaer BOA plan, and methods for providing comments/input. Efforts will be made to obtain earned media through press release submission and/or stories by local reporters. Information will also be shared digitally and disseminated through appropriate social media channels.

Postings/Flyers

Posters and flyers will be prepared to advertise all public events and surveys. The flyers will also include QR codes for the public to provide input on the Rensselaer BOA plan, if unable to attend the public meetings.

Engaging with Local Organizations

Rensselaer is home to several local organizations that will be integral to the public engagement plan.

- **Rensselaer Public Library:** The library will be an integral part of the public outreach. Hard copies of all project-related materials will be available at the Rensselaer Public Library to encourage public outreach. The Committee will work with the library staff to provide a permanent display board with regular project updates.
- **Rensselaer Central School:** The Committee will work with the school to distribute hard copies of all project-related materials. Schools will be encouraged to publicize events during announcements and to include information about events in school calendars, newsletters, etc. that are shared with students and parents whenever possible.
- **Community Based Organizations:** The Committee will reach out to local organizations such as Circles of Mercy, St Paul's Center, Concerns-U, and the Boys and Girls Club to present project updates.

Rensselaer BOA
Committee Meeting summary
Project Number: 2231805

Location: Rensselaer City Hall
Date: November 28, 2023
Time: 11:00 AM

	Name	Organization/Role
Attendees:	Tom Hulihan	City of Rensselaer
	Amy Lolik	City of Rensselaer
	Joseph Kardash	Rensselaer Central School
	Madeline Rizzo	Rensselaer IDA
	Penelope Vavura	Port of Albany
	Megan Daly	Port of Albany-Rensselaer
	Richard Zazycki	Circles of Mercy
	Maggie Zmuda	Resident
	Justin Ko	Business Owner
	Matt Smith	NYS DOS
	Norabelle Greenberger	LaBella Associates
	Mirren Galway	LaBella Associates

Meeting Summary:

Background:

- Attendees introduced themselves.
- LaBella provided a refresher on the BOA project.
 - Previous iterations of the BOA plan made recommendations that were seen as too lofty, so the intention of this project will be to establish a new set of recommendations that are realistic and align with the goals of the City.
 - LaBella reviewed the benefits of a BOA designation, including prioritization for State funding and projects.

BOA Boundaries:

- LaBella reviewed the results of the first committee meeting and walking tour, noting that the previous iterations of the study area boundaries were larger and were since narrowed down during the walking tour to a more centralized area.
 - The Port of Albany was in the previous version of the study area but was removed due to its significant difference in development needs from the rest

of the study area. It was suggested that the Port could be a part of a future BOA, and that the final study area boundaries remain flexible pending input from the committee.

- The Port of Albany's relationship to the BOA project was discussed because of its proximity to the study area.
 - The Port boundaries have expanded north, and they are pursuing development options on the newly acquired land, including offshore wind or supply chain manufacturing.
 - The Port hopes to ensure that any projects done at the Port are complementary to the work being done in the City.
 - The committee discussed the importance of knowing what is going on at the Port as context for what that development can contribute to the study area in terms of access to new jobs and overall development.
 - It was also explained that while development on land just outside of the BOA cannot technically be considered within the BOA boundaries, benefits can always be felt in a larger area when development occurs.
 - The Port is located near the Fort Crailo neighborhood, and there could be increased truck traffic on roads in that neighborhood if the Port were to expand. Maggie, a resident of the neighborhood, confirmed that traffic seems to be a concern of the area.
 - A question on traffic in the Fort Crailo neighborhood could be considered during public outreach in this process.

Timeline:

LaBella explained that the BOA process from start to finish typically takes about a year. While we are able to pull from previous iterations of the BOA study, because so much time has passed and the study area has changed, it will be important to start fresh with the direction of the project and the goals of the community.

Inventory and Analysis:

- A draft inventory and analysis was presented to the committee for feedback and discussion.
 - Key takeaways from each section were reviewed including demographics, housing, transportation, open space, historic buildings, infrastructure, and flood zones.

Demographics:

- Housing burden has generally decreased over time for residents in the City. Theories on why this may be were discussed including the impact of new employment at Regeneron, apartments at Delaet's landing, lower property taxes than surrounding areas, and potential Covid impacts.
- It was noted that while this may be true for the average resident, at Circles of Mercy they have people coming in who are still struggling with the cost of living.

Transportation:

- The committee had a conversation about the need for pedestrian and biking infrastructure to better connect locations within the City, as well as better connecting to Albany and other surrounding areas.
- The planned pedestrian route over the new Livingston Avenue rail bridge was also mentioned as an opportunity to get people over the river to the City from Albany.

Historic Buildings:

- During the inventory and analysis review, committee members discussed Rensselaer's existing strengths like its historic buildings and historic Fort Crailo neighborhood.
- It was said that while the Fort Crailo neighborhood is historic and has a lot of strengths, there are not currently a ton of opportunities in the neighborhood to purchase, live, or play, so they often get overlooked.

Land Ownership:

- The significant amount of private ownership in the study area was discussed as both a strength and a limitation.
- While limiting in terms of the City's ability to direct development, it may also be an opportunity for the City to leverage its tax base, as opposed to a City like Albany that is more limited by the influence publicly owned buildings and land have on their property tax base.

Parks and Waterfront Access

- The City received a CDBG park grant through the CARES act to enhance four of its parks, including the riverfront park in the study area.
- The committee discussed some of the inherent advantages of the City of Rensselaer including how compact it is, its potential to connect via bike trails, and the skyline view of Albany.
- Some initial suggestions also included a bike rental location by the train station, wayfinding signs, working with CDPHP, and others.
- Committee members agreed that it will be important to be thoughtful about pulling together the City's existing resources as well as developing new ones.
- The committee mentioned several new proposed projects along the waterfront including Fort Crailo's plan to have historic boats leaving for tours from the Crailo Site.
- There is also a boat launch north of the study area that will be connected to the new Livingston Avenue bridge trail.
- Unfortunately, there are only a few public access points to the waterfront so this may be a topic to consider going forwards.
- The City is also going to soon have the bow of the USS Albany across the river from the USS Slater for people to visit in Rensselaer.
- It was said that there are lots of exciting new initiatives in the area and that this BOA project will be a good way to bring all of them together.

Grocery:

- In discussing existing conditions in the City, the committee discussed the closure of Aldi. The committee said that with its closure the City of Rensselaer does not have access a fresh grocery store within City limits.
- This has caused a big issue for residents who relied on its accessibility for groceries. Madeline said that the IDA is working to get a new grocery store into the area but is struggling to do so.

Floodplains:

- It was also noted that about 85 percent of the Study Area is in a flood plain which is a significant constraint of development for the City.

Strategic Sites:

Following the inventory and analysis overview, the committee discussed potential strategic sites that could act as targets within the study area for development. Some areas suggested included:

- The Zappala Block area
- Both gateway areas into the City as people enter from the highway
- The land surrounding the Amtrak station
- The area around the former Aldi lot

The committee noted that Rensselaer has an opportunity to capitalize on State and office employees on their lunch breaks in need of convenience items, gas, etc., who may not have access to those things in downtown Albany or elsewhere.

A few other projects were mentioned to keep an eye on throughout this process, including vacant spaces in the First Alley plaza area, a vacant green space near City Hall that is to become apartments, a potential bakery/coffee shop, 2 Green Street (a historic building that will soon be converted to apartments), and DOT's current discussion of rethinking the Menands Bridge. These potential development areas, and others, will be further discussed and assessed as potential strategic sites for the BOA plan.

Public Engagement:

- The committee discussed the draft public engagement plan.
 - The first public event will be planned for this winter along with a press release kick-off to launch the project.
 - There will also be a public survey that goes out around the same time.
 - The committee was encouraged to provide input on how to maximize engagement in the project. Suggestions included:
 - Reaching out to ward leaders of the study area
 - Utilizing the planning department's website
 - Engaging the student population

- It was also decided that outreach materials should be translated into Spanish and Burmese to optimize engagement with all communities.
 - For Burmese translation, the committee suggested engaging a student leader to help translate materials and be involved throughout the process. This could be in the form of volunteer or internship hours.
 - Going forward, the committee will likely meet once every two months in addition to public events.

ITEM	ACTION ITEM	OWNER
1	Provide feedback on draft Inventory and Analysis and Public Engagement Plan	Committee
2	Draft Press Release and Public Survey to circulate	LaBella
3	Provide updated Inventory and Analysis with brownfield, abandoned, underutilized and vacant sites analysis and Market Analysis	LaBella
4	Brainstorm and send contact information for stakeholders who should be contacted throughout this process.	Committee
5	Circulate notes from first committee meeting/walking tour	LaBella
6	Develop plan for Burmese translation of materials	Tom, Amy and Joseph

Rensselaer Rising
Committee Meeting #3 summary
Project Number: 2231805

Location: Rensselaer City Hall
Date: January 29th
Time: 3:00 PM

	Name	Organization/Role
Attendees:	Michael Stammel	City of Rensselaer, Mayor
	Tom Hulihan	City of Rensselaer, Director Planning and Development
	Amy Lolik	City of Rensselaer, Assistant Planning Director
	Lydia Kyaw	City of Rensselaer, Student Intern
	Fred Weakley	Planning Commission Member
	Joseph Kardash	Rensselaer Central School
	Madeline Rizzo	Rensselaer IDA
	Penelope Vavura	Port of Albany
	Richard Zazycki	Circles of Mercy
	Maggie Zmuda	Resident
	Justin Ko	Business Owner
	Matt Smith	NYSDOS
	Norabelle Greenberger	LaBella Associates
	Mirren Galway	LaBella Associates

Meeting Summary:

Review Updated Inventory and Analysis:

- Attendees introduced themselves.
- LaBella provided an overview of the updated inventory and analysis which now includes a Market Analysis and an analysis of any potential Brownfield, Underutilized, Abandoned or Vacant (BAUV) properties within the study area.
- A committee member asked about the 10% projected increase in employment and whether there was a sector that was expected to impact. LaBella noted that the NYSDOL data does not include this breakdown.

Review Preliminary Survey Results

- LaBella provided a summary of the results of the survey so far which has received 173 responses. Major themes identified by the public in preliminary results included:
 - More small businesses, restaurants, and grocery stores within the community.
 - More development along the waterfront and increased access to the river.

- New community programming and entertainment for youth, families, and seniors.
 - Love the small-town feel and sense of community in the City.
 - Hope of a long-term vision of development in the City and along the waterfront.
- The committee noted that the number of survey responses was in line with response rates from previous surveys, but decided to keep the survey open beyond the end of January to pursue more targeted outreach to business owners and others by:
 - Distributing survey flyers to businesses.
 - Connecting with the school district PTA group.
 - Reaching out to the Chamber of Commerce to distribute the survey to their membership.
- The committee asked if there were any questions on the survey about the timeline of when respondents expect implementation of the ideas/development they're hoping to see in the City.
 - While there was no specific question about the timeline of implementation, as a part of the BOA plan, recommendations for future projects can be broken up into short term, medium term, and long-term visioning goals to encourage development in both a realistic and productive way.
 - It was noted that this may be a good strategy for the BOA Study as previous iterations were deemed too lofty in terms of project goals by the Department of State when reviewed.

