

RENSELAER RISING:

EXISTING CONDITIONS AND ANALYSIS

COMMUNITY AND REGIONAL CONTEXT

The City of Rensselaer is situated in the heart of the Capitol 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.



787

20

9

Hudson River

Mill Creek

Riverside Ave

Nelson Ave

Cambridge Ave

Belmore Pl

Mansion Ave

Aiken Ave

Rensselaer Ave

1st Ave

1st Aly

1st Ave

2nd Ave

Green St

Walker St

Washington St

Ferry St

Huyck Sq

5th Ave

Broadway

7th St

Herrick St

East St

4th Ave

Adams St

Wendell St

Willow St

South St

Stewart Port Exp



0.2

Miles

LEGEND



Brownfield Opportunity Area

RENSELAER RISING:

EXISTING CONDITIONS AND ANALYSIS

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 AND ECONOMIC PROFILE

Population

The City of Rensselaer's 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.

KEY TAKEAWAYS: DEMOGRAPHIC AND ECONOMIC PROFILE

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.

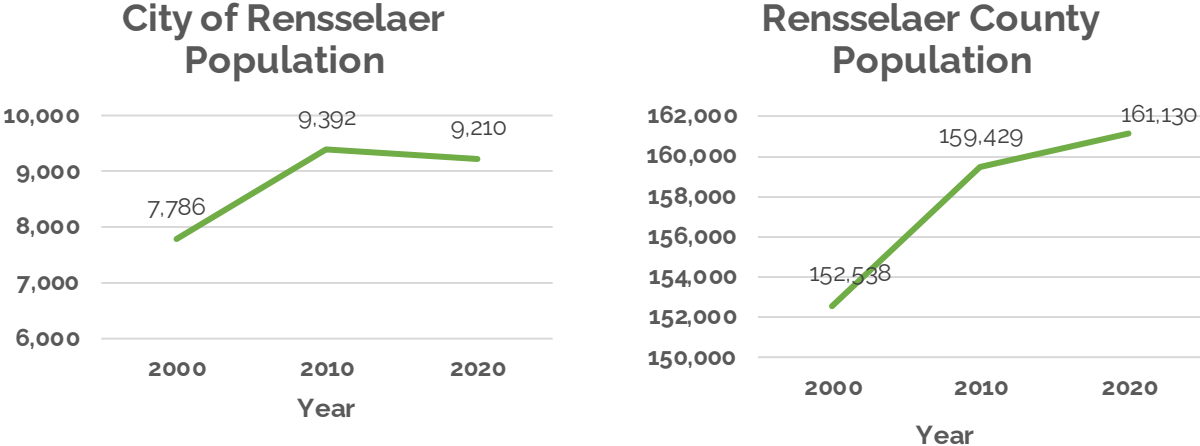
Rensselaer is more diverse than the greater County.

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.

**RENSELAER RISING:
EXISTING CONDITIONS AND ANALYSIS**



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,

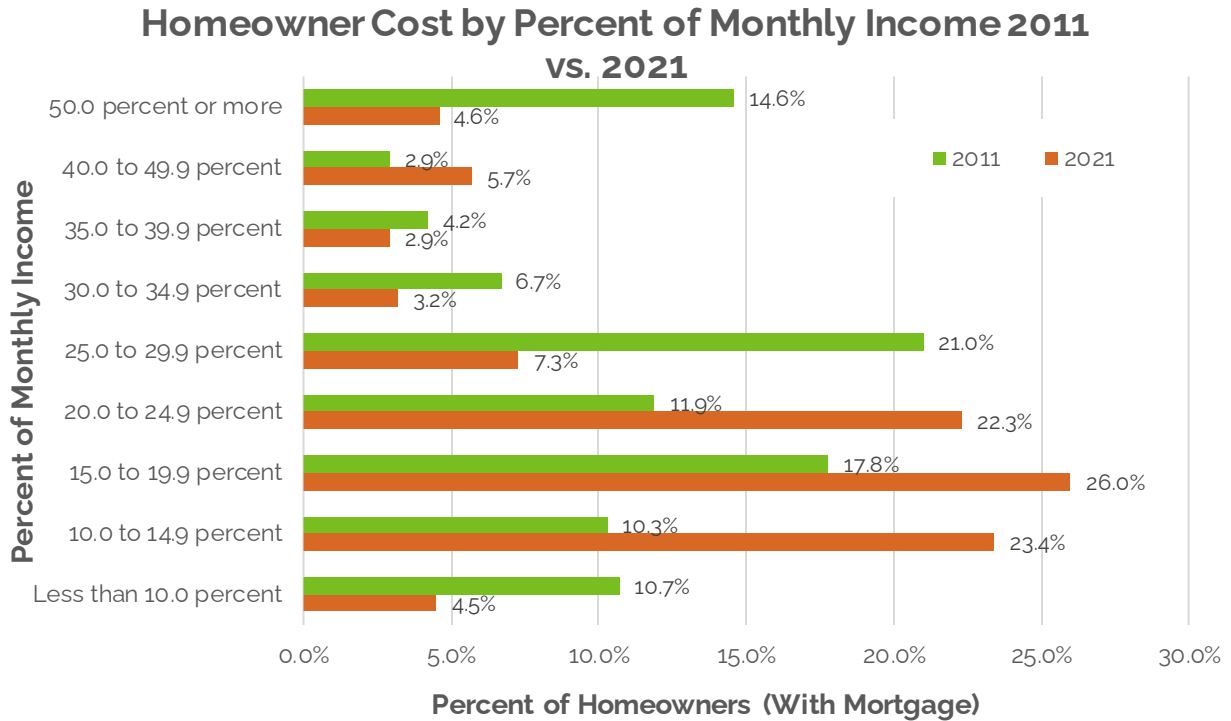
Data from 2020 shows that the age group between 25 and 39 years old is the largest in the City, representing 25 percent of the population. In comparison, the most represented age group in the County is slightly younger and falls between 15 and 29 years old, representing 21.5 percent of the population. 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 10 percent of 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 7 percent of their populations). 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 in Rensselaer County and 37.2 percent renter-occupied units. Between 2010 and 2021, homeownership rates for both the City and County decreased, while renter-occupied units increased. As a result, the City and County homeownership rates dropped four percent and two percent respectively, while their renter rates increased four percent and two percent, respectively.

RENSELAER RISING: EXISTING CONDITIONS AND ANALYSIS



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% 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 is \$1,435. Rent has increased a bit more, with a median rent in the City of \$820 in 2011 and \$1,005 in 2021. The 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

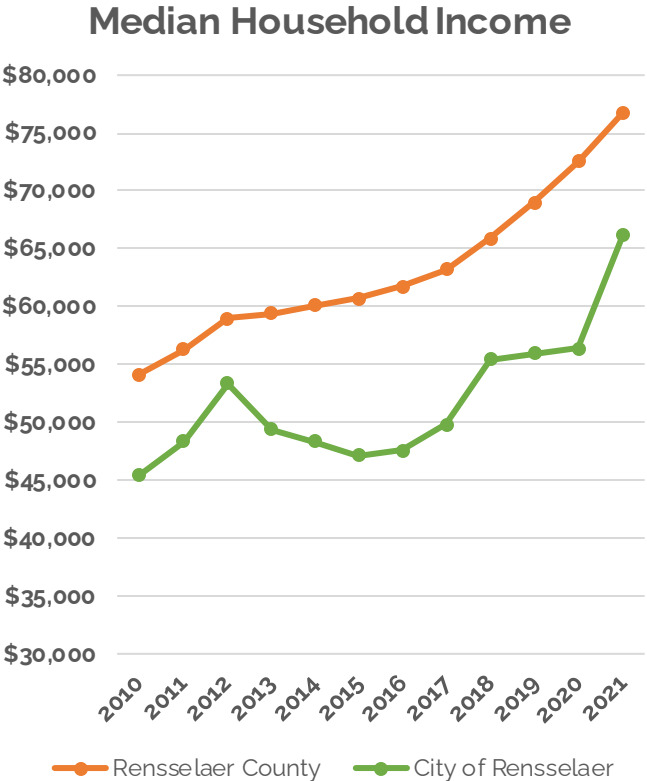
According to 2021 Census data, the average household size in the City of Rensselaer is 2.1, which is slightly less than the County average of 2.3. Since 2010, in both Rensselaer County and the City of Rensselaer, household size has remained about the same. However, the

RENSELAER RISING: EXISTING CONDITIONS AND ANALYSIS

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 3 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.



