BINGHAMTON, NY
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON

FORWARD TOGETHER

a citizen-driven plan for
BINGHAMTON'S FUTURE

INTERFACE-STUDIO
REAL ESTATE STRATEGIES
CIVIC ECONOMICS
SAM SCHWARTZ ENGINEERING
SHUMAKER ENGINEERING
VIBRANT CREATIVE
CODE STUDIO

ADOPTED 08.01.2014

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON: FORWARD TOGETHER is the 2014 update of the City of Binghamton's Comprehensive Plan. The City received a Community Challenge Planning Grant from the **U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING & URBAN DEVELOPMENT (HUD)** to fund this citizen-driven effort to plan for our collective future. Thank you to HUD and to everyone in the Binghamton community who volunteered their time and talents, ideas, expertise, and resources to help us move our City forward together. While a full list of the thousands of residents and stakeholders who participated in the Blueprint Binghamton planning process is impossible to produce, the Appendix includes a more extensive listing of those who gave of their time in interviews and focus groups.

Special thanks to the **BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON** Steering Committee members who provided guidance throughout the process, and to our Community Partners who generously shared their resources, talents, and time through in-kind donations.

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BINGHAMTON NEIGHBORHOOD PROJECT,
for developing and administering a citywide survey to inform the creation of this plan
CITIZENS BANK,
for sponsoring the Blueprint Binghamton Community Discussion series
LIVABLE COMMUNITIES ALLIANCE,
for sponsoring a Blueprint Binghamton Community Discussion as well
PYRAMID BROKERAGE,
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for including the Project Design Studio among the creative spaces featured at the monthly First Fridays Art Walk
QUARTER YELLOW,
for curating and installing an exhibit of local artists in conjunction with the opening of the Project Design Studio
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for sharing your talent and providing entertainment during the special youth edition of the Project Design Studio
B-METS,
for sending the mascot, Buddy the Bee, to support the special youth edition of the Project Design Studio

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SPECIAL THANKS also for the time and effort dedicated to the creation of Blueprint Binghamton by former City staff and elected officials:

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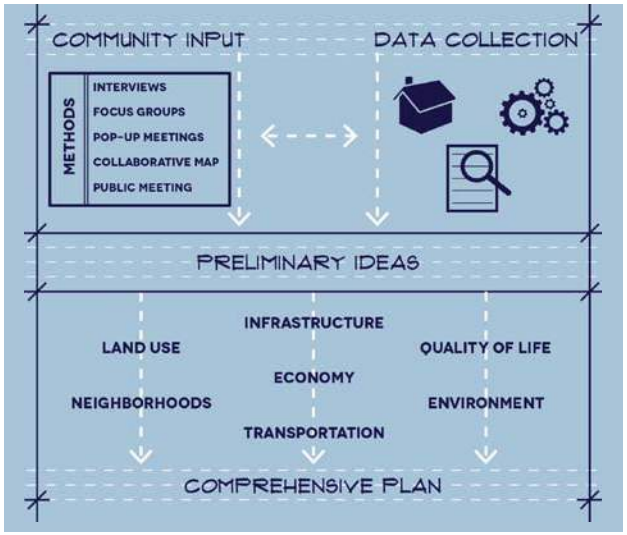
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BLUEPRINT
BINGHAMTON

PROJECT BACKGROUND

BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON: FORWARD TOGETHER is the 2014 update of the City of Binghamton's Comprehensive Plan, a citizen-driven effort to plan for Binghamton's future and move our City forward together. In 2011, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) awarded the City a Community Challenge Planning Grant* to update the Comprehensive Plan and develop a corridor plan focused specifically on the design and redevelopment of Court and Main Streets. The planning process began in the fall of 2012, and included input from thousands of people. Their input, combined with an analysis of Binghamton today, form the vision for the City's future and the basis for the action areas of the Plan.



WHAT IS A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN?

Since the last Comprehensive Plan in 2003, new businesses and housing have brought new life to Downtown; the City's population has stabilized, and the waterfront trail and parks have given a boost to the quality of life and regional image of Binghamton.

But there is still a lot to do to keep the City's infrastructure and neighborhoods in good shape, advance the local economy, and fully realize the potential of Binghamton's educational assets. Even more pressing, the devastating floods of the last few years have made it clear that the City must think proactively and prepare for tomorrow, today.

That is where a Comprehensive Plan comes in. A Comprehensive Plan is a State-mandated document that describes the City's policies and actions related to Binghamton's land use, neighborhoods, transportation, infrastructure, the economy, the environment and quality of life. Updating the Comprehensive Plan now provides the opportunity to build on the positive initiatives already in full swing while proactively tackling new challenges. The Comprehensive Plan, involving extensive community outreach, also provides a framework for the development of programmatic goals and budgetary planning for the upcoming 2015-2020 HUD Consolidated Plan, which identifies housing and community development priorities through community-wide dialogue.

PLANNING PROCESS

BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON: FORWARD TOGETHER is the culmination of a year and a half-long planning process that sought to involve everyone with a stake in the City of Binghamton. The **BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON** planning process had four main phases:

- **PHASE 1: ANALYSIS OF EXISTING CONDITIONS** - The first phase of work was all about studying the City in detail, collecting data, conducting interviews, and listening to the concerns and ideas of the Binghamton community.
- **PHASE 2: VISION + RECOMMENDATIONS** -The second phase of work was about imagining the way things could be. The vision statement for Binghamton tomorrow blends all of the hopes and dreams that people shared and organizes those aspirations into key goals for the City and their partners to work toward.
- **PHASE 3: PLAN DEVELOPMENT** - The third phase of work brought the analysis, vision, and recommendations together into one plan - this Plan - complete with many pictures and quotes to reflect the citizen-driven process. This plan includes the action steps necessary to make our shared vision a reality.
- **PHASE 4: FORM-BASED CODE FOR THE COURT STREET-MAIN STREET CORRIDOR** - The fourth phase of the planning process provided an opportunity to kick-start implementation through the drafting of a form-based code for consideration as new zoning for Court and Main streets.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The overarching goal of **BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON** was to ensure that this update to our City's Comprehensive Plan would be a community-driven effort to move our City **FORWARD TOGETHER**, so public involvement was a central component of each phase in the planning process. We committed to a robust, equitable and meaningful public process, and we dreamt up and implemented an innovative approach to outreach and engagement in order to reach and reflect the diversity of our Binghamton community. As a community, we had FUN as we worked together on this Plan!

THOUSANDS of people who live, work, worship, learn, and play in Binghamton participated in the planning process between Fall 2012 and Spring 2014, making time to share their visions, hopes, and dreams for the next decade in the life of our City. **MANY THANKS TO EACH AND EVERY ONE OF YOU.**

PUBLIC OUTREACH - TO DATE

BINGHAMTON NEIGHBORHOOD PROJECT SURVEY	454
INTERVIEW / FOCUS GROUP ATTENDEES	101
COMMUNITY DISCUSSION ATTENDEES	422
FACEBOOK FRIENDS	400
TWITTER FOLLOWERS	185
UNIQUE WEBSITE VISITORS	3,889
OPEN HOUSE VISITORS	1,000+
VISION STATEMENTS	72
BIG IDEAS	170
COLLABORATIVE MAP COMMENTS	361
MEETING IN A BOX	85+
STUDENTS IN THE CLASSROOM	230+
KIDS OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM	80+

* *The work that provided the basis for this publication was supported by funding under an award with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The substance and findings of the work are dedicated to the public. The author and publisher are solely responsible for the accuracy of the statements and interpretations contained in this publication. Such interpretations do not necessarily reflect the views of the Government.*

OPPORTUNITIES FOR PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

To foster a truly citizen-driven process, **BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON** employed a range of strategies to meet the people of our City, learn from their unique perspectives, and use their local knowledge to inform the creation of the plan. Opportunities for learning and sharing, involvement and action included:

- **TRADITIONAL MEETINGS** with the public, with community groups, and with the Steering Committee convened to help guide the process

- **A CITYWIDE SURVEY**, developed and administered (both online and door-to-door) by the Binghamton Neighborhood Project, that reached **454 RESIDENTS** across the city (see summary on next page)

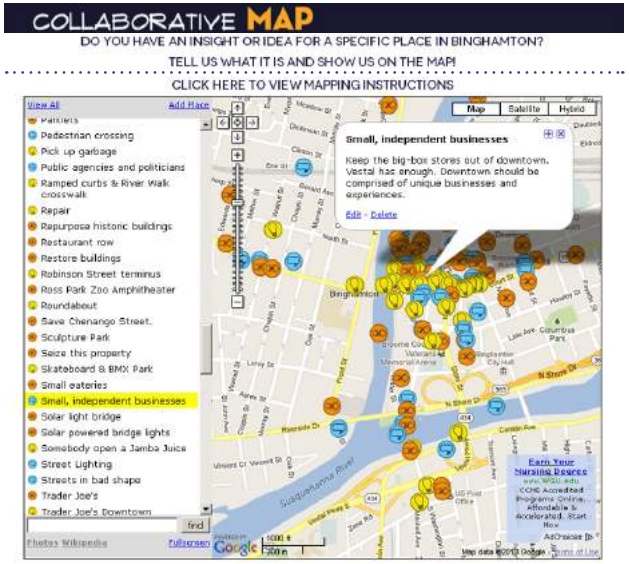
- **INTERVIEWS AND FOCUS GROUPS** with more than **120 RESIDENT/COMMUNITY EXPERTS** on topics from community health to infrastructure, housing to commercial districts, transportation to zoning and design, the elderly in Binghamton to the youth of Binghamton

- A series of free lunchtime **COMMUNITY DISCUSSIONS** that explored different community development issues - **442 PEOPLE** attended the first round of seven community discussions, which addressed:
  - Green Infrastructure
  - Placemaking & Economic Development
  - Trends in Residential Markets
  - Energy Efficiency for Businesses
  - Historic Preservation & Adaptive Reuse
  - Environmental Justice: Blight, Brownfields & Land Banks
  - Public Health & Community Design

- A **PROJECT WEBSITE [WWW.BLUEPRINTBINGHAMTON.COM]** that catalogued the planning process, public events, results, and findings and invited input and interaction through mini-surveys and an online collaborative map. Before the publication of the final Blueprint Binghamton: Forward Together plan, the website had received **3,889 UNIQUE WEB VISITORS!**

- Frequent updates using the powers of the internet to reach a **FACEBOOK** following of **400 PEOPLE**, and a twitter following of **185 PEOPLE**, and counting...

- An evolving series of interactive exhibits hosted in the **PROJECT DESIGN STUDIO**, the Blueprint Binghamton public headquarters and pop-up gallery located in the former First National Bank at 49 Court Street. Over the course of the planning project, the Project Design Studio was open to the public for meetings and events, the biggest of which happened every few months in conjunction with Gorgeous Washington Street Association's First Fridays Art Walk. The Project Design Studio opened its doors to the public five times, and was a HUGE success, drawing **MORE THAN 1,000 VISITORS** who signed in (many more attended and participated in the activities). The space featured exhibits designed to raise awareness of the Plan, ask people to share a bit about themselves, their ideas and insights for the city, their vision, and their priorities for the future of Binghamton.

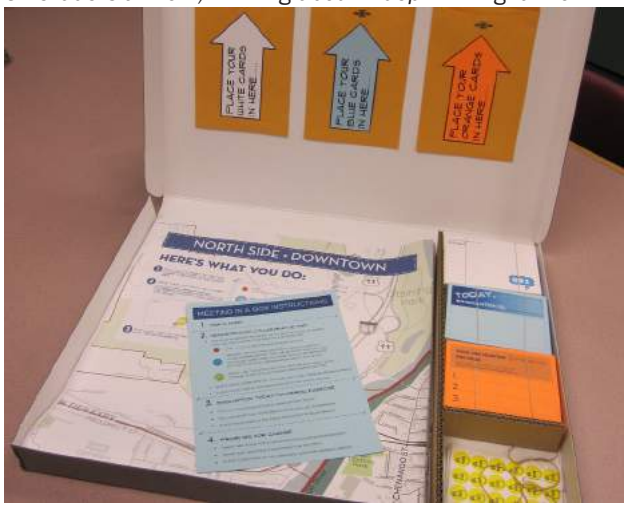


Online Collaborative Map

5th Graders at work, thinking about Blueprint Binghamton

The Pop-Up Gallery

Advertisement for public outreach



Meeting in a Box brought planning activities to neighborhoods

The Pop-Up Gallery

SPECIAL FOCUS ON YOUTH

Binghamton's youth are the future of our City. **BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON** wanted their voice to be heard loud and clear, and their vision for the Binghamton of tomorrow to be central to our planning effort. Working with the Youth Bureau and the Binghamton City School District, City staff visited classrooms with important lessons, cultivating a cadre of concerned citizens and aspiring planners-to-be.

- Over 100 5th graders from Horace Mann and Theodore Roosevelt Elementary Schools wrote and illustrated essays about their neighborhood as it is today, and their ideal neighborhood as they envision it in the future.
- 212 students in 11th and 12th grade at Binghamton High School participated in eight sessions, generating thorough lists of Binghamton's Strengths, Weaknesses, and Suggested Solutions for the future.
- About 20 planning students from Binghamton University participated in a focus group to share their thoughts about what would make them more likely to remain in Binghamton after graduation.
- 40 kids told us what would make Binghamton a safer city at the Stand for Children Anti-Bullying Rally hosted by City Planning staff in Recreation Park.
- 40 kids attended the Juneteenth Celebration in Columbus Park where kids and parents shared their priorities for the City's future.
- More than 200 kids attended the Special Edition Pop-Up Gallery for Kids. City Planning staff, Blueprint Binghamton volunteers, and ten teens from the Cornell Cooperative Extension's Citizen U program hosted a youth-focused version of the Pop-Up Gallery with the interactive exhibits retooled to be kid-friendly.

Photos from the youth events

VISION & PLAN ORGANIZATION

Over the course of the planning process, thousands of people who live, work, learn, and play in Binghamton have made time to share their visions for the next ten years in the life of the City and its evolving story. The rich collection of community inputs resulted in a collective vision for the City:

Our Plan for moving **FORWARD TOGETHER** calls for a **BLUEPRINT FOR A BINGHAMTON** that is:

ZOEY ENJOYS PLAYING AT THE CITY PARKS. ALL OF THEM ARE BEAUTIFUL AND DIVERSE. WE ATE DINNER AT A LOCAL RESTAURANT WITH FRESH, LOCAL INGREDIENTS. EVERY-ONE HERE IS SMILING BECAUSE THEY HAVE ENOUGH TO EAT, PLACES TO PLAY, THEY HAVE JOBS, AND A SENSE OF COMMUNITY. WE ALL HAVE A COMMON BOND AND THAT IS THAT WE ARE PROUD TO BE RESIDENTS OF THE COOLEST CITY IN THE WORLD.

Quote from a "postcard from the future"

THRIVING

with a bustling Downtown and home-grown businesses that create local jobs, driven by our spirit of entrepreneurialism

RESILIENT

a city of safe neighborhoods nestled within a beautiful landscape, where greener design renders the City more resilient to changing weather patterns, and local institutions support a continuum of learning and opportunity for all

HEALTHY

with active citizens who take advantage of the City's walkability, proximity to natural assets and recreation along the rivers

PROUD

with the authenticity of place fostered by our rich cultural and architectural history, emboldened by the growing sense of possibility we celebrate and project a renewed self-image

ALIVE

one of a cadre of small cities across America experiencing a resurgence based on quality of life driven by an engaged public, Binghamton today and tomorrow is a great place in which to raise a family and grow old, a welcoming home to people of all ages, races, ethnicities, and incomes who choose to live here, and more importantly, stay here.

This recommendations that comprise BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON: Forward Together fall within seven topic-specific sections or mini-plans that together comprise the City's new Comprehensive Plan.

BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON's seven mini-plans include:

- **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:** a plan for a city that prospers
- **HOUSING:** a plan for those at home in the city
- **TRANSPORTATION**: a plan for a city that walks, bikes, rides transit...and drives too
- **INFRASTRUCTURE:** a plan for where the rivers meet the city
- **ENVIRONMENT & OPEN SPACE:** a plan for preservation and play
- **LAND USE & ZONING**: a plan for the land
- **COMMUNITY BUILDING:** a plan for neighbors and neighborhoods

The following pages summarize the key issues, goals and strategies associated with each mini-plan.

A

SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The economic development chapter or **BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON MINI-PLAN ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT** speaks to residents' primary concerns about local jobs and businesses. The plan addresses the need to create jobs (and training) for workers of varied skill and education levels, the importance of encouraging new jobs at big companies that require big sites as well as small businesses and start-ups, strategies for promoting businesses that restore vibrancy Downtown, and the benefits of expanding connections between businesses and major institutional anchors. This Plan strives to position Binghamton as a City that businesses choose for its business-friendly environment, creative vibe, and high quality of life offered to employees.

The key to a revitalized Binghamton is economic development and job growth for all residents. Since the closure of the major industries that fueled regional growth, the lack of jobs has remained a constant concern for residents and City leaders alike. The perceptions of the City, combined with the relatively low incomes of local families, have also limited the opportunities for new retail establishments. What were once vibrant industrial and retail corridors are now a reflection of the economic challenges faced by the City.

Despite these challenges, the City has the opportunity to reverse course and capitalize on its inherent assets including its location, infrastructure (freight rail, highways, and utilities) and concentration of jobs Downtown. There is also momentum Downtown with new restaurants and services as well as a significant amount of new student housing to support retail. The recommendations in this chapter address one or more of the following objectives:

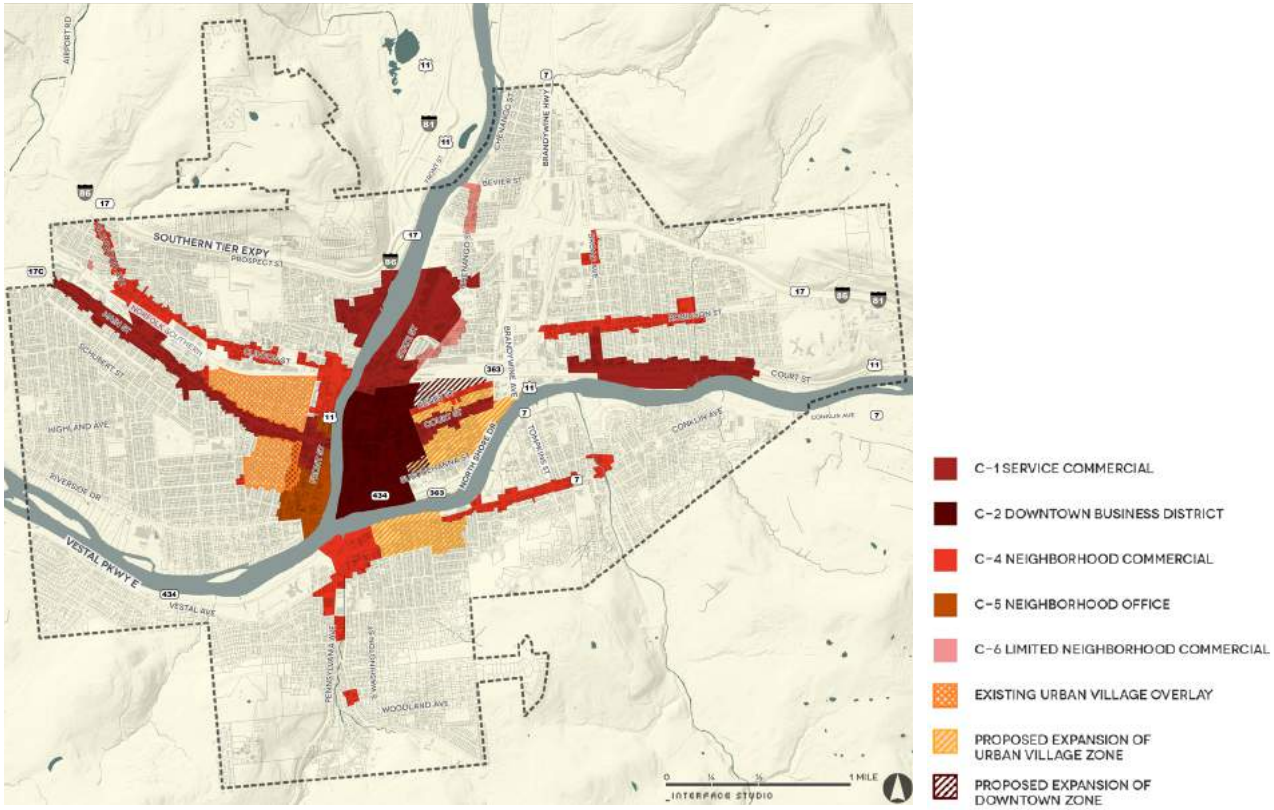
- Encourage **LOCAL ENTREPRENEURIAL ACTIVITY** and help businesses thrive
- Improve downtown as a **REGIONAL DESTINATION** and strengthen neighborhood commercial corridors
- Improve the **IMAGE** of the **CITY**
- Encourage new **INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT**
- Leverage **LOCAL INSTITUTIONS** for local job growth
- Utilize the **ARTS** to help spur economic development

Downtown activities

GOALS	OUTCOMES	KEY STRATEGIES
01 IMPROVE THE IMAGE OF THE CITY AS AN EXCELLENT PLACE TO DO BUSINESS	• Improved perception of the City • Boost in economic development, new jobs and services	• Develop professional branding strategy for the City • Seek "Shovel Ready" designation to enhance marketing of the Charles Street Business Park
02 LEVERAGE RAIL AND BRANDYWINE BOA FOR JOB GROWTH	• Proactive planning and investment • New industrial businesses • Employment opportunities for residents	• Create an Industrial Preservation Area within the Brandywine industrial corridor • Focus site acquisition efforts on the Brandywine BOA, using land bank program to assemble property • Use tools such as BOAs and I/I credits for redevelopment
03 LEVERAGE THE VALUE OF LOCAL ANCHOR INSTITUTIONS FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	• Local entrepreneurs linked to anchor institutions such as hospitals and universities • New small businesses that provide employment for residents of all backgrounds	• Implement the Binghamton University Technology Incubator and position the City to offer space for incubator "grown-ups" and ancillary businesses supporting the incubator • Challenge anchor institutions to purchase 20% (with annual escalator) of procured goods and services from local businesses
04 CREATE A MIXED-USE DOWNTOWN THAT IS A REGIONAL DESTINATION	• A clean, branded and improved Downtown that attracts more businesses and services • More residents and customers • More restaurants and local retailers	• Improve coordination amongst Downtown stakeholders to build on the successes and momentum in Downtown Binghamton • Promote more activities Downtown to encourage commuters to stay after work • Create an aesthetically appealing and cohesive visual identity
05 ENCOURAGE LOCAL ENTREPRENEURIAL ACTIVITY AND HELP SMALL BUSINESSES THRIVE	• Access to local business support • Strong local retailers	• Embrace the idea of pop up shops and retail incubators to encourage entrepreneurial activity • Support and grow the Buy Local campaign • Streamline the regulatory process for small, independent retailers
06 CREATE STRONG NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL HUBS	• Local commercial hubs offering services close to local families • Greater diversity of businesses	• Allow the preservation of neighborhood commercial development to give residents the option to shop and eat in their neighborhoods • Proactively guide the redevelopment of key areas such as Binghamton Plaza and Chenango Street
07 FOSTER THE LOCAL ARTS & HERITAGE TOURISM	• Enhanced public art and a more attractive business environment • Thriving local arts that leads to economic returns • Growing heritage and tourism industry	• Create a volunteer Public Art Commission to foster local arts • Encourage visible and large-scale public art • Participate in local and regional efforts to boost tourism and heritage tourism

B

The housing chapter addresses the needs of homeowners, landlords, renters, policy makers, public agencies, investors, and developers, alike - all people affected by Binghamton's housing stock and housing market. Recommendations encompass strategies for maintaining the City's aging housing stock, opportunities to diversify housing typologies to bring beautiful buildings back to life and better serve certain market segments, and tactics to preserve affordability and the integrity of neighborhoods.



Rental housing zones

SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Binghamton's neighborhoods offer a range of choices from urban apartment living to almost rural, secluded environments. The affordability of housing makes Binghamton attractive to prospective buyers and renters but at the same time, constrains new residential construction. There are however opportunities to improve the condition of housing and neighborhoods in the City for existing residents and attract a broader variety of residents. All of the recommendations in this chapter address one or more of the following objectives:

- Maintain **QUALITY HOUSING** and **ATTRACTIVE NEIGHBORHOODS** to foster pride and quality of life
- **REVITALIZE** neighborhoods through balanced **HOUSING DEVELOPMENT** throughout the City
- Encourage **STUDENT HOUSING** where it will best benefit the surrounding community and City as a whole
- Develop diverse and distinctive **HOUSING OPTIONS** to attract various types of households to live in the City

GOALS	OUTCOMES	KEY STRATEGIES
01 PRESERVE THE EXISTING HOUSING STOCK	• Reduced blight • Strong and marketable neighborhoods	• Work with the Binghamton Housing Authority (BHA), private developers/owners, and community development corporations to preserve and expand quality affordable rental housing • Assist residents in need (low-income, seniors) with maintenance and repairs • Develop "Fix to Own" program for City-owned properties to transition to owner-occupied properties
02 EXPAND HOUSING CHOICE IN BINGHAMTON	• New housing to compete with neighboring areas and plan for changing demographics • More residents choosing to live in Binghamton • New housing investment	• Work with Broome County Land Bank to assemble redevelopment sites for new for-sale housing units • Develop new market-rate rental housing for general occupancy • Develop affordable housing and mixed income developments adjacent to services and transportation
03 MANAGE THE QUALITY OF RENTAL AND STUDENT HOUSING	• Improved housing conditions • Better code enforcement • Rehabilitated housing and new housing	• Devise a new urban village/mixed use zoning classification to legalize and better regulate rental housing while also managing externalities • Identify opportunity sites and incentives for new student housing development • Work with the BHA to ensure that properties leased to families with Housing Choice Vouchers have been inspected and are in compliance
04 REVITALIZE DOWNTOWN WITH A MIX OF HOUSING OPTIONS	• Adaptive reuse of historic properties • A mix of housing types to appeal to a diverse range of residents	• Encourage historic preservation and reuse to provide unique, attractive housing options • Develop moderate-income senior housing near amenities • Apply for a Choice Neighborhood Initiative Planning Grant for Woodburn Court II
05 MARKET BINGHAMTON HOUSING TO ATTRACT DIVERSE RESIDENTS	• Marketing campaign and message deployed through realtors, institutions and City agencies	• Develop branding strategy for different target populations and neighborhoods • Work with institutions to offer employee incentives to live in Binghamton • Expand Binghamton Homeownership Academy (BHOA) services and partnerships

TRANSPORTATION: A PLAN FOR A CITY THAT WALKS, BIKES, RIDES TRANSIT... AND DRIVES TOO

C

The transportation chapter or **BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON MINI-PLAN ON TRANSPORTATION** is about how Binghamton moves - more specifically about the multiple ways in which people travel through the City and how the City can better balance its public rights-of-way to serve those traveling on foot, by bicycle, by bus, and by car to get where they need to go for work, for school, and for fun. The transportation strategies address the existing network of streets and parking areas, bike trails and transit services while seeking to add amenities, options, and alternatives to boost safety, convenience, and mobility via multiple modes.