Stakeholder Outreach Matrix:

- LaBella presented the proposed stakeholder outreach method for the visioning stage of the project.
 - The Committee recommended that the Rensselaer IDA be contacted for a one-on-one interview because of their experiences in the community.
 - It was noted that there is a scheduled stakeholder meeting with Amtrak forthcoming.
 - Outreach to stakeholders for focus group meetings will begin soon.

Discuss Project Name:

- Tom introduced the new name of the project as "Rensselaer Rising", which pulls from a previous successful BOA project completed in Wyandanch, New York.

Workshop Planning:

- The Committee began discussing the first public workshop for Rensselaer Rising
 - Options for location were identified as the school, or the Boys and Girls Club
 - Potential dates were identified for late February and Early March
 - The format of the meeting will be a brief presentation on the work done for the project so far, followed by an open-house style component to gather feedback and public input on the project.

Next Steps:

- Next steps for Rensselaer Rising will include targeted outreach for the survey, beginning stakeholder outreach, and preparing for the project's first public workshop.

ITEM	ACTION ITEM	OWNER
1	Upload Inventory and Analysis to project website	Tom & Amy
2	Targeted survey outreach via distribution of survey flyer, contacting the PTA, and continued outreach to Committee Member networks	Tom & Amy / Committee
3	Contact School District for use of facilities for Public Workshop	Tom & Amy
4	Provide any feedback on inventory and analysis and stakeholder matrix	Committee
5	Begin outreach for stakeholder meetings and focus group meetings	LaBella
6	Begin preparing Public Workshop Materials	LaBella

Rensselaer Rising Committee Meeting #4 summary

Project Number: 2231805

Location: Rensselaer City Hall
Date: April 25th
Time: 4:00 PM

	Name	Organization/Role
Attendees:	Michael Stammel	City of Rensselaer, Mayor
	Tom Hulihan	City of Rensselaer, Director Planning and Development
	Amy Lolik	City of Rensselaer, Assistant Planning Director
	Joseph Kardash	Rensselaer Central School
	Madeline Rizzo	Rensselaer IDA
	Maggie Zmuda	Resident
	Justin Ko	Business Owner
	Matt Smith	NYSDOS
	Norabelle Greenberger	LaBella Associates
	Mirren Galway	LaBella Associates
	Mary Moore Wallinger	LAndArt Studio

Meeting Summary:

Public Outreach Updates

- LaBella and the City provided a brief update on progress made since the last committee meeting, including closing the public survey, conducting the first public meeting, conducting stakeholder outreach and calls, and setting a date to speak with OCFS staff at the Rensselaer office location.
- The City also noted that they are meeting with developers and property owners to hear more about planned development in the City, including sites for new apartments, a mattress store and ice cream stand, and a hotel by the Amtrak station.
- The group also discussed some gaps in public outreach so far and what groups need to be targeted for further outreach. These groups included the City's Burmese population, smaller property owners, and business owners.
 - Mayor Stammel provided a contact that can help with outreach to the Burmese community.

Identify Strategic Sites

- The committee identified several strategic sites to focus on in the study area. The sites are spread throughout the community but cluster around major roads that run through the study area, including along Broadway, Columbia Turnpike, and the waterfront.

- A map is attached identifying the key sites identified by committee.
- In addition to individual properties, the committee also identified key areas and ideas that should be prioritized, these included:
 - Improving the intersection of Broadway and the Columbia Turnpike:
 - This intersection currently separates the Historic Fort Crailo neighborhood from the rest of the downtown area.
 - It was noted that while there is a crosswalk across the intersection, it is not very pedestrian friendly due to the width of the street and speed of cars.
 - Alternatives were discussed to make it both pedestrian friendly and inviting for cars to enter the downtown area.
 - Discussions of major roadways/entrances into the City will have to consider the implications of potential future changes to the Dunn Memorial Bridge and 787, which could impact how traffic enters Rensselaer.
 - Streetscaping along Columbia Turnpike to make the businesses there more inviting.
 - Improving pedestrian connections along Broadway.
 - Adding identifying features to the historic Crailo neighborhood to improve historic connections throughout the City.
 - Bringing more community events and economic development to Rensselaer by leveraging the existing farmers market, inviting more food trucks, and connecting these small businesses with vacant storefronts to grow their businesses.

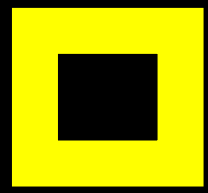
Develop Project Vision and Goals

- Finally, the committee discussed visions and goals for the Rensselaer Rising project based on the public input gathered so far, the above discussion, and past iterations of the BOA vision and goals. The major goals identified so far included:
 - Enhancing the downtown of Rensselaer:
 - Bringing in more business,
 - Having more community events,
 - Promoting walkability,
 - Having convenient parking for visitors to the downtown, while also ensuring it is implemented in a visually appealing way.
 - Improving the overall aesthetics of the City, including streetscaping and general beautification.
 - Prioritizing branding, marketing, and celebrating existing assets of Rensselaer.
 - Ensuring quality access to community services, especially fresh food and groceries.
 - Promoting more community events and programming.
 - Leveraging access to the Amtrak Train Station in Rensselaer to bring visitors into the City.
 - Encouraging homeownership and affordable housing.
- Overall, the committee spoke to the importance of highlighting what makes Rensselaer unique. With one of the busiest Amtrak stations in the Country, access to

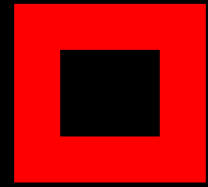
the Hudson Riverfront, and access to all major routes to get in and out of the City to other locations, committee members agreed that Rensselaer is a compact community with great potential which should be highlighted in this project.

ITEM	ACTION ITEM	OWNER
1	Develop new draft vision and goals	LaBella
2	Continued targeted outreach to property owners and specific populations	Tom & Amy / LaBella

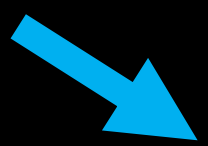
Legend for meeting takeaways



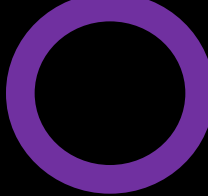
= Potential Strategic Sites



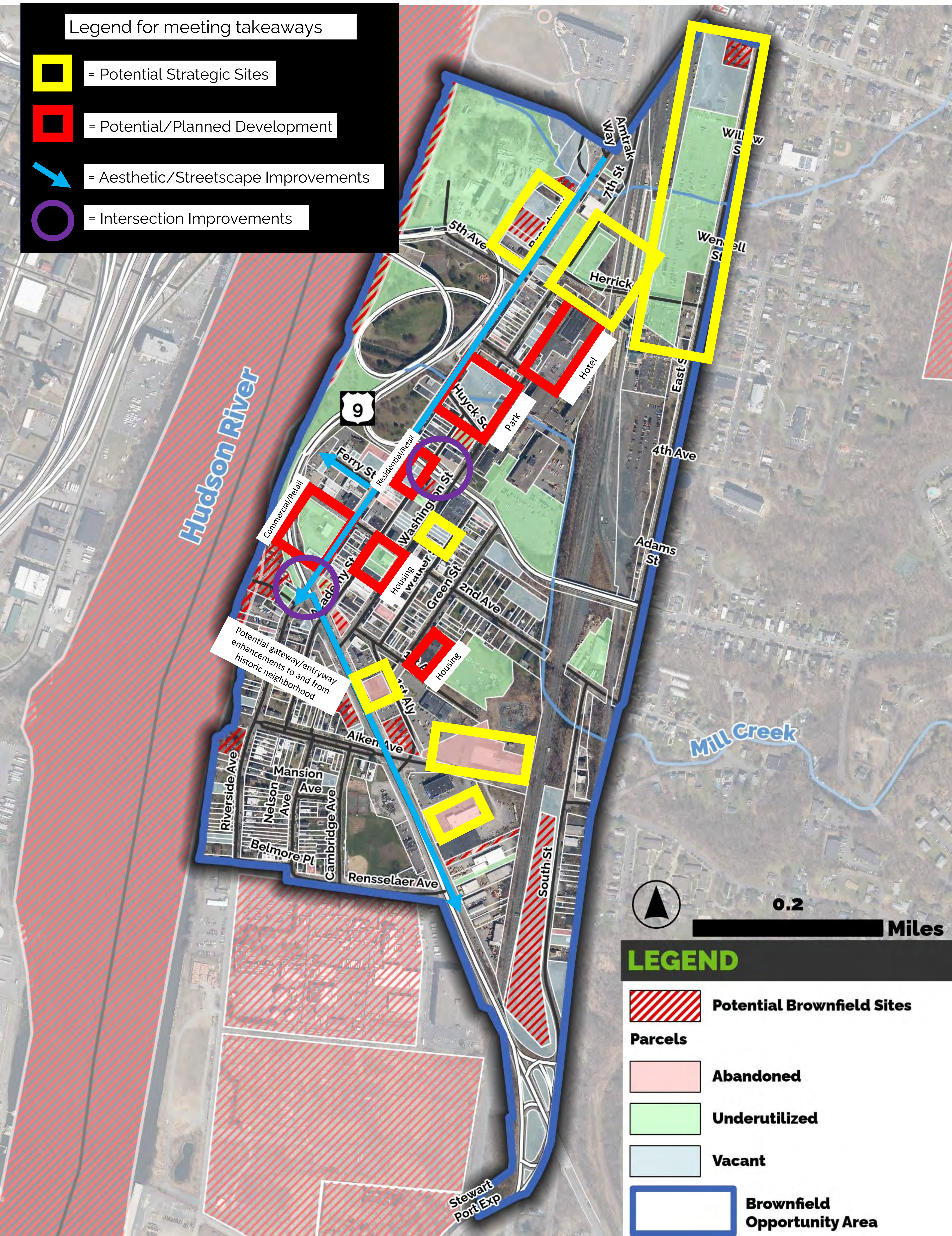
= Potential/Planned Development



= Aesthetic/Streetscape Improvements



= Intersection Improvements



0.2

Miles

LEGEND



Potential Brownfield Sites

Parcels



Abandoned



Underutilized



Vacant



Brownfield Opportunity Area

Rensselaer Rising
Committee Meeting #5 summary
Project Number: 2231805

Location: Rensselaer City Hall
Date: September 5th
Time: 10:00 AM

	Name	Organization/Role
Attendees:	Tom Hulihan	City of Rensselaer, Director Planning and Development
	Amy Lolik	City of Rensselaer, Assistant Planning Director
	Joseph Kardash	Rensselaer Central School
	Madeline Rizzo	Rensselaer IDA
	Justin Ko	Business Owner
	Matt Smith	NYSDOS
	Norabelle Greenberger	LaBella Associates
	Mirren Galway	LaBella Associates
	Mary Moore Wallinger	LAndArt Studio

Meeting Summary:

Public Outreach Updates

- LaBella and the City provided a brief update on progress made since the last committee meeting, including results of the OCFS staff survey and event, focus group meetings with local transit providers, community organizations, business owners, property owners and developers, and attendance at the Rensselaer night out.
 - It was noted that there are about 500 staff at the Rensselaer OCFS office which is a significant population for the City to capitalize on during the week
- Feedback gathered from events, conversations with stakeholders, and committee meetings was used to inform a draft vision, goals, and recommendations for the plan.