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. 9.3 percent of the City population identifies as Black or African American, 9.4 percent identify 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 the 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, it was expressed during a tour of the study area that there is a large Burmese presence in the City. This diversity should be celebrated in the community and considered in public outreach work throughout the development process.

RENSELAER RISING: EXISTING CONDITIONS AND ANALYSIS

EXISTING LAND USE AND ZONING

Land Use

Walking from one end of the study area to the other, the Amtrak station, its surrounding parking, and the Herrick Street ramp 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 in the City of Rensselaer. 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.

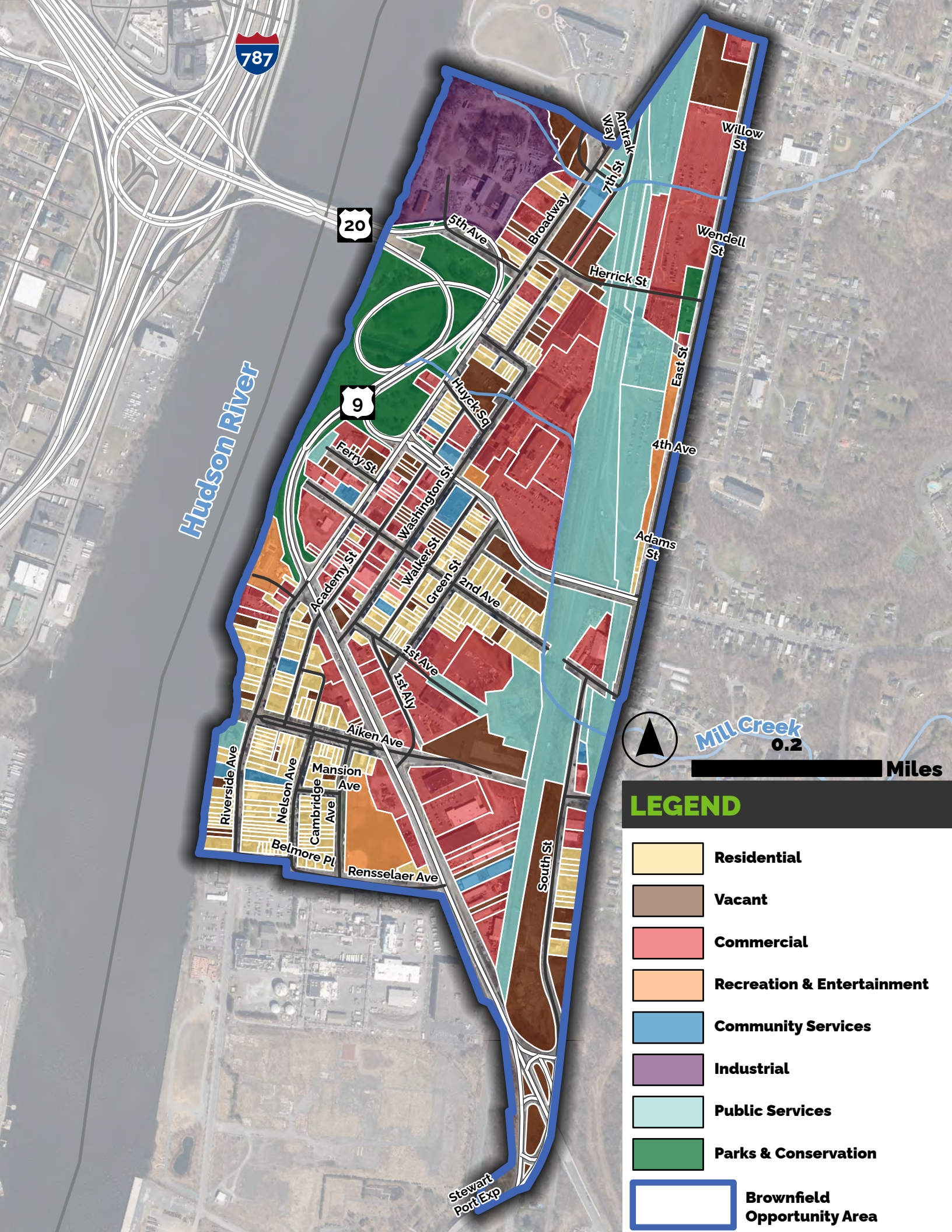
KEY TAKEAWAYS: LAND USE & ZONING

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.

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.



Hudson River

Mill Creek
0.2



Miles

LEGEND

- Residential
- Vacant
- Commercial
- Recreation & Entertainment
- Community Services
- Industrial
- Public Services
- Parks & Conservation
- Brownfield Opportunity Area

20

9

Riverside Ave

Nelson Ave

Cambridge Ave

Belmore Pl

Mansion Ave

Aiken Ave

Rensselaer Ave

1st Ave

1st Aly

1st Ave

1st Ave

1st Ave

1st Ave

1st Ave

1st Ave

1st Ave

1st Ave

1st Ave

1st Ave

1st Ave

1st Ave

1st Ave

1st Ave

1st Ave

1st Ave

1st Ave

Stewart Port Exp

Ferry St

Academy St

Walker St

Green St

2nd Ave

Huyck Sq

Washington St

5th Ave

Broadway

7th St

Herrick St

East St

Adams St

South St

Willow St

Wendell St

Antarak Way

RENSELAER RISING: EXISTING CONDITIONS AND ANALYSIS

There are 88 parcels (17 percent) making up around 22.6 acres in the study area that are identified as vacant. 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.