Rendering of proposed improvements at intersection of State & Hawley showing a narrowed gateway to slow speeds as drivers enter Downtown

SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Binghamton is remarkably walkable due to its urban street grid, and this aspect should be emphasized with all future transportation planning. There are a number of opportunities to improve the city's transportation to reduce the cost of living in Binghamton, attract new residents, and help encourage economic development and livability. All of the recommendations address one or more of the following objectives:

- Improve the **CONNECTION** between **DOWNTOWN** and the **UNIVERSITY** through improved multi-modal infrastructure and service
- Improve **WALKING AND BIKING ACCESS** to parks and open space and other destinations
- Prioritize **MAINTAINING** and **MODERNIZING** existing **INFRASTRUCTURE**
- **REDUCE** infrastructure **BARRIERS** that fragment the city
- Begin to build a **MULTI-MODAL** foundation that makes it easier to live, work, and **GET AROUND BINGHAMTON WITHOUT A CAR**

GOALS	OUTCOMES	KEY STRATEGIES
01 UPGRADE AND MAINTAIN TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE	• Improved roadway and rail infrastructure • Reduced costs	• Expand and regularly update a citywide roadway infrastructure plan • Work with private rail companies to improve rail infrastructure • Develop guidelines and standards to integrate green infrastructure in street rehabilitation projects • Reduce City costs by removing excessive infrastructure where possible
02 ADDRESS PARKING AND MAINTENANCE ISSUES	• A balance of parking supply and demand • Increased parking revenue • Improved alternative transportation to reduce competition for parking	• Undertake a comprehensive Downtown parking study • Develop a Parking Improvement District in Downtown, and utilize a portion of revenue from parking for Downtown improvements for pedestrians and bicyclists • Introduce shared parking arrangements or residential permit parking in neighborhoods with student housing zones
03 PROMOTE ALTERNATIVE MODES OF TRANSPORTATION	• Improved public transportation experience • Safe streets for non-auto users • Reduced maintenance • More foot traffic and economic development	• Improve transportation connections between Binghamton University and Downtown • Improve the public transportation experience • Develop complete streets hierarchy for street design • Develop a crosswalk policy • Develop a citywide bike network
04 IMPROVE THE PEDESTRIAN EXPERIENCE ON CITY STREETS	• Safer, more attractive streets • More foot traffic and economic development	• Reclaim underutilized asphalt space on wide streets and intersections • Make the bridges distinctive through lighting and highlighting architectural detail • Address the needs of Binghamton City School District students who walk or take the bus to school

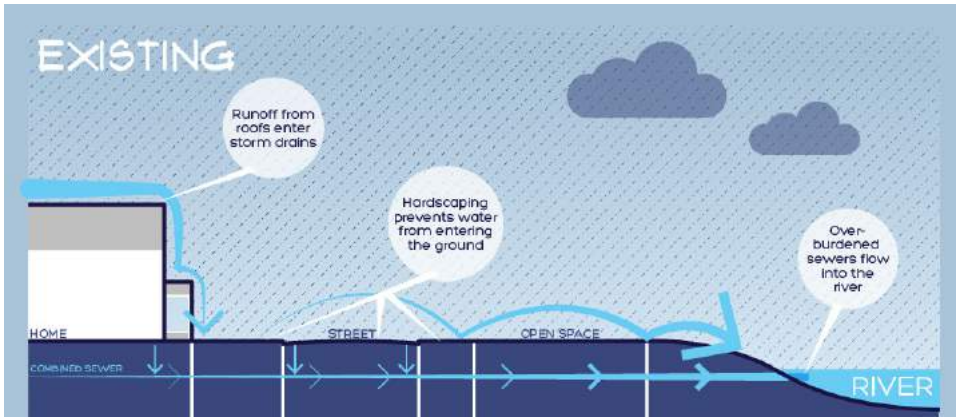
D

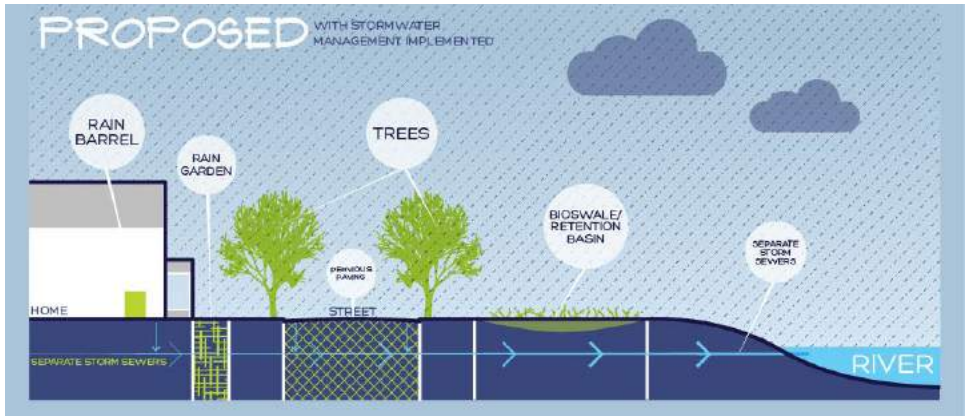
SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The infrastructure chapter or **BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON MINI-PLAN ON INFRASTRUCTURE** recognizes the realities that Binghamton faces as a city trisected by rivers. In addition to strategies that address energy, utilities, and operating costs in an era of budget cuts, portion of the plan puts forth strategies to address the volume and quality of water flowing downstream which threaten Binghamton's riverfront and low-lying properties during riverine flood events, stormwater regulations and opportunities for smaller-scale interventions that mitigate flash flood events caused by rainfall, and the relationship between water and urban land use decisions in the future.

Binghamton must be creative in addressing some of the very pressing infrastructure and water issues facing the city. With aging infrastructure, threats of future flooding, and a limited budget, a coordinated effort is needed to tackle these issues in an environmentally and financially sustainable manner. All of the recommendations address one or more of the objectives listed below:

- **REDUCING** operational and **MAINTENANCE COSTS**
- Maintaining **INFRASTRUCTURE REPAIRS** and upgrades
- Enhancing existing flood protection
- **REDUCING EFFECTS** of small scale and **FLASH FLOODING** through **GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE**





Stormwater management practices to reduce infiltration and inflow

GOALS	OUTCOMES	KEY STRATEGIES
01 REDUCE THE IMPACT OF FLOODING AND PROTECT BINGHAMTON NEIGHBORHOODS & BUSINESSES	• Safer, more resilient homes compliant with new floodplain standards • Flood mitigation in areas of high risk	• Implement the City's established priority projects in the County's 2013 Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan • Help residents reduce the impact of flooding on their homes and comply with new floodplain standards to reduce flood insurance costs • Proactively manage land in the floodplain to reduce blight and implement flood mitigation measures
02 IMPROVE STORMWATER MANAGEMENT AND RIVER WATER QUALITY	• Proactive stormwater management • Informed and engaged public • Improved river water quality • Reduced infrastructure costs	• Enforce and enhance Urban Runoff Reduction Plan (URRP) requirements • Continue to make sewer system improvements • Develop public education and awareness campaign for stormwater and sewer overflows to encourage individual action and responsibility
03 CONSERVE WATER/ENERGY RESOURCES AND REDUCE OPERATING COSTS	• Reduced resource use and improved efficiency • Reduced maintenance • Reduced operating costs • Improved planning and decision-making through data	• Incentivize low impact development practices • Invest in wireless meter system for all water uses, allowing the City to monitor where water is being used, and correct areas of water loss • Update water model to assist in detecting areas of concern within the system to target funding • Openly coordinate/communicate between departments and utilities on any major projects to reduce redundancies

ENVIRONMENT & OPEN SPACE A PLAN FOR PRESERVATION AND PLAY

E

The environment & open space chapter or **BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON MINI-PLAN ON ENVIRONMENT & OPEN SPACE** focuses on the City's natural landscapes - rivers, riparian edges, and park spaces - as well as opportunities in daily life for Binghamton's citizens to contribute to a healthier City, region, and planet by reducing waste output, increasing the urban forest and flora, and strengthening the connection between people and the parks, playgrounds, rivers, and trails that welcome healthy play so long as they remain clean and safe spaces.

"BIG IDEA" Comments - Columbus Park

SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The environment and open space chapter of Blueprint Binghamton seeks to recognize and reinforce the importance of Binghamton's beloved parks and natural landscapes, with the understanding that each citizen can take steps to lessen his or her impact on the environment while also taking new steps to engage more directly with the City's trees and rivers, parks and open spaces.. All of **BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON'S** environment and open space recommendations address one or more of the following objectives:

- Adopt new habits to **MINIMIZE** the **WASTE OUTPUT** of the City
- Invest in the **URBAN FOREST** and a new generation of citizen pruners who can support the City's efforts to add more green to the public realm
- **REENGAGE** with the **RIVERS**, both through waterfront parks and trails and water-based recreation
- Celebrate the City's **PARK SYSTEM** and ensure that each neighborhood has **SAFE** and **BEAUTIFUL PLACES** for residents of all ages to relax and play for generations to come

GOALS	OUTCOMES	KEY STRATEGIES
01 REDUCE WASTE	• increased recycling • Reduced costs to the City	• Increase household recycling through incentive programs • Add recycling containers to public trash receptacles in business district, at public facilities, and at public events • Launch a City compost program • Adopt a construction and demolition recycling ordinance
02 INCREASE TREE COVER TO IMPROVE AIR QUALITY AND THE PUBLIC REALM	• Improved tree cover • Improved stormwater management • Beautification of the public realm	• Expand the tree inventory database, and add to the tree inventory with size-appropriate species in under-planted areas • Continue to support efforts by Shade Tree Commission as a key partner for Park and Recreation • Enlist the community in tree planting efforts through education
03 IMPROVE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN THE CITY AND ITS NATURAL ASSETS	• Active riverfronts • Economic development	• Improve existing Riverwalk • Extend the Riverwalk Trail north to Otsiningo Park and east/west along both banks of the Susquehanna River • Reactivate the Rivers with water-based recreation • Acquire easements along entire waterfront and require easements as a condition for future waterfront development
04 MAINTAIN PARKS AND PLAY SPACE IN EVERY NEIGHBORHOOD TO BRING RESIDENTS TOGETHER	• Safer and active recreational spaces • Improved maintenance of green spaces	• Improve access, visibility, active recreation at targeted parks • Formalize and provide technical assistance to Friends of Parks groups to maintain and program neighborhood parks • Expand community service maintenance program to supplement parks and landscape maintenance • Continue to expand business partnerships for landscape maintenance in business districts

LAND USE & ZONING A PLAN FOR THE LAND

F

The land use and zoning chapter or **BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON MINI-PLAN ON LAND USE & ZONING** includes one of the most important elements to emerge from a comprehensive planning process, a future land use map, which is a tool that indicates where existing land uses should be preserved, and where property should be positioned for redevelopment to accommodate a mix of new uses. The future land use recommendations will inform updates to the City's Zoning Code as well as decisions by the Planning Commission and Zoning Board regarding development proposals for properties throughout Binghamton.

The proposed future land use for Binghamton seeks to reinforce areas of stability within our City and adjust the land uses allowed in underperforming areas to make room for development that meets emerging or demonstrated market potential, all while balancing development with the need for environmental sensitivity in the City's flood-prone zones. All of **BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON'S** land use and zoning recommendations address one or more of the objectives listed below:

- Embrace policy changes that reinforce **RESILIENT LAND USE PATTERNS** and proactively tackle land use challenges
- Reinvent **MAJOR OPPORTUNITY SITES** with new, market-driven, **MIXED USE DEVELOPMENT** that will breathe **NEW ECONOMIC LIFE** into neighborhoods and Downtown
- Encourage appropriate types and intensities of development and **IMPROVE FLOODWATER INFRASTRUCTURE** in areas rendered vulnerable, both physically and economically, by the shifting floodplain
- **REWRITE THE ZONING CODE** to ensure that the intent of the future land use map is supported by appropriate zoning and zoning procedures that work with the development community

Residential block in the West Side

Riverwalk Downtown

GOALS	OUTCOMES	KEY STRATEGIES
01 UPDATE MAPS CODES AND PROCEDURES	• Streamlined and transparent development process benefiting investors, developers, the City, and residents	• Update the Land Use Map • Rewrite the Zoning Code to ensure that appropriate zoning supports the future Land Use Map • Incorporate a Special Purpose classification for key sites • Study current land uses allowed by the Zoning Code and examine ways to simplify the Code
02 ALLOW GREATER HOUSING CHOICE AND PROTECT THE LIVABILITY OF BINGHAMTON'S NEIGHBORHOODS	• Diverse, livable neighborhoods with a mix of housing	• Convert the Urban Village District Overlay into a zoning category, and expand its application • Create a new, low density zoning classification for environmentally sensitive areas • Allow the development of parking facilities in the Urban Village District subject to strict design guidelines • Enable higher density housing along Main Street
03 ENCOURAGE NEW COMMERCIAL USES DOWNTOWN AND ALONG TRADITIONAL COMMERCIAL CORRIDORS	• Increased commercial activity • New businesses Downtown and along commercial corridors • Stabilized residential areas adjacent to commercial uses	• Change mix of uses permitted within the Urban Business Park (UBP) zoning classification • Explore parking maximums or lower parking minimums for Downtown development • Lessen off-street parking requirements for commercial redevelopment along traditional commercial corridors • Update the sign ordinance
04 EXPAND OPPORTUNITIES FOR NEW INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT	• New industrial growth and employment • Protected industrial districts • A greater mix of production businesses and jobs • Increased tax revenue for the City	• Identify and code an Industrial Preservation Area within the Brandywine industrial Corridor • Buffer industrial areas from residential communities • Re-zone to allow small-scale production and a mix of uses in targeted areas
05 PROTECT BINGHAMTON'S HISTORIC CHARACTER AND ENCOURAGE DESIGN EXCELLENCE	• New private investment • Restored historic structures • Appropriate design standards for major new projects	• Establish a threshold for design review for large projects to provide a streamlined review process and ensure good design • Evaluate current landscape requirements and develop clear standards for all project types

COMMUNITY BUILDING A PLAN FOR NEIGHBORS AND NEIGHBORHOODS

G

The community building chapter or **BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON MINI-PLAN ON COMMUNITY BUILDING** stems from the energy and momentum built during the planning process with strategies that seek to harness the community's interests and ideas with tools that foster actions for change - at the block level, the community level, the neighborhood level. With ideas that pertain to your backyard, your streetscape, your children, and your health, these quality of life recommendations establish a common ground that will bring each part of the Binghamton community to the implementation table to help make BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON: forward together a reality.

Community building is vital for the success of Binghamton's future. A strong healthy community and network of active civic groups that are self-motivated and engaged can serve as important partners with the City to bring about the changes needed to improve each neighborhood and Binghamton as a whole. All of Blueprint Binghamton's community building recommendations address one or more of the objectives listed below:

- Ensure that **POSITIVE CHANGE** is **DISTRIBUTED** throughout the entire city
- **EMPOWER RESIDENTS** to guide the revitalization of their own neighborhoods
- Support **HEALTH** and **SAFETY** in all neighborhoods
- Promote the **EQUITABLE REVITALIZATION** of all neighborhoods for a mix of incomes and families

Potential programs of a community development corporation

Walnut Street Park is an example of grassroots efforts led by Safe Streets Binghamton

GOALS	OUTCOMES	KEY STRATEGIES
01 EXPAND THE CIVIC INFRASTRUCTURE OF THE CITY	• Engaged residents and community organizations • Increased funds for community improvements and investment • Increased capacity to assist City departments in implementation activities	• Explore the creation of a Binghamton Neighborhood Development Corporation • Cultivate pride through branding and improvements at the neighborhood and block level • Develop media and communication plan to keep the community engaged and updated
02 MAINTAIN A CONTINUUM OF CARE FOR RESIDENTS AND FAMILIES IN NEED	• New supportive housing with access to services • improved health of residents • improved effectiveness of existing services	• Strengthen and support development of supportive housing for developmental disabilities, mental health and substance addiction recovery with access to transportation and service providers • Support community development initiatives to improve access to preventive care and chronic disease management for high-utilizing patients
03 INTEGRATE RESIDENT HEALTH INTO NEIGHBORHOOD PLANNING AND REINVESTMENT	• Improved health of residents • Reduced costs to local hospitals • Reduced incidents of chronic disease • Improved access to fresh food and active programming	• Encourage partnerships between the community development and health sectors to foster healthier neighborhoods • Ensure each neighborhood has access to healthy, fresh food • Promote tobacco and smoke free living through better protections for non-smokers and youth • Promote healthy and active living through education programs and activities
04 ACTIVELY ENGAGE YOUTH IN CITY INITIATIVES	• New collaborative initiatives between educational institutions and the City • Youth-led community improvement projects • Greater civic involvement and participation by youth and families • Identification and encouragement of potential future City and business leaders	• Support Youth Success Initiative as key youth services liaison and provider • Coordinate with non-profit youth organizations to maintain an inventory of programming and address gaps • Formalize partnerships between the School District, the City, and area institutions of higher education • Formalize partnership with BOCES vocational programs
05 ENSURE SAFE NEIGHBORHOODS FOR ALL RESIDENTS	• Reduced crime rates • Reduced code citations • Clean, attractive streets • Improved perceptions of the City and more economic activity	• Educate residents on code enforcement • Initiate a "Dumpster Day" program for large, bulky items; electronics recycling; clothing drive • Strengthen community resiliency to crime and drugs with community policing • Improve neighborhood lighting for visibility and safety

NO DOGS ALLOWED
WITHOUT LEASH
ORDINANCE
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YOU MUST CLEAN UP
AFTER YOUR DOG
BLUEPRINT
BINGHAMTON
BLUEPRINT
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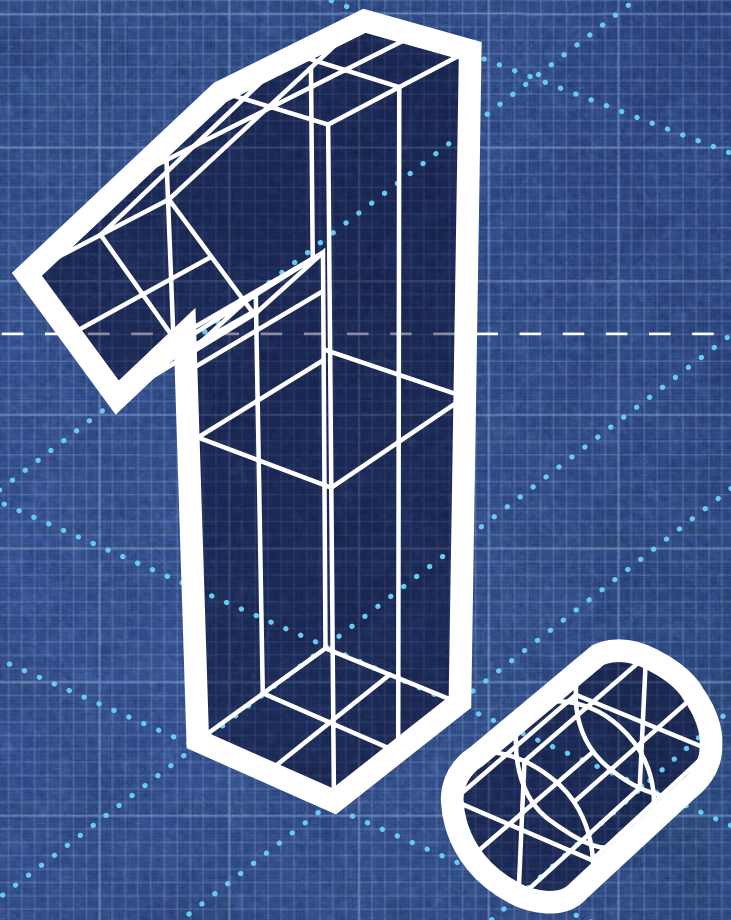


INTRODUCTION

BLUEPRINT
BINGHAMTON

01

PROJECT BACKGROUND

BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON: FORWARD TOGETHER is the 2014 update of the City of Binghamton's Comprehensive Plan, a citizen-driven effort to plan for Binghamton's future and move our City forward together. In 2011, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development awarded the City a Community Challenge Planning Grant* to update the Comprehensive Plan and develop a corridor plan focused specifically on the design and redevelopment of Court and Main Streets. The planning process began in the fall of 2012, and over the next year and a half, thousands of people shared their thoughts on how Binghamton should move forward over the coming decade. Their input, combined with an analysis of current and historic conditions in Binghamton, form the vision for the City's future and the basis for the action areas of the Plan.

* *The work that provided the basis for this publication was supported by funding under an award with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The substance and findings of the work are dedicated to the public. The author and publisher are solely responsible for the accuracy of the statements and interpretations contained in this publication. Such interpretations do not necessarily reflect the views of the Government.*

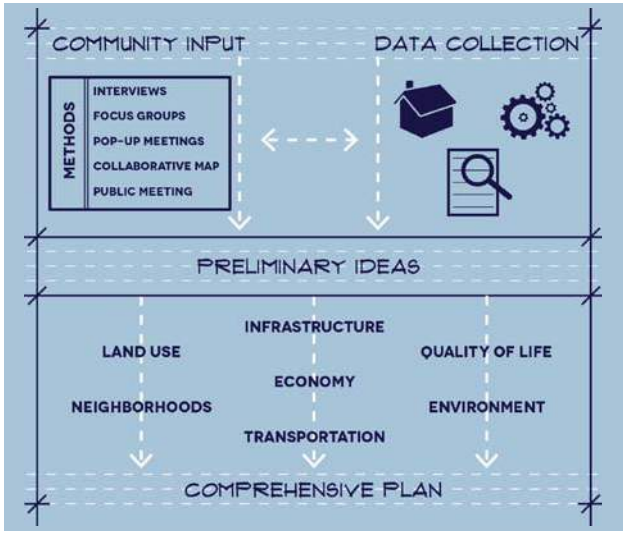
WHAT IS A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN?

Since the last Comprehensive Plan in 2003, new businesses and housing have brought new life to Downtown; the City's population has stabilized, and the waterfront trail and parks have given a boost to the quality of life and regional image of Binghamton.

But there is still a lot to do to keep the City's infrastructure and neighborhoods in good shape, advance the local economy, and fully realize the potential of Binghamton's educational assets. Even more pressing, the devastating presidentially declared disaster floods in 2006 and 2011 have made it clear that the City must think proactively and prepare for tomorrow, today.

That is where a Comprehensive Plan comes in. A Comprehensive Plan is a State-mandated document that describes municipal policies and actions related to land use, neighborhoods, transportation, infrastructure, the economy, the environment, and quality of life. Updating the Comprehensive Plan now provides the opportunity to build on the positive initiatives already in full swing in Binghamton, while proactively tackling the challenges.

We live in an age of limited resources. Our City needs a comprehensive plan to coordinate our actions and investments in ways that help to improve Binghamton for all residents and businesses, while encouraging efficiency and cost savings. This means promoting a high quality of life for current residents that also attracts future residents, balancing growth and development while preserving the City's historic character, maintaining and building upon the City's educational assets, promoting the growing arts and cultural life of the City, strengthening and diversifying the local economy, improving transportation, supporting strong civic ties, reducing the City's environmental footprint, and encouraging regional cooperation. This Plan, **BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON**, is a collaboration between the City of Binghamton and each citizen to create a framework for re-investment that moves our City **FORWARD TOGETHER**.