Review Draft Vision Goals and Recommendations

- LaBella reviewed the draft vision, goals, and recommendations with the Committee for feedback on whether it captures the needs within the study area.
 - Overall, the committee felt the recommendations covered the many topics brought up throughout the process.
- The committee feels that the Hudson River waterfront and park provides great opportunity for the community through general access to the waterfront, community events, and spurring economic development downtown. There is interest from the committee in ensuring that future plans consider leveraging the waterfront through walkways along the water, concerts, pop-up areas, artwork, and creatively using the

ramps over the park that currently provide shelter from rain and poor weather for community events.

Review Draft Concept Plans

- The group reviewed the draft concept plans prepared based on stakeholder outreach, conversations with the committee, and previous iterations of the BOA study.
- The committee agreed that the draft achieves the vision and goals of the plan.
- One recommendation for the concept plan was to further develop ideas surrounding waterfront park including:
 - Adding an amphitheater to the visual due to the park's potential for a covered area for live music
 - Encouraging the farmers market, food trucks, and more permanent vendors to locate further in a visible area of the park that would draw more people in and encourage them to walk around the downtown area.
- Another idea to add to the concept plan identified in the meeting was to add a physical location for a day care near the existing boys and girls club utilizing the largely underutilized parking lot next to the club.
- The group also discussed the future impacts of potential changes to 787 and the Dunn Memorial bridge. One of the potential alternatives being considered by NYS would move the ramp south of downtown Rensselaer and open the Riverfront park.
 - A concept plan has been developed for the BOA plan that takes this alternative into consideration
 - It was noted by the committee that there are pros and cons to all alternatives being considered for 787 as it relates to Rensselaer, including this alternative.
 - There was concern raised by the Committee that removal of the offramp could take away through travel that currently enters Rensselaer via the ramp, especially those traveling to the train station.
 - It was also noted however, that the riverfront park would have complete views of the waterfront with no roadways interrupting it, and resulting improvements to the park and local downtown could help establish Rensselaer as a destination that people travel to.
 - Considerations will have to be made in the planning for this area to take into account any potential changes to the roadway. This is why the concept plan for the BOA plan will have short-term, medium-term, and long-term plans and recommendations for the area.

Public Outreach

- The group discussed methods of public engagement for the final phase of the project to gather feedback on the plan's draft vision, goals, recommendations and concept plan. The committee recommended engaging people at existing local events, like the farmers market, the school's trunk or treat, and including information about the project in the City newsletter.

- The committee also recommended connecting with the library to share materials at their location, or to host an event there to engage the public, and to have a display of information at City Hall.
- Another recommendation of the committee was to have a web-based presentation of the information, either through recording or video of the draft plan and recommendations.

Next Steps

ITEM	ACTION ITEM	OWNER
1	Finalize draft recommendations	LaBella
2	Continue targeted outreach through pop-up events and creative presentations of the materials.	LaBella/Tom & Amy

Rensselaer Rising
Committee Meeting #6 summary
Project Number: 2231805

Location: Rensselaer City Hall
Date: November 18th
Time: 10:30 AM

	Name	Organization/Role
Attendees:	Tom Hulihan	City of Rensselaer, Director Planning and Development
	Amy Lolik	City of Rensselaer, Assistant Planning Director
	Joseph Kardash	Rensselaer Central School
	Madeline Rizzo	Rensselaer IDA
	Justin Ko	Business Owner
	Victor Batorsky	City of Rensselaer Historian
	Matt Smith	NYSDOS
	Norabelle Greenberger	LaBella Associates
	Mirren Galway	LaBella Associates
	Mary Moore Wallinger	LAndArt Studio

Meeting Summary:

Public Outreach Updates

- LaBella and the City provided a brief update on progress made since the last committee meeting, including attendance at the riverfront park farmers market, an event at the local library to review recommendations and the draft concept plan, and participation in a White Cane Awareness Day event held in the City.

Review Master Plan Updates and Draft Concepts

- The consultant team presented updates to the full area plan and introduced some concepts that were further developed based on the overall area plan. These included improvements to the waterfront park, streetscape and gateway enhancements, and a draft concept for a new mixed-use development prioritizing a grocery store located on top of an Amtrak/CDTA parking site, which also maintains parking.
- The committee provided feedback on the concepts. Feedback was positive and there was general agreement that these concepts support the goals and recommendations agreed to for the plan.
- There was a recommendation to make sure that a playground at Hudson riverfront park is shown in the long-term concept plan because although there are a lot of unknowns with the future of the Dunn Memorial, the recent improvements to the Hudson Riverfront Park playground are extremely popular among the residents, and

a playground would need to be maintained in some capacity in any long-term planning and should be shown that way.

- There was also a discussion around adding bike lanes to the developed concept for gateway enhancements along Broadway near DeLaet's Landing. While including cyclist infrastructure is important for planning in the City, it was determined that lengthier discussions will need to be held to determine what those will look like. Infrastructure will need to be able to support connections throughout the City, and not be a disjointed network, and considerations of road width and pedestrian infrastructure will also need to be taken into account.
- It was also noted that there are several amenities needed in the City in addition to a grocery store, including a bank. While the concept plans likely won't call out every necessary use within the City, several recommendations in the concept plan include recommendations for mixed-use buildings that could accommodate several types of businesses, services, and amenities for residents, including a bank.

Identify Priority Recommendations

In addition to reviewing draft concept plans, the committee also discussed the recommendations of the plan. Recent public engagement was focused on gathering feedback from residents on which of the plan's recommendations should be the highest priority for the City. Using this feedback and discussion during the meeting, the Committee determined some top priorities for the implementation section of the plan to develop in more detail. Some of these recommendations included revitalizing vacant and underutilized building, addressing the need for a grocery store, and branding for the downtown and City as a whole. The committee would also like to see a more developed concept plan for the old City Hall site that is called out as a strategic site in the plan. The group also discussed the importance of highlighting and recognizing the City's history in any new branding or marketing work.

Final Public Workshop

The group determined that there would be a final workshop for the plan following completion of the draft plan. This will likely be held in a convenient location like the Boys & Girls Club, or the Court Room in City Hall. The Committee will meet again following that workshop to review public feedback and work towards finalizing the BOA plan.

Next Steps

ITEM	ACTION ITEM	OWNER
1	Finalize draft plan	LaBella
2	Revise Concept Plan and Develop Final Concepts for Strategic Sites	LaBella/LandArt
3	Review draft recommendations and provide feedback	Committee



MEETING SUMMARY

Rensselaer Rising Public Workshop #1

Thursday, March 7, 2024

6:00 PM – 7:30 PM

Rensselaer City School

The first Rensselaer Rising Public Workshop was held on Thursday March 7, 2024, from 6-7:30 PM at the Rensselaer City School. The workshop was open to the public and was attended by 14 members of the community and Rensselaer Rising committee members.

The purpose of the meeting was to provide an overview of the Rensselaer Rising project so far, review preliminary findings, summarize public survey results, and get public feedback on visioning and goals for the project and study area. Following the project overview, attendees were provided with post-it notes, pens, and six interactive stations to gather feedback on a community vision for the project. Each station included questions to guide conversation, and members of the community were free to visit each one to discuss their ideas for specific topics.

The first station included some general visioning questions for participants, and the other five stations each corresponded with major topic areas of the project, including economic development, waterfront access and open spaces, community services, housing, and transportation. The following is a summary of the public feedback from the event organized by station and question.

Station 1 – Overall Visioning

- **Describe your vision for the City of Rensselaer in one word:**
 - Responses included visions of a revitalized, historic, clean, revamped, and redeveloped area, with an identifiable downtown core.
- **What strengths does the City of Rensselaer have?**
 - Participants identified several strengths of the City, including its potential to start fresh, riverfront access, proximity to transportation hubs and other communities, affordability, especially relative to neighboring areas, natural resources, its people, history, and its small size.
- **How do you envision the City 5-10 years from now?**
 - Participants highlighted their hopes of seeing new opportunities and progress for the community, more access to the waterfront, new business and industry, and for the City to become an interconnected, diverse, hub in the region.
- **Is there anything else you want to add? Including outside of the study area.**
 - Other general recommendations included more parking for residents and businesses, prioritizing industries and businesses that will not pollute, improving boating access to the Hudson through a boat launch at the riverfront park, and addressing concerns surrounding the Dunn Landfill.



Station 2 – Economic Development

- **What types of businesses and amenities would you like to see in the study area? Where should they be located?**
 - Suggestions included adding more amenities in walking distance of the train station for visitors to access, a grocery store for residents, a barge restaurant or waterfront restaurant, banks or a credit union, a tourist trolley that uses existing and underutilized railways, and a cluster of bars, restaurants, and nightlife to allow people to walk between multiple locations.
- **How can we attract these types of businesses?**
 - Several suggestions within the study area were discussed for attracting businesses and amenities to the City, these included:
 - Focusing on attraction of the arts and music,
 - Creating an event space for all ages and a gymnasium for youth and adult sports and events,
 - Utilizing the waterfront park space more frequently for events like 5K races, food trucks etc., and considering more specialized and holiday/seasonal community events,
 - Considering the creation of a BID and use of PILOTs and other tax incentives,
 - Addressing the misuse of commercial storefronts, improving clarity of what existing businesses are in the storefronts,
 - Considering modernized systems for business owners to interface and connect with the City, and for residents to engage in community events,
 - Prioritizing sustainable energy conscious development,
 - Communicating with the CDTA and Amtrak to have signage within the Train Station directing visitors to local amenities, and
 - Centralizing development to create 'hubs' that are logical for residents and visitors who are traveling through, stopping on their way home from work, walking, or biking.

Station 3 – Open Spaces

- **What would you like to see along the waterfront?**
 - Ideas for the waterfront included a canoe and kayak launch, as well as swimming access near the riverfront park, restaurants along the water, more access to groceries, and one participant suggested to add more native plantings to support the habitats of local species (not only along the waterfront but in the community as a whole).
- **What is the greatest restraint of development along the waterfront?**
 - Participants identified restraints of development along the waterfront, including private property ownership of waterfront parcels, extensive railroad tracks and infrastructure, and limited access to the actual river due to fences and other private properties. Participants also noted that there are several pedestrian and cyclist safety concerns that limit accessibility to the



waterfront, like proper lighting at night, high traffic speeds, and a general lack of infrastructure for walking and biking.

- **Which open spaces in the community do you use the most, and where would you like to see more?**
 - Large parking lots in the study area were identified as potential areas for more community open spaces, and the riverfront park was identified as the most frequented green space in the community.
- **How can we better connect green spaces in the community?**
 - Participants recommended bike lanes, bike racks, bikeable paths, and walkable routes throughout the community to encourage connections between existing green spaces. It was also recommended to connect with and expand the Albany-Hudson Electric Trail.
 - One suggestion to improve the connectivity of green spaces in the City was to have a unified 'branding' approach for parks by having all facilities have the same types and styles of signage, benches, facilities, etc.
 - Other recommendations included maps indicating where green spaces and trails are, working with the County to free up land currently owned by RPI, improving ADA accessibility, community gardens, more street trees, planters, and vegetation throughout the City, and addressing vacant, underutilized, and abandoned properties.