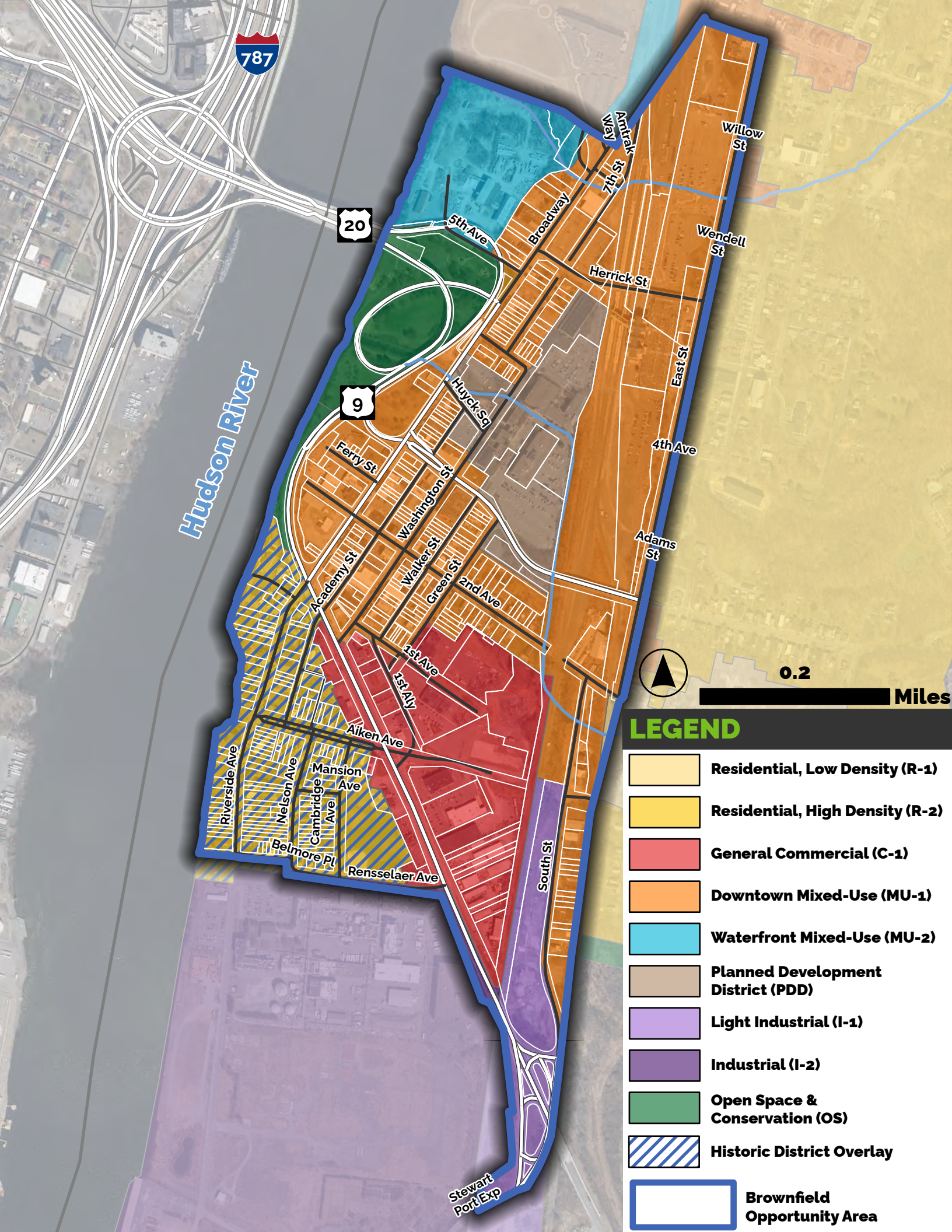
All other uses in the study area represent less than ten percent of the study area parcels. However, some of these uses occupy larger parcels and therefore have a larger impact in terms of overall acreage. Industrial uses make up less than one percent of the parcels but represent 5.5 percent of the study 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

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 below 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,



787

20

9

Hudson River

Willow St

Wendell St

Herrick St

East St

4th Ave

Adams St

5th Ave

Broadway

7th St

Huyck Sq

Ferry St

Washington St

Walker St

Green St

2nd Ave

1st Ave

1st Aly

Academy St

Aiken Ave

Riverside Ave

Nelson Ave

Cambridge Ave

Mansion Ave

Belmore Pl

Rensselaer Ave

South St












Stewart Port Exp



0.2

Miles

LEGEND

-  Residential, Low Density (R-1)
-  Residential, High Density (R-2)
-  General Commercial (C-1)
-  Downtown Mixed-Use (MU-1)
-  Waterfront Mixed-Use (MU-2)
-  Planned Development District (PDD)
-  Light Industrial (I-1)
-  Industrial (I-2)
-  Open Space & Conservation (OS)
-  Historic District Overlay
-  Brownfield Opportunity Area

**RENSELAER RISING:
EXISTING CONDITIONS AND ANALYSIS**

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.

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

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 of the area, 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.

Waterfront Mixed Use (MU-2)

In the study area, Waterfront Mixed Use zoning covers the Zappala Block property 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.

RENSELAER RISING:

EXISTING CONDITIONS AND ANALYSIS

Open Space and Conservation district (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.

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.

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

RENSELAER RISING: EXISTING CONDITIONS AND ANALYSIS

accommodations, including an interconnected network of sidewalks, landscaping, and rear or side lot parking development.

Industrial

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 areas where industrial uses have historically been concentrated and will be continued.

All industrial operations must respect adjacent transitional areas through the incorporation of buffers, design guidelines, and compliance with performance standards.

RENSELAER RISING: EXISTING CONDITIONS AND ANALYSIS

BROWNFIELD, ABANDONED, AND VACANT SITES

Brownfield Sites

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 sites” is not intended to indicate a site that requires immediate assessment and/or remediation. Rather, it is intended to identify potential impediments to development and inform sites that may be eligible for BOA Pre-Development funding to spur private investment.

To identify potential brownfield sites, 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, USEPA Envirofacts Database, and Parcel Assessment database. After reviewing all the following resources, in total, about 11.4 acres of land within the study area were identified as potential brownfield sites made up of parcels that are a part of a remediation program or have a bulk storage facility on-site. While these sites 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.

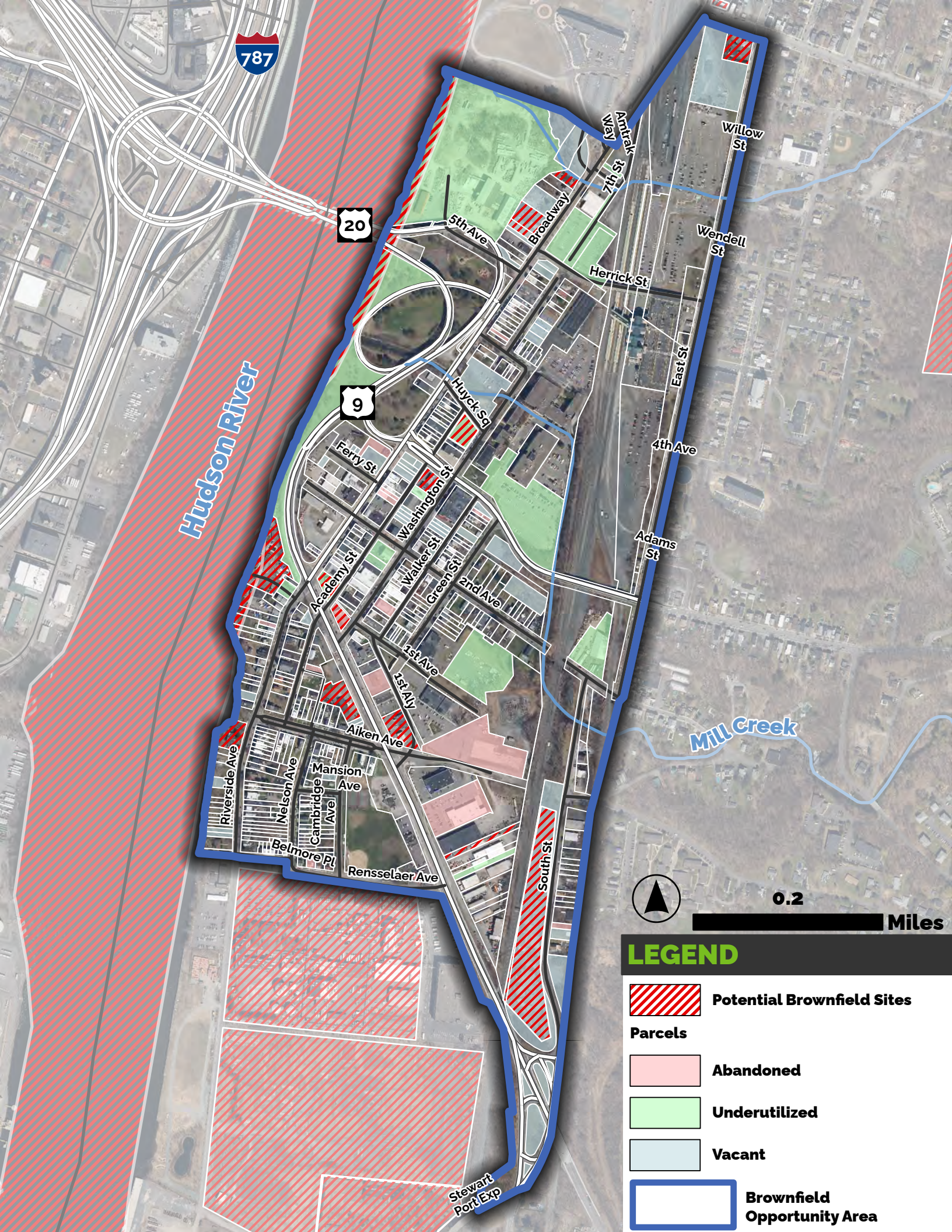
Of note, there is an active resource conservation and recovery site in the southeast of the study area. The site was used by Ashland Inc. as a chemical distribution facility until operations were discontinued in 2001. The buildings and associated structures were demolished in 2009 and the 4.8-acre site 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 for downtown mixed use

KEY TAKEAWAYS: BROWNFIELD, ABANDONED AND VACANT SITES

The study area has 11.4 acres of land that were identified as potential brownfield sites. 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.