NEIGHBORHOODS

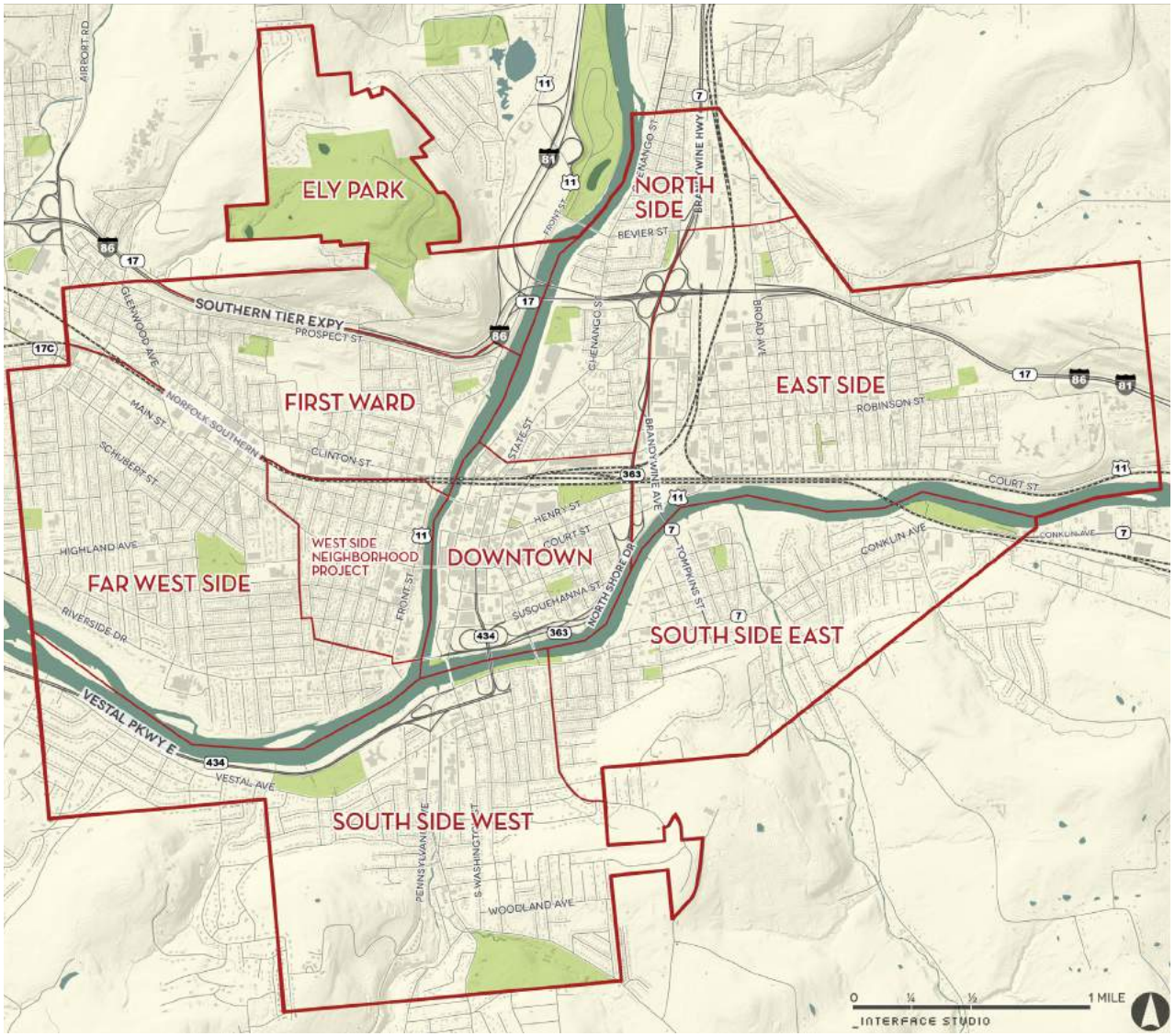


FIGURE 1: Neighborhood Map

PREVIOUS PLANS

BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON: FORWARD TOGETHER builds off and expands on the work of the previous 2003 Comprehensive Plan and several other plans and studies that include the following:

BINGHAMTON METROPOLITAN GREENWAY STUDY: TRAIL MASTER PLANS, DESIGN GUIDELINES AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES FOR RIVERBANK TRAIL DEVELOPMENT
(1999)

This study examines the feasibility of creating a riverbank trail network to improve access to the Chenango and Susquehanna Rivers. Of the 13 trail master plans reviewed in this study, four cross through Binghamton: the Vestal Parkway Trail connecting Binghamton University and Downtown Binghamton, the Chenango West Bank Trail connecting along Front Street and the riverfront from the Memorial Bridge to Otsiningo Park, the Chenango East Bank Trail linking the Washington Street Bridge and Confluence Park to Otsiningo Park, and the Susquehanna River Trail from Confluence Park to Rock Bottom Dam. Of these, only the Chenango East Bank Trail has been developed as far as Cheri A. Lindsey Memorial Park. The Chenango Connector of the Riverwalk to Otsiningo Park and Susquehanna River Trail are currently under design.

CITY OF BINGHAMTON COMPREHENSIVE PLAN (2003)

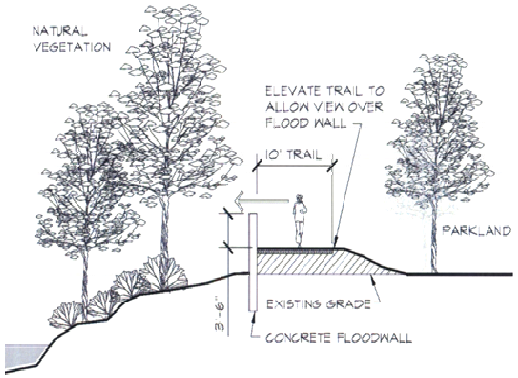
The previous Comprehensive Plan envisioned the City as a "Vibrant Regional Center" and provided four areas of recommendations that focused on quality of life, the City's regional image, its economic vitality, and neighborhood stability. Many of the focus points are still relevant today; the redevelopment of major sites such as the Anitec site and Binghamton Plaza, improving parks, addressing infrastructure barriers, mitigating the impact of commercial corridors on residential neighborhoods, developing the riverfront, managing Downtown revitalization and parking, managing student housing, and reinvesting in and marketing neighborhoods. The 2014 update to the Comprehensive Plan reassesses these issues while also adding new goals, objectives and recommendations to reflect the changes that have occurred over the last 10 years.

LOCAL WATERFRONT REVITALIZATION PROGRAM (2005)

This plan identified key issues and opportunities for the revitalization of the City's waterfront including: improving links between Downtown and the waterfront, completing the Chenango River Promenade, improving the Downtown core and capitalizing on its historic character, improving physical and visual access through innovative flood control measures, creating gateways, identifying appropriate services and programs, updating zoning and design standards, redeveloping vacant and underutilized waterfront sites, upgrading parks, preserving scenic views, improving pedestrian and bicycle circulation, and addressing the barrier North Shore Drive creates between Downtown and the Susquehanna River. The LWRP sets forth policies that promote uses that benefit from the waterfront location, minimize the adverse effects of development, preserve and maintain natural areas and open space, protect and improve water resources, minimize loss from flood and erosion, improve public access and recreation opportunities, and preserve historic resources. Major proposed projects include redeveloping North Shore Drive as a parkway with access to the waterfront and pedestrian and bicycle connections, removing the 363/434 cloverleaf and converting the space for recreation, developing a pedestrian bridge across the Susquehanna River connecting Lourdes Hospital to the South Side, adding bike lanes to Route 434, and creating a Susquehanna River Trail from Sandy Beach to Veterans Park. The LWRP also proposes land uses that support the development of the waterfront and adjacent neighborhoods as mixed-use areas.

NORTH SIDE CARES VISION PLAN
(2003)

This plan was incorporated into the city's Comprehensive Plan and the Local Waterfront Revitalization Program as part of the larger North Side Riverfront Revitalization program which partnered the North Side Communities of Shalom with the City of Binghamton, NYS Department of State, Cornell University and the State University of New York School of Environmental Science and Forestry. The plan centers around seven goals: community engagement and relationships, safety, economic opportunity, diverse housing, accessible open spaces, identity, and holistic planning. Major recommendations include: developments such as a community center, a supermarket, and redeveloping Binghamton Plaza; redeveloping State Street and revitalizing commercial areas; developing a plan for vacant properties; improving access to River and connections to open space; creating a riverside performance venue; improving park programming; encouraging walkability through a sidewalk plan and pedestrian-friendly mixed-use development; remediating brownfield sites; and reinforcing neighborhood identity through design, signage, marketing materials, events, and beautification.



LWRP Riverwalk Trail Section

LWRP Concept Plan for Downtown

SUSQUEHANNA HERITAGE AREA MANAGEMENT PLAN AMENDMENT
(2009)

The plan proposes expanding the Susquehanna Heritage Area to include Broome and Tioga Counties in their entirety, identifies strategies for the enhancement of the counties' unique cultural and natural resources, and guides the implementation of programs and projects to strengthen regional identity, foster economic revitalization, and enhance quality of life throughout the region. The Heritage Area supports the revitalization of Downtown Binghamton as a cultural center, recognizing that the City stands out as a regional urban center in contrast to its surrounding rural landscape but it is challenged by a lack of identity outside of the Binghamton area. It is seen as a gateway to other destinations such as the Finger Lakes, Cooperstown, and the Endless Mountains, rather than a destination itself. The plan suggests telling the story of the community through the theme of late 19th and early 20th century labor and industry in the Triple Cities (Binghamton, Endicott and Johnson City). Recommendations include developing cohesive signage and interpretation around the theme and working with cultural venues and museums to develop an interpretative plan that segues into their exhibits and programming, developing the Center for Technology and Industry's TechWorks Museum of Upstate Invention and Industry, and supporting the proposed Susquehanna Heritage Byway (along Routes 17C and 11) with design guidelines, streetscape improvements, historic preservation initiatives, and a corridor management plan, along with pursuing designation as a state or national scenic byway.

ENERGY AND CLIMATE ACTION PLAN
(2011)

In 2009, the City of Binghamton joined ICLEI-Local Governments for Sustainability, aligning with hundreds of other cities to take action on climate change at the local level. The Energy and Climate Action Plan outlines a proactive approach to climate change that also seeks to improve the quality of life for residents. The Plan identifies actions in four main areas with a goal of reducing emissions to 25% below 2006 levels by 2025. The areas include: 1) Buildings and Energy, 2) Transportation and Land Use, 3) Waste Management, Reduction and Recycling, and 4) Local Food, Agriculture and Urban Forestry. The plan addresses topics such as severe weather and impacts on food systems, power, buildings, vulnerability due to flooding and drought, water conservation, storage capacity, energy efficiency, alternative fuel, renewable energy, emissions reductions, waste reduction/recycling, and Smart Growth.

BUILDING OUR FUTURE: BROOME COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
(2013)

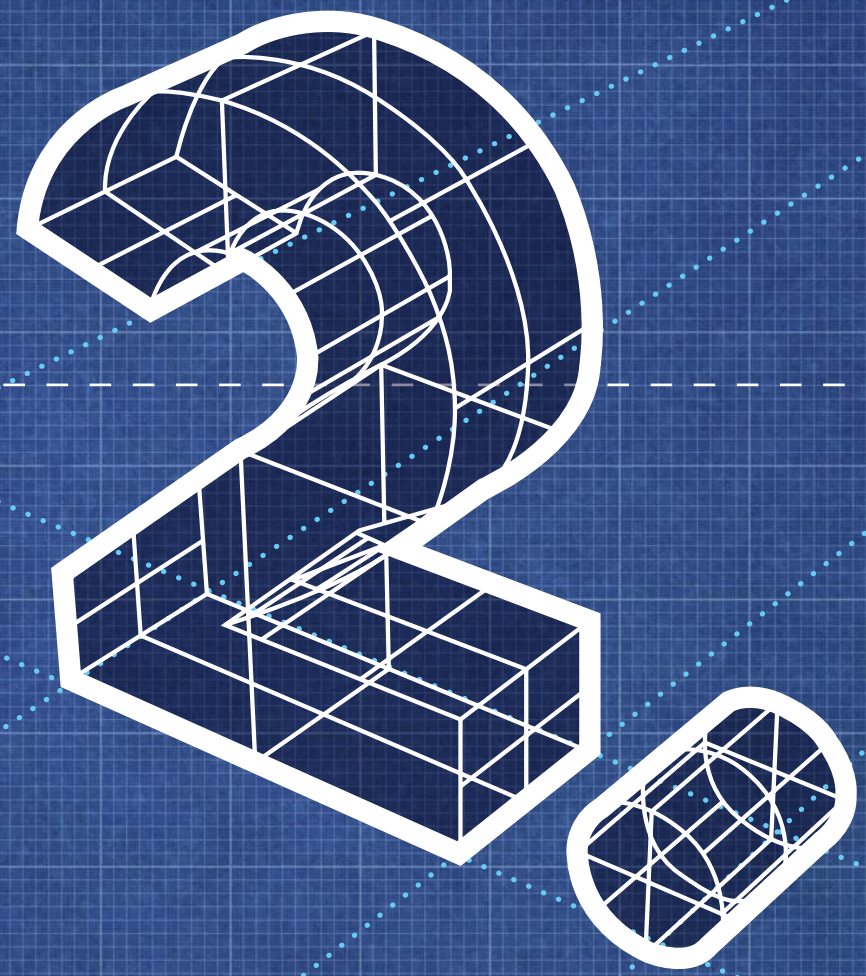
Broome County recently finished a Comprehensive Plan that envisions the County over the next 10 years and considers how to enhance its assets, such as its mix of scenic beauty and urban villages, its educational strengths, and its investment in innovation and technology. The planning process involved an extensive public component with surveys and workshops that allowed the County to listen to what Broome County residents had to say. The City of Binghamton was an active participant in this planning process, and conversely, Broome County representatives were closely involved in the creation of **BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON.**

BROWNFIELD OPPORTUNITY AREA (BOA) PLANS
(ongoing)

The Brownfield Opportunity Areas (BOA) Program assists municipalities and community-based organizations with the completion of revitalization plans and implementation strategies for areas affected by brownfield sites. The goal is to assist communities with redevelopment, return blighted land to productive use, and restore environmental quality. A BOA plan helps communities identify what sites should be targeted for clean-up and development, and determine what types of projects are viable given the market. Currently, three BOA plans are underway for areas in the City of Binghamton. Two are being managed by the City (North Chenango River Corridor and First Ward), and one is managed by Broome County (Brandywine Corridor).

BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON, as the updated Comprehensive Plan for the City of Binghamton, seeks to align and reinforce these major prior plans as well as other previous and ongoing planning efforts.

2



OVERVIEW OF BINGHAMTON

BLUEPRINT
BINGHAMTON

OVERVIEW OF BINGHAMTON

02
HISTORY

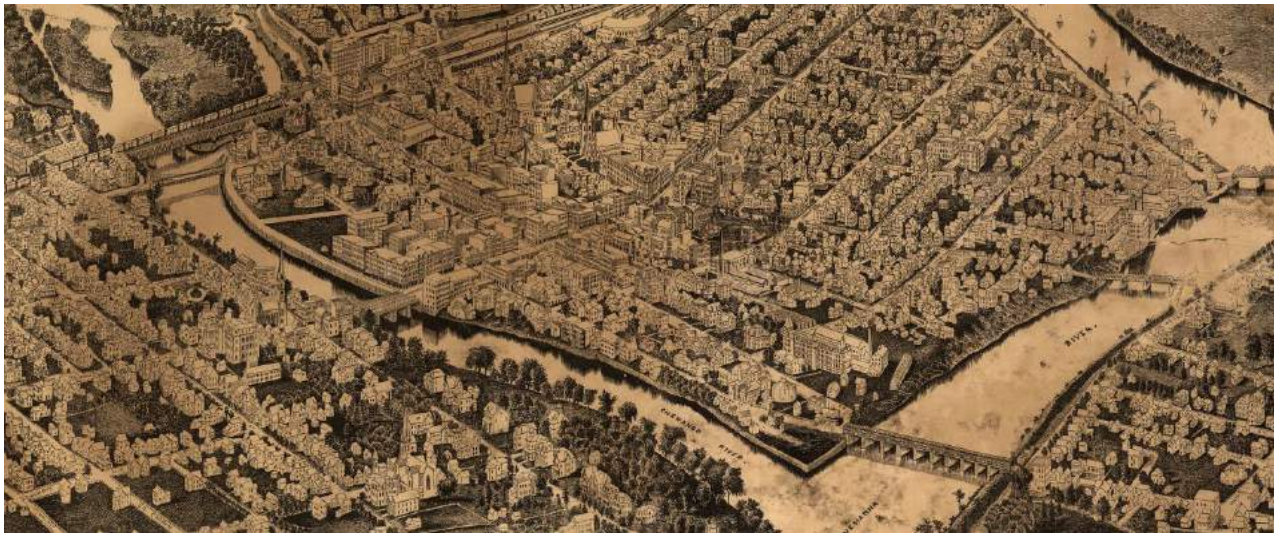
The City of Binghamton grew around the confluence of the Chenango and Susquehanna Rivers, originating as a Native American settlement until the land was given over to the State of New York in the late 18th century and then granted to William Bingham in 1800. First known as the Village of Chenango Point, Binghamton was legally incorporated as a Village in 1834. The rivers were the drivers of its growth with raw materials and goods traded on the waterways. The major industry at the time was lumber. The construction of the Chenango Canal in the 1830s, connecting Binghamton to Utica and the Erie Canal, contributed greatly to the growth of the Village. The canal was then supplanted by the railroad. The first train arrived in Binghamton in 1848 on the Erie Railroad, touching off another transformation, which expanded Binghamton's access across the country, making it a transportation hub. Rendered obsolete, the canal eventually became today's State Street.

By 1867, Binghamton had grown to the point where it was incorporated as a City. In the late 1800s, industry had shifted to finished goods, in particular to the production of cigars. Binghamton was the second largest manufacturer of cigars in the country behind only New York City. The success of the cigar industry during this period spurred the development of many of the City's institutions and a housing boom that gave Binghamton the nickname "Parlor City".

Historic photos of Downtown Binghamton

In the 20th century, major companies such as the Endicott-Johnson Company came to the region and ushered in another economic boom. Endicott-Johnson Company was known for its progressive labor policies, the Square Deal, that provided extensive benefits to its workers ranging from subsidized housing to generous medical plans and even free carousel rides (a tradition that lives on today). As this industrial wave declined with automation and outsourcing in the era following World War II and the boom of the 1950s, it was followed by the rise of technology companies, most notably IBM, which exerted an equally strong influence on the region. By the 1960s, the dominance of the automobile and the construction of NYS Route 17 and I-81 through the City pulled businesses and residents to outlying areas. This marked an era of decline that only now is beginning to reverse.

Carousel in Binghamton



1882 Perspective of Binghamton

Historic Endicott-Johnson Factory

BY THE NUMBERS: YESTERDAY TO TODAY

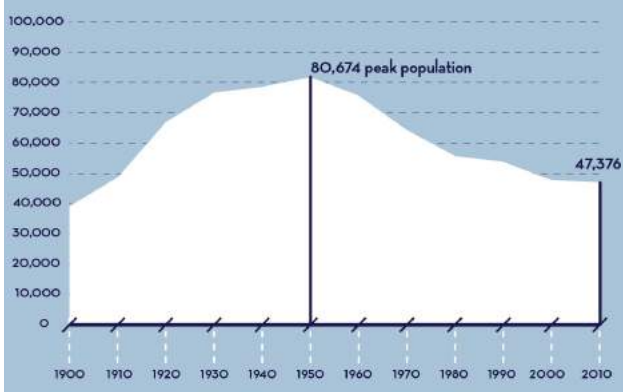
POPULATION

SOURCE: 2010 Census, Census Projections

Total (2010): **47,376**
High (1950): **80,674**
1950-2000: **– 41.3%**
2000-2010: **< 1% DECREASE**
5 year projection: **–2.5%**

As with many older, northeastern cities with an economic base in manufacturing, Binghamton witnessed large population growth during the first half of the 1900s, peaking in the 1950s, followed by decades of precipitous decline. As of the 2010 Census, Binghamton's population stands at 47,376 persons, a 45% decrease from its peak population in 1950 of 80,674 persons. The largest declines occurred during the 1960s and 1970s, when manufacturing jobs relocated to southern states and offshore locations and many city residents relocated to new surrounding suburban communities. In recent years, the population loss has leveled off, and between 2000 and 2010, the population remained stable, with no decrease. Current population projections predict the population to continue to decline with a 2018 population of 44,801, a 2.5% decline from 2010.

FIGURE 2: Population Trends



HOUSEHOLDS

SOURCE: 2010 Census, ESRI Projections

Total (2010): **21,150**
Size: **2.18 PERSONS**
TYPE
Non-Family: **52.8%**
Family: **47.2%**

FAMILY
Husband-Wife: **26.9%**
Male-No Wife: **4.7%**
Female-No Husband: **15.6%**

According to the 2010 Census, there were 21,150 households present in Binghamton. Of these households, 47.2% are made up of Families and 52.8% are classified as Non-Family. The census classifies a Family as Husband-Wife, Male-No Wife present, or Female-No Husband Present. The Non-Family definition includes couples cohabiting or single persons living alone. The average household size of 2.18 is relatively small and declining. The decline in household size is consistent with the broader trend in the U.S., in which household size has declined consistently over recent decades.

FIGURE 3: Household Data

RACE & ETHNICITY

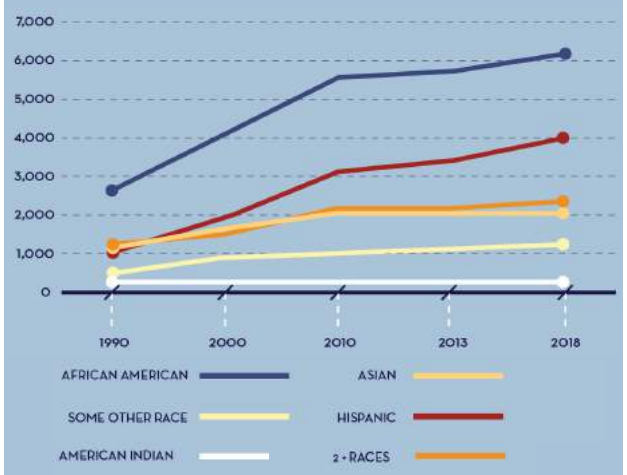
SOURCE: 2010 Census, Census Projections

White: **77.6%**
Black or African American: **11.4%**
American Indian / Alaska Native: **0.4%**
Asian: **4.2%**
Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander: **0%**
Other: **2%**
Two + Races: **4.4%**

Hispanic: **6.4%**

White persons make up the majority of Binghamton's population with 77.6%, followed by 11.4% Blacks, 4.4% Two or More Races, 4.2% Asian, 2.0% Other, and finally 0.2% American Indian/ Alaskan Native. Hispanics comprise 6.4% of the population. Compared to New York State which is 65.8% White, 15.9% Black, 7.3% Asian, 7.4% Other, 3.0% Two or More Races, and 0.6% American Indian/Alaskan Native; Binghamton is considerably less diverse. While the City's population continues to be predominantly white, there have been increases in the minority population, including two or more races, and Hispanics. Further increases are expected in the five-year projections shown in the adjacent figure.

FIGURE 4: Minority Population Projections



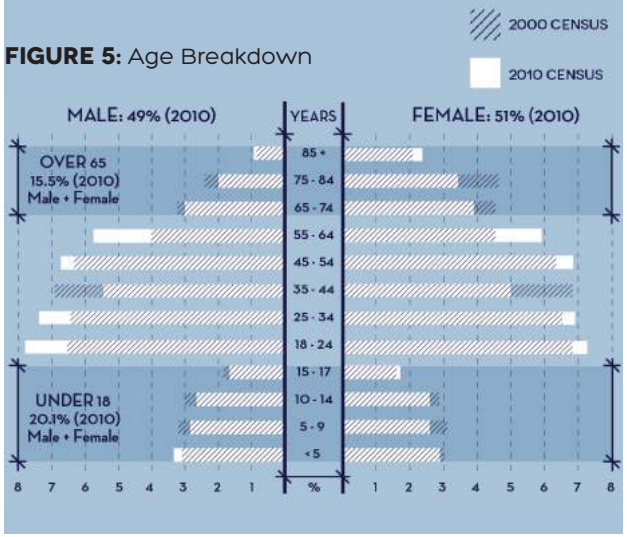
AGE & SEX

SOURCE: 2010 Census

Male: **49%**
Female: **51%**
Median Age (2010): **35.8 YEARS**
65+: **15.5%**
<18: **20.1%**

The median age of Binghamton residents is 35.8 years of age. Of the 47,376 persons living in the City, 20.1% are under the age of 18, and 15.5% are over the age of 65. There have been slight variations in the age structure between 2000 and 2010, with some cohorts gaining persons and other cohorts losing persons, as depicted in the age pyramid to the right. As is typical of college towns, the age pyramid bulges to capture the large number of residents between the ages of 18 and 34, and records growth in the percentage of young adult (mostly student) residents. The male-to-female ratio is close to 1:1 with 49% male and 51% female.

FIGURE 5: Age Breakdown



INCOME & POVERTY

SOURCE: 2008-12 American Community Survey

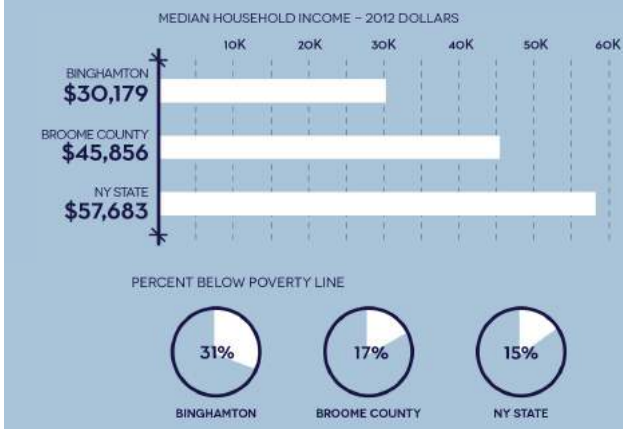
MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME
Binghamton: **$30,179**
Broome County: **$45,856**
New York State: **$57,683**

Poverty Levels: **31.2%**
UNEMPLOYMENT RATE
Broome County (as of November 2013): **7.1%**

Like many other older center cities, Binghamton has a lower Median Household Income ($30,702) than its surrounding County ($44,457) and State ($55,602). According to the 2008-12 American Community Survey, almost a third of all Binghamton residents live in poverty at a rate of 31.2%, compared to 16.5% for Broome County, and 14.9% for the State of New York. Projections estimate that incomes will be consistently lower than the County and State for the next five years.

Within the City boundaries, the lowest median household income levels can be found in parts of the West Side particularly along Front Street and Main Street, and in portions of Downtown, though income levels are low throughout much of the North Side and First Ward neighborhoods as well. The highest income levels can be found in the Far West Side, South Side West, and parts of South Side East.