Station 4 – Community Services

- **What types of programs are needed for youth, adults, and seniors?**
 - Participants noted that the City should first highlight and expand its existing programming, like at the Boys and Girls Club, local museums, and parks.
 - New recommendations included:
 - Outdoor gym/recreational activities for all ages,
 - Indoor gym,
 - Disc golf course,
 - A kayak launch,
 - A community center/public meeting space with programming,
 - A community empowerment project,
 - Historic lectures about the City,
 - A dance hall, and
 - Fishing regulation classes.
- **What types of events would you like to see, and where should they be held?**
 - Recommendations included:
 - Events along the riverfront or at the riverfront park, including food trucks, a large annual summer event like the Troy Stoll, vendors, music, and fall festivals,
 - Art and mural tours,
 - Shows/nightlife along Broadway,
 - Public problem-solving conversations, and
 - Fishing.



Station 5 - Housing

Discussion on housing focused on the potential of redevelopment at Zappala Block, and the need for less absentee landlords in the community; one participant suggested more one-family homes in the City. Other recommendations included promoting mixed-use buildings and repurposing existing buildings for housing.

Station 6 – Transportation

Participants were asked to mark up a map of the study area with their recommendations related to transportation and a downtown business district.

- A potential location for a downtown business district was identified surrounding the current NYS OCFS building, the southern end of Broadway, Washington Street, and including Walker Street and part of the Columbia Turnpike.
- It was noted that employees of OCFS tend to walk on their lunch break to the Stewart's that is in the northeast corner of the study area. Making a clearer walking path in that area was suggested and could be helpful for people already walking.
- A participant noted that there are currently no bus stops north of City Hall, which may be worth considering for expansion.
- Participants also identified the potential for some bike paths throughout the study area.



RENSSELAER RISING

OCFS Offices Survey

Introduction

In June 2024, as a part of the Rensselaer Rising planning process, employees of the Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) participated in a survey to gain insights on their experience working within the City. During the lunch hour from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. staff were asked to complete the survey and provide feedback on how they commute to the office, what areas of Rensselaer they frequent, improvements that could be made to the area, and whether they eat out for lunch during the day.

78 responses were collected, and the analysis below is intended to summarize the variety of perspectives seen within the office.

OCFS Staff Office Time

Of the respondents working in the office, the survey results indicate that most employees spend either three or five days a week in the Rensselaer office.

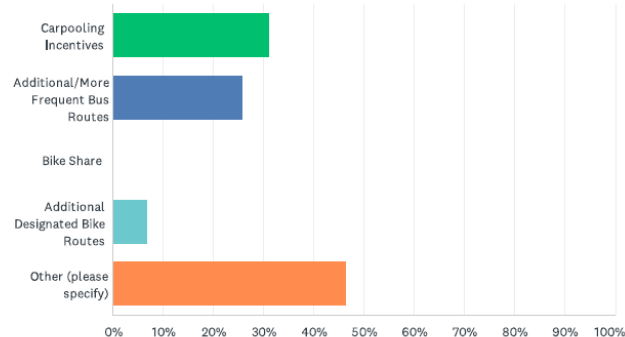
Number of Days Staff Spend in the Rensselaer Office Per Week	
Days spent in office	Percentage of respondents
0	0%
1	0%
2	1%
3	47%
4	6%
5	46%

Staff Commuting Patterns

In the next three questions, respondents were asked about their commute to the office. First, they were asked how they travel to work. The vast majority, 92 percent, of employees drive to work, with just four percent either walking, carpooling, or taking public transportation, and four percent getting dropped off or using a combination of ways they get to work. convenience of driving over alternative transportation methods. Others noted the lack of convenient public transportation routes available near them.

Q5 If you commute by car, what would make it easier to travel to work by other means?

Answered: 58 Skipped: 18

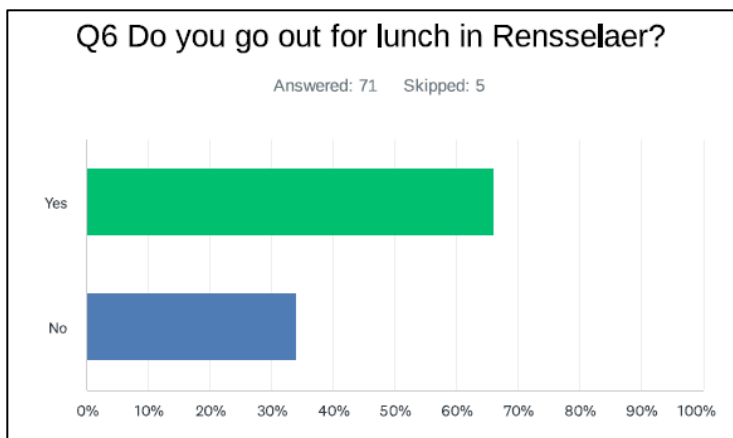


Next, employees were asked in an open response format why they travel by car to work if they chose that option. Most responses mentioned the distance between home and work and how it is currently unrealistic for them to get to work any other way. Many others discussed the

Finally, respondents were asked about what would make it easier to travel to work by other means. For this question, employees could choose more than one response. Of the responses, 31 percent of employees said carpooling incentives would be helpful, 26 percent answered additional and more frequent bus routes, seven percent said additional designated bike routes, and notably, 47 percent responded that none of the options would convince them not to drive.

Lunch-Time Dining Options in Rensselaer

Staff were also asked whether they go out for lunch. 66 percent said that they do go out for lunch in Rensselaer during the workday. Respondents then indicated a variety of dining options in the nearby area from chain food services to local businesses. Commonly mentioned locations included Dunkin, Son of Egg, Skyline Diner and Thai Orchid. Followed by several other smaller businesses including Cuginos, Illusive, Omars small market, local delis, and the occasional food truck.

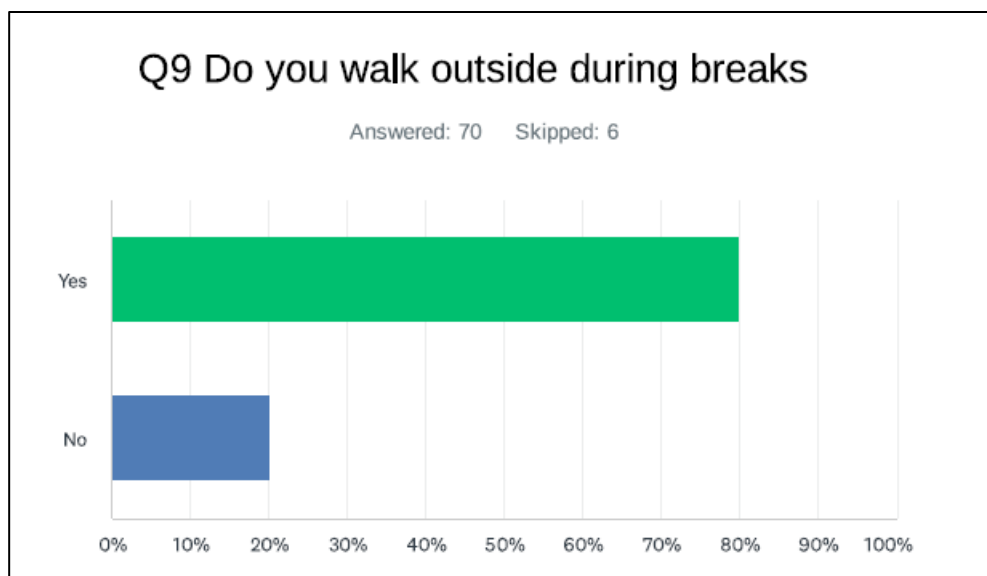
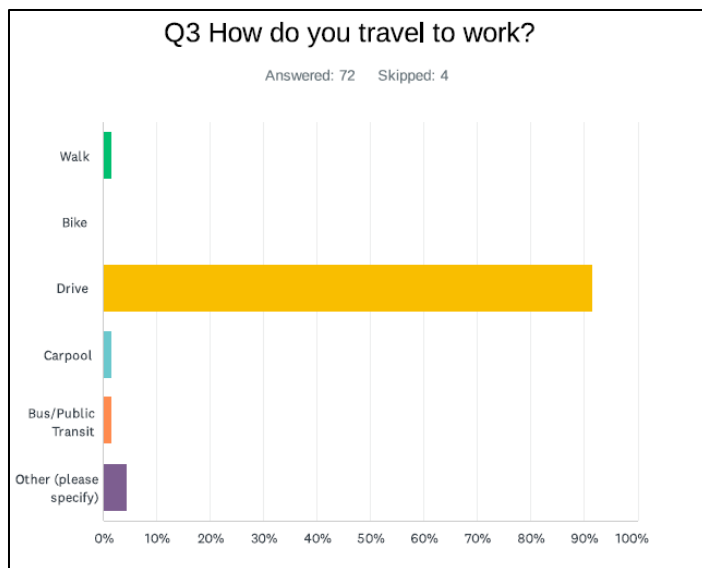


Finally, respondents were asked about what could improve regarding their experience of going out for lunch in Rensselaer. Of the options given, 25 percent were seeking more lunch options to choose from, 18 percent were searching for affordability, and 22 percent said that they want more walkable lunch options.

Walkability of Rensselaer

80 percent of respondents said they walk outside while 20 percent said they do not.

Most respondents noted that they stay close to the office while walking on break. Many

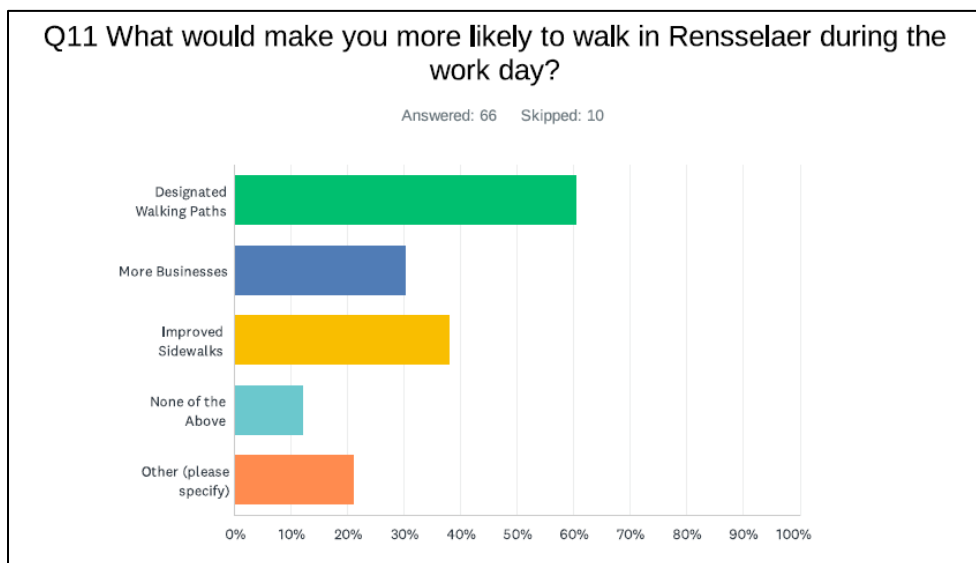


others reported that they walk by the river or around the train station. A few others mentioned that they walk quite a distance away, or to different parks in the area.