787

20

9

Hudson River

Mill Creek

Riverside Ave

Nelson Ave

Cambridge Ave

Belmore Pl

Mansion Ave

Aiken Ave

Rensselaer Ave

1st Ave

1st Aly

Academy St

Ferry St

Walker St

Green St

2nd Ave

1st Ave

1st Aly

1st Ave

1st Ave

1st Ave

1st Ave

1st Ave

1st Ave

1st Ave

1st Ave

1st Ave

1st Ave

1st Ave

1st Ave

1st Ave

1st Ave

1st Ave

1st Ave

1st Ave

1st Ave

1st Ave

1st Ave

1st Ave

1st Ave

Stewart Port Exp

South St

Adams St

4th Ave

East St

Wendell St

Willow St

Herrick St

7th St

Antarak Way

Broadway

5th Ave

Huyck Sq

Washington St

Washington St

Washington St

Washington St

Washington St

Washington St

Washington St

Washington St

Washington St

Washington St

Washington St

Washington St

Washington St

Washington St

Washington St

Washington St

Washington St

Washington St

Washington St

Washington St

Washington St

Washington St



0.2

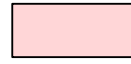
Miles

LEGEND

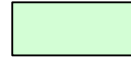


Potential Brownfield Sites

Parcels



Abandoned



Underutilized



Vacant



Brownfield Opportunity Area

RENSELAER RISING: EXISTING CONDITIONS AND ANALYSIS

and planned development district use. Between 1870 and 1920, gas plant operations contaminated the site and resulted in contaminated groundwater and soil.

There are also twelve petroleum bulk storage sites within the area, five of which are auto oriented locations. Two of the bulk storage sites are vacant and one is abandoned.

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, the building utilization survey, and input from the Steering 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).

RENSELAER RISING: EXISTING CONDITIONS AND ANALYSIS

LAND OWNERSHIP PATTERNS

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 land 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. The use of these portions of land, because they are largely used for railroad functions or public transit, are not expected to change significantly.

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.

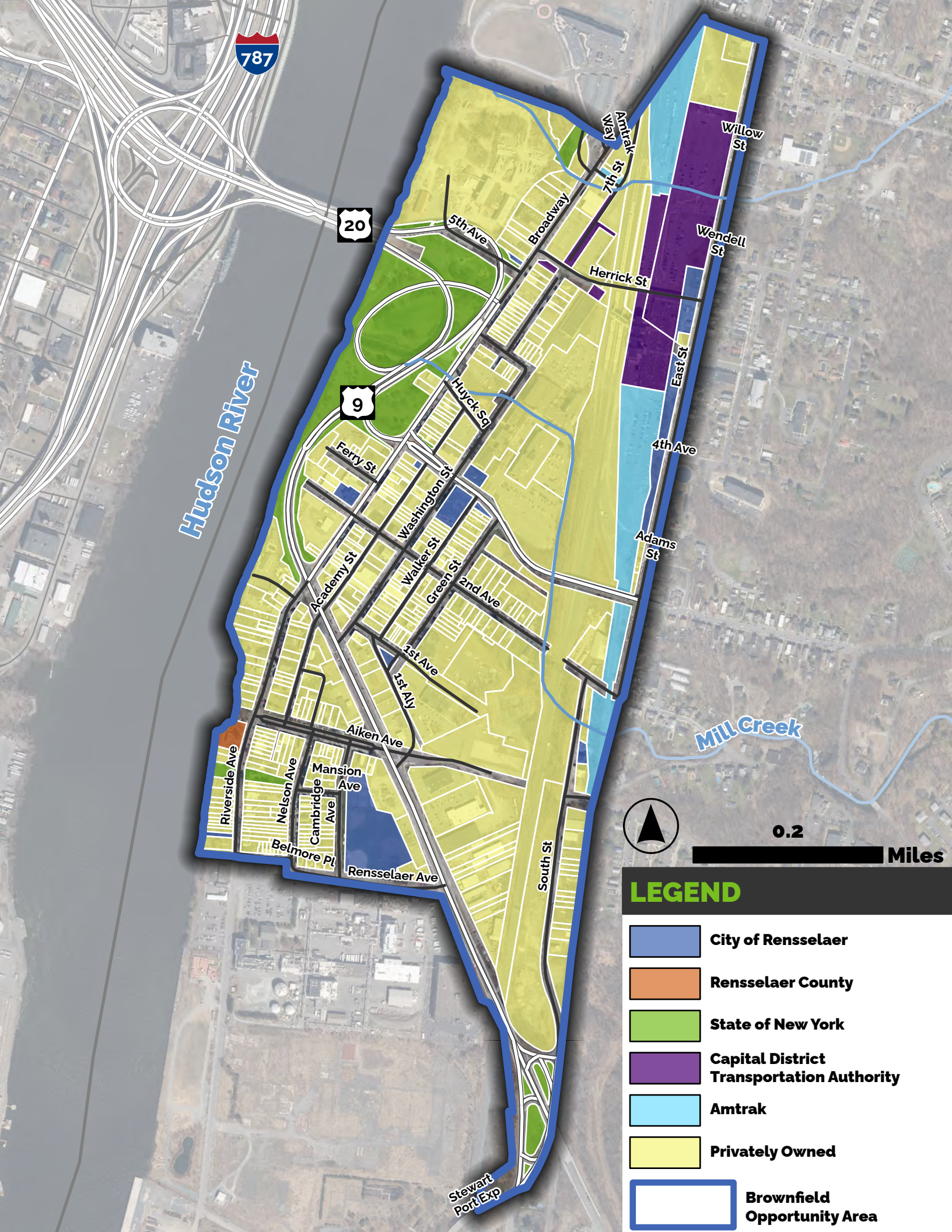
KEY TAKEAWAYS: LAND OWNERSHIP

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.



Hudson River

Mill Creek

787

20

9

0.2

Miles

LEGEND

- City of Rensselaer
- Rensselaer County
- State of New York
- Capital District Transportation Authority
- Amtrak
- Privately Owned
- Brownfield Opportunity Area

Riverside Ave

Nelson Ave

Cambridge Ave

Belmore Pl

Mansion Ave

Cambridge Ave

Rensselaer Ave

Aiken Ave

Academy St

Ferry St

1st Ave

1st Aly

Walker St

Washington St

Green St

2nd Ave

South St

1st Ave

Green St

Walker St

Washington St

Huyck Sq

5th Ave

Broadway

Herrick St

7th St

Amtrak Way

Adams St

4th Ave

East St

Wendell St

Willow St

Stewart Port Exp

RENSELAER RISING: EXISTING CONDITIONS AND ANALYSIS

PARKS AND OPEN SPACE

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. 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 will start 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 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. Looking forward, there are several planned improvements at the park. \$396,000 in CDBG funding is being used for new playground equipment, waste management, picnic tables, water bottle filling stations, and more. There are also 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 park in the study area and seems to serve the community well.