FIGURE 6: Income and Poverty



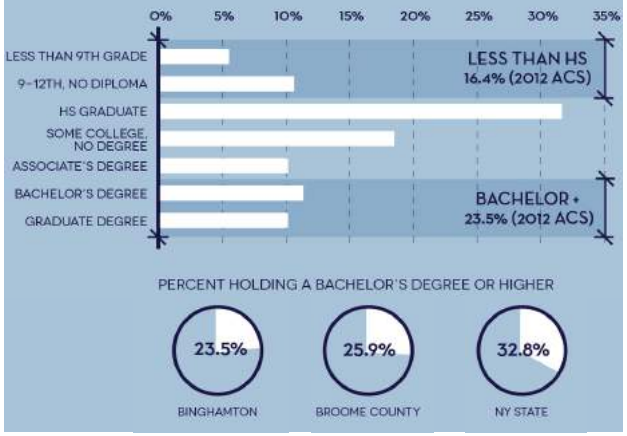
EDUCATION

SOURCE: 2008-12 American Community Survey

Percent HS graduate or higher: **83.6%**
Bachelor's degree or higher: **23.5%**

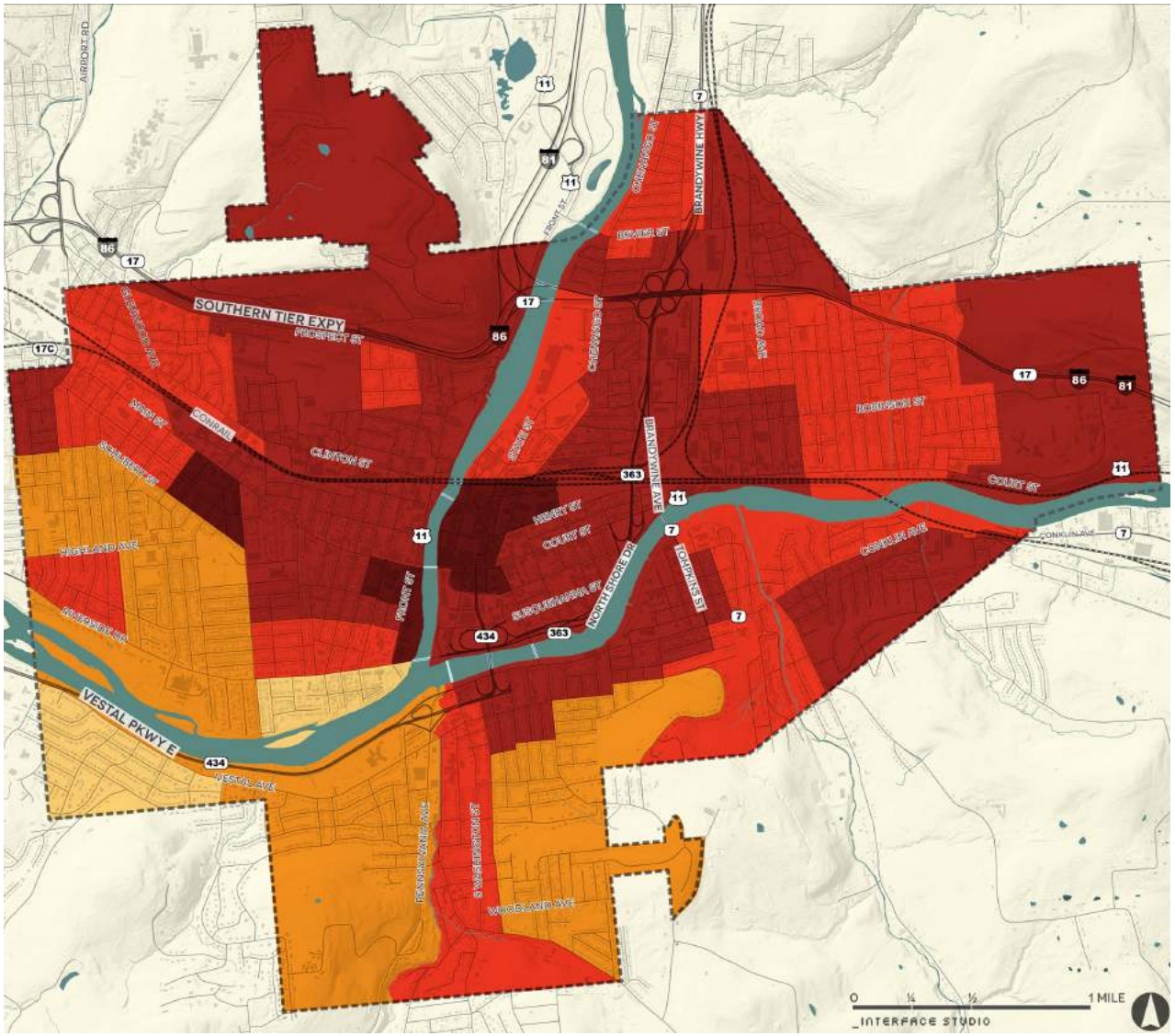
With 23.5% of the population 25 years or older holding a college degree, Binghamton can compete for highly skilled jobs that require advanced degrees. This number compares favorably with Broome County's 25.9% of residents, but less so compared to the 32.8% for New York State. However, 16.4% of Binghamton residents 25 or older do not have a high school diploma. Binghamton residents with low educational attainment could benefit from adult education and workforce training programs to address issues of under/unemployment.

FIGURE 7: Educational Attainment



MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME

2010



LESS THAN 15K
15 –30K
31 – 45K
46 – 60K
MORE THAN 61K

SOURCE: 2006-10 AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY

FIGURE 8: Median Household Income

RENTER OCCUPIED UNITS

2010

HOUSING UNITS, TENURE & OCCUPANCY

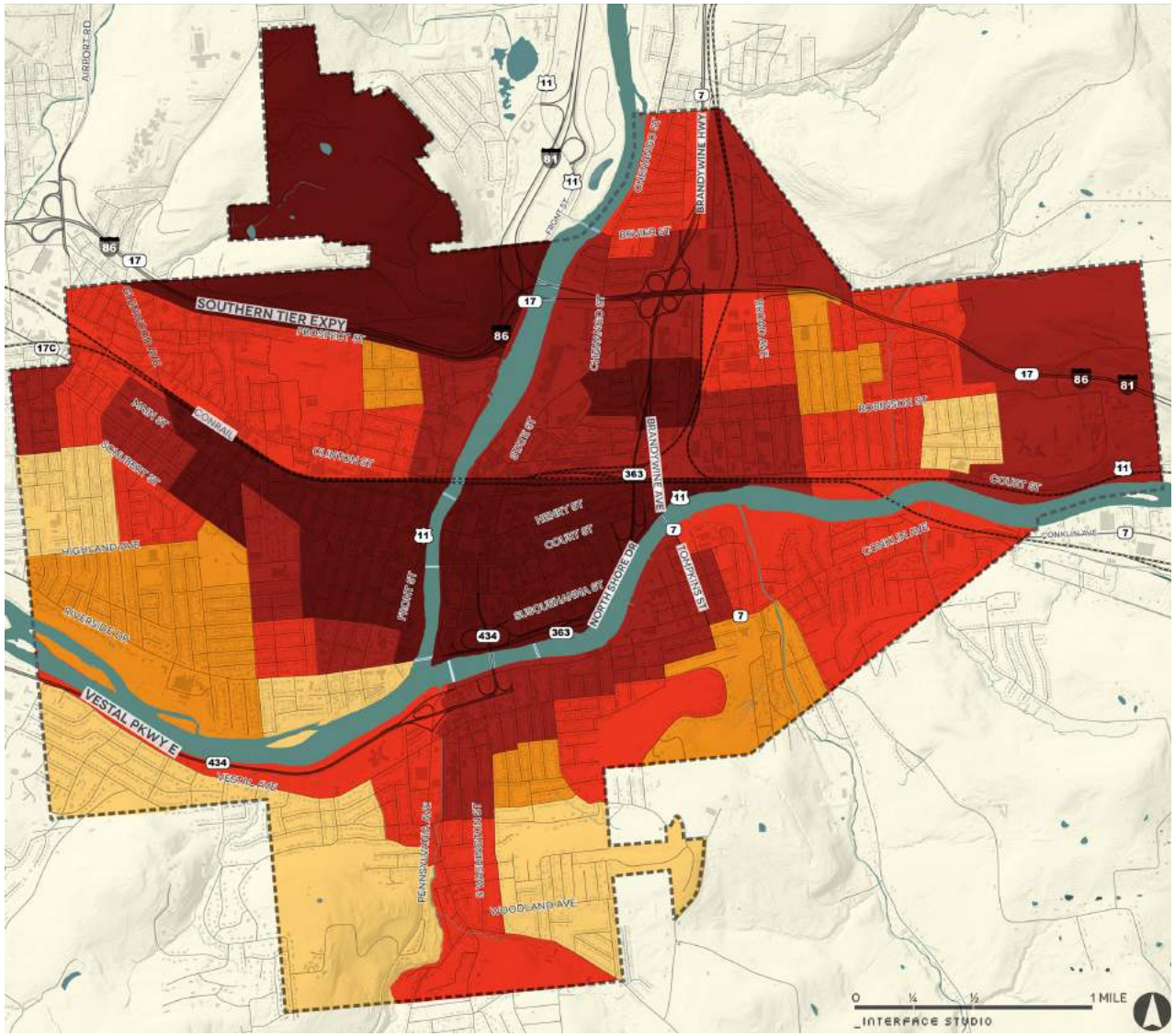
SOURCE: 2008-12 American Community Survey

Units: **23,842**

Occupied: **88.7%**
Vacant: **11.3%**

Occupied: **21,150**
Own: **42.5%**
Rent: **57.5%**

There are 23,842 housing units in Binghamton, of which 21,150 are occupied, resulting in a vacancy rate of 11.3%. Of the 21,150 occupied units, 42.5% are owned, and 57.5% are rented. The highest concentrations of rental units can be found in the West Side Neighborhood Project target area (the near West Side), Downtown, parts of the North Side, and Ely Park, as illustrated in the map to the left.



0 – 20%
21% – 40%
41% – 60%
61% – 80%
81% – 100%

SOURCE: 2010 CENSUS

FIGURE 9: Renter Occupied Units

HOUSING VACANCY

2010

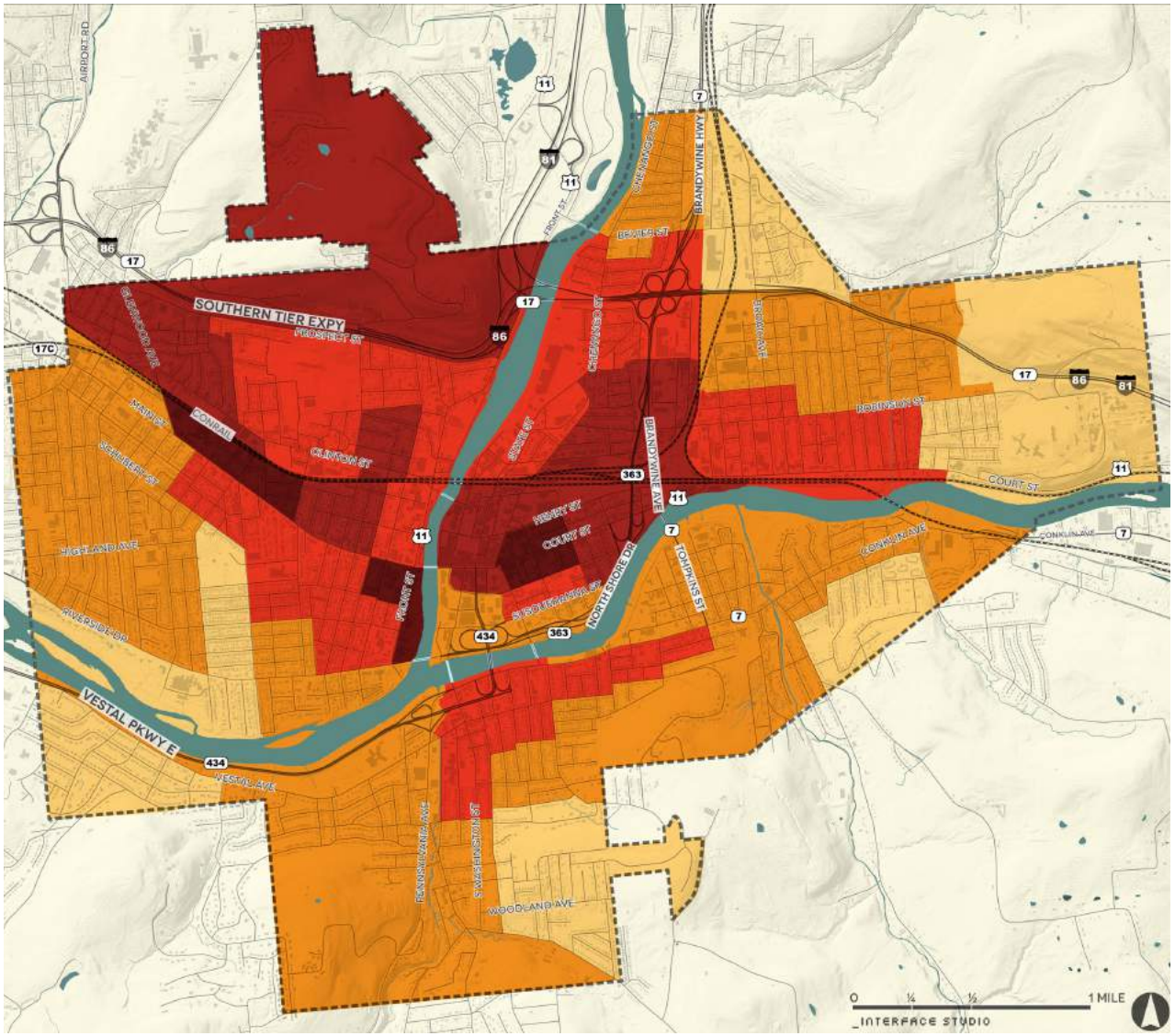


FIGURE 10: Housing Vacancy

The largest concentration of vacant units can be found in the near West Side, along Front Street, and north of Main Street, as well as in the residential sections of Downtown.

50%

OF BINGHAMTON BLOCK GROUPS HAVE A VACANCY RATE OVER 10%

- 0 – 5%
- 6% – 10%
- 11% – 15%
- 16% – 20%
- 21% +

SOURCE: 2010 CENSUS

COMPARABLE CITIES

SOURCE: 2010 Census, 2007-11 American Community Survey, Bureau of Labor Statistics

While Binghamton faces some demographic challenges, it is illuminating to place the City and the data in the context of other cities located nearby. Compared with these other cities in New York, as well as nearby Scranton, Pennsylvania, Binghamton fares better on some demographic and economic factors and substandard on others.

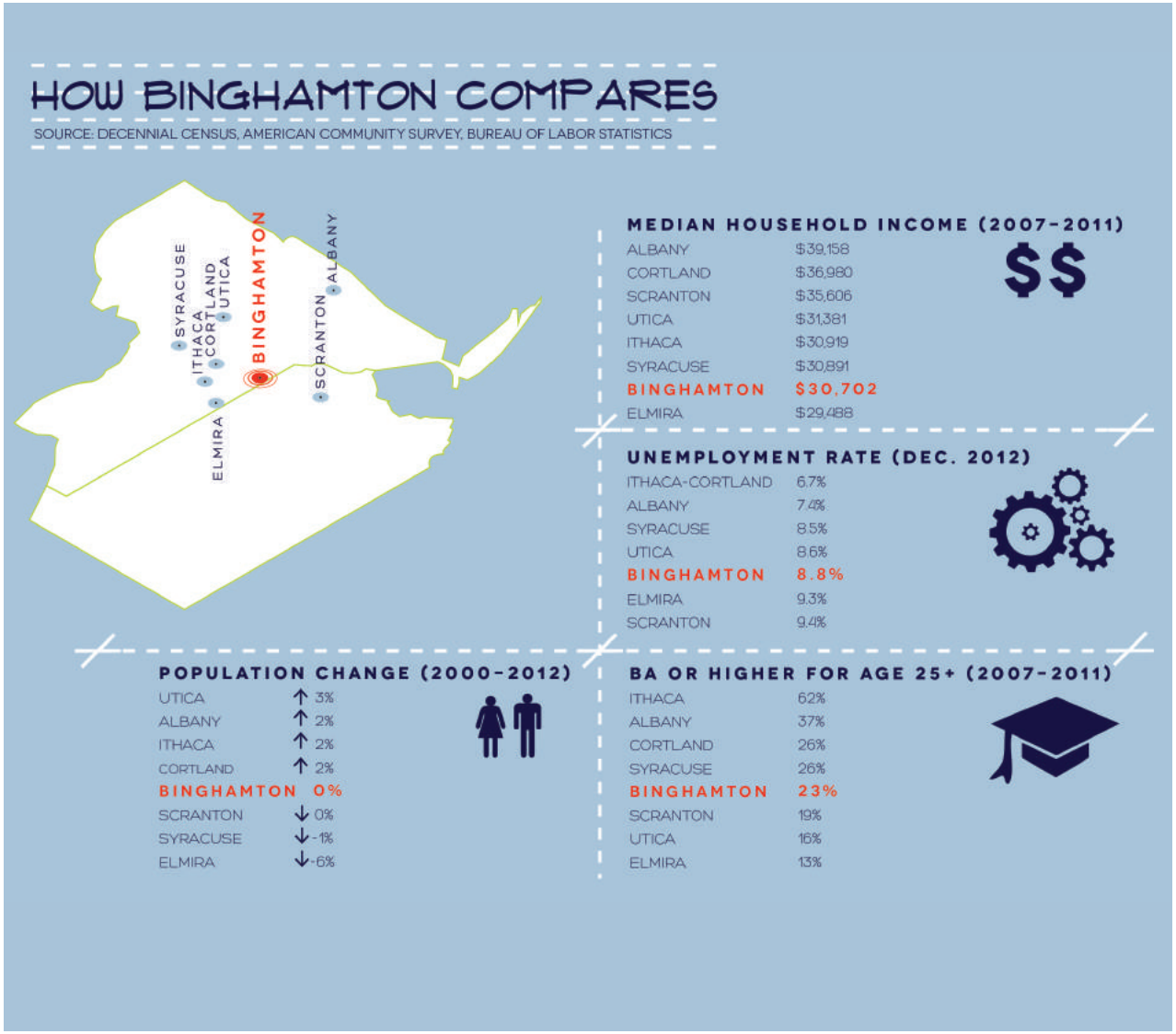


FIGURE 11: Comparative Cities

BINGHAMTON TODAY

For the first time since the 1950s, Binghamton's population has stabilized. Nationwide, recent population growth in small and large cities alike has brought about a renewed interest in walkable communities and the amenities of urban life. Binghamton is poised to take advantage of this emerging trend. With its distinctive architecture, its grid of walkable streets and neighborhoods, and a resurgent Downtown, Binghamton stacks up favorably when compared to other cities with similar characteristics.

Binghamton is close to the region's most prized scenic resources, premier universities, two international airports, and regional cities and national hubs such as Philadelphia and New York. However, the infrastructure that helped fuel Binghamton's growth also enabled population and jobs to relocate outside the City. This combined with the economic shifts of the latter 20th century, the decline of manufacturing, and heightened influence of a few major employers left the Binghamton area vulnerable. In order to support the City's urban revival, some challenges will need to be addressed.

Population loss and neighborhood decline have impacted each neighborhood in different ways. While some neighborhoods in the City are stable and thriving, others face issues that negatively impact their residents' quality of life such as aging housing stock, deferred maintenance, and physical deterioration. Downtown, boosted by new construction and adaptive reuse of historic buildings for housing, has experienced a blossoming of new businesses and restaurants, rendering the urban core more appealing as a residential option. But Downtown and the City's local neighborhood shopping streets continue to face competition from the suburbs for shopping and jobs, and such competition is further complicated by perceptions of crime and a persisting negative image of the City. However, there are opportunities to foster a more business-friendly environment that not only attracts big businesses, but also encourages independent local businesses that add to the character of the City, create distinctive retail corridors, and enhance local pride of place.

While Binghamton is inherently walkable, more can be done to make it easier and more enjoyable to get around the City without a car, which in turn supports economic development and improves health and overall quality of life in the City. Physical barriers in the form of vacant land and infrastructure such as highways and flood walls inhibit the connection of neighborhoods to each other, to Downtown, and to the riverfronts, but they have the potential to be re-imagined and reclaimed.

The major environmental issues affecting the region today are also of great concern in Binghamton, particularly after the 2006 and 2011 presidentially declared disaster floods and new Federal flood insurance requirements. The City can take the opportunity to plan now to manage the impacts of future flooding, ensuring the safety of its residents and neighborhoods and redefining its relationship to the rivers.

All of these issues and opportunities touch the daily life and future of the people who call Binghamton home, a diverse community of people of all ages, races, ethnicities, and incomes. Blueprint Binghamton sought to build a sense of community as much as it built a plan of investment for our community. As we look forward from today to tomorrow, we must continue to come together as residents, businesses, organizations, City agencies, and elected officials to move our City **FORWARD TOGETHER.**

BINGHAMTON RESTAURANT W
LUNCH, 3 COURSES, $10.
DINNER, 3 COURSES, $20.
3/12-21
ELLIS BROS
PHIL'S
GIFT
SHOP

3

PLANNING PROCESS + PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON

PLANNING PROCESS + PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

03

PLANNING PROCESS

BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON: FORWARD TOGETHER is the culmination of a year and a half-long planning process that sought to involve everyone with a stake in the City of Binghamton. This citizen-driven plan will guide the growth and development of the City over the next 10 years; its complement is a proposed form-based code corridor plan that focuses specifically on the design of Court and Main streets as future redevelopment occurs.

The **BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON** planning process had four main phases:

- **PHASE 1: ANALYSIS OF EXISTING CONDITIONS** - The first phase of work was all about learning. Early in the process, the planning team spent time studying the City in detail, collecting data, conducting interviews, and listening to the thoughts, concerns, and ideas of the Binghamton community. Taken together, the input from the research and public outreach yielded an in-depth analysis of existing conditions in the City today. This first phase provided the foundation of the planning process.

- **PHASE 2: VISION + RECOMMENDATIONS** -The second phase of work marked the transition from studying the way things are to imagining the way things could and should be. Drafting a collective vision statement was the first step in this phase. The vision statement for Binghamton tomorrow blends all of the hopes and dreams that people shared and organizes those aspirations into key goals for the City to work toward. These goals or themes serve to frame the recommendations that comprise the Blueprint Binghamton plan.

- **PHASE 3: PLAN DEVELOPMENT** - The third phase of work brought the analysis, vision, and recommendations together into one plan - this Plan - complete with many pictures and quotes to reflect the citizen-driven process, as well as maps and illustrations to communicate all of the work undertaken to develop this Plan for the future of our City. Finalizing the plan also called for much thought about implementation: the action steps necessary to make our shared vision a reality; the key agencies, organizations, and actors that the City will need as partners in implementing each recommendation; and the decisions required to prioritize and allocate limited resources.

- **PHASE 4: FORM-BASED CODE FOR THE COURT STREET-MAIN STREET CORRIDOR** - The fourth phase of the planning process provided an opportunity to kick-start the implementation process while the plan was still in progress through the drafting of a proposed form-based code for Court and Main streets, which could result in updated zoning to guide new development along the corridor.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The overarching goal of **BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON** was to ensure that this update to our City's Comprehensive Plan would be a community-driven effort to move our City **FORWARD TOGETHER**, so public involvement was a central component of each phase in the planning process. We committed to a robust, equitable and meaningful public process, and we dreamt up and implemented an innovative approach to outreach and engagement in order to reach and reflect the diversity of our Binghamton community. As a community, we had FUN as we worked together on this Plan!

THOUSANDS of people who live, work, worship, learn, and play in Binghamton participated in the planning process between Fall 2012 and Spring 2014, making time to share their visions, hopes, and dreams for the next decade in the life of our City. **MANY THANKS TO EACH AND EVERY ONE OF YOU.**

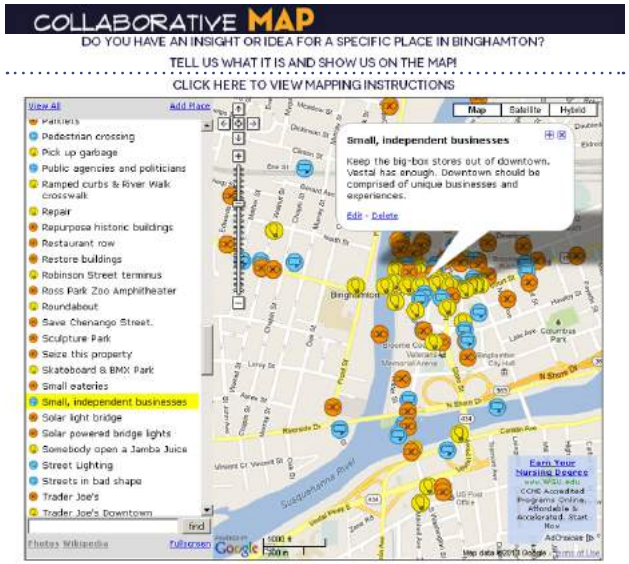
PUBLIC OUTREACH - TO DATE

BINGHAMTON NEIGHBORHOOD PROJECT SURVEY	454
INTERVIEW / FOCUS GROUP ATTENDEES	101
COMMUNITY DISCUSSION ATTENDEES	422
FACEBOOK FRIENDS	400
TWITTER FOLLOWERS	185
UNIQUE WEBSITE VISITORS	3,889
OPEN HOUSE VISITORS	1,000+
VISION STATEMENTS	72
BIG IDEAS	170
COLLABORATIVE MAP COMMENTS	361
MEETING IN A BOX	85+
STUDENTS IN THE CLASSROOM	230+
KIDS OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM	80+

GOALS FOR PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The City's goals for inviting everyone in the Binghamton community to embrace an active role in the planning process were to:

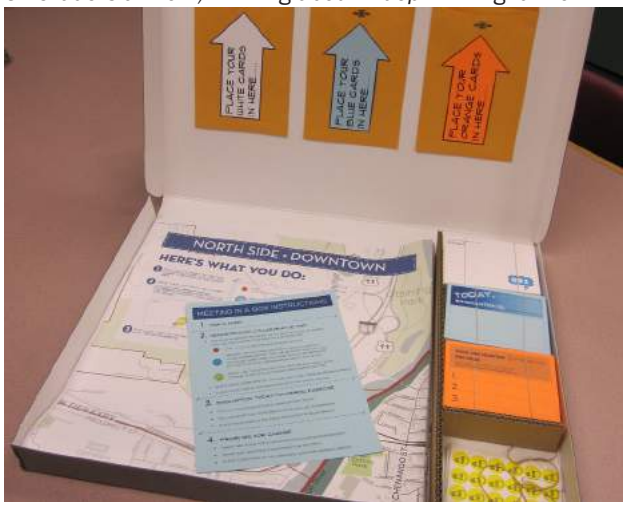
- Inform and educate the public about the purpose of planning and the challenges and opportunities facing Binghamton today
- Encourage the participation of all community members regardless of age, income, race, ethnicity or first language
- Actively engage the youth in Binghamton
- Invite feedback and meaningful discussion through a transparent planning process
- Build and maintain confidence, trust, and enthusiasm about the planning process
- And foster a civic culture of active and engaged community members, interested and poised to collaborate with each other and with the City on implementation efforts now that the plan is complete.