Lastly, employees were asked about what would make them more likely to walk in Rensselaer during the workday. Respondents could choose more than one response for this question. 61 percent would like more designated walking paths, 30 percent said more businesses, 38 percent chose improved sidewalks, 21 percent added other suggestions like better green spaces, and safer walking paths. 12 percent chose none of the above.

Other Frequented Businesses

For this question set, respondents were asked if they commonly visit other businesses in Rensselaer. Of 69 responses, 25 percent said that they do frequently visit Rensselaer businesses.



In an open response format, many respondents indicated that they often utilize local services like the post office, banks outside of the City, barbershops/hair salons, gas stations, and the train station. Others prefer to utilize close shopping centers with stores like Target, Walmart, Walgreens, Home Depot and Dollar Tree.

What more would you like to see in Rensselaer?

For this question, respondents were asked about what they would like to see more of in Rensselaer. Respondents could choose more than one response for this question. 73 percent of employees would like to see more restaurants, 62 percent would like to see more shops, 13 percent would like more convenience stores and gas stations, 60 percent would like more parks and open space, and 20 percent of employees listed other things like cafes, food trucks, more entertainment, and nicer outdoor seating.

Other questions and comments?

This question allowed for respondents to openly respond and voice any other concerns or opinions regarding Rensselaer and the surrounding community. 23 of the respondents took advantage of this field with various comments and concerns. A few common points of emphasis were improved walkability and safer pedestrian environments, historical highlights and landmarks being pinpointed to better understand the storied background of Rensselaer, and more greenspaces and walking trails to promote safe time spent outside. Less spoken about but still important suggestions were possible sound barriers by the train tracks, accessible free parking, and more convenient bus schedules.



This document was prepared with funding provided by the New York State Department of State under the Brownfield Opportunity Areas Program

RENSSELAER WALKING TOUR NOTES

Date: May 23, 2023, 10 AM

Attendees:

- Ketura Vics, City of Rensselaer
- Amy Lolik, City of Rensselaer
- Matthew Smith, NYS Department of State
- Fred Weakley, BOA Committee Member, Planning Commission member
- Maggie Zmuda, BOA Committee Member, Resident
- Jeshua White, BOA Committee Member, Resident
- Madeline Rizzo, BOA Committee Member, Rensselaer IDA
- Norabelle Greenberger, LaBella Associates
- Kyle Hatch, LaBella Associates
- Stephen Hiney, LaBella Associates
- Mary Moore Wallinger, LAndArt Studio

BACKGROUND:

- Rensselaer's original 2016 BOA Nomination/Designation Application was too lofty. Goals weren't feasible
- Goal of this plan is to build on the past efforts with fresh data and realistic plans
- Project should focus on low hanging fruit while still identifying a limited number of large projects (anchor sites)
- Steering committee is formulated. Mix of property owners, business owners, and investors – looking to add a rep from a community services org if possible.
- Updated study area includes Port. Not a near-term development but included for potential longer-term benefits of BOA designation.

WALKING TOUR:

- Key Properties/Areas:
 - Long standing business on Washington Street: opportunity for façade improvements and screening of open storage area (storage would not be permitted under current zoning).
 - Cluster of properties in the downtown area along Broadway, Academy, and Columbia that need new façades and redevelopment.
 - Abandoned former gas station at the corner of Academy and Columbia is a high potential property given its location. Opportunities for additional traffic calming opportunities along Columbia Street gateway.
 - Several vacant/underutilized parcels with shared ownership along west side of Broadway. Interest in seeing developed. Restaurant that occupies one of the buildings is interested in expanding.
 - 254 Broadway is for sale.



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- Active industrial/contractor property on west side of Broadway above the Riverfront park. Parcel extends from waterfront to Broadway and includes the former City Hall building (since demolished).
 - Broadway section of the parcel is vacant/used for open storage. Opportunities for infill development.
 - Waterfront represents key connection between Riverfront Park and the Rensselaer Waterfront Esplanade. Opportunities to connect through parcel should be explored.
- Across the bridge from the train station is an underutilized lot used for parking. Parcel is privately owned and leased by the State for State employee parking. Opportunities to reduce area devoted to parking and add mixed-use development to the streetwall.
- Historic district has unique amenities, including Crailo State Historic Site and a former church that was converted to residential uses but is also used for community events.
- Industrial area south of the historic district:
 - Stark change between Fort Craillo historic site/neighborhood and industrial area adjacent to the south.
 - Surface parking lots surrounded by barbed wire fencing. Few street trees.
 - Preferred route for cyclists: low traffic volumes and few cross streets.
- Large vacant parcel in southern industrial area is a brownfield with restricted uses permitted. Previous application for industrial development on the site. Now being considered for wind turbine/renewable energy construction site.
- Housing:
 - Rental rates are high, but not always the highest quality.
 - Increasing housing demand from Regeneron.
 - Waiting list of 35 for CDBG housing funding.
- Rensselaer has a large Burmese population.
- Mandatory parking minimums for buildings allotted a lot of space for parking, taking away land from other potential developments.
- Floodplain is a challenge to development:
 - Much of downtown is at elevation of 16 feet but has a BFE of 21 feet.
 - The costs to raise the first floor, floodproof, and pay flood insurance can be cost-prohibitive. Previous discussions around City incentives/assistance to help offset these costs.
 - City flood permit is required.
- Current zoning regulations do not require parking screening. Opportunities to improve the streetscape/pedestrian experience by adding parking screening at several sites in the study area.
- Several buildings along Broadway illegally converted ground floor commercial to residential.
- The City has a façade program for the residential historic district, but not for commercial properties. Could be interest in expanding something similar to commercial areas.
- Many buildings have owners that are unwilling to make improvements, sell, redevelop, or collaborate with the City.



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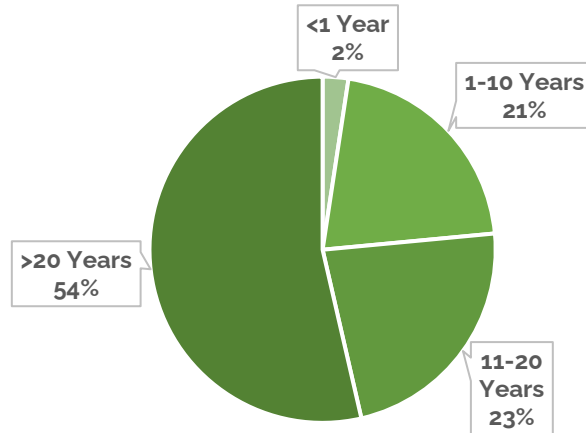
- Common theme – strong resistance to change among some property owners
- No CDPHP Cycle stations anywhere in the City. This is a missed opportunity with the train station, the Empire State Trail, waterfront park/trails. Reason for lack of stations due to perceived costs.
 - .Traffic:
 - Heavy traffic flows through Broadway and historic district. There has been many residential complaints. Trucks currently use it due to the fastest route out of the City.
 - Previous CDTC Technical Assistance grant looking at rerouting truck traffic off Broadway/Riverside.
 - Traffic backup from Dunkin Donuts drive-in is very common.
- Planned Development/Projects:
 - Farmers' market coming to the Riverfront Park in August/September.
 - New three-story mixed-use development planned for corner of Broadway and Third Ave. Will have ground floor retail and market rate apartments above. Will be first new ground-up construction in this area in many years.
 - Coffee shop planned along Broadway.
 - \$2 million in CDBG funded improvements to City parks.
 - New boat docking area coming to Crailo State Historic Site.
- Modifications to the study area:
 - Current study area doesn't include the historic district, also includes the Port on the southern end.
 - May want to include the historic district given location/connectivity between areas to the north and south.
 - May want to exclude the Port as there is no near-term development potential; could be the subject of a future BOA or EPA study instead.

RENSSELAER RISING SURVEY RESULTS SUMMARY

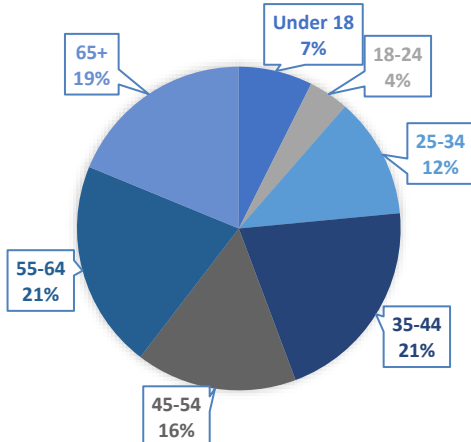
The Rensselaer Rising survey served to gather feedback from the public on their vision and goals for the City, as well as strengths of and challenges facing Rensselaer. The survey was open from January 2024 to the end of February and consisted of 19 general and visioning questions to guide the project. When the survey closed, 239 people from a range of backgrounds had responded.

Most people who responded, about 70 percent, were current residents of the City of Rensselaer. Twenty-one percent were residents of Rensselaer County, and just nine percent reside outside of Rensselaer County. Of those respondents who live in the City of Rensselaer, many have lived in the City for a long time. Just over half, 54 percent, have been residents for over 20 years. Twenty-three percent have been for 11 to 20 years, 21 percent for one to ten years, and just two percent have been in Rensselaer for less than one year.

HOW LONG HAVE YOU LIVED IN THE CITY OF RENSSELAER?



AGE OF RESPONDENTS



Of those who responded, 57 percent were female 37 percent were male; the remaining identified as "other" or chose not to answer the question. Additionally, over half of those who responded (56 percent) are over the age of 45, and eleven percent are under the age of 25.

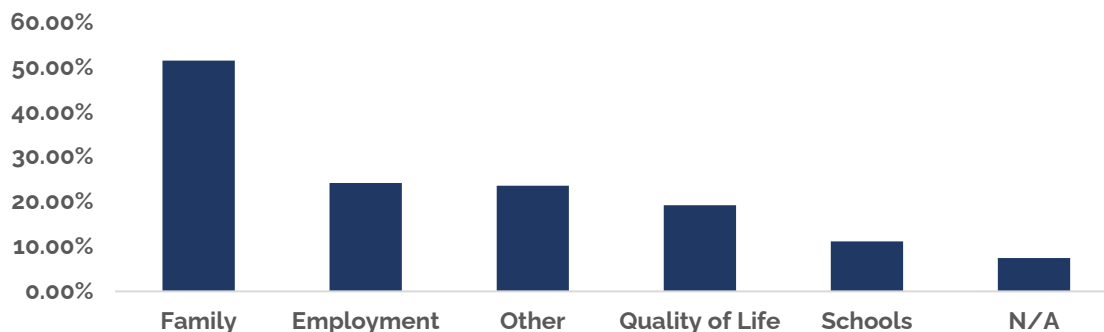
Next, the survey identified property and business ownership. Fifty-seven percent of respondents are property owners, and 12 percent (27 respondents) are business owners. Of the business owners, most (74 percent) have been in business for less than ten years, and 16 percent have been in business for longer.

VISIONING QUESTIONS:

The survey began by asking Rensselaer residents why they choose to live in the City. The clear, most common response, with 51.5 percent of responses, was family. Other identified reasons were employment (24 percent), quality of life (19 percent), schools (11 percent), and 24 percent of respondents chose "other." For those that chose other reasons, they often cited that the proximity and convenience of Rensselaer's location to other cities and communities

in the area is a great asset and reason they live there. Others also said the affordability of the City, especially compared to surrounding cities, is why they live in Rensselaer.

