

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

The City of Binghamton, New York and its neighborhoods, which include the East Side, have seen many changes in recent decades. As with many cities located in the country's "Rust Belt", the economic downturn in this area has had profound physical and social effects that can be seen all around the community. Evidence of these effects includes a number of abandoned businesses, and many brownfields, vacant lots, and neglected homes. This has led to a loss of sense of place.

Once referred to as the "Valley of Opportunity" by arriving immigrants, the Parlor City, Binghamton's nickname which stems from the prevalence of neat, tree-lined streets and attractive homes, was home to a population of 85,000, but as of the 2000 Census that population was down to 47,380. Binghamton's importance to the national defense industry is such that it was ranked as the seventh most likely location for a nuclear attack during the Cold War, a tribute to its economic power. However, following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, Greater Binghamton's prosperity began to deteriorate rapidly, a problem that was exacerbated by the relocation of many businesses to places more central to their operations.

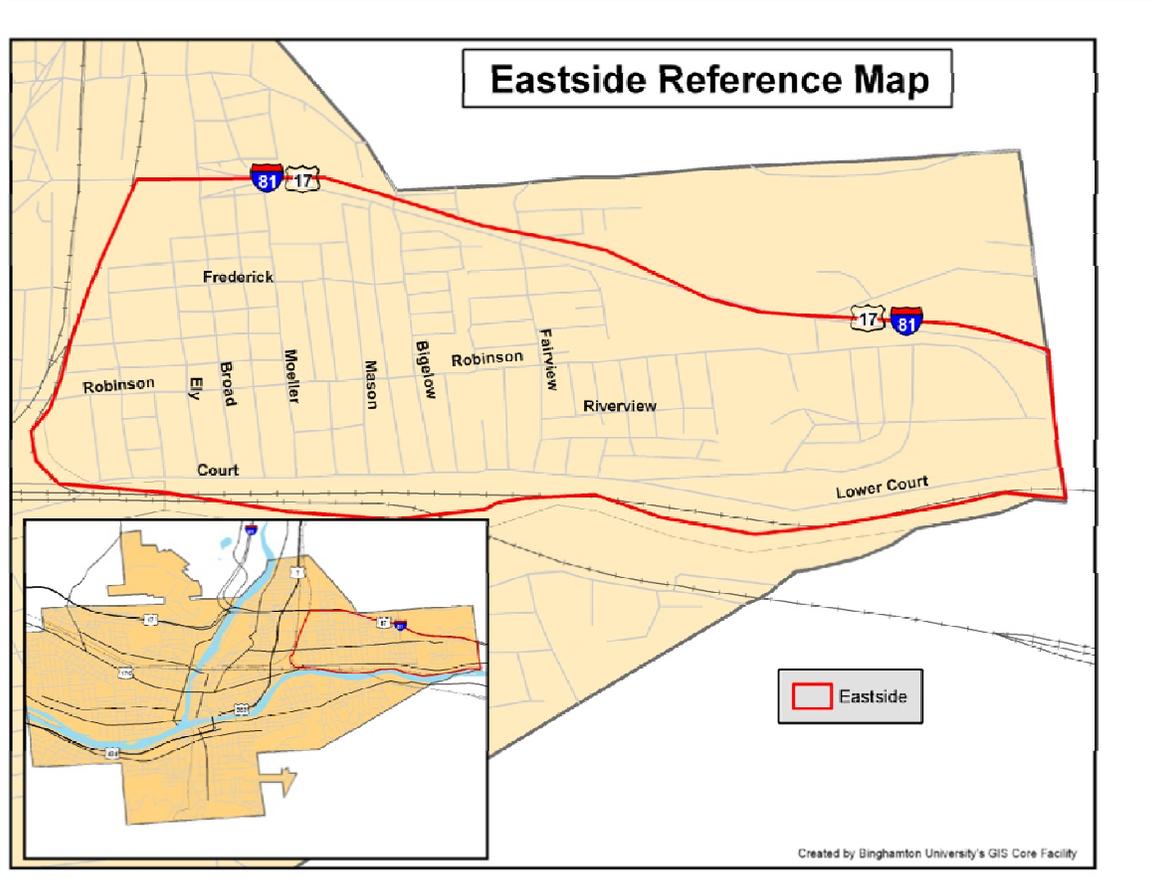
Today Binghamton enjoys a variety of diverse neighborhoods housing a variety of social and economic activities. These neighborhoods can best be divided as follows:

- Downtown Binghamton, the area's central business district and governmental center;
- the West Side, characterized by older, large homes;
- the First Ward, a neighborhood situated at the foot of Mount Prospect;
- the South Side of Binghamton, a re-emerging, residential and commercial area;
- the North Side, a neighborhood with a large industrial presence;
- Ely Park, a hill-top development on Mount Prospect and finally,
- the East Side, a middle income neighborhood which is home to some 2,000 households, a small but established commercial district and the Binghamton Health Center.

This plan focuses on the East Side neighborhood. It is hoped that revitalization of the East Side of Binghamton will lead to the sort of population and investment that helped make the Parlor City a truly successful economic engine. Specifically the focus is on redeveloping the core area of the East Side, the Robinson Street corridor, anticipating that a public investment in this area that will lead to additional private investments across the rest of the East Side and possibly across the city.

The Robinson Street corridor is delineated by the intersection of Griswold Street and the State Hospital complex (see Figure 1.1). However, the intersections of Robinson Street and Broad Avenue and Robinson Street and Fairview Avenue mark the commercial heart of the East Side. This document approaches revitalization at two levels: the entire Robinson Street corridor and the area around the Cameo Theater.

Figure 1.1 East Side Study Area



## 2.0 PROCESS

In August, 2007 faculty of the Department of Geography at Binghamton University were approached by the City of Binghamton's Planning Department to provide consulting services for an East Side Revitalization Strategy. The East Side Revitalization Strategy was funded through the 2005 Quality Communities Demonstration Project. Under the grant, the consultants were to develop a guide that included the following elements:

- Creation of an organizational structure between the City, the neighborhood and the consultants to guide the preparation of this strategy and provide substantial public outreach and participation.