Online Collaborative Map

5th Graders at work, thinking about Blueprint Binghamton

Advertisement for public outreach



Meeting in a Box brought planning activities to neighborhoods

OPPORTUNITIES FOR PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

To foster a truly citizen-driven process, **BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON** employed a range of strategies to meet the people of our City, learn from their unique perspectives, and use their local knowledge to inform the creation of the plan. Opportunities for learning and sharing, involvement and action included:

- **TRADITIONAL MEETINGS** with the public, with community groups, and with the Steering Committee convened to help guide the process

- **A CITYWIDE SURVEY**, developed and administered (both online and door-to-door) by the Binghamton Neighborhood Project, that reached **454 RESIDENTS** across the city (see summary on next page)

- **INTERVIEWS AND FOCUS GROUPS** with more than **120 RESIDENT/COMMUNITY EXPERTS** on topics from community health to infrastructure, housing to commercial districts, transportation to zoning and design, the elderly in Binghamton to the youth of Binghamton

- A series of free lunchtime **COMMUNITY DISCUSSIONS** that explored different community development issues - **442 PEOPLE** attended the first round of seven community discussions, which addressed:
  - Green Infrastructure
  - Placemaking & Economic Development
  - Trends in Residential Markets
  - Energy Efficiency for Businesses
  - Historic Preservation & Adaptive Reuse
  - Environmental Justice: Blight, Brownfields & Land Banks
  - Public Health & Community Design

- A **PROJECT WEBSITE [WWW.BLUEPRINTBINGHAMTON.COM]** that catalogued the planning process, public events, results, and findings and invited input and interaction through mini-surveys and an online collaborative map. Before the publication of the final Blueprint Binghamton: Forward Together plan, the website had received **3,889 UNIQUE WEB VISITORS!**

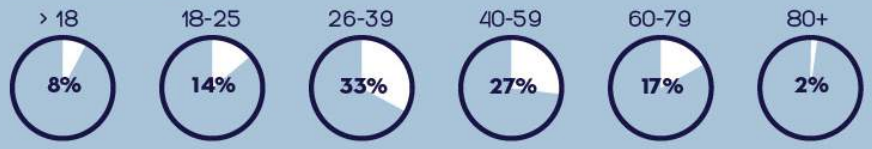
- Frequent updates using the powers of the internet to reach a **FACEBOOK** following of **400 PEOPLE**, and a twitter following of **185 PEOPLE**, and counting...

- An evolving series of interactive exhibits hosted in the **PROJECT DESIGN STUDIO**, the Blueprint Binghamton public headquarters and pop-up gallery located in the former First National Bank at 49 Court Street. Over the course of the planning project, the Project Design Studio was open to the public for meetings and events, the biggest of which happened every few months in conjunction with Gorgeous Washington Street Association's First Fridays Art Walk. The Project Design Studio opened its doors to the public five times, and was a HUGE success, drawing **MORE THAN 1,000 VISITORS** who signed in (many more attended and participated in the activities). The space featured exhibits designed to raise awareness of the Plan, ask people to share a bit about themselves, their ideas and insights for the city, their vision, and their priorities for the future of Binghamton.

BINGHAMTON NEIGHBORHOOD PROJECT CITYWIDE SURVEY

ARE YOU AWARE OF BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON? **YES:** 42% **NO:** 58%

AGE OF RESPONDENT?
*REPRESENTATIVE SAMPLE



IMPROVEMENTS YOU'D LIKE TO SEE

1. Improved job opportunities.
2. Downtown revitalization.
3. Better sidewalks and safer streets.
4. More small and locally owned businesses.
5. Targeted code enforcement.

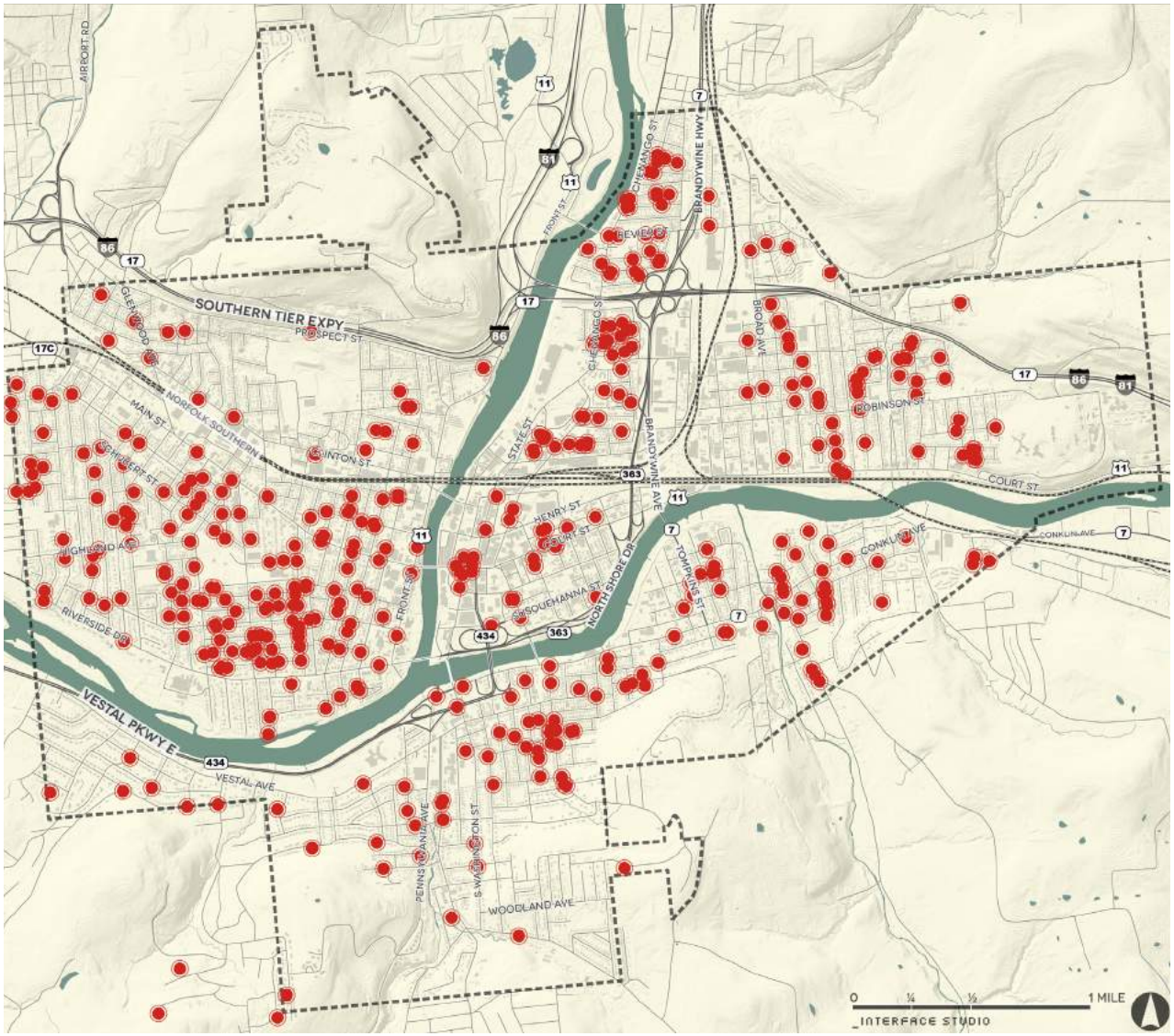
TOP RESPONSES - BY NEIGHBORHOOD / CITYWIDE

NEIGHBORHOODS	THINGS YOU LIKE **BEST** ABOUT BINGHAMTON?	THINGS YOU LIKE **LEAST** ABOUT BINGHAMTON?	**GOOD** THINGS ABOUT BINGHAMTON?	**BAD** THINGS ABOUT BINGHAMTON?
WEST SIDE	HOUSE / APARTMENT	ACCESS TO JOB OPPORTUNITIES	AFFORDABLE	LACK OF JOBS
FIRST WARD	DISTANCE TO WORK	LACK OF SAFETY	PARKS	CRIME
NORTH SIDE	HOUSE / APARTMENT	LACK OF SAFETY	PARKS	LACK OF JOBS
EAST SIDE	ACCESS TO AMENITIES	ACCESS TO JOB OPPORTUNITIES	PARKS	LACK OF JOBS
SOUTH SIDE EAST	ACCESS TO AMENITIES	ACCESS TO JOB OPPORTUNITIES	PARKS	BLIGHT
SOUTH SIDE WEST	AFFORDABILITY OF HOUSING	ACCESS TO JOB OPPORTUNITIES	PARKS	BLIGHT
CENTER CITY	HOUSE / APARTMENT	LACK OF SAFETY	AFFORDABLE	BLIGHT
CITYWIDE	**HOUSE / APARTMENT**	**ACCESS TO JOB OPPORTUNITIES**	**PARKS**	**LACK OF JOBS**

FIGURE 12: Summary of Citywide Survey Results

CITYWIDE SURVEY

PARTICIPANTS



NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS

454

SURVEY PARTICIPANT

FIGURE 13: Citywide Survey Participants

POP-UP GALLERY – PART I

Over 700 people attended **BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON'S** Spring & Summer First Friday Pop-Up Gallery events. In all, we received more than 70 vision statements on **POSTCARDS FROM THE FUTURE**, we collected more than 170 **BIG IDEAS IN THE PHOTO SUGGESTION BOOTH**, and we received more than 360 comments on a **COLLABORATIVE MAP.**

Photos from the Pop-Up Gallery - Part I

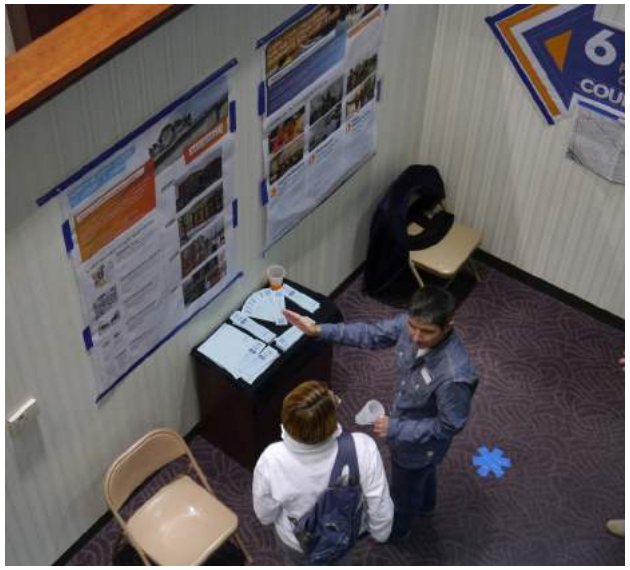
OPEN
OPEN

WELCOME
BLUEPRINT
BINGHAMTON
FORWARD TOGETHER

POP-UP GALLERY – PART II

In Fall 2013, Blueprint Binghamton re-opened the Pop-Up Gallery featuring a new collection of exhibits that repackaged all of the community ideas collected in the spring and summer and presented a **COLLECTIVE VISION** for the future and series of ideas - possible policy recommendations and action strategies - for consideration. Over 300 people attended the fall event and offered their feedback on **BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON'S** preliminary recommendations.

Photos from the Pop-Up Gallery - Part II



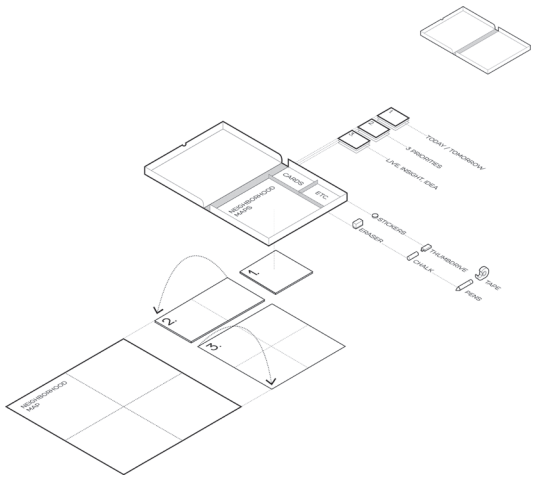
YOU TALKED... WE LISTENE

BLUE
PRINT>

OU TALKED... WE LISTENED
361

MEETING IN A BOX

To make sure that those who are less mobile also had a chance to make their voice heard, we built a portable **MEETING IN A BOX** tool that mimicked the Pop-Up Gallery activities, and we took it out on the town. We met with seniors at the First Ward Senior Center and public housing tenants at the Binghamton Housing Authority.



Meeting In A Box Instructions

DESIGN CHARRETTE

In October 2013, Blueprint Binghamton hosted a **DESIGN CHARRETTE** for the Main Street - Court Street Corridor. The charrette included a three-part series of workshops focused on updating zoning and guiding redevelopment along the corridor: 1) A hands-on Design Workshop where anyone with a stake in the corridor was invited to collaborate with the design team on a vision for Court and Main, 2) an Open House where the public was encouraged to review and comment on the charrette work in progress, and 3) a Final Presentation by the design team of the proposed zoning changes and design features. **ROUGHLY 50 PEOPLE ATTENDED EACH OF THE THREE EVENTS**.

Attendees at the Design Charrette

COMMUNITY EVENTS

And finally, Blueprint Binghamton has had a presence at **MANY DIFFERENT COMMUNITY EVENTS** - we brought the plan to you in the midst of your daily routines! Among these community events were several **YOUTH-ORIENTED EVENTS** where we engaged children and families to get their thoughts on the future of our City. Kids, teens, and parents weighed in on Blueprint Binghamton at the Stand for Children Anti-Bullying Rally, at the Juneteenth Celebration, and at the special version of the Pop-Up Gallery, designed just for kids! Blueprint Binghamton visited classrooms at the elementary, middle, high school and college levels too!

So, thank you, Binghamton for your enthusiasm and involvement. This Plan - our community-driven plan for our City - is **YOUR PLAN,** and your words, your ideas, and your smiling faces are found throughout.

Irish Dancers at the Youth Open House

Attendees at the Juneteenth Event

Advertisement for the Youth Open House

SPECIAL FOCUS ON YOUTH

Binghamton's youth are the future of our City. **BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON** wanted their voice to be heard loud and clear, and their vision for the Binghamton of tomorrow to be central to our planning effort. Working with the Youth Bureau and the Binghamton City School District, City staff visited classrooms with important lessons, cultivating a cadre of concerned citizens and aspiring planners-to-be.

Photos from the youth events

- Over 100 5th graders from Horace Mann and Theodore Roosevelt Elementary Schools wrote and illustrated essays about their neighborhood as it is today, and their ideal neighborhood as they envision it in the future. The art and essays were displayed at City Hall and also within the Project Design Studio when it reopened with special exhibits designed for young people in Binghamton. The artwork and essays of the seven winners are featured throughout this Plan.
- 212 students in 11th and 12th grade at Binghamton High School participated in eight sessions, generating thorough lists of Binghamton's Strengths, Weaknesses, and Suggested Solutions for the future.
- About 20 planning students from Binghamton University participated in a focus group sharing their thoughts about why they chose Binghamton, what they like best about the City, what would make them more likely to remain in Binghamton after graduation, and what would make the City more competitive in attracting graduates and young professionals.

Outside the classroom, kids, teens, and parents have had other opportunities to lend their voice and vision to help create **BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON.**

- Stand for Children Anti-Bullying Rally - City Planning staff hosted a table at the event in Recreation Park. Over 40 kids stopped by the table, and before they could earn a **BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON** sticker, they had to vote on what would make Binghamton a safer city.
- Juneteenth Celebration - City Planning staff hosted two tables at the event in Columbus Park, one for kids and one for adults. Again, over 40 kids shared their thoughts on what would make Binghamton a safer city for children, and adults shared their priorities for the future.
- Pop-Up Gallery, Special Edition for Kids - City Planning staff, Blueprint Binghamton volunteers, and ten teens from the Cornell Cooperative Extension's CitizenU program hosted a youth-focused version of the Pop-Up Gallery with the interactive exhibits retooled to be kid-friendly. More than 200 kids and parents came out and weighed in. The Binghamton University men and women basketball teams ran clinics for youth. The B-Mets donated eight tickets for a raffle, and their mascot, Buddy the Bee was there to help out. A local teen Irish dancing troupe performed as well.

AINSLEY G.

NEIGHBORHOOD NOW:

My neighborhood is NOT the best neighborhood ever. The people aren't the best either. People in their apartment, I can hear them yelling at each other when I'm inside. College kids throw parties with blasting music keeping me up all night. Only some of the people don't do that. Safety is scarce. Cars speeding already ran friends dog over. Litter like glass, cigarettes, and cans. No crossing guards and I'm close to Leroy Street. The thing I'm mostly concerned about is the environment. There's trash A LOT trash, bumpy sidewalks and run down houses. If I could change my neighborhood, it would be the best neighborhood ever.

Ainsley G. "Neighborhood Now"

MY DREAM NEIGHBORHOOD:

This would be my version of the perfect neighborhood. The people would be the best. The people would nice and polite. They wouldn't yell and instead they would talk quietly so I COULDN'T HEAR THEM FROM A MILE AWAY (hint hint). They would pick up their trash so I don't have to. Recreational areas would be good to have also. There would be more trees to play in. There would also be a few "watch for children" signs and some basketball hoops or hockey nets to play with. My perfect neighborhood would also have no environmental problems. Trees wouldn't be cut down so we could have more air and homes for birds. Absolutely NO pollution because when you breath it you could get sick. There would be no speeding cars. If that were true that would be the best neighborhood ever.

Ainsley G. "Dream Neighborhood"

CHYNA B.

NEIGHBORHOOD NOW:

The street I live on isn't the best street ever. I'd like to tell you about it. I live near Recreation Park and I play there all the time. Some people don't care about the park and just litter all over the ground instead of putting it in the garbage can. A lot of kids play at the park, so the park shouldn't be looking like this. To keep people safe on my street, we should be cooperative with each other and nice. If everybody got along on my street it would be the best place ever. That's what my neighbors and I can do to get along on my street. This is what my neighborhood is like now. It is unsafe and not clean. I hope it gets better in Binghamton because if not, people will move away.

Chyna B. "Neighborhood Now"

MY DREAM NEIGHBORHOOD:

The perfect neighborhood would the best neighborhood ever. This is the way I would want my neighborhood to be. The parks would be clean. There would be no litter or drugs and I would make sure there are signs that say, "No drugs or litter allowed." There would also be leaf blowers to blow the leaves away. There would be litter monitors so they can pick up the litter kids and adults drop on the ground. The litter monitors would have the job of picking up litter and the leaf blowers will have the job of blowing leaves away. I will also make sure the kids aren't at the park before 9:00 am and after 10:00 pm because I don't want their parents or whoever lives with them to get worried. I would make sure there are more crossing guards on my street. They would make sure nobody gets crashed over and tell other cars to stop when somebody's crossing the street. If the person in the car isn't paying attention, they might take somebody's life. In my perfect neighborhood there would be nothing but kind people and no litter bugs. Everybody's houses and yards would be spotless and not one piece of litter anywhere. There would also be garbage can on my street so nobody would litter. This is my perfect neighborhood and they way I would want it to be so nobody feels disgusted when they see it.

Chyna B. "Dream Neighborhood"

KIRSTEN G.

NEIGHBORHOOD NOW:

My neighborhood has changed a lot over time. I know that with more efforts it can improve even more. Two years ago my neighborhood was a mess. It was horrible; I even wanted to move far away. Garbage was everywhere. There were bottles, cans, cigarette butts, and leaves. No one would rake or cut their grass. College kids lived everywhere on my street. They always had parties. One day it was 2 o'clock in the morning and there were about 100 people.

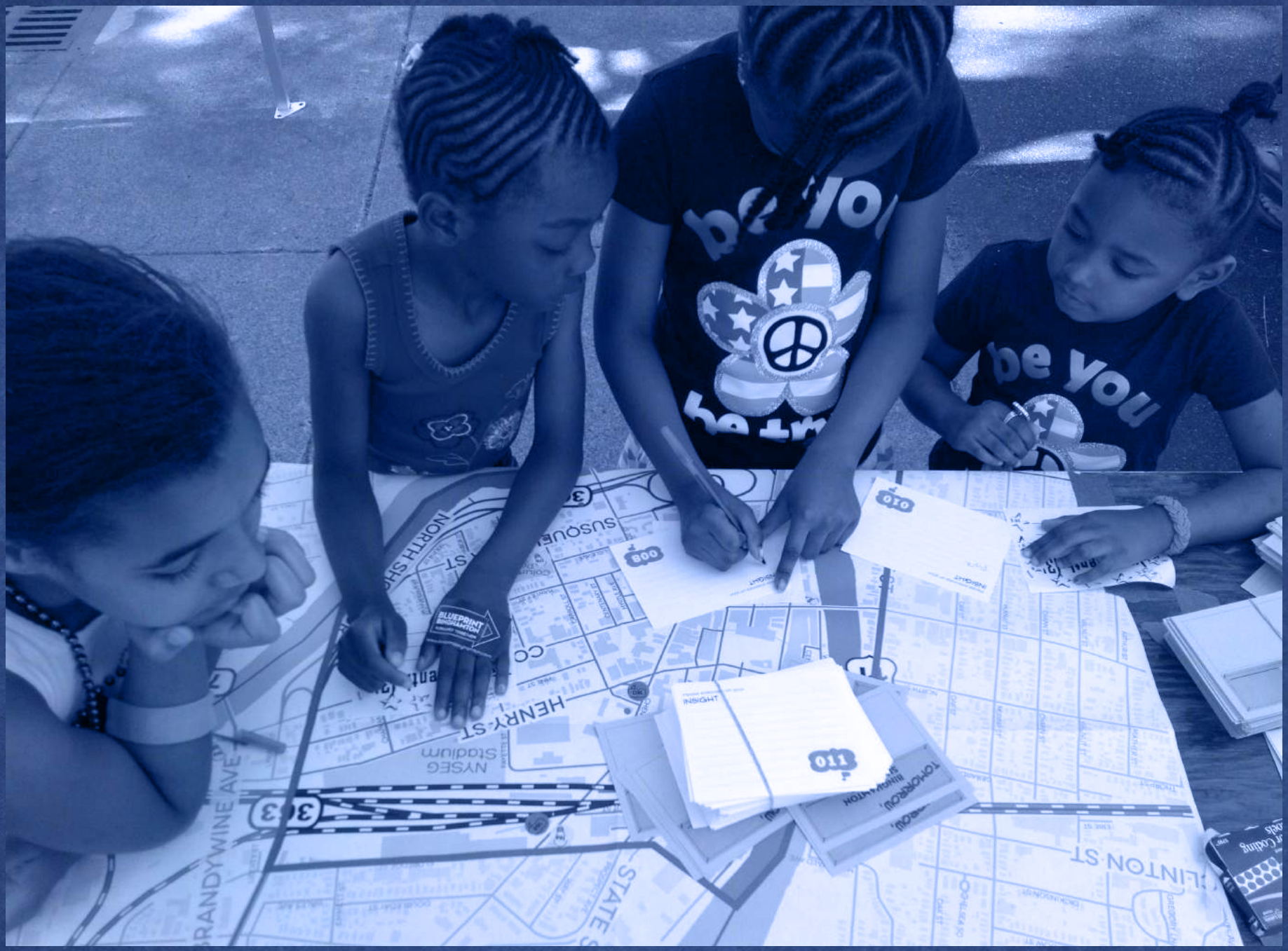
Kirsten G. "Neighborhood Now"

MY DREAM NEIGHBORHOOD:

I want the perfect neighborhood. It would have everything nice. It would have nice people, flower beds, and mowed lawns. It would be perfect. People would be very nice. They would never get in fights. They would always clean their yards. The people would have kids that would be my best friends. Some of the people would have candy houses.

The houses would be blue, white, green, and pink. The houses would be castles. There would be water slides out of the houses into the pools. The yards would have pools, hot tubs, playgrounds, gardens, and trampolines. The yards would be huge. These would be irrigation systems in the yards too. It would be awesome. The streets would have blue lines. The blue lines would mean flying cars only. The flying cars would not create pollution. The cars would just hover. They would run on bad air and create clean air. The sidewalks would be colorful and would say "WELCOME TO MY NEIGHBORHOOD!" Everyone would be so happy. Any the end of the street there would be a big fun house, with an arcade. Fun! The perfect neighborhood is right there and it's perfect for me

Kirsten G. "Dream Neighborhood"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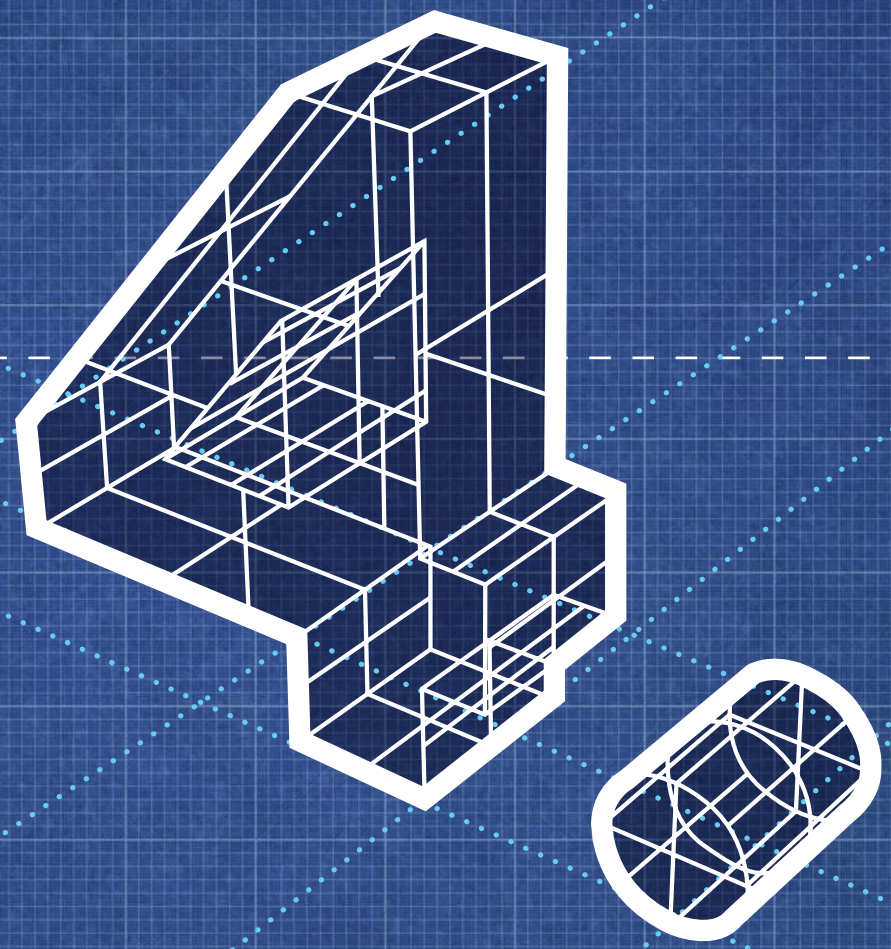


VISION

BLUEPRINT
BINGHAMTON

VISION

04

Over the course of the planning process, which commenced in Fall 2012, thousands of people who live, work, learn, and play in Binghamton have made time to share their visions for the next ten years in the life of the City and its evolving story.