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

KEY TAKEAWAYS: 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.



787

Rensselaer Riverfront Esplanade

Riverfront Trail

20

Hudson Riverfront Art Park

9

Huyck Memorial Park

Rensselaer Sprinkler Park

Plum Street Park

Crailo Greenspace

First & Green Triangle

Empire State Trail

Coyne Field



0.2

Miles

LEGEND



Parks and Open Space



Trails



Proposed Trails



Hudson River Access Points



Brownfield Opportunity Area

Hudson River

Mill Creek

Riverside Ave

Nelson Ave

Cambridge Ave

Mansion Ave

Belmore Pl

Rensselaer Ave

Aiken Ave

1st Ave

1st Aly

1st Ave

2nd Ave

Green St

Walker St

Washington St

Ferry St

Academy St

1st Ave

1st Ave

2nd Ave

Stewart Port Exp

South St

Adams St

4th Ave

East St

Wendell St

Willow St

Herrick St

Broadway

7th St

Anttrak Way

RENSELAER RISING: EXISTING CONDITIONS AND ANALYSIS

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.

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.

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.

RENSELAER RISING:

EXISTING CONDITIONS AND ANALYSIS

HISTORIC AND ARCHAEOLOGICALLY SIGNIFICANT RESOURCES

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 and Broadway Avenues. These buildings help to maintain a historic feel to the neighborhood but are mixed in with several other style 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.

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 archaeological 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.



787

20

9

Hudson River

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

Harder Mill

Mill Creek

Irwin, W.P. Bank Building

Aiken House

Fort Crailo



0.2

Miles

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

RENSELAER RISING: EXISTING CONDITIONS AND ANALYSIS

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 Aiken house can help contribute to a community's overall character and can provide focal points for development in the area.

RENSELAER RISING:

EXISTING CONDITIONS AND ANALYSIS

TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS

Roadway Network

Surface roadways are the most prominent form of travel in Rensselaer. This results in both an ease of connection with surrounding cities, and a challenge to pedestrian development while leaving a disjointed feel throughout the community. Additionally, current ramps and roadways in the study area limit views of and physical access to the waterfront in the City.

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 are frequently trafficked including 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.

With such significant traffic flow along many of the roads making up the area, pedestrian friendly infrastructure is made more challenging in the community. Despite the disjointed nature of the roadways however, the ease of access to major highways connecting Rensselaer with other major cities provides an opportunity for the City to capture more of this traffic for longer stops in the community. The major roadways also provide easy connection to the Amtrak station, which brings people in and out of the area every day.

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

KEY TAKEAWAYS: TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS

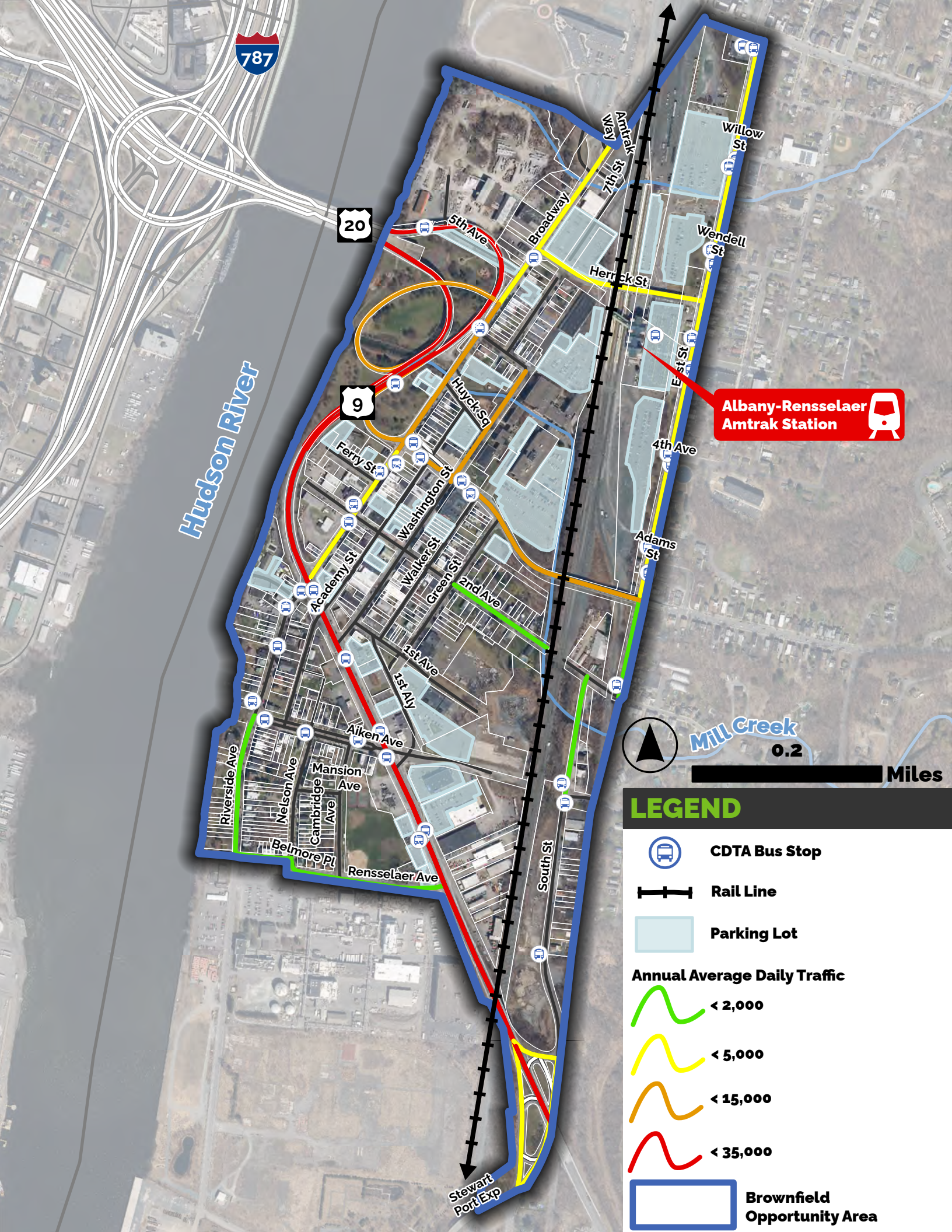
The study area is divided by several major roadways, off-ramps, and the Dunn Memorial Bridge. This limits safe development for pedestrians due to the heavy traffic through the community.

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.

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



787

20

9

Hudson River

Mill Creek
0.2

Miles

Albany-Rensselaer
Amtrak Station

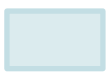
LEGEND



CDTA Bus Stop



Rail Line



Parking Lot

Annual Average Daily Traffic

< 2,000

< 5,000

< 15,000

< 35,000



Brownfield
Opportunity Area

Riverside Ave

Nelson Ave

Cambridge Ave

Belmore Pl

Mansion Ave

Aiken Ave

1st Ave

1st Aly

1st Ave

2nd Ave

Green St

Walker St

Washington St

Ferry St

Academy St

Huyck Sq

Broadway

7th St

Herrick St

East St

4th Ave

Adams St

Willow St

Wendell St

South St

Rensselaer Ave

Stewart Port Exp

RENSELAER RISING: EXISTING CONDITIONS AND ANALYSIS

look and feel of significant areas of paved roads and parking lots can prove to be a challenge.

Nine percent of the designated commercial land use in the study area is currently used for parking lots and garages. While sufficient parking is helpful for a community with such heavy road traffic, existing parking lots provide an opportunity for the City to consider alternate uses for pedestrians, cyclists, green spaces, or other goals of the community. Heavy car traffic, busy roadways, and large areas of parking can make the community feel disjointed and heavily vehicle dependent.