WHAT ARE YOUR REASONS FOR CHOOSING TO LIVE IN THE CITY OF RENSSELAER?



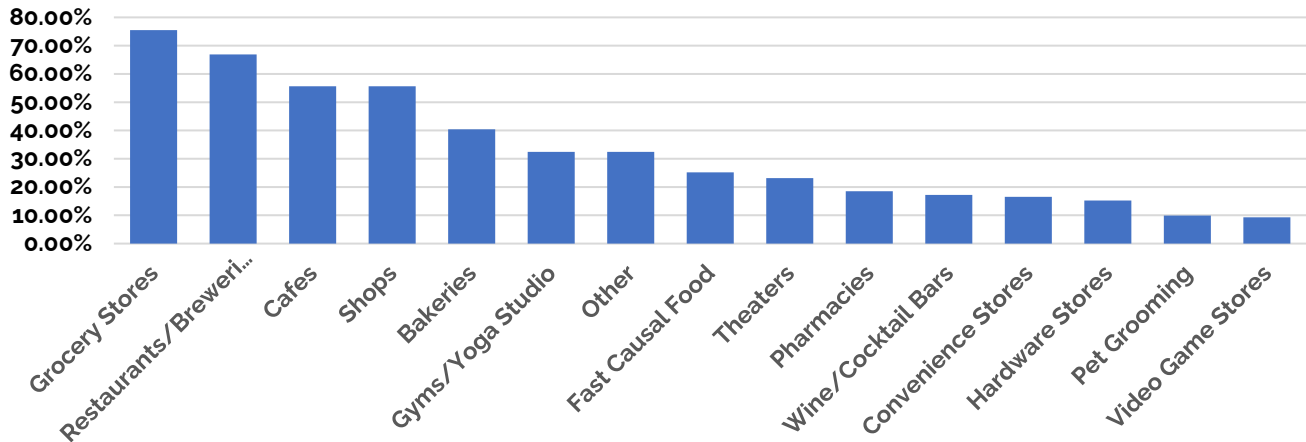
Next, visioning questions continued by asking people to describe the City of Rensselaer in one word. Responses focused largely on the great potential of Rensselaer and its small town feel, while also maintaining proximity to other larger communities and cities. Other major themes included the need for new investment, development, and overall support. Residents clearly like the sense of community in Rensselaer but are concerned that development has felt stagnant in recent times.

This conversation continued into the next question about one thing residents would most like to see changed in the City. Many of the responses focused on bringing more businesses, activities, and community events for residents, youth, and seniors into the City. Several people also noted hoping to see more restaurants in the downtown area and several noted the need for renewed access to a grocery store following the closure of Aldi. Several people also identified the waterfront as something they would like to see changed. Improving access to the waterfront for businesses, parks, and recreation is seen by many respondents as a significant opportunity for Rensselaer to grow.



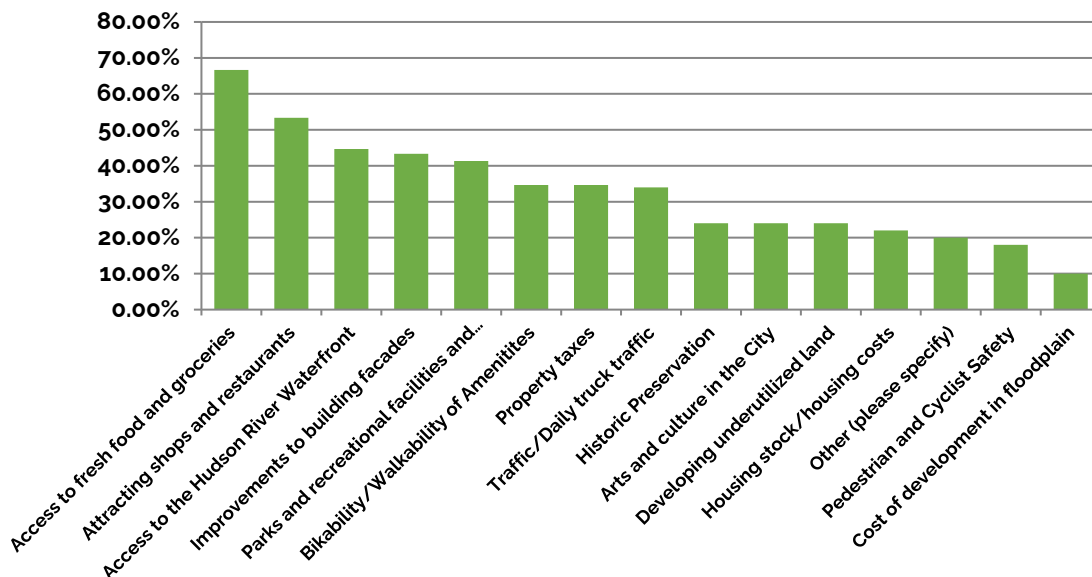
The next question spoke to the desire of many respondents to see more economic development in Rensselaer and asked what types of businesses and services are most needed. The top response was grocery stores, followed by restaurants, cafes, shops, and bakeries. There was also an "other" option where people could add their own suggestions. Recommendations included community centers, a senior center, a public pool, an ambulance service, boutiques, a bike shop, specialty stores, bowling, and a hotel.

WHAT TYPES OF BUSINESSES ARE MOST NEEDED IN THE CITY?



Respondents were also asked what they view as the most pressing issues facing the City in the next ten years. Access to fresh food and groceries rose to the top of the list again. With the recent closure of the grocery store Aldi in the City, residents do not have access to a full-service grocery store within City limits. This seems to be top of mind for residents as a major concern. Followed closely behind was attracting unique shops and restaurants to the City. Responses seemed to center around a lack of an identifiable downtown area in Rensselaer, making it hard to attract new and maintain businesses. Third, access to the Hudson River waterfront is perceived as a top challenge for respondents. Many seem to believe that the waterfront is underutilized and could become a great asset for the community. Also identified in the top five pressing issues was improvements to existing building facades and parks and recreational facilities and programs. Many respondents feel there is simply not

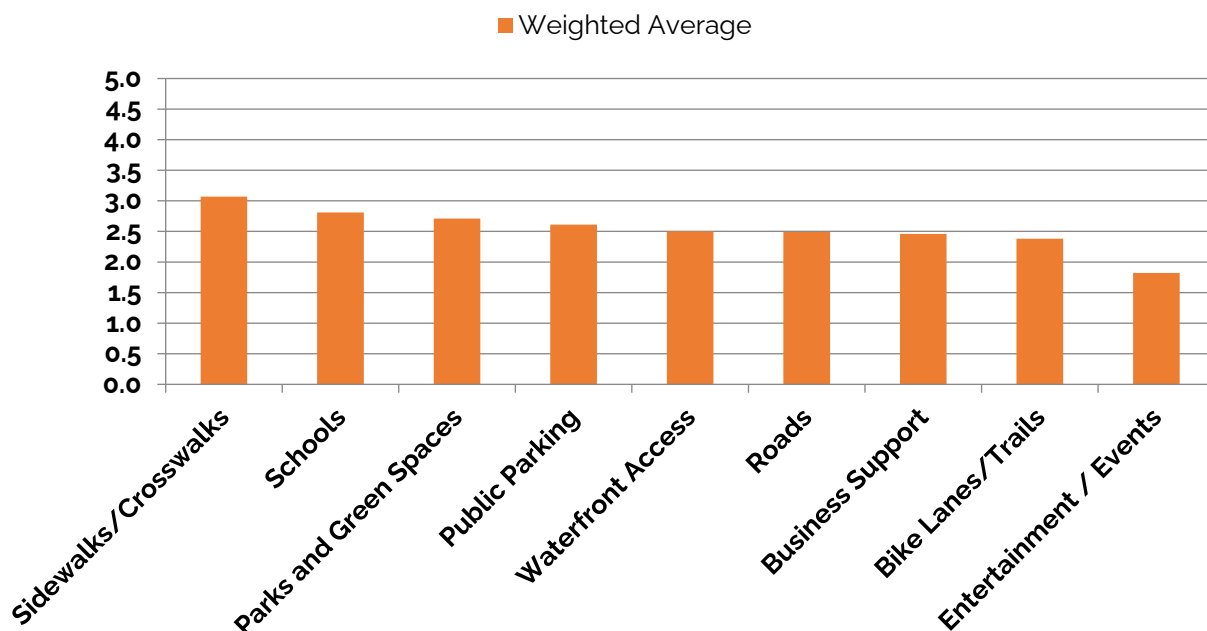
WHAT ARE THE MOST PRESSING ISSUES YOU SEE FOR THE CITY IN THE NEXT TEN YEARS?



enough to do in the City, despite great potential due to the waterfront and its proximity to the City of Albany and other areas. While there are great existing parks within the City, people tend to want to see more programming and support for improvements at them. Speaking to building facades, it seems residents would also like to see a focus on the overall beautification of the City to make it more attractive to visitors and residents alike.

In addition to asking about new businesses and amenities, people were asked to rate the adequacy of existing amenities and services in the community on a scale of one (poor) to five (excellent). Sidewalks and crosswalks received the highest average rating of 3.1, schools received a 2.8 score out of five, parks and green spaces were ranked 2.7, public parking 2.6, waterfront access 2.5, roads 2.5, business support 2.5, bike lanes and trails 2.4, and entertainment and events 1.8. This reflected some of what was noted earlier in the survey, as people ranked entertainment and events the lowest, and in other places noted their desire to see more programming for all ages. Most categories received a fair score, hovering around the 2.5 to 3 range, showing that each category could still use improvement but have a solid base in the City.

HOW WOULD YOU RATE THE ADEQUACY OF THE FOLLOWING AMENITIES AND SERVICES IN YOUR COMMUNITY ON A SCALE OF 1-5?