Resident experts and people with professional expertise, life-long Binghamtonians and newcomers, college students calling Binghamton home for now and city youth who embody the Binghamton of tomorrow touched the planning process in myriad ways: through interviews and focus groups, online and door-to-door surveys, in classrooms at elementary, middle, high school, and college levels, at community meetings and community discussions, and at citywide events like the First Fridays Art Walk. Those passionate about this City have shared countless ideas and concerns, hopes and dreams for the future.

The vision statement below translates the rich collection of community inputs into a collective vision for the City -Binghamton has spoken up, and this is what our City said:

OUR PLAN FOR MOVING FORWARD TOGETHER CALLS FOR A BLUEPRINT FOR A BINGHAMTON THAT IS:

THRIVING

- with a bustling Downtown and home-grown businesses that create local jobs, driven by our spirit of entrepreneurialism coupled with the flexibility afforded by technology and the digital marketplace that allow workers and creative makers to locate where the living is good

HEALTHY

- with active citizens who take advantage of the City's walkability and bikeability, proximity to natural assets and recreation along the rivers and among the hills, and access to affordable, fresh, local foods

ALIVE

- one of a cadre of small cities across America experiencing a resurgence based on quality of life and livability driven by an engaged public and grassroots activism, Binghamton today and tomorrow is a great place in which to raise a family and grow old, a welcoming home to people of all ages, races, ethnicities, and incomes who choose to live here, and more importantly, stay here.

RESILIENT & SUSTAINABLE

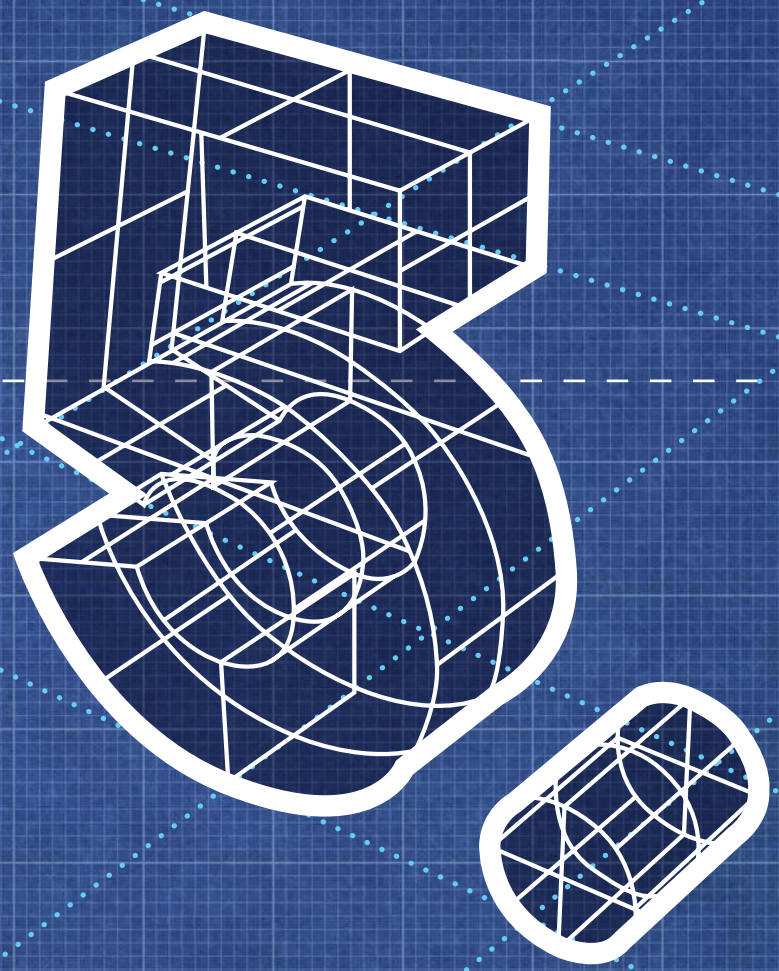
- a city of safe neighborhoods nestled within a beautiful landscape, where greener design renders the City more resilient to changing weather patterns, housing policies preserve neighborhoods for future generations, and local institutions support a continuum of learning and opportunity for all

PROUD

- with the authenticity of place fostered by our rich cultural and architectural history, empowered by our progress in effecting positive change, and emboldened by the growing sense of possibility, we celebrate and project a renewed self-image, and most of all

Open House attendees expressing their vision for Binghamton

5



BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON: THE PLAN

BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON

05

OVERVIEW

This chapter of **BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON: FORWARD TOGETHER** is the Plan, itself, with seven topic-specific sections or mini-plans that together comprise the City's new Comprehensive Plan. Each mini-plan speaks to elements of the community's vision with:

- An analysis of **EXISTING CONDITIONS** and summary of key issues
- An overview of your input in special spreads documenting the **COMMUNITY'S VOICE**
- A series of **GOALS AND OBJECTIVES** that organize the recommendations and relate them back to the vision, and
- A set of **RECOMMENDATIONS** or strategies, including policy changes and action steps, that will help make the community's vision a reality in the years to come.

BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON'S seven mini-plans include:

A

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: A PLAN FOR A CITY THAT PROSPERS speaks to residents' primary concerns about local jobs and businesses. The plan addresses the need to create jobs (and training) for workers of varied skill and education levels, the importance of encouraging new jobs at big companies that require big sites as well as small businesses and start-ups, strategies for promoting businesses that restore vibrancy Downtown, and the benefits of expanding connections between businesses and major institutional anchors. This plan strives to position Binghamton as a city that businesses choose for its business-friendly environment, creative vibe, and high quality of life offered to employees.

B

HOUSING: A PLAN FOR THOSE AT HOME IN THE CITY addresses the needs of homeowners, landlords, renters, policy makers, public agencies, investors, and developers, alike - all people affected by Binghamton's housing stock and housing market. Recommendations encompass strategies for maintaining the City's aging housing stock, opportunities to diversify housing typologies to bring beautiful buildings back to life and better serve certain market segments, and tactics to preserve affordability and the integrity of neighborhoods.

C

TRANSPORTATION: A PLAN FOR A CITY THAT WALKS, BIKES, RIDES TRANSIT... AND DRIVES TOO is about how Binghamton moves - more specifically about the multiple ways in which people travel through the City and how the City can better balance its public rights-of-way to serve those traveling on foot or by wheelchair, by bicycle, by bus, and by car to get where they need to go for work, for school, and for fun. The transportation strategies address the existing network of streets and parking areas, trails and transit services while seeking to add amenities, options, and alternatives to boost safety, convenience, and mobility via multiple modes.

D

INFRASTRUCTURE: A PLAN FOR WHERE THE RIVERS MEET THE CITY recognizes the realities that Binghamton faces as a city trisected by rivers. In addition to strategies that address energy, utilities, and operating costs in an era of budget cuts, this portion of the Plan puts forth strategies to address the volume and quality of water flowing downstream which threaten Binghamton's riverfront and low-lying properties during riverine flood events; stormwater regulations and opportunities for smaller-scale interventions that mitigate flash flood events caused by rainfall; and the relationship between water and urban land use decisions in the future.

E

ENVIRONMENT & OPEN SPACE: A PLAN FOR PRESERVATION AND PLAY focuses on the City's natural landscapes - rivers, riparian edges, and park spaces - as well as opportunities in daily life for Binghamton's citizens to contribute to a healthier city, region, and planet by reducing waste output, increasing the urban forest and flora, and strengthening the connection between people and the parks, playgrounds, rivers, and trails, that welcome healthy play so long as they remain clean and safe spaces themselves.

F

LAND USE & ZONING: A PLAN FOR THE LAND includes one of the most important elements to emerge from a comprehensive planning process, a future land use map, which is a tool that indicates where existing land uses should be preserved, and where property should be positioned for redevelopment to accommodate a mix of new uses. The future land use recommendations will inform updates to the City's Zoning Code as well as decisions by the Planning Commission and Zoning Board regarding development proposals for properties throughout Binghamton. With recommendations about housing, commercial, and industrial property, parklands and floodplains, as well as the development and design review processes, this mini-plan highlights where Blueprint Binghamton's recommendations hit the ground.

G

COMMUNITY BUILDING: A PLAN FOR NEIGHBORS AND NEIGHBORHOODS stems from the energy and momentum built during the planning process with strategies that seek to harness the community's interests and ideas with tools that foster actions for change - at the block level, the community level, the neighborhood level. With ideas that pertain to your backyard, your streetscape, your children, and your health, these quality of life recommendations establish a common ground that will bring each part of the Binghamton community to the implementation table to help make **BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON: FORWARD TOGETHER** a reality.

WANT TO KEEP READING?

BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON HAS 7 MAIN CHAPTERS

- **A** ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
- **B** HOUSING
- **C** TRANSPORTATION
- **D** INFRASTRUCTURE
- **E** ENVIRONMENT & OPEN SPACE
- **F** LAND USE & ZONING
- **G** COMMUNITY BUILDING

CHAPTER V

A

THE BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON MINI-PLAN ON

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

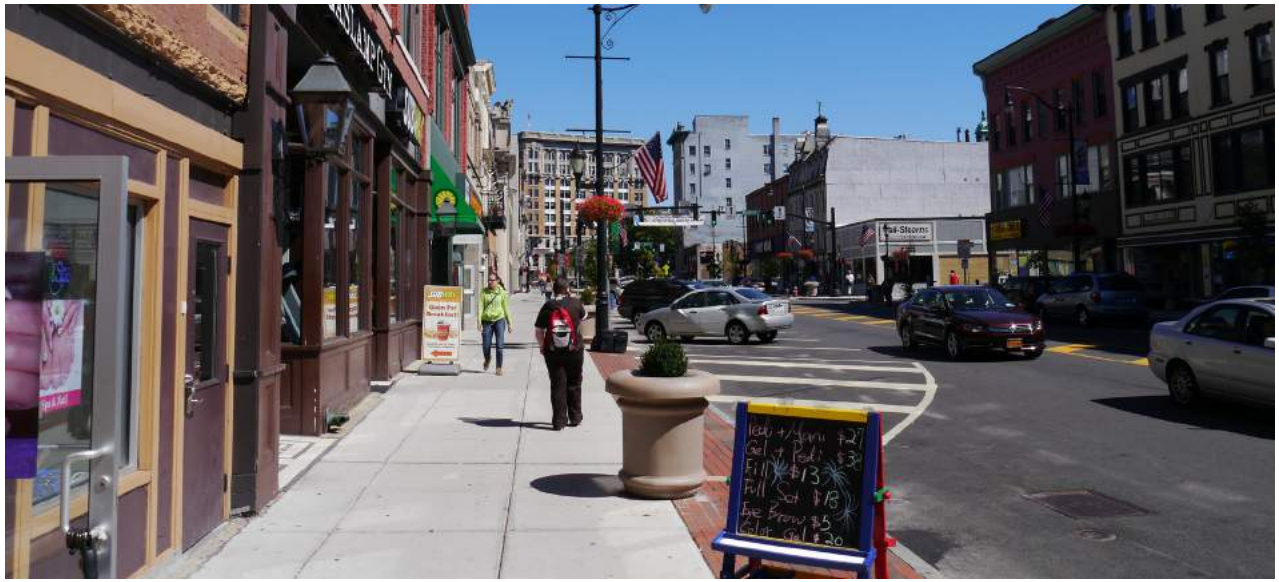
A PLAN FOR A CITY THAT PROSPERS

BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT A PLAN FOR A CITY THAT PROSPERS

A

The economic development chapter or **BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON MINI-PLAN ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT** speaks to residents' primary concerns about local jobs and businesses. The plan addresses the need to create jobs (and training) for workers of varied skill and education levels, the importance of encouraging new jobs at big companies that require big sites as well as small businesses and start-ups, strategies for promoting businesses that restore vibrancy Downtown, and the benefits of expanding connections between businesses and major institutional anchors. This Plan strives to position Binghamton as a City that businesses choose for its business-friendly environment, creative vibe, and high quality of life offered to employees.



Downtown Binghamton

EXISTING CONDITIONS

EMPLOYMENT CENTERS / JOBS

Binghamton has a long tradition as a center of transportation and industry dating back to the 1830s and the completion of the Chenango Canal. More recently, however, reductions in jobs in the City as well as in Broome County and the broader region have been major concerns. As shown in the table, total employment and private employment in the City have decreased steadily from 2002 to 2011 with an employment decline totaling more than 5,400 overall, of which almost 4,950 were private sector jobs. While there was some recovery from 2010 to 2011 with an increase of 613 in private employment, much remains to be done to put Binghamton back on a path of new business development and associated job growth.

Job reductions by industries with historical strength in the area, including defense contractors, have deferred recovery in the area from the Great Recession. Especially distressing for Binghamton is the decline of 2,502 jobs in the manufacturing sector from 2002 to 2011, or 66% of all manufacturing jobs in the City. More recently, declines in employment by local government as a result of essential fiscal austerity measures has added to the slow pace of economic recovery. Data from the New York Department of Labor showed unemployment (not seasonally adjusted) in the City of Binghamton was 8.1 percent in September 2013 and 7.9 percent during October 2013.

Employment has increased in a few sectors in the City's economy. The largest growth from 2002 to 2011 has been in Health Care and Social Assistance sector, which has added 446 jobs. There have been smaller increases in other sectors: Other Services (excluding Public Administration (311 jobs); Real Estate Rental and Leasing (106 jobs); Professional, Scientific and Technical Services (59 jobs); and Arts, Entertainment and Recreation (44 jobs).

While the State of New York does not prepare employment projections for Binghamton, projections for the Southern Tier Region and Broome County are for job growth during the time frame from 2010 to 2020. The New York State Department of Labor forecasts that total employment in the Southern Tier Region will increase by 19,140 jobs, or 6.2%. The number of jobs in Broome County is also expected to increase during the ten-year time frame. Four NAICS two-digit industry sectors are projected to provide about 70% of the additional jobs: Health Care and Social Assistance; Professional and Business Services; Educational Services; and Accommodation and Food Services.

FIGURE 14: Total Employment: Private and Public
SOURCE: US CENSUS, ON THE MAP LEHD DATA, WORK AREA PROFILE ANALYSIS.

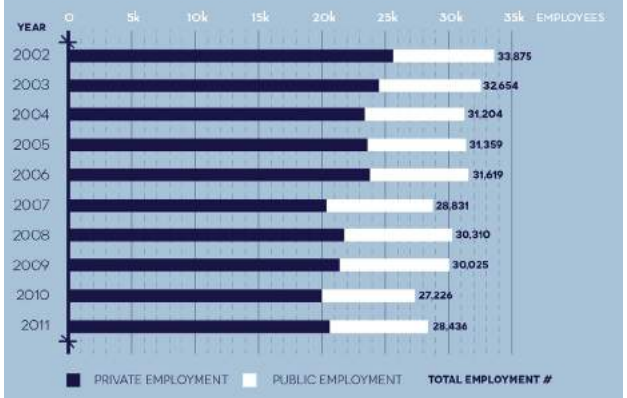
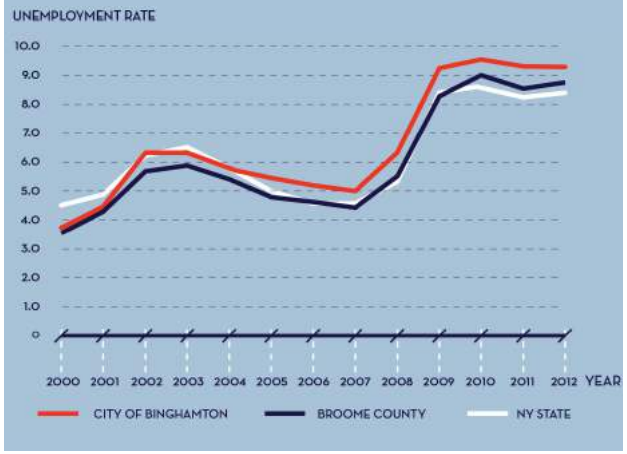


FIGURE 15: Unemployment Rate: 2000-2012
SOURCE: NEW YORK STATE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR



BROWNFIELD OPPORTUNITY AREAS

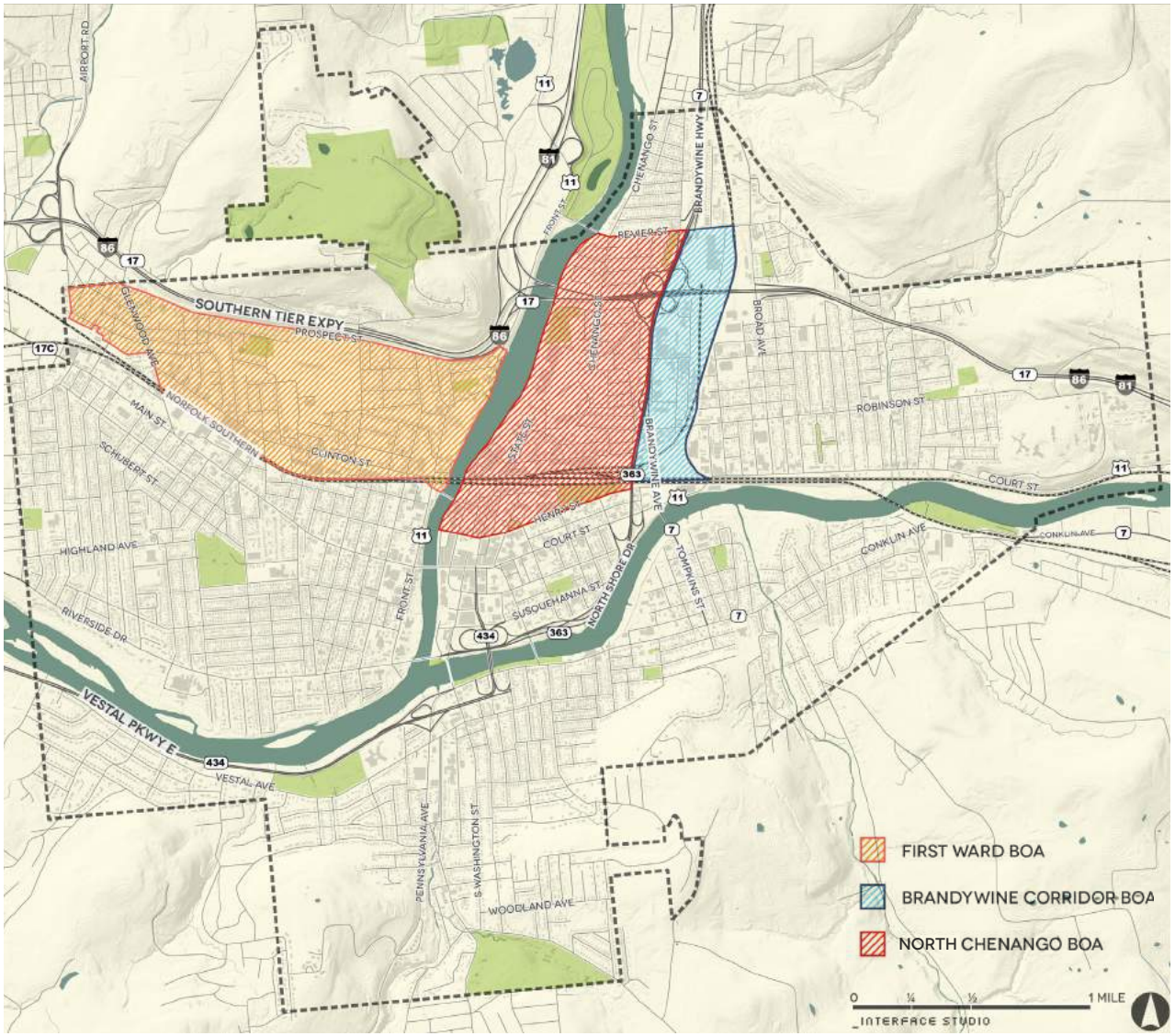


FIGURE 16: Brownfield Opportunity Areas - MAP

BROWNFIELD OPPORTUNITY AREAS (BOA) PROGRAM

The Brownfield Opportunity Areas Program is a collaboration between the New York State **DIVISION OF COASTAL RESOURCES** and **DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION**. The BOA Program is designed to assist communities in fostering redevelopment and returning underutilized land into productive and catalytic areas while restoring environmental quality. The purpose of the BOA program is to establish a community-based revitalization plan and implementation strategy to achieve brownfield redevelopment. The BOA program requires three steps for any BOA:

- Step 1 - Pre-nomination Study
- Step 2 - Nomination
- Step 3 - Implementation Strategy

The BOA program provides benefits to both the community and property owners. Benefits to the community include the establishment of a Community Vision and Strategy for Revitalization that defines future uses and potential businesses, improves environmental quality, and provides an inventory of sites. The BOA also serves to foster partnerships with State agencies and will increase the competitiveness for other funding programs.

Applications by the City of Binghamton and Broome County have resulted in over $650,000 in grant monies for brownfield redevelopment in the City of Binghamton. The grant monies are being used at three BOAs in the City of Binghamton:

BRANDYWINE CORRIDOR
- prepared by Elan Planning and Design

Broome County received a BOA Nomination award to study the Brandywine Corridor, a 158-acre old industrial site that runs along the Brandywine Highway and is crossed by rail and major highways. The Brandywine BOA is an opportunity to bring public and private investment to bear on a new vision for the area as a gateway to the City of Binghamton and Broome County that can be redeveloped with high quality urban design to generate a positive impact on the region's economy. The preferred scenario for redevelopment envisions retail and residential mixed uses and better pedestrian connections along Robinson and Bevier streets at the northern and southern ends of the industrial corridor to improve quality of life in adjacent residential communities. Given the City's overwhelming need for new employment opportunities, the mix of industrial uses, such as high tech, trucking, and rail-oriented businesses also included in the preferred scenario would offer much-needed locations for new business development and should be the first priority for redevelopment. The plan also addresses floodplain issues and mitigation strategies.

NORTH CHENANGO RIVER CORRIDOR
- prepared by Vanasse Hangen Brustlin

The North Chenango BOA encompasses approximately 410 acres between the Chenango River and the Brandywine Highway in the North Side neighborhood and the industrial area just north of Downtown. The North Chenango BOA study grows out of North Side CARES Vision Plan and the findings of earlier BOA studies of adjacent areas. The community vision for the North Chenango River Corridor seeks to create a gateway to the City that combines an active commercial core with vibrant neighborhoods and strong links to the River and the rest of the City. The market study supports rehabilitation over new construction as a development tool, the redevelopment of retail and attraction of new retail to bring new activity and better connection to the riverfront, residential development to strengthen the community and support local retail with a long-term strategy of senior housing, and potentially providing flex/industrial/office space if in the longer term start-ups are in need of space. Redevelopment is envisioned in three phases: 1) revitalizing the retail plazas through rehabilitating existing structures, connecting roads to the river, and enhancing the riverfront, 2) improving street and infrastructure, through streetscape, public space improvements, and a stronger streetwall along key roads, for better connection to Downtown Binghamton and the River, and 3) public investment to support social services and plazas in the area east of West State Street through better roadways and retail.

FIRST WARD
- prepared by Bergmann Associates

The First Ward BOA plan is a Step 2 Nomination Study which will be conducted in coordination with this Comprehensive Plan Update and other BOA plans. The First Ward BOA is a 368-acre area that extends from the Chenango River to the City's western boundary and from the Norfolk Southern Railroad to Prospect Street and Route 17/I-86. The plan will investigate the market potential of key areas and produce master plans for the Charles Street Business Park and Clinton/Glenwood corridors. The plan will also address the impact of the new flood zone boundaries, undertake analyses of retail/light industry, housing and infrastructure, produce a gateway and wayfinding plan for key intersections, prepare National Register designations for buildings in the study area, and conduct environmental site assessments.

BUSINESS DISTRICTS /RETAIL

The decline of Binghamton as the County's hub of retail activity has been occurring slowly over the past 25 years as **FIGURE 26** depicts. Data from the Economic Census shows that Binghamton's share of Broome County's retail sales has been steadily declining over that time period. Binghamton's retail market share has shifted to Vestal and Johnson City over this time period. This situation is not surprising as Vestal has been attracting large chain merchants in power centers for over 20 years that bring large footprints and sales in their direction. Johnson City has the Oakdale Mall and its nearly one million square feet of leasable space along with other big box retail that it attracts.

However, Binghamton's share of restaurant and bar sales has been growing in recent times. This is a positive indicator for Binghamton moving forward. If the City can capitalize on its strength of restaurants and nightlife the long term goal should be to shift more sales to the large portion of independent merchants in the City.

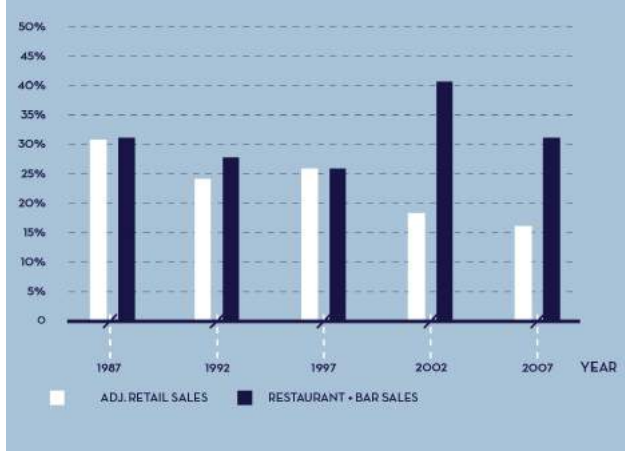
Currently, sales at **RETAILERS** in the City of Binghamton slightly exceed the expected demand of its citizens, indicating a modest draw of shoppers from outside the City. According to Claritas, annual sales for 2013 would hit $410 million in the City, approximately 8% more than expected retail demand of $381 million. This surplus of retail sales is in line with most markets where the urban core typically performs better, capturing sales from area residents and visitors drawn to the City to work, shop, and recreate.