Parking exists on large lots across the study area beyond the nine percent of parcels designated for parking as well. 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 which seems underutilized day to day. 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.

Rail Services

Rail service is a major component of the built environment and transportation services within the study area and the community. A busy rail station can be an opportunity for the City to capitalize on the number of people coming into the area each day.

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 Rensselaer Rail Station from Crossgates Mall with major stops in downtown Albany. Route 214 also runs in the area along Herrick Street,

RENSELAER RISING: EXISTING CONDITIONS AND ANALYSIS

Broadway, and Third Avenue. Route 214 connects from the Empire State Plaza to East Greenbush Tech Park via Rensselaer.

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 and cyclist access in the community. Part of this work can be done as a part of the planned 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 connectivity of the existing trail running through the study area.

RENSELAER RISING: EXISTING CONDITIONS AND ANALYSIS

INFRASTRUCTURE

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.

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.

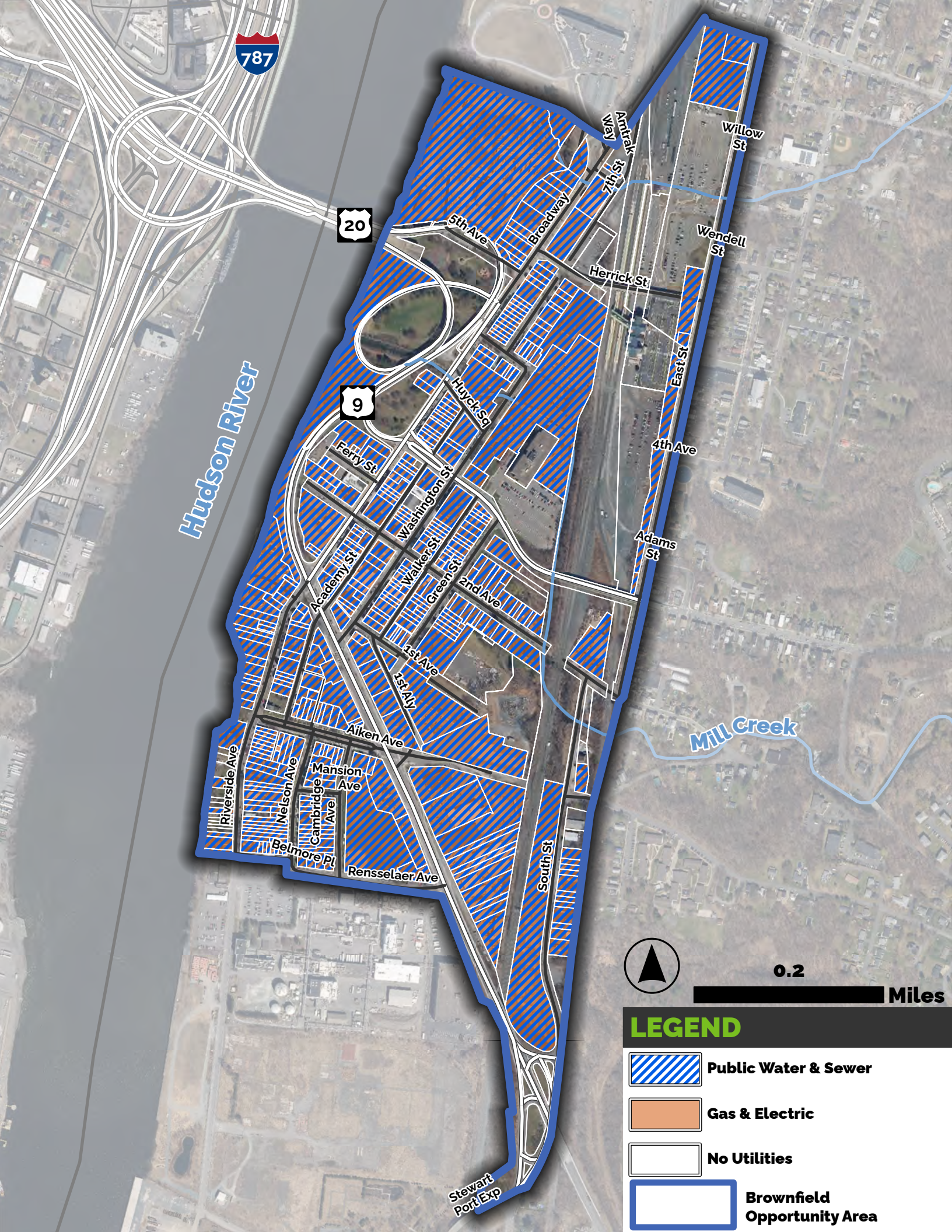
KEY TAKEAWAYS: INFRASTRUCTURE

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.



787

20

9

Hudson River

Mill Creek

Riverside Ave

Nelson Ave

Cambridge Ave

Belmore Pl

Mansion Ave

Cambridge Ave

Rensselaer Ave

Aiken Ave

1st Ave

1st Aly

1st Ave

2nd Ave

Green St

Walker St

Washington St

Ferry St

Huyck Sq

5th Ave

Broadway

Herrick St

7th St

Anttrak Way

Adams St

4th Ave

East St

Wendell St

Willow St

South St

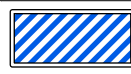
Stewart Port Exp



0.2

Miles

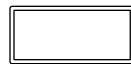
LEGEND



Public Water & Sewer



Gas & Electric



No Utilities



Brownfield Opportunity Area

RENSELAER RISING:

EXISTING CONDITIONS AND ANALYSIS

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 storm water 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.

RENSELAER RISING: EXISTING CONDITIONS AND ANALYSIS

NATURAL RESOURCES & ENVIRONMENTAL FEATURES

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. The entire study area falls within what is designated as a disadvantaged community according to the Climate Justice Working group. Additionally, much of the study area falls within Potential Environmental Justice areas (PEJAs), as designated by the DEC. Under the New York Climate Act, it was recognized that climate change does not affect all communities equally, so the disadvantaged community and PEJA designation helps prioritize environmental protection to those areas.

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 flood plain will present a challenge for the City as it considers development. As a result, careful planning will have to occur to account for changes to new or renovated structures to minimize future flooding risks and damage to existing properties.