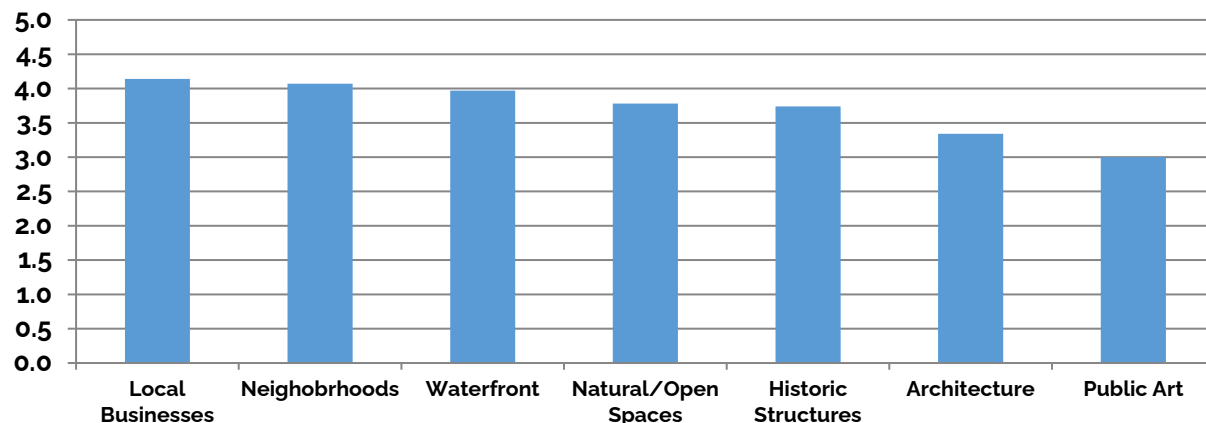


Respondents were also asked to rank on a scale of one to five how important several attributes are to the community character of the City of Rensselaer, one being not important at all, and five being very important. Local businesses and neighborhoods ranked as the highest attributes contributing to community character with an average score of 4.1 each. This is representative of what was heard in several other sections of the survey, that people appreciate the small-town feel of Rensselaer, the community, and the neighborhoods but would like to see many more businesses brought to the area. The waterfront also received a

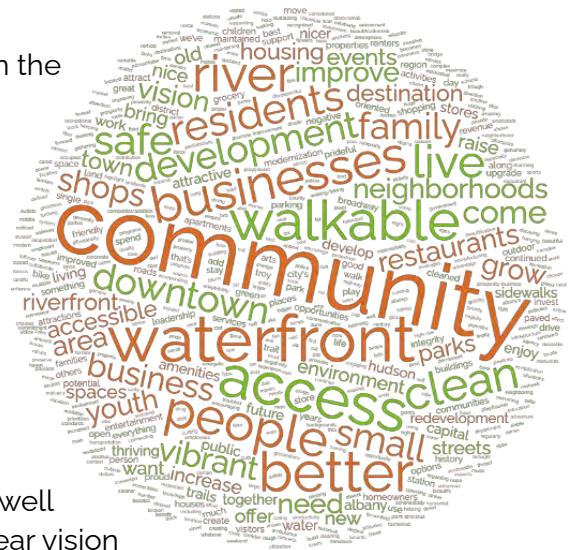
score of 4, and natural and open spaces received a ranking of 3.8. Historic structures had an average score of 3.7, architecture 3.3, and public art the lowest score of 3. While there was some variation, all these attributes were ranked high in contributing to community character, showing that people care a lot about them in Rensselaer, and indicating that they should likely be taken into consideration as the Rensselaer Rising project moves forward.

**ON A SCALE OF 1-5 HOW IMPORTANT ARE THE
FOLLOWING TO THE COMMUNITY CHARACTER OF THE
CITY OF RENSSELAER**

■ Weighted Average



Finally, the survey asked respondents to describe their vision for Rensselaer, along with what they view as the biggest limitations facing the City. Visions for the City focused on the importance of developing a thriving community with more small businesses, community events, and things to do for families, youth, and adults. Respondents view Rensselaer as primed for new development and progress, with the potential to become a vibrant waterfront community close to several other thriving cities. Alternatively, the main limitation facing the City identified by respondents was the need for more investment and funding for the City to achieve its vision and goals. Responses also cited the underutilized areas and properties in the City in need of redevelopment, as well as the hope that Rensselaer will move forward with a clear vision for its growth and strong leadership throughout the process.



APPENDIX 2

BROWNFIELD, UNDERUTILIZED, VACANT, OR ABANDONED SITES

Parcel Number	Current Use	Address	Owner	AUV	Brownfield	Acres
143.52-1-1.22	Vacant Commercial Land	New Broadway	Marx Properties Inc	V	No	0.32
143.52-1-2.1	Vacant Commercial Land	New Broadway (W of)	Zappala V Co Inc	V	No	0.46
143.52-1-2.2	Vacant Commercial Land	Herrick St	State of New York	V	No	0.50
143.52-4-1.1	Vacant Commercial Land	Partition St	National Railroad	V	Yes	2.25
143.52-4-1.2	Mini-mart	12 PARTITION ST	Stewarts Shops Corp		Yes	0.55
143.59-1-1	Manufacturing and Processing	7 Fifth Ave	Zappala V Co Inc	U	Yes	12.37
143.60-1-11	Parking lot	527 BROADWAY	Zappala Land Dvlp LLC	V	Yes	0.52
143.60-1-12	Small Retail Outlet	505 BROADWAY	V Zappala & Co Inc	V	Yes	0.54
143.60-1-13	Vacant Commercial Land	501 BROADWAY	Zappala V Co Inc	V	Yes	0.19
143.60-1-14	Vacant Commercial Land	491 BROADWAY	Zappala V Co Inc	V	No	0.09
143.60-1-18	Vacant Commercial Land	467 BROADWAY	State of New York	V	No	0.12
143.60-2-1	Vacant Commercial Land	798 Broadway	3167 Route 20 LLC	U	No	0.07
143.60-2-18	Residential Vacant land	484 BROADWAY	Capital District Trans Auth	V	No	0.10
143.60-2-19	Residential Vacant Land with Improvements	480 BROADWAY	Washington Complex LLC	V	No	0.12
143.60-2-35.1	Parking lot	Broadway (E of)	Capital District Trans Auth	U	No	0.61
143.60-2-35.2	Non-Ceiling Railroad	Broadway	Amtrak		Yes	0.20
143.60-2-7	Recreation Facility	544 BROADWAY	Rensselaer Boys Club Inc		Yes	0.61
143.60-2-8	Commercial Vacant Land With Improvements	Broadway	Washington Complex LLC	U	Yes	0.81
143.60-3-3	Commercial Vacant Land With Improvements	Herrick St	Washington Complex LLC	U	No	0.86
143.60-3-7	Municipal Park	East St	City of Rensselaer	U	No	0.80
143.60-3-9.1	Parking lot	615 EAST ST	Capital District Trans Auth		Yes	7.43
143.67-1-1	Public park	300 BROADWAY	State of New York	U	No	4.93
143.67-1-13	Residential Vacant land	11 FERRY ST	Neary, Suzan B	V	Yes	0.04
143.67-1-14	Vacant Commercial Land	13 FERRY ST	223 Broadway Inc	V	Yes	0.04
143.67-1-19	Residential Vacant Land with Improvements	Ferry St	223 Broadway Inc	V	No	0.33
143.67-1-20	One Story Small Structure	263 BROADWAY	Mingalabar Properties LLC	A	No	0.23
143.67-1-23	One Story Small Structure	325 BROADWAY	Lucarelli, Daniel L		Yes	0.17
143.67-1-3.2	One Story Small Structure	1 2ND AVE	3 Ferry Street LLC		Yes	0.31
143.67-1-4	One Story Small Structure	35 2ND AVE	3 Ferry Street, LLC		Yes	0.10
143.67-1-7.1	Vacant Commercial Land	Ferry St	3 Ferry Street, LLC		Yes	0.12
143.67-1-8	Residential Vacant land	4 FERRY ST	3 Ferry Street LLC	V	Yes	0.05
143.67-2-6	One Family Residence	406 BROADWAY	Brayton Construction Inc	A	No	0.05
143.67-3-7	Vacant Industrial	338 BROADWAY	Washington Complex LLC	V	Yes	1.41
143.67-5-1	Parking lot	89 WASHINGTON ST	Washington Complex LLC	U	Yes	0.40
143.67-7-1	Residential Vacant land	280 BROADWAY	Zeppetelli, Susan M	V	No	0.08
143.67-7-11	Vacant Commercial Land	264 BROADWAY	Zeppetelli, Anthony C	V	No	0.11
143.67-7-12	Vacant Commercial Land	266 BROADWAY	Varden Properties LLC	V	No	0.05
143.67-7-13	Commercial Vacant Land With Improvements	274 BROADWAY	Zeppetelli, Anthony C	V	No	0.07
143.67-7-14	Mini-mart	9 3RD AVE	Rensselaer One Stop Corp.		Yes	0.31
143.67-7-3	Vacant Commercial Land	7 Third Ave	City of Rensselaer	V	No	0.04
143.67-7-5	Detached Row Building	236 BROADWAY	Hayati, Abdul	A	No	0.06
143.68-1-12	Residential Vacant land	416 WASHINGTON ST	Forbare, Mark R	V	No	0.12
143.68-1-13	Residential Vacant land	428 WASHINGTON ST	Fobare, Mark R	V	No	0.12
143.68-1-14	Residential Vacant land	432 WASHINGTON ST	Oriel Group LLC	V	No	0.08
143.68-1-3	Playground	East St	City of Rensselaer	U	No	1.38
143.68-1-5	Office Building	64 WASHINGTON ST	Washington Complex LLC		Yes	6.05
143.68-2-1	Restaurant	501 EAST ST	Hunter, June	U	No	0.11
143.75-10-3	Auto Body Shop	3 COLUMBIA ST	Vaccarielli Sr Trust, Anthony	U	Yes	0.26
143.75-10-7	Vacant Commercial Land	126 BROADWAY	Thorpe Elect Supply Inc		Yes	0.06
143.75-10-8	Vacant Commercial Land	128 BROADWAY	Thorpe Elect Supply Inc		Yes	0.06
143.75-1-1	Detached Row Building	232 BROADWAY	Kretser, Jerry	A	No	0.08
143.75-11-11	Marina	75 BROADWAY	Albany Yacht Club Inc		Yes	1.39
143.75-11-13	Parking lot	75 BROADWAY	Albany Yacht Club	U	No	0.15
143.75-11-19	One Family Residence	57 BROADWAY	Burton, Arline	A	No	0.06
143.75-12-5	Residential Vacant land	45 ACADEMY ST	B&D Realty Management LLC	V	No	0.07
143.75-13-13	One Family Residence	24 ACADEMY ST	Lee, Amey Wai Ching	A	No	0.08
143.75-14-3	Auto Dealer	27 COLUMBIA ST	Adam Auto Agency LLC		Yes	0.34
143.75-2-10	Residential Vacant land	55 WASHINGTON AVE	Wainman, Gerald E	V	No	0.06