For various reasons, the City of Binghamton has been unable to attract or accommodate large-scale retail projects, so its place in the regional retail market is largely driven by local or regional merchants requiring smaller footprints. A wide array of these merchants have found space and customers in the urban fabric of Downtown and surrounding neighborhoods.

For retail in the City proper, some sectors stand out as regional draws while others are underserved, forcing residents to shop elsewhere in the County. Some categories such as automotive parts, furniture, health and personal care stores, sporting goods, hobby, book, and music stores are drawing people into the City with sales that exceed demand by at least 10%. Other categories such as building materials, clothing, and miscellaneous retailers are not meeting retail demand for Binghamton residents and may present opportunities for new and existing merchants.

In **EATING AND DRINKING ESTABLISHMENTS,** Binghamton falls short of meeting expected demand for its own residents despite the growing restaurant and bar business in Downtown Binghamton. Among full-service restaurants, the City meets only three-quarters of local demand, and even less of the fast food market which indicates potential opportunities for more food-related businesses in town.

FIGURE 17: Binghamton Share of Broome County Retail and Restaurant/Bar sales, 1987-2007
SOURCE: CLARITAS



To address these challenges, **BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON** must address the opportunities in both Downtown and different neighborhood commercial corridors as well as foster more locally-owned businesses and entrepreneurs.

IMAGE / MARKETING

Successful marketing of a city is critical for economic development both within the region and beyond. Businesses, residents, students and others choose where to live and/or invest based, in part, upon the image a place projects. The perception of a place is shaped by many factors, some based on real trends and facts while other factors include how a city markets itself and whether that image is reinforced through local media.

Binghamton and the Southern Tier have long faced a challenge with regards to perception and image. The recently completed Broome County Comprehensive Plan highlights the many ways in which the region's negative perception is a challenge to business growth:

"PERCEPTIONS AND REALITIES OF THE NEW YORK STATE BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT: HIGH INCOME AND PROPERTY TAXES, HIGH LEVEL OF UNIONIZATION (ALBEIT DRIVEN BY GOVERNMENT AND UTILITY WORKERS)."

"LOW RECOGNITION OF BROOME COUNTY AND THE SOUTHERN TIER AMONG BUSINESSES AND THE GENERAL PUBLIC OUTSIDE THE STATE, MAKING IT DIFFICULT TO ATTRACT COMPANIES AND INDIVIDUALS TO THE AREA."

"TOO MUCH FOCUS ON THE ECONOMIC AND INDUSTRIAL LOSSES OF THE PAST (PEOPLE ARE SO CAUGHT UP IN THE PAST, THEY CAN'T SEE THE FUTURE)."

"LOCAL MEDIA PERPETUATE A NEGATIVE VIEW OF THE REGION, HURTING EFFORTS TO PROMOTE BROOME COUNTY AS A LOCATION FOR BUSINESS AND A GOOD PLACE TO RAISE A FAMILY."

"DIFFICULTY RECRUITING WORKERS, ESPECIALLY YOUNG PROFESSIONALS, FROM OUTSIDE THE AREA; THE GREATER BINGHAMTON/BROOME COUNTY REGION IS RELATIVELY UNKNOWN."

The negative images that impact the region are only heightened for the City of Binghamton. As stated in the 2003 City of Binghamton Comprehensive Plan, "Many regional residents never visit Downtown Binghamton, assuming the City is unsafe and unpleasant. Many of these impressions are formed by the information regional residents are receiving from local media." As a result, "Promoting Binghamton to Improve Its Image" was one of the core objectives of that Plan. At the outset of the **BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON** planning process, the Steering Committee was asked about the City's progress since the last Comprehensive Plan. Universally, Steering Committee members indicated that "perception" and "image" needed the most amount of improvement to move Binghamton forward.

There are significant assets in Binghamton, and Downtown has clear momentum represented by new housing and restaurants. It will be critical to promote these investments while also instilling an image that Binghamton is open for business.

SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES

The key to a revitalized Binghamton is economic development and job growth for all residents. Since the closure of the major industries that fueled regional growth, the lack of jobs has remained a constant concern for residents and City leaders alike. Job losses have continued even over the course of the last decade which has only furthered negative perceptions about Binghamton from potential businesses and many residents throughout the region. The perceptions of the City, combined with the relatively low incomes of local families, have also limited the opportunities for new retail establishments. What were once vibrant industrial and retail corridors and an active Downtown that earned the City the 19th century name the "Parlor City" are now a reflection of the economic challenges faced by the City. Although Binghamton was once an industrial town, the ability to re-industrialize and create jobs for residents of all backgrounds is limited due to the lack of market-ready, available land for large-scale industrial redevelopment.

Despite these challenges, the City has the opportunity to reverse course and capitalize on its inherent assets including its location, infrastructure (freight rail, highways, and utilities) and concentration of jobs Downtown. The New York State Department of Labor forecasts that four industrial sectors - Health Care and Social Assistance; Professional and Business Services; Educational Services; and Accommodation and Food Services - are poised to provide new jobs in the region. There is also momentum Downtown with new restaurants and services as well as a significant amount of new student housing to support retail.

The recommendations in this chapter address one or more of the following objectives:

- Encourage **LOCAL ENTREPRENEURIAL ACTIVITY** and help businesses thrive
- Improve Downtown as a **REGIONAL DESTINATION** and strengthen neighborhood commercial corridors
- Improve the **IMAGE** of the City
- Encourage new **INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT**
- Leverage **LOCAL INSTITUTIONS** for local job growth
- Utilize the **ARTS AND HERITAGE TOURISM** to help spur economic development

COMMUNITY VOICE

BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON asked YOU for your thoughts and ideas, concerns and priorities related to economic development. Ideas abounded for how to enliven commercial areas, especially Downtown, and create jobs for a thriving and resilient City.

COLLABORATIVE MAP COMMENTS

Your ideas for the **COLLABORATIVE MAP** addressed the need for better marketing of the City, jobs, making Downtown livelier and more attractive, and promoting the arts:

COLLABORATIVE MAP

IDEAS. INSIGHTS. BARRIERS

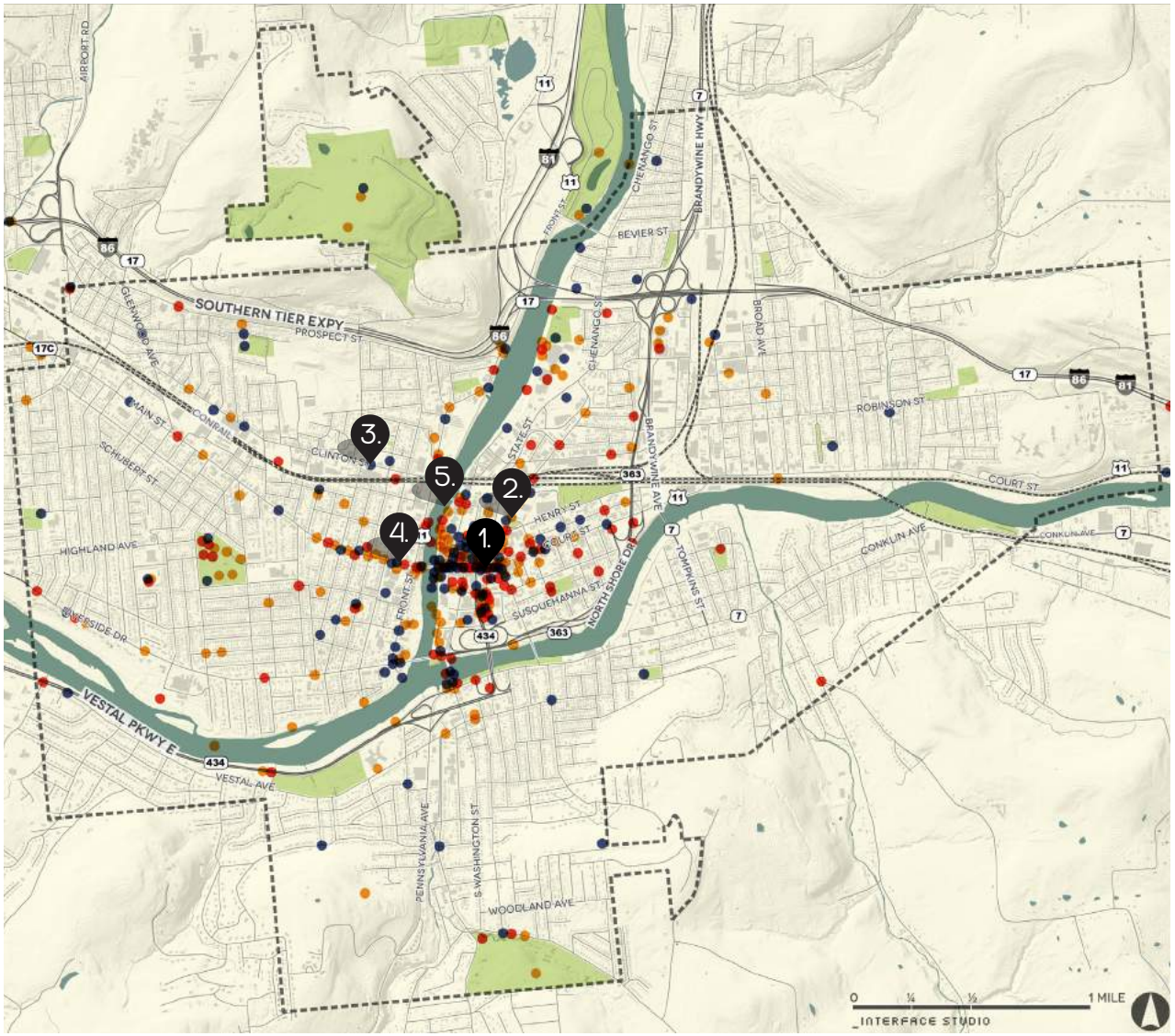


FIGURE 18: Collaborative Map Comments Locations

1. "DOWNTOWN SHOULD BE IMPROVED IN LOOKS TO MAKE IT MORE INVITING."

2. "ARTS SHOULD BE PART OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT - ARTISTS SHOULD BE INCLUDED ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT BOARDS."

3. "CLINTON ST. ANTIQUE ROW IS UNDER APPRECIATED."

4. "OPEN UP EMPTY STOREFRONTS TO TEMPORARY EVENTS & PROMOTIONS."

5. "REVITALIZE BUSINESS AREA BY THE RIVER & MLK PARK - IT WOULD MAKE THE LOVELIEST CAFÉ/SHOP/ BUSINESS PROMENADE."

- IDEA
- INSIGHT
- BARRIER

POSTCARDS FROM THE FUTURE

Your **POSTCARDS FROM THE FUTURE** describe a vision for a thriving City with lots to do, local businesses, jobs and an entrepreneurial spirit:

"THE CITY THRIVES! ENTREPRENEURSHIP THRIVES! WHAT A WONDERFUL PLACE TO RAISE OUR FAMILY."

"THERE IS A GREAT RIVERFRONT DEVELOPMENT. LOTS OF OUTDOOR CAFES. THE ART SCENE IS THRIVING AND THERE IS SO MUCH GOING ON – CONCERTS, ART GALLERIES, MUSEUMS"

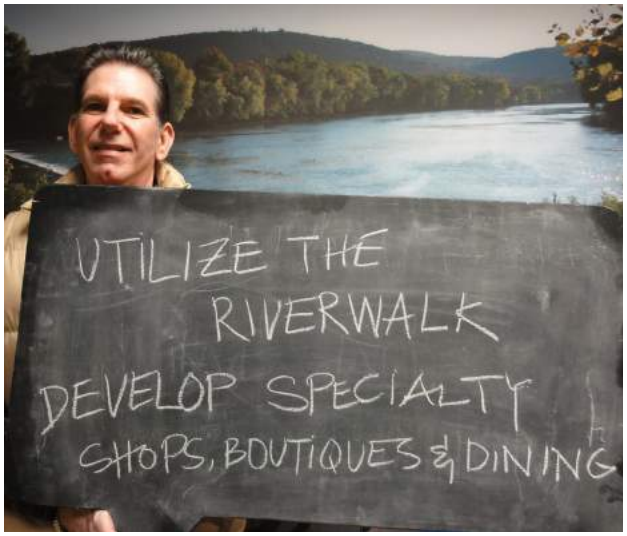
"[WE] PLAYED UP PARTNERSHIPS FOR GREEN TECH! LOCAL BUSINESSES, EXPANDED EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENERGY EFFICIENCY HOUSING RETROFITTERS, ARTS & RECREATIONAL VENUES, LOCALLY SUSTAINABLE BUSINESSES"

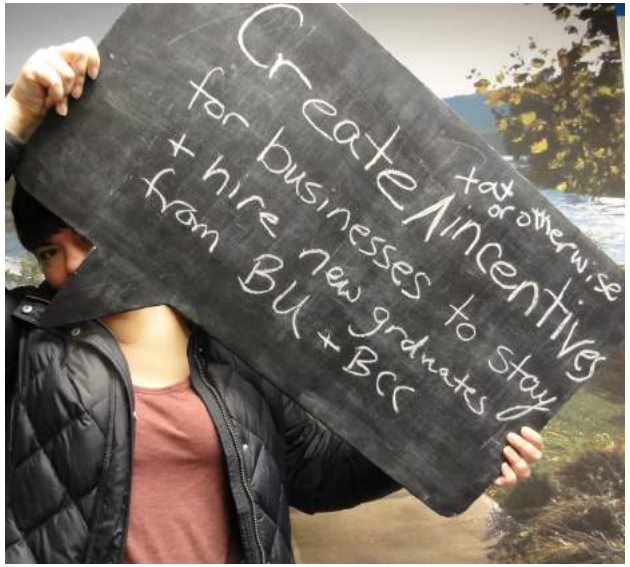
"THERE'S FRESH, AFFORDABLE FOOD ON EVERY CORNER. I STOPPED TO PICK BLUEBERRIES WHILE WALKING THE DOG ALONG THE RIVER, THEN BOUGHT A BURRITO MADE FROM LOCAL INGREDIENTS DOWNTOWN. TONIGHT I PLAN TO LISTEN TO A FREE CONCERN IN THE PARK BUY SOME LOCALLY SOURCED ICE CREAM FROM THE ICE CREAM CART. AND I LOVE MY NEW JOB WORKING IN A GREEN BUILDING AS AN OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST."

"THE DOWNTOWN IS NOW SO VIBRANT. RESTAURANTS & STORES HAVE POPPED UP, OPEN AT LATER HOURS THAN YOU WERE USED TO. YOU SHOULD SEE THE FOOT TRAFFIC!"

BIG IDEAS

Your **BIG IDEAS** inform the recommendations for improving economic development in Binghamton:





Images from the "Photo Suggestion Booth"

CITYWIDE SURVEY

And your responses on the **CITYWIDE SURVEY** highlight areas of improvement for economic development in the City:

- Things you like: access to amenities, such as community centers and services, and arts and culture
- Improvements you would like to see in Binghamton:

64%	Improved job opportunities
58%	Downtown revitalization
52%	More small and locally owned businesses
37%	More arts and cultural activities

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOALS:

The recommendations that comprise **BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON'S MINI-PLAN ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT [A PLAN FOR A CITY THAT PROSPERS]** are organized into seven goal areas, each titled by a key economic development goal:

01

IMPROVE THE IMAGE OF THE CITY AS AN EXCELLENT PLACE TO DO BUSINESS

02

LEVERAGE RAIL AND BRANDYWINE BOA FOR JOB GROWTH

03

LEVERAGE THE VALUE OF LOCAL ANCHOR INSTITUTIONS FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

04

CREATE A MIXED-USE DOWNTOWN THAT IS A REGIONAL DESTINATION

05

ENCOURAGE LOCAL ENTREPRENEURIAL ACTIVITY AND HELP SMALL BUSINESSES THRIVE

06

CREATE STRONG NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL HUBS

07

FOSTER THE LOCAL ARTS AND HERITAGE TOURISM

Taken together, the Economic Development Goals and their related objectives and strategies support the following themes of **BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON'S** vision for the future of our City:

- **THRIVING** - with a mix of new businesses and activity Downtown and along commercial corridors, and on large sites that represent major development opportunities and local job growth
- **RESILIENT & SUSTAINABLE** - with a robust mix of local businesses and institutional and industrial anchors
- **PROUD** - with a fresh perspective on the City that promotes economic development, attracts jobs and celebrates a quality of life that makes us proud to be in Binghamton.

FOR FULL VISION STATEMENT, SEE PAGE 40.

GOAL:

01

IMPROVE THE IMAGE OF THE CITY AS AN EXCELLENT PLACE TO DO BUSINESS

Binghamton's image inhibits efforts to boost economic development and establish new jobs and services. A focused effort to change the City's perception, both within and outside the region, is necessary to pursue funding and attract and grow businesses. The following economic development recommendations support Goal 1:

1.1 POSITION BINGHAMTON AS A LEADER IN THE REGION

As the largest City in the region, Binghamton needs to play a central role with respect to economic development. The City should actively engage with regional initiatives such as the Southern Tier Regional Economic Development Council and the Broome County Industrial Development Agency to coordinate activities and promote the City and region for job growth. This includes actively pursuing regional and State funding and working to recruit large businesses to market-ready development sites. For instance, Binghamton's close proximity to large metropolitan areas and lower cost of living make it ideal for back office development, which provide computer support remotely and act as a backup for company main offices.

1.2

DEVELOP PROFESSIONAL BRANDING STRATEGY FOR THE CITY TO MARKET BINGHAMTON ASSETS AND QUALITY OF LIFE

Downtown business associations should hire a branding and marketing consultant to develop a range of identity graphics for Downtown that simultaneously reflect the many facets of the area's character and maintain some graphic integrity and interrelatedness. As a lower-cost, more grassroots alternative, local partners could engage local artists and designers in participating in a design competition to develop a graphic identity for Downtown and hold an open vote to determine the winning designs.

This graphic identity can be expressed through postcards, posters for storefront windows, a brochure listing all businesses and online as part of a Downtown Binghamton website. Online and print media will need to be supplemented by physical improvements Downtown using the same graphic look. Specifically, new signs at key gateways as described in Recommendation 4.6 can reinforce the brand and highlight local amenities. Local partners should also consider starting a sign program modeled on other examples. The sign program pairs business owners with local designers at reduced costs to design and install a new, distinctive sign to promote the business.

Branding campaign in Macon, GA

1.3

RESTRUCTURE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OFFICE TO HELP BUSINESSES NAVIGATE THE SYSTEM

The City will work to identify and help resolve problems affecting business, facilitate expansion, and assist in the removal of operational barriers through the following programs:

- **DEDICATED CONCIERGE POSITION** - The Binghamton Economic Development Office offers many programs, incentives and technical support to existing and start-up businesses. Although staff essentially functions as a concierge to businesses, there is no one dedicated, concierge for business development. This position would be expressly marketed as a one-stop-shop for businesses and be tasked with linking entrepreneurs with available incentives and support.

Charles Street Business Park

- **BINGHAMTON VISITATION PROGRAM** - To promote business retention, Economic Development staff will create a database of all Binghamton businesses and embark on a regular visitation program to develop an understanding of challenges and opportunities that the City may be able to assist with or facilitate assistance from other state or local organizations.

- **BINGHAMTON QUICK RESPONSE TEAM** - This team of individuals will be assembled from the Mayor's Office, and City Departments of Economic Development, Planning & Community Development, Buildings and Code Enforcement, and others, such Law and Engineering, where the need is indicated. The Quick Response Team will be ready to quickly collaborate with existing and prospective businesses when new opportunities arise for development, relocation, or expansion.

1.4

SEEK "SHOVEL READY" DESIGNATION TO ENHANCE MARKETING OF THE CHARLES STREET BUSINESS PARK

The County's Comprehensive Plan has noted that neither Broome County nor the City of Binghamton has any sites that have been certified as "shovel ready," according to criteria established by the State for the Build Now-NY Program of Empire State Development. Under the program, an economic development site certified as a "Shovel Ready Site" means all major permitting issues have been addressed to make a site ready for development. The advance work completed to obtain the shovel ready certification means that construction can begin quickly, which is a very attractive incentive for a prospective new business seeking to locate or expand in the area. In addition, Empire State Development offers marketing assistance for certified sites.

The Charles Street Business Park, which is located in the First Ward, presently is the home of Emerson Network Power. An additional 25 acres is available for light industrial use and is being actively marketed on the Broome County IDA's web site. Furthermore, truck access will soon be enhanced with the new interchange under construction by NYSDOT in the Prospect Mountain Project, which will add westbound on and off ramps. Certification as a shovel ready site could speed attraction of a new business to this location, thereby generating additional jobs in Binghamton. Therefore, the City should work with the IDA to begin the process of obtaining the certification.

Depending on the results of the BOA analysis, infrastructure improvements may be important for the Charles Street Business Park to attract the desired kind of light industrial users, including improvements for truck access. Completing the requirements for shovel ready certification during the same time frame as the BOA analysis will ensure timely consideration of improvements necessary for the remaining acreage to be used most successfully along with an identification of sources of funding. Additionally, as described in Land Use and Zoning Recommendations 1.3 and 3.1, adjusting the mix of uses permitted by the Urban Business Park zoning classification could also draw new interested investors to the site by allowing a mix of housing and office (medical) uses with lesser road access requirements in addition to light industry. If residential uses are considered for this site, careful consideration of any remaining environmental issues is necessary.

GOAL:

02

LEVERAGE RAIL AND BRANDYWINE BOA FOR JOB GROWTH

The local freight rail infrastructure is a major asset that few cities of Binghamton's size can offer. Land in the Brandywine Corridor, with access to rail and local highways, provides the best opportunity in the City to create new industrial businesses that offer well-paying employment opportunities for local residents. Proactive planning and investment are needed to realize the potential of these assets for stimulating economic growth. The following economic development recommendations support Goal 2:

2.1

CREATE AN INDUSTRIAL PRESERVATION AREA (IPA) WITHIN THE BRANDYWINE INDUSTRIAL CORRIDOR

The Brandywine BOA offers a unique opportunity for the City to leverage rail and highway access to its advantage. The area is served by three freight railroads. It enjoys excellent access to a full cloverleaf interchange of Interstate 81/Route 17, and it has access to the Brandywine Highway (Route 7). Land use in much of the area already is industrial. Two railroads, New York, Susquehanna, and Western Railroad Corporation (NYSW) and Canadian Pacific Railroad own land along railroad tracks in the BOA. The ability to build on the presence of rail lines and highway access is a unique opportunity for Binghamton and one that can be the basis for expansions of job-generating development.

INDUSTRIAL PRESERVATION AREA

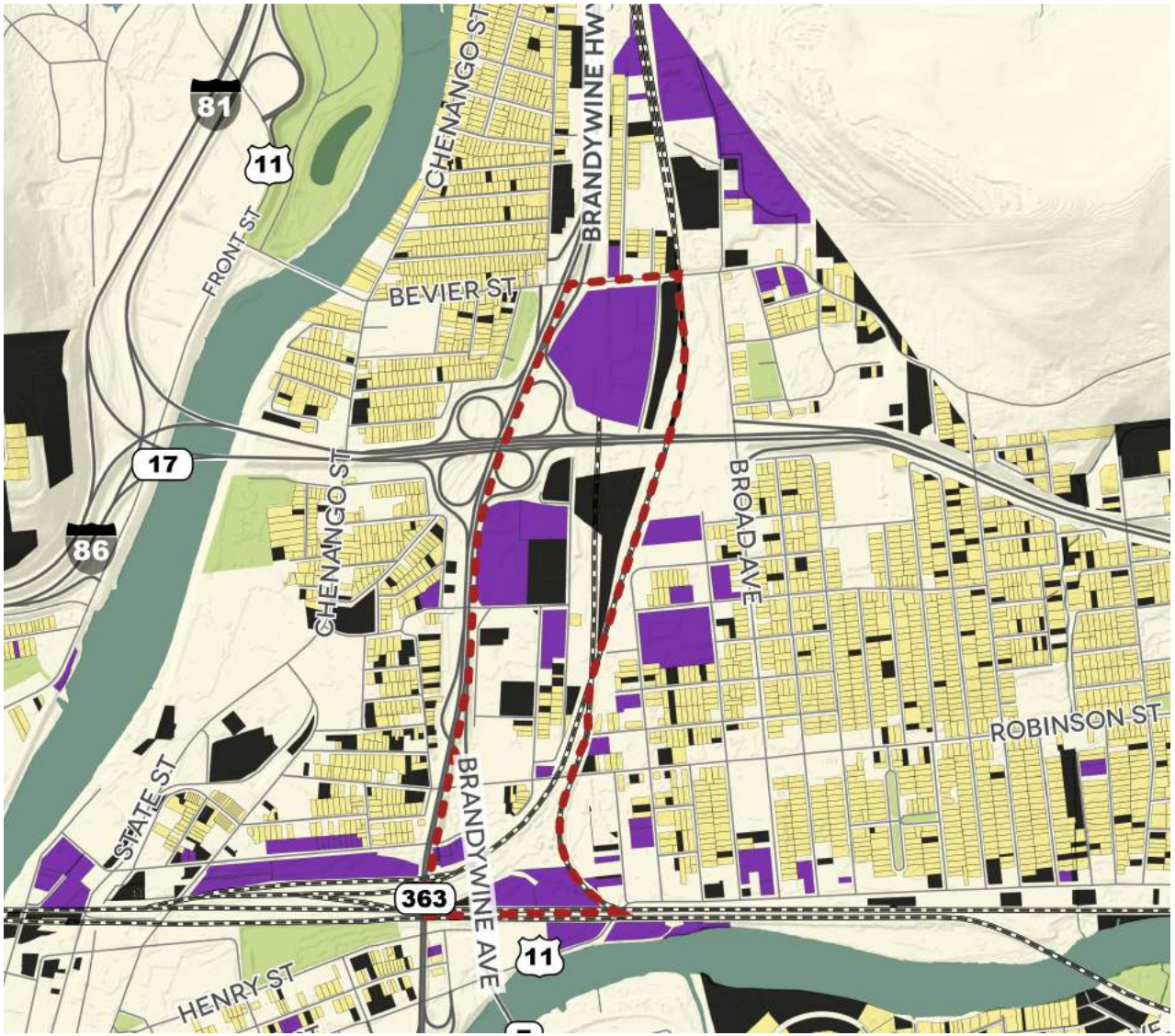


FIGURE 19: Industrial Preservation Area - MAP

The challenge in maximizing the potential of this area for job growth is available land. The corridor, while predominantly industrial, also includes some commercial and residential use. These uses often elevate the price of real estate beyond what industrial uses can pay; additionally, these uses limit the amount of land that could be assembled and redeveloped for new industrial jobs. An Industrial Preservation Area (IPA), corresponding to the Brandywine BOA, would be a specific overlay that protects the Brandywine Corridor from any other uses except industrial. Over time, this would enable sites to be assembled for new industrial development, and these businesses would be protected and buffered from other uses. Legislation to enact the industrial preservation area should include area boundaries and a time limit after which the legislation would sunset. See Land Use and Zoning Recommendations 1.4 and 4.1 as well.