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

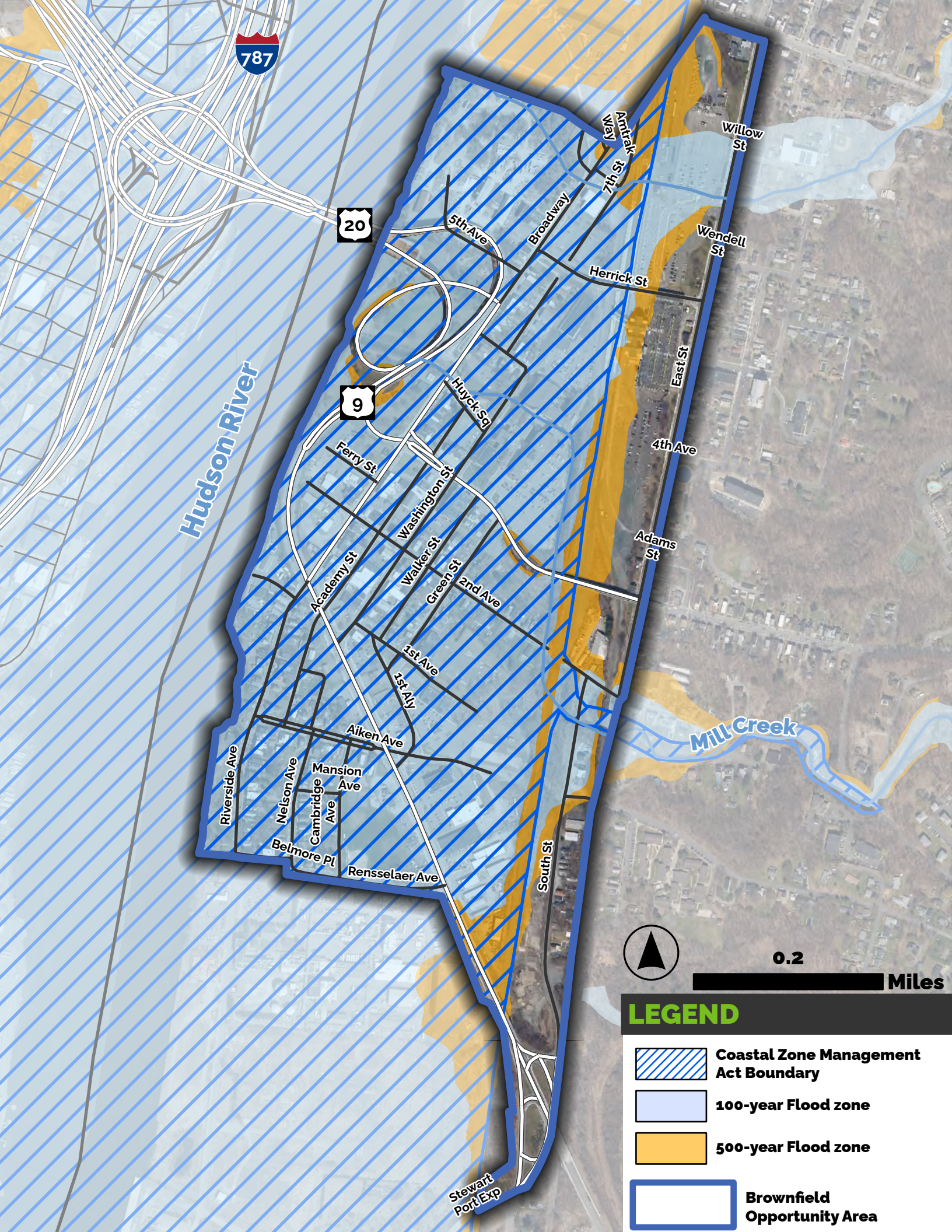
KEY TAKEAWAYS: NATURAL RESOURCES

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.



787

20

9

Hudson River

Mill Creek

Riverside Ave

Nelson Ave

Cambridge Ave

Belmore Pl

Mansion Ave

Rensselaer Ave

Aiken Ave

1st Ave

1st Aly

Academy St

Ferry St

Washington St

Walker St

Green St

2nd Ave

Huyck Sq

5th Ave

Broadway

Herrick St

East St

4th Ave

Adams St

Wendell St

Willow St

7th St

Anttrak Way

South St

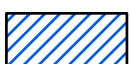
Stewart Port Exp



0.2

Miles

LEGEND



Coastal Zone Management Act Boundary



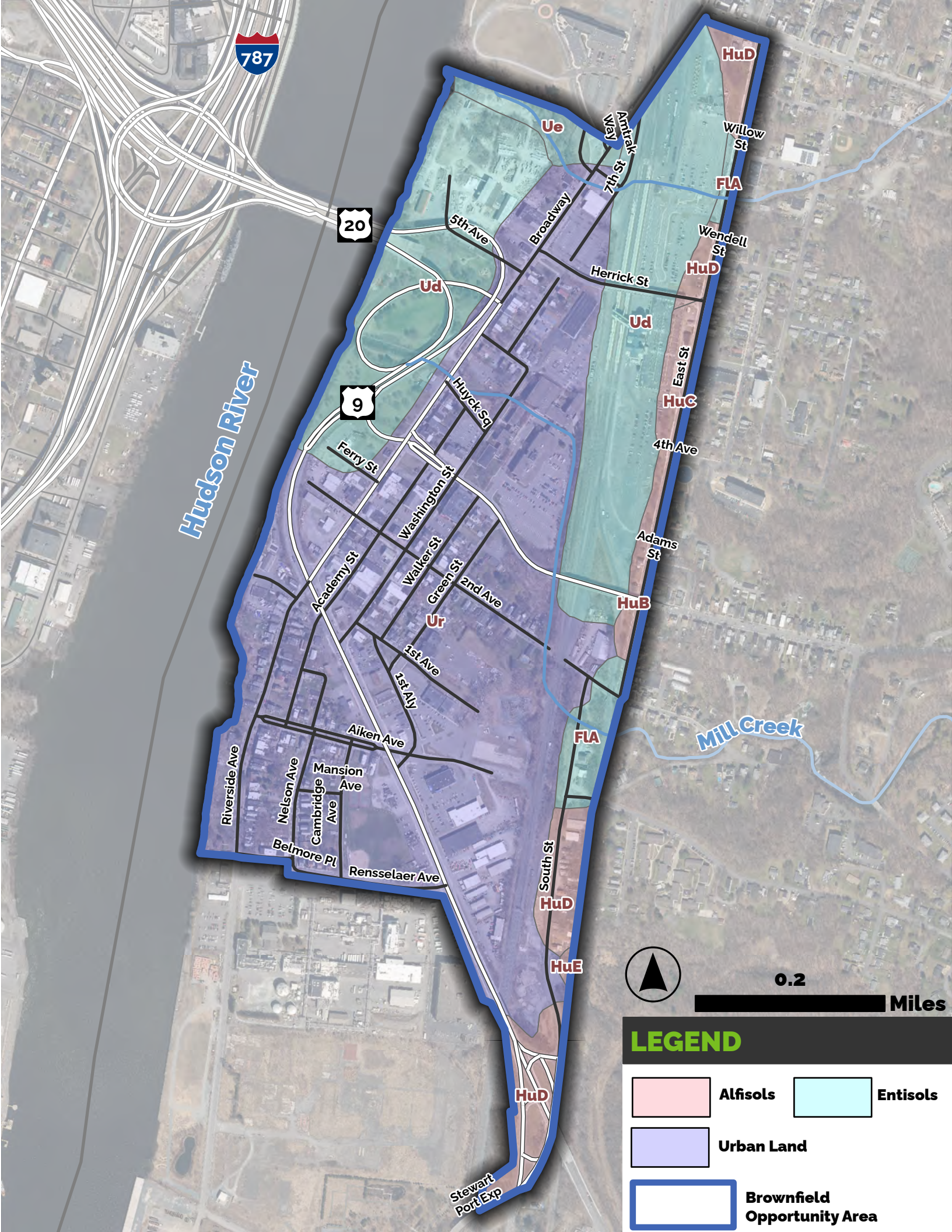
100-year Flood zone



500-year Flood zone



Brownfield Opportunity Area



787

20

9

Hudson River

Mill Creek

Riverside Ave
Nelson Ave
Mansion Ave
Cambridge Ave
Belmore Pl
Rensselaer Ave

Ferry St
Academy St
Washington St
Walker St
Green St
2nd Ave
1st Ave
1st Aly
Aiken Ave

5th Ave

Huyck Sq

Broadway

Herrick St

4th Ave

Adams St

7th St

Anttrak Way

Willow St

Wendell St

South St

Stewart Port Exp

HuD

FLA

HuD

Ud

HuC

HuB

FLA

HuD

HuE

HuD

Ud

Ur

Ue

0.2

Miles

LEGEND

- Alfisols
- Entisols
- Urban Land
- Brownfield Opportunity Area



**RENSELAER RISING:
EXISTING CONDITIONS AND ANALYSIS**

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.

RENSELAER RISING:

EXISTING CONDITIONS AND ANALYSIS

ECONOMIC AND 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, in conjunction with the analysis of the local and regional context, sets realistic assumptions, identifies the area's redevelopment potential, and helps establish which sites should be targeted for redevelopment and the appropriate timing for redevelopment.