143.75-2-11	Residential Vacant land	57 WASHINGTON AVE	Wainman, Gerald E	V	No	0.06
143.75-2-12.1	Other Storage	65 WASHINGTON ST	Wainschaf Associates Inc	U	No	0.13
143.75-2-8	Residential Vacant land	51 WASHINGTON ST	Wainman, Gerald E	V	No	0.06
143.75-2-9	Residential Vacant land	53 WASHINGTON ST	Wainman, Gerald E	V	No	0.06
143.75-3-10	Vacant Commercial Land	46 Washington St	Thorpe Elect Supply Inc	V	Yes	0.06
143.75-3-11	Vacant Commercial Land	48 Washington St	Thorpe Elect Supply Inc	V	Yes	0.06
143.75-3-12	Vacant Commercial Land	50 WASHINGTON ST	Thorpe Elect Supply Inc	V	Yes	0.06
143.75-3-5	Vacant Commercial Land	27 2ND AVE	LaPoint Real Estate LLC	V	No	0.06
143.75-3-9	Vacant Commercial Land	44 Washington St	Thorpe Elect Supply Inc		Yes	0.06
143.75-4-1	Residential Vacant land	28 Third Ave	City of Rensselaer	V	No	0.08
143.75-4-14	Residential Vacant land	52 WALKER ST	Vanepps, Jean	V	No	0.12
143.75-4-18	One Family Residence	64 WALKER ST	Clow, Estate of Mary E	A	No	0.03
143.75-4-2	Multi-Use Building	63 GREEN ST	Tran, Thuy	A	No	0.02
143.75-5-1	Vacant Inudstrial Use	58 GREEN ST	Washington Complex LLC	V	No	0.41
143.75-8-10	Religious	16 WASHINGTON ST	Pinckney, Thaddeus	A	No	0.16
143.75-8-5	Vacant Commercial Land	26 WASHINGTON ST	Thorpe Elect Supply Inc		Yes	0.04
143.75-8-6	Vacant Commercial Land	24 WASHINGTON ST	Thorpe Elect Supply Inc		Yes	0.04
143.75-8-7	Other Storage	22 WASHINGTON ST	Gammel, Arthur		Yes	0.12
143.75-9-1	Bank	16 2ND AVE	16 Second Ave LLC	U	No	0.24
143.75-9-12	Commercial Vacant Land With Improvements	13 COLUMBIA ST	Hess Retail Stores LLC	A	Yes	0.19
143.75-9-2	Parking lot	37 Washington St	Key Bank NA	U	No	0.13
143.76-1-10	Vacant Public Utility Land	30 WILLIAMS TER	National Grid	V	No	0.56
143.76-1-11.2	Parking lot	Third Ave	Washington Complex LLC	U	Yes	3.44
143.76-1-12	Non-Ceiling Railroad	East St	Amtrak	U	No	4.43
143.76-1-5	One Family Residence	333 EAST ST	Hahn, Bonnie L	U	No	0.15
143.76-1-7	Two Family Residence	303 EAST ST	Jackson, Genesis	U	No	0.07
143.76-1-8	Other Storage	85 2ND AVE	Cristo Demolition Inc	U	Yes	1.04
143.82-1-1	Residential Vacant land	20A RIVERSIDE AVE	City of Rensselaer	V	No	0.10
143.82-1-7	Residential Vacant land	Riverside Ave	BASF Wyandotte Corp	V	No	0.09
143.83-1-4	Residential Vacant land	5 BROADWAY	Edick, Kathryn B	V	No	0.11
143.83-3-13	Vacant Commercial Land	60 COLUMBIA ST	Jakovic, Jay Harold	V	No	0.05
143.83-3-14	Vacant Commercial Land	62 COLUMBIA ST	Vesta Properties Inc	V	No	0.04
143.83-3-15	Vacant Commercial Land	64 COLUMBIA ST	Polsinello Realty Corp	V	No	0.03
143.83-3-8	Gas station	50 COLUMBIA ST	Stewart's Shops Corp		Yes	0.64
143.83-4-1	Self carwash	41 COLUMBIA ST	Polsinello Realty Corp	A	Yes	0.35
143.83-4-3.12	Parking lot	First Ave (Rear)	David Little Marketing Inc	U	No	2.15
143.83-4-5	Vacant Commercial Land	44 Aiken Ave	44 Aiken Avenue LLC	A	No	2.33
143.83-4-6	Mini-mart	69 COLUMBIA ST	Stewart's Shops Corp		Yes	0.60
143.83-5-1.2	Supermarket	307 COLUMBIA ST	Rensselaer Assoc 1 LLC	A	No	1.57
143.83-5-2	Truck Terminal	309 COLUMBIA ST	FPI Mechanical, Inc.		Yes	2.00
143.83-5-3	Other Storage	317 COLUMBIA ST	Fairdale Realty Inc		Yes	0.32
143.83-5-4	Other Storage	319 COLUMBIA ST	Fairdale Realty Inc		Yes	0.59
143.83-6-11	Residential Vacant land	Rensselaer Ave	Filippini, Frank J	V	No	0.03
143.83-7-9	Residential Vacant land	66 CAMBRIDGE AVE	Gartner, Dorothy M	V	No	0.13
143.83-8-7	Two Family Residence	17 RENSSELAER AVE	Green, Norman J	A	No	0.07
143.83-9-1	Sewage	1A RIVERSIDE AVE	Rensselaer County Sewer Dist		Yes	0.50
143.83-9-27	Residential Vacant land	35 Riverside Ave	Fairdale Realty Inc	V	Yes	0.19
154.27-1-1	Residential Vacant land	2 BELMORE PL	AMRI Rensslaer Inc		Yes	0.00
154.27-2-2.1	Other Storage	321 COLUMBIA ST	Fairdale Realty Inc		Yes	0.28
154.27-2-2.2	Vacant Commercial Land	323 COLUMBIA ST	Fairdale Realty Inc	U	Yes	0.27
154.28-1-1	Vacant Commercial Land	130 SOUTH ST	Ashland Chemical Inc	V	Yes	0.62
154.28-1-1	Vacant Commercial Land	130 SOUTH ST	Ashland Chemical Inc	V	Yes	5.32
154.28-2-11	One Family Residence	73 SOUTH ST	Sajid, Mohammad	A	No	0.10
154.28-2-12	Vacant Land with Improvements	75 SOUTH ST	Ryan, Kevin	V	No	0.18
154.36-1-1	Vacant Commercial Land	South St	State of New York	V	No	0.53
154.36-1-1	Vacant Commercial Land	South St	State of New York	V	No	0.04
154.36-1-1	Vacant Commercial Land	South St	State of New York	V	No	0.20
154.36-1-1	Vacant Commercial Land	South St	State of New York	V	No	0.09
154.36-1-1	Vacant Commercial Land	South St	State of New York	V	No	0.06
154-5-1	Manufacturing and Processing	33 RIVERSIDE AVE	AMRI Rensselaer Inc		Yes	0.00

A P P E N D I X 3



STRATEGIC SITE 1: 615 EAST STREET

Address	615 East Street
Parcel No	143.60-3-9.1
Zoning	Downtown Mixed Use (MU-1)
Property Acreage	7.43
Current Owner(s)	Capital District Transportation Authority
On-Site Structures	None
Current Groundwater Conditions	None Known
Flood Zone	500-year Flood-Zone
Environmental Land Use History	None Known
Current Use	Parking Lot / Vacant Land
Potential Contamination Issues	Current Use/Historic Use
Existing Infrastructure	Public Water & Sewer, Gas & Electric
Proximity to Existing Transportation Networks	Bus Line and Train Station
Natural and Cultural Resources or Historic Resources	Buffer Area of Recorded Archaeological Resources.
Potential Development/Property Improvements	Parking conversion to new build mixed use building with grocery, small retail, and residential, and second new build residential building.



STRATEGIC SITE 2: BROADWAY

Address	Broadway
Parcel No	132.60-2-35.1
Zoning	Downtown Mixed-Use (MU-1)
Property Acreage	0.81 Acres
Current Owner(s)	Washington Complex LLC
On-Site Structures	None
Current Groundwater Conditions	None Known
Flood Zone	100-year Flood Zone
Environmental Land Use History	None Known
Current Use	Parking Lot/Vacant Land
Potential Contamination Issues	Petroleum Bulk Storage Site
Existing Infrastructure	Public Water & Sewer, Gas & Electric
Proximity to Existing Transportation Networks	Bus Line
Natural and Cultural Resources or Historic Resources	Buffer Area of Recorded Archaeological Resources.
Potential Development/Property Improvements	Parking to new build mixed-use day care and housing conversion.



STRATEGIC SITE 3: 505 BROADWAY

Address	505 Broadway
Parcel No	143.60-1-12
Zoning	Downtown Mixed Use (MU-1)
Property Acreage	0.54
Current Owner(s)	V Zappala & Co. Inc.
On-Site Structures	None
Current Groundwater Conditions	None Known
Flood Zone	100-year floodzone
Environmental Land Use History	None Known
Current Use	Vacant
Potential Contamination Issues	Historic Use/Current Use/Petroleum Bulk Storage Site
Existing Infrastructure	Public Water & Sewer, Gas & Electric
Proximity to Existing Transportation Networks	Bus Line
Natural and Cultural Resources or Historic Resources	Buffer Area of Recorded Archaeological Resources.
Potential Development/Property Improvements	New build mixed-use development with first floor retail and upper floor residential.



STRATEGIC SITE 4: 264 BROADWAY

Address	264 Broadway
Parcel No	143.67-7-11
Zoning	Downtown Mixed-Use (MU-1_
Property Acreage	0.11
Current Owner(s)	Anthony Zeppetelli
On-Site Structures	None
Current Groundwater Conditions	None Known
Flood Zone	100-year Flood Zone
Environmental Land Use History	None-Known
Current Use	Vacant Commercial Land
Potential Contamination Issues	None Known
Existing Infrastructure	Public Water & Sewer, Gas & Electric
Proximity to Existing Transportation Networks	Bus Line
Natural and Cultural Resources or Historic Resources	Buffer Area of Recorded Archaeological Resources.
Potential Development/Property Improvements	New build three-story building with first floor retail, upper floors residential, on-site parking.



STRATEGIC SITE 5: 3RD AVENUE

Address	3 rd Avenue
Parcel No	143.76-1-11.2
Zoning	Planned Development District (PDD)
Property Acreage	3.44
Current Owner(s)	Washington Complex LLC
On-Site Structures	None
Current Groundwater Conditions	None Known
Flood Zone	100-year Flood Zone
Environmental Land Use History	None Known
Current Use	Parking Lot
Potential Contamination Issues	Historic Use/Current Use
Existing Infrastructure	Public Water & Sewer, Gas & Electric
Proximity to Existing Transportation Networks	Bus Line
Natural and Cultural Resources or Historic Resources	Buffer Area of Recorded Archaeological Resources.
Potential Development/Property Improvements	Parking converted to new residential units.



STRATEGIC SITE 6: 58 GREEN STREET

Address	58 Green Street
Parcel No	143.75-5-1
Zoning	Planned Development District (PDD)
Property Acreage	0.41
Current Owner(s)	Washington Complex LLC
On-Site Structures	None
Current Groundwater Conditions	None Known
Flood Zone	100-year Flood Zone
Environmental Land Use History	None Known
Current Use	Vacant Industrial Use / Parking
Potential Contamination Issues	None Known
Existing Infrastructure	Public Water & Sewer, Gas & Electric
Proximity to Existing Transportation Networks	Bus Line
Natural and Cultural Resources or Historic Resources	Buffer Area of Recorded Archaeological Resources
Potential Development/Property Improvements	Parking converted to new residential units.



STRATEGIC SITE 7: 13 COLUMBIA STREET

Address	13 Columbia Street
Parcel No	143.75-9-12
Zoning	Downtown Mixed-Use (MU-1)
Property Acreage	0.19
Current Owner(s)	Hess Retail Stores LLC
On-Site Structures	1 Overhang Structure
Current Groundwater Conditions	None Known
Flood Zone	100-year Flood Zone
Environmental Land Use History	Gas Station
Current Use	Abandoned Gas Station
Potential Contamination Issues	Historic Use/Current Use/Petroleum Bulk Storage Site
Existing Infrastructure	Public Water & Sewer, Gas & Electric
Proximity to Existing Transportation Networks	Bus Line
Natural and Cultural Resources or Historic Resources	Buffer Area of Recorded Archaeological Resources
Potential Development/Property Improvements	Demolition of structure. Conversion from current use to new build mixed-use redevelopment with first floor retail, upper floor residential.



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Rensselaer RISING