Existing Economic Conditions

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 area 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), and 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.

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.

RENSELAER RISING: EXISTING CONDITIONS AND ANALYSIS

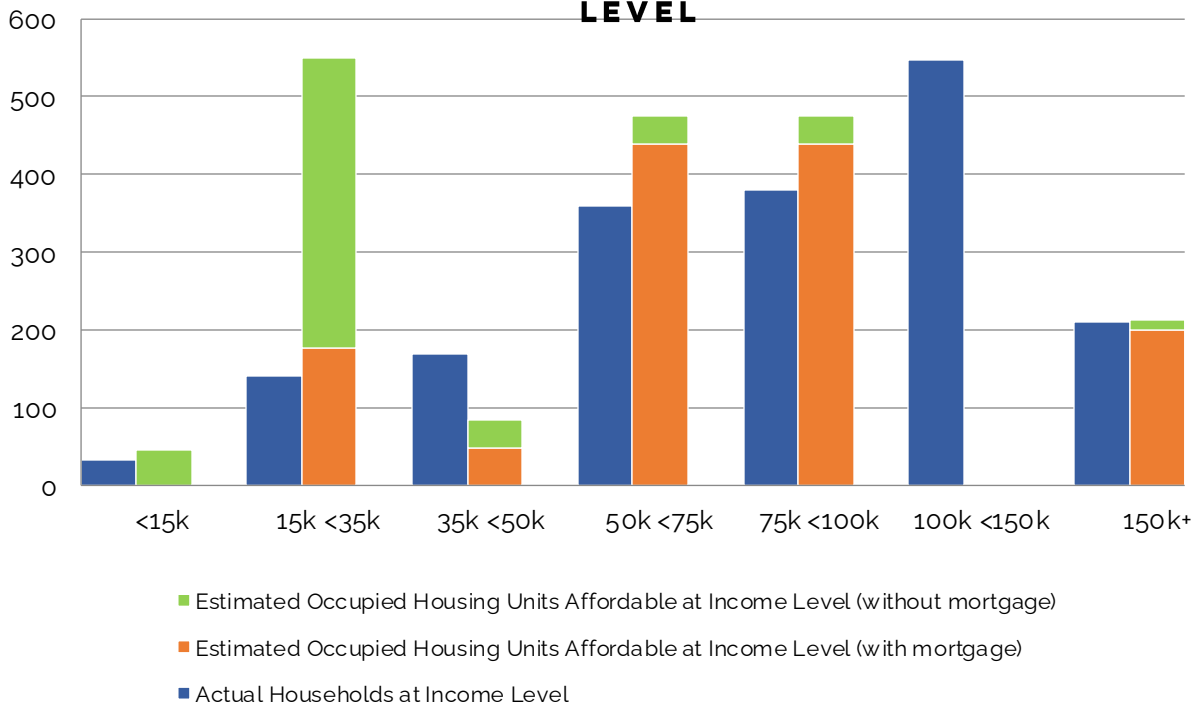
Housing

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 demand of households today, and future demands by 2040.

Current Housing Market

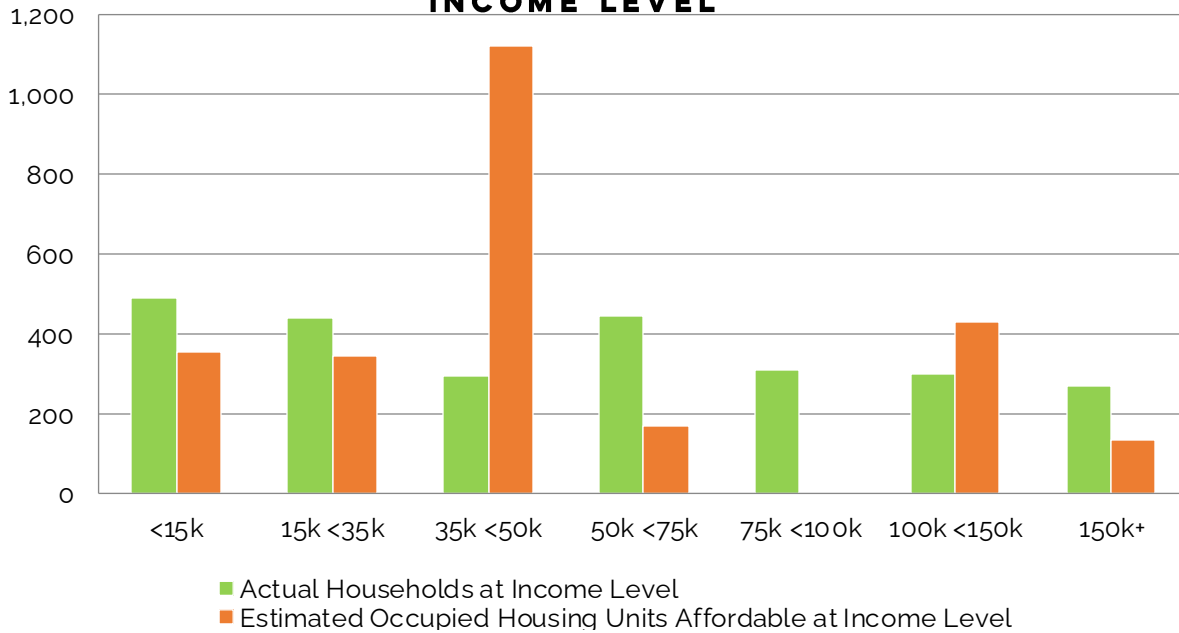
Owner household incomes (demand) were compared with occupied units affordable by income level (supply) to identify current gaps in the market. Notably, there is an insufficient supply of owner-occupied housing in the City for households earning \$35,000 to \$50,000, and \$100,000 to \$150,000 and an oversupply of units for households earning \$15,000 to \$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. As shown in the chart below, most rental units in the City are at rates that are affordable to households earning between \$35,000 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).

**RENSELAER RISING:
EXISTING CONDITIONS AND ANALYSIS
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 housing market. Growth projections used in this analysis were developed based on household size trends at the City level and County level populations 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 expected to be rental housing and 190 would 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 of the housing supply being multifamily homes and much of the remaining supply being split between small lot and standard large lot single family homes.

RENSELAER RISING: EXISTING CONDITIONS AND ANALYSIS

2040 INCREMENTAL HOUSING DEMAND IN RENSELAER 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 (30%)	\$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	381
Surplus Rental Units	-	-	341	-	-	-	-	-
Owner Housing Needs								
Target Affordable Home Value (250%)	<\$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	190
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 Business 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, including Skyline Diner, Illusive Restaurant and Bar, Cugino's Pizza, Son of Egg, Thai Orchid, and Dunkin Donuts. 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, furniture and home furnishing stores, and general merchandise stores.

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

RENSELAER RISING: EXISTING CONDITIONS AND ANALYSIS

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

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.

Emerald City denizens live in lower-density neighborhoods of urban areas throughout the Country. Young and mobile, they are more likely to rent. Half have a college degree and a professional occupation. Incomes close to the US 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

RENSELAER RISING: EXISTING CONDITIONS AND ANALYSIS

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. 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.

Notable in the tapestry segments are that many of the above describe 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.

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.

RENSELAEER RISING: EXISTING CONDITIONS AND ANALYSIS

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, these MPI findings 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.

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 last year, 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 across the river, 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

RENSELAER RISING: EXISTING CONDITIONS AND ANALYSIS

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. High LQ scores, or scores of 1.0 or more, show the strengths of a community to build from. With Rensselaer County, scoring high in terms of 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 one provide an opportunity for communities to pursue investment in job creation there. 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, 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

RENSELAER RISING:

EXISTING CONDITIONS AND ANALYSIS

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.