- BROWNFIELD OPPORTUNITY AREA
- INDUSTRIAL
- RESIDENTIAL
- VACANT

Land in the Brandywine Corridor

2.2 FOCUS SITE ACQUISITION EFFORTS ON THE BRANDYWINE BOA, USING LAND BANK PROGRAM TO ASSEMBLE PROPERTY

During March 2013, Broome County received notification that Empire State Development had approved the County's application to create a local Land Bank, one of only eight municipalities in New York State to receive an approval. The mission established for the Land Bank is "to foster economic and community development" through a series of actions to address distressed, vacant, abandoned and underutilized properties. One of the methods cited is the aggregation of parcels for redevelopment plans. Funding from the Land Bank might be used to acquire land and assemble parcels within the Brandywine BOA area where rail and highway access is available, improve them, and market the sites to new businesses and industries.

2.3 OBTAIN SHOVEL READY CERTIFICATION FOR SITES IN THE BRANDYWINE INDUSTRIAL CORRIDOR

The Broome County Comprehensive Plan completed during August 2013 reported that there were no shovel ready sites in Binghamton or in Broome County, a weakness in marketing sites to job-generating businesses and industries. Shovel Ready Certification is administered by Empire State Development. The process expedites construction, and provides assistance with permitting. Empire State also provides assistance with marketing and outreach to specific businesses and industries that are consistent with local priorities for the sites. Once sites are assembled and ready for redevelopment in the Brandywine Corridor, Shovel Ready Certification should be pursued.

2.4

LEVERAGE FREIGHT RAIL TO ATTRACT BUSINESSES IN THE DISTRIBUTION CLUSTER AND INTERMODAL BUSINESSES

Binghamton is unique in having three freight railroad companies with rail lines in the City. All three have tracks in the Brandywine BOA. Included are two Class One railroads (Norfolk Southern and Canadian Pacific), and a local carrier, New York, Susquehanna, and Western Railroad Corporation (NYSW). From Binghamton, Norfolk Southern tracks go due west to Buffalo and Chicago. Canadian Pacific and Norfolk Southern share tracks east of Binghamton, to Oneonta, Albany, and points farther north and east. Canadian Pacific serves Scranton and points south. NYSW's rail extends to Syracuse to the north and connects there with another railroad, CSX. To the southeast, NYSW goes to North Bergen, New Jersey where it also can interchange with CSX and Norfolk Southern and can also access port facilities there.

NYSW owns property in the BOA area and has been expanding its holdings. Canadian Pacific also owns land along the eastern side of their tracks where a tenant is establishing a yard for storing and transferring fracking materials. The presence of these railroads as property owners, as well as improvements to Interstate 81, offer opportunities for several types of development. These two railroads might be approached about developing a major transloading facility that would transfer goods from one mode of transportation, such as rail cars, to another form, such as trucks. These types of facilities enable a railroad to serve a company lacking access to a rail line and also allow rail customers to supplement rail with truck deliveries. Transloading facilities include warehouses, cross-dock terminals, and outdoor facilities designed for transloading that are often called terminals. NYSW has a terminal in Syracuse and is completing a terminal in Cortland that will have facilities to transload, and also to unload boxcars and container shipments. Such a facility in Binghamton might benefit NYSW, Norfolk Southern, or Canadian Pacific. Norfolk Southern has intermodal facilities in Albany and Buffalo and also near Scranton, Pennsylvania. Canadian Pacific has no intermodal terminal in New York State; the nearest is in Philadelphia.

This recommendation supports the Preferred Land Use Scenario in the County's Brandywine BOA Plan, which calls for rail-oriented industry in proximity to the rail and industrial or truck service use adjacent to the Route 7, the Brandywine Expressway. As shovel-ready sites described in Recommendation 2.3 are assembled, the Broome County IDA should actively market the area's potential to transloading operators.

Brandywine Industrial Corridor

2.5 USE TOOLS SUCH AS BOAS AND I/I CREDITS FOR REDEVELOPMENT

While the difficult economics of new development is an issue for Binghamton, location of redevelopment in the BOA should offer opportunities for grants to help finance projects and make them economically feasible. The City can also leverage infiltration and inflow (I/I) credits to steer development where infrastructure and infill opportunities exist. In addition, special financing through the Broome County Land Bank Authority, Broome County IDA, and Empire State Development might be tapped for developments generating new private investment and new jobs in the area. The presence of rail, highway access, and transloading facilities should result in demand in the area for additional private sector businesses taking advantage of the infrastructure and facilities.

2.6 SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT OF TARGETED WORKFORCE TRAINING PROGRAMS TO PREPARE BINGHAMTON RESIDENTS FOR JOBS CREATED

Workforce development programs are a valuable tool with long-term benefits for companies and the communities where they are located. There is a need in Binghamton to build a more skilled workforce that is not expendable, more adaptable to change, and better able to transfer within and between economic sectors. The City will work with its partners at Broome Tioga Workforce, SUNY Broome, and the Department of Labor in the development of workforce development programs provide information on the training needs of businesses and industries and provide access to workforce training and recruitment resources.

Job generation by transloading facilities, alone, is relatively low with an estimate of 20 new jobs for one transloading facility. However, related jobs - including rail and trucking company positions - should add additional jobs for residents of Binghamton and the region. While wages vary, Bureau of Labor Statistics 2012 median salaries for rail employees ranged from about $45,000 to about $55,000. Median wages for drivers of large trucks in the same year were almost $40,000; the median wage for supervisors/managers was almost $54,000. Nationally, employment in rail and truck transportation has grown steadily since January 2010. Working with local service agencies, training programs are required to ensure that new businesses have a steady supply of qualified local employees and that residents have the opportunity to gain the necessary skills for employment in this field.

GOAL:

03

LEVERAGE THE VALUE OF LOCAL ANCHOR INSTITUTIONS FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Binghamton and the region have many recognized institutions including hospitals and universities that are essential to the local economy. The City should seek ways to leverage their value as a way to encourage local businesses and entrepreneurs. The following economic development recommendations support Goal 3:

3.1

SUPPORT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BINGHAMTON UNIVERSITY TECHNOLOGY INCUBATOR AND POSITION THE CITY TO OFFER SPACE FOR INCUBATOR "GROWN-UPS" AND ANCILLARY BUSINESSES SUPPORTING THE INCUBATOR

The Southern Tier High Technology Incubator is expected to start construction during March 2014 and to be completed during 2015. The facility, which will be located on Hawley Street in Binghamton, will provide resources for up to 10 businesses at a time, providing them with laboratories, business services, and access to Binghamton University's technology transfer and commercialization expertise. If these start-up businesses are successful, they will "graduate" from the incubator and will need new space to occupy. Studies by the National Business Incubation Association have found that start-ups generally tend to stay in the metropolitan area where they were incubated, an indication that successful businesses will be seeking space in the Binghamton area. The designation of the incubator as one of three lined virtual Hot Spot nodes, along with Cornell University's incubator and Corning's Ceramics Corridor Innovation Center, is expected to help foster commercialization and job generation by the Southern Tier High Technology Incubator. In addition, having a Hot Spot should be another incentive for incubator graduates to remain in areas near the incubator.

In 2013, New York State enacted START-UP NY (SUNY Tax-free Areas to Revitalize and Transform Upstate NY), which will allow SUNY colleges and universities the opportunity to develop tax-free communities within one mile of their campuses or research centers. New start-ups or out-of-state businesses that relocate to these communities, create new jobs, and are aligned with the mission of the sponsoring university will be eligible for the 10-year tax-free program. This program, if applied to the Binghamton University Technology Incubator, will provide a strong incentive for new incubator-related businesses to set up in the core of the City and has the potential to foster technology business growth in the City.

Rendering of Technology Incubator. Source: PressConnects.com

Local officials, working with the Southern Tier Regional Economic Development Council, need to establish a process to identify existing space in the City that might meet the needs of potential graduates and to pursue development or retrofits of space to meet the requirements of these emerging businesses. It will be several years before incubated businesses graduate and require space. In the meantime, however, other entrepreneurs are likely to seek space near the Southern Tier High Technology Incubator and generate demand for space.

3.2
DEVELOP AN INNOVATION DISTRICT TO PROMOTE BINGHAMTON AS A CULTURAL AND CREATIVE HUB

The City should develop an Innovation District centered on the Southern Tier High Technology Incubator in collaboration with the County and the Villages of Endicott and Johnson City as outlined in the County's recently adopted Comprehensive Plan. The district will be the home for the development and branding of Binghamton INSPIRED, a central initiative that recognizes that creativity is fundamental to the emerging 21st century global economy. With a strong history of innovation, and as home to many arts and cultural venues, Binghamton has many of the elements that make up a robust creative economy. By making the right strategic investments and collaborating with the Arts Council and known creative industries, Binghamton will become known as a cultural and creative hub. The many elements and industries that make up our creative economy will be investigated, and will frame the community's conversation with a focus on the production and consumption of creative works, creative people, and the creative workforce.

3.3
PROMOTE ENTREPRENEURSHIP THROUGH THE DEVELOPMENT OF JUMPSTART BINGHAMTON AND THE ENTREPRENEURIAL ECOSYSTEM

Through the Entrepreneurial Ecosystem, the City will promote the development of new products and services by working closely with Binghamton University and SUNY Broome to foster investment in basic and applied research and development, and facilitate technology transfer and commercialization opportunities. Recognizing that venture capital plays an important role in high technology entrepreneurship, the City should work to form a network of venture capitalists, angel investors, and local investors to provide incentives for entrepreneurship by lowering the difficulties of entering an industry. As part of this effort, the City will cooperate with Binghamton University and the Small Business Administration in providing information and assistance to startup firms that may qualify for SBIR/STTR grants, which are programs to ensure the nation's small, high tech, innovative businesses are a significant part of the federal government's research and development efforts. In today's environment of constrained credit, the public sector can and should play an important role in enabling deeper and more diverse funding opportunities. Ultimately, all players in the funding ecosystem need to think more creatively about how to provide access to finance. The JumpStart model will also enhance entrepreneurship providing new startup ventures with enhanced entrepreneurial assistance, including help with business plans and connection to business mentors, through its partners throughout the Greater Binghamton area.

3.4

CHALLENGE ANCHOR INSTITUTIONS AND BUSINESSES TO PURCHASE 20% (WITH ANNUAL ESCALATOR) OF PROCURED GOODS AND SERVICES FROM LOCAL BUSINESSES

Purchases of goods and services by institutions such as college, universities, and hospitals as well as large businesses located in Broome County involve significant sums of money. When the money is spent in the County, these expenditures help to provide income for local businesses that will, in turn, hire local residents as workers and also spend money on goods and services. Tapping these "spin-off" benefits when institutions are, of necessity, making purchases can result when officials responsible for procurements are asked to consider buying local and are provided with information about local businesses who might be contacted to submit bids. An inventory of goods and services currently available in the City of Binghamton should be maintained and provided on a regular basis to institutions in Broome County. Other cities have found that this kind of business-to-business (B2B) strategy can result in higher levels of local employment and business start ups.

3.5

WORK WITH AREA HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS TO DEVELOP SENIOR HOUSING IN BINGHAMTON THAT OFFERS A CONTINUUM OF CARE

As described in the Housing section, Binghamton has a growing senior population but limited housing-related facilities located in the City. In addition to a positive housing impact, development of senior housing with services, including assisted living facilities and nursing homes, also provides jobs. Hospitals often are involved on an ongoing basis with the development and operation of facilities offering a continuum of care. One example is the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center. UPMC Senior Communities provide homes for more than 2,900 seniors in Western Pennsylvania. Senior communities include independent living, assisted living, nursing homes, and continuing care retirement communities. The medical resources, preventive health care, and comprehensive wellness services of the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center are offered to residents of the senior communities.

GOAL:

04

CREATE A MIXED-USE DOWNTOWN THAT IS A REGIONAL DESTINATION

Downtown is experiencing the beginning of a resurgence that is helping to re-establish the area as a regional destination. New housing, new restaurants and expanded events are drawing more residents and customers Downtown. A coordinated effort to clean, brand and improve the character of Downtown is needed to attract more businesses and services. The following economic development recommendations support Goal 4:

4.1

IMPROVE COORDINATION AMONGST DOWNTOWN STAKEHOLDERS TO BUILD ON THE SUCCESSES AND MOMENTUM IN DOWNTOWN BINGHAMTON

Downtown Binghamton has experienced marked change and growth in recent years, with an infusion of student housing, an increase in restaurants, bars, and breweries, and a renovated DoubleTree hotel, among other investments. A calendar of events offer programs that draw people Downtown including some hosted by the Binghamton Economic Development Office (BEDO) while others, like the First Fridays Art Walk, Restaurant Week, and July Fest, are organized by committed teams of volunteers. To reinforce the positive momentum building in Downtown, the City should convene a roundtable with Downtown groups including the Downtown Binghamton Business Association (DBBA), the Chamber of Commerce, Gorgeous

Washington Street

Washington, the Restaurant Week organizers, and others with a stake in Downtown to outline the components of a sustainable collaboration to support the stewardship and social life of Downtown.

The City will continue to provide cleaning, plowing, and shoveling through DPW and public safety via the Police Department. Beyond marketing and business development, BEDO should also explore offering small business education and leadership training, as the Downtown groups and Downtown itself would benefit from enhanced coordination. The goal of the roundtable would be to organize and empower Downtown groups to act collectively through coordinated efforts in marketing, events, programming, and public realm improvements including landscaping and public art. Downtown groups should be encouraged to learn from best practices in other cities, including long-term public-private partnerships models that yield dedicated funding and staff time devoted to Downtown improvements.

4.2 STEP UP BUSINESS DISTRICT CLEANING EFFORTS AND PAIR WITH AN ANTI-LITTER CAMPAIGN

Improved cleaning efforts Downtown will help improve the image that Downtown has in the minds of people outside the area. While the cleanliness of Downtown is not the major factor holding the Downtown back, it is certainly a factor that needs to be addressed if Binghamton is to become a regional destination. The cleaning should include an ongoing plan for street and sidewalk cleaning as well as graffiti removal. Additional garbage and recycling containers should be installed with appropriate signage. Such an initiative offers service jobs and training for those with limited employment opportunities due to low educational attainment or other barriers to the job market.

4.3
ENHANCE RETAIL OPTIONS DOWNTOWN

The lack of retail options Downtown hurts the City in two main areas. The first is that the lack of retail options limits the number of shoppers interested in Downtown. The result is a chicken and egg scenario with retailers hesitant to locate Downtown due to a lack of consumers and people choosing to shop or live elsewhere, in part, because of a lack of retail options. Additionally, existing customers such as nearby office workers spend less than they might otherwise due to the lack of retail options. A study by the International Council of Shopping Centers (ICSC) determined that office workers spend more than twice as much in urban areas where retail choices are ample ($129/week) as compared to areas where retail choices were limited ($60/week) on goods and services. The lack of options allows money to be spent elsewhere even from potential consumers already in the Downtown.

The City should work with existing landowners to target retail and services that would be most appealing to the students and office workers who are already living and working Downtown. Over time, as more retail is established, Downtown can begin to draw more customers from throughout the region.

Image from the "Photo Suggestion Booth"

- **STUDENTS –** According to the 2013 College Explorer survey, the average student spends $5,318 in discretionary spending per year. The top categories are food (including restaurants and grocery stores), automotive, and apparel which account for 62% of their discretionary spending.
  - Grocery stores in particular receive approximately $960 per student per year. The lack of a Downtown grocery store is hurting the retail market Downtown.
  - Students also spend an average of $595 per year on apparel. This is a more difficult retail category since the bulk of this spending occurs online or at chain retailers due to convenience, selection, and price sensitivity. However, there is a market for this category if a retailer can appeal to students with unique, affordable merchandise.
  - Other retail spending tends to be in areas relating to their daily lives such as health and personal care stores, office supplies, entertainment, and books, music, and sporting goods.
- **OFFICE WORKERS –** According to the ICSC survey referenced previously, office workers will spend the most money per week on restaurants, as expected. This is followed by grocery, personal care, discount, and department stores. All of these stores receive more business when they are more available to the consumer. At an average of $165 per employee per week, $1 million in retail sales could be created for every 121 office workers located Downtown if the choices were plentiful. Without such ample options it would take 253 office workers to generate $1 million in sales.

Over time, as shoppers become more comfortable in Downtown, retail options will expand. It will take some time and effort to compete with the large national retail options in Vestal and Johnson City but there are numerous retail districts throughout New York State that have been able to compete in other ways with those offerings. The focus should be on creating alternatives to big box offerings rather than competing on price.

Even though the major national chains have not shown an interest in Downtown Binghamton this too may change over time. An effort should be made to ensure that chain retail offerings should be in categories that do not compete with businesses already located Downtown but rather enhance them. Special attention can be given to attract successful retail operators from Ithaca, Syracuse, Buffalo, Albany, and Rochester as well as the surrounding areas in opening up new locations in Downtown Binghamton. These new retail outlets could come with built in word of mouth and encourage new customers to shop Downtown. These new retail outlets will help demonstrate to other retailers that Binghamton is open for business.

4.4

PROMOTE MORE ACTIVITIES DOWNTOWN TO ENCOURAGE COMMUTERS TO STAY AFTER WORK

Binghamton currently has a number of activities that take place Downtown and serve to drive pedestrian traffic into the district. These current events could benefit from additional paid staff to help coordinate each event and drive up attendance. New events could also be planned with the assistance of the Downtown Merchants Association.

Currently, the area benefits from First Friday Arts Walks drawing people from throughout the region, the cluster of activities around July Fest, and indoor and outdoor farmers markets. The historic streetscapes around Washington, State, and Court Streets offer appealing spaces for evening and weekend performances and markets, while venues such as Metrocenter and the Veterans Memorial Arena and Forum Theatre offer indoor spaces suited to a range of winter activities in the heart of Downtown. A holiday market and temporary ice skating rink in this core area would provide an opportunity for merchants and area residents to experience Downtown shopping as an alternative to more standard offerings in nearby communities. Metrocenter's plaza facing Court Street should be actively programmed for events like these.

University students are already accustomed to traveling Downtown for eating and drinking as well as some academic activities. Incorporating music and food appealing to young people into Downtown events will enhance the draw of Downtown events, creating a more diverse visitor base beyond bar hours. Other events that have had success in other areas could include a craft beer festival highlighting beers made in the region, local music festival, and market featuring items made locally. As the success of some these events grows, the model should change to charge an admission fee. This admission fee along with revenue-generating sales can go to the Downtown Merchants Association and assist in funding additional projects in the Downtown.

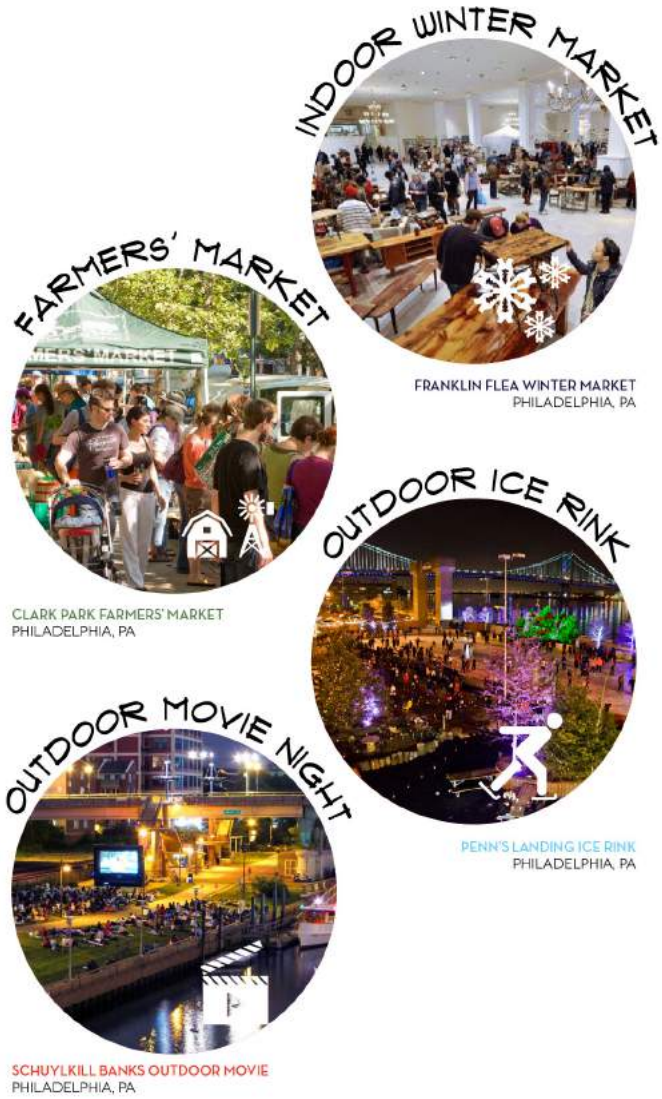


FIGURE 20: Downtown activities

4.5 CREATE AN AESTHETICALLY APPEALING AND COHESIVE VISUAL IDENTITY FOR DOWNTOWN

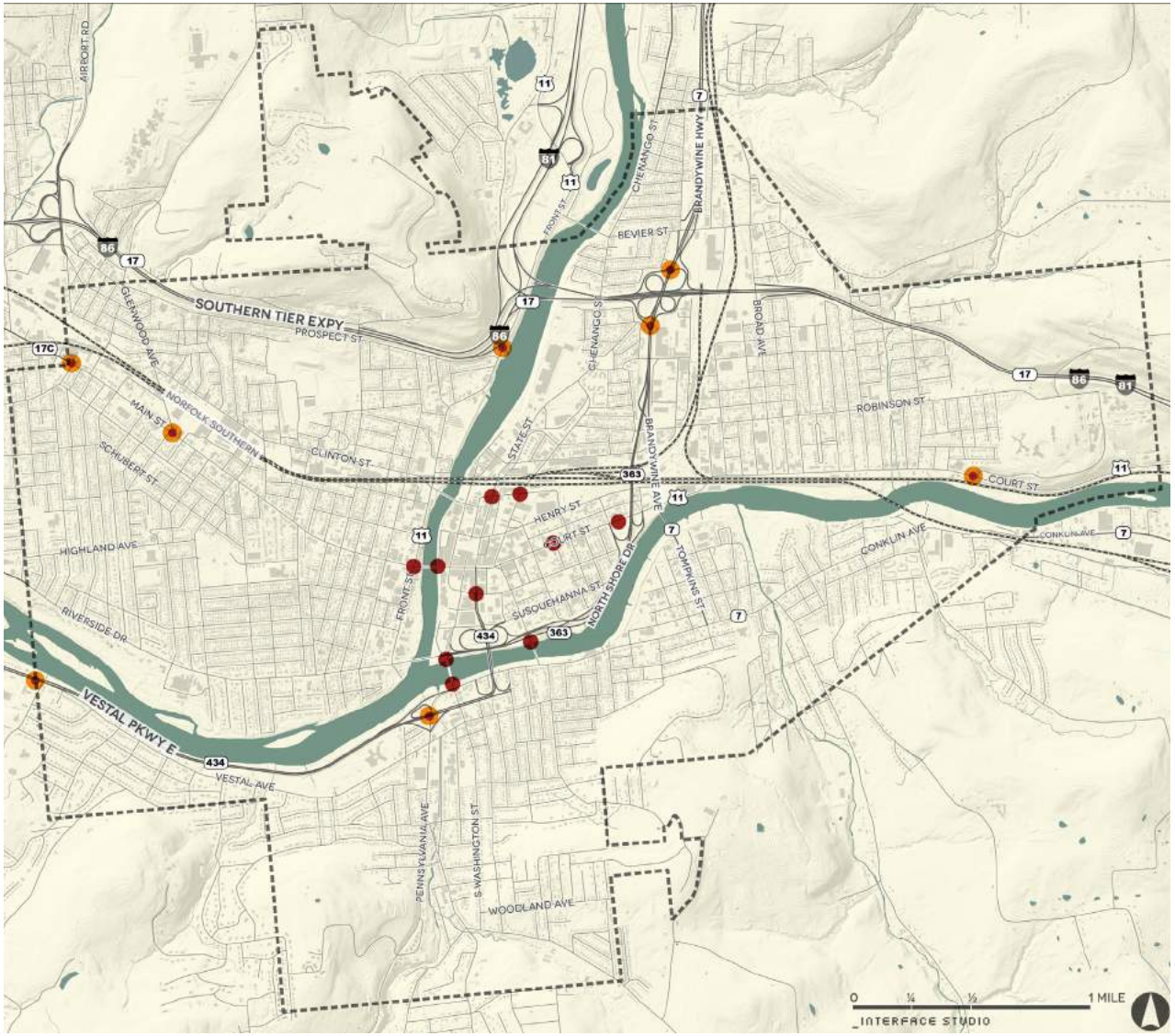
Creating a cohesive identity for Downtown will not necessarily create a regional destination but rather signify that the Downtown has become a destination. With the Downtown Merchants Association as the lead, and working in concert with the Commission on Architecture and Urban Design, a motif should be chosen for the Downtown that reflects the recent development and energy re-emerging Downtown since the Plan was started and builds upon the work of prior planning efforts. Signage, banners, wayfinding, public art, and other elements will signify that Downtown is one cohesive unit and allow visitors to better recognize the boundaries of the Downtown district and all that exists within it.

4.6 IMPROVE THE GATEWAYS TO DOWNTOWN AND THE CITY

As part of a central branding strategy for Downtown, improvements should be made at highly visible locations that serve as gateways to the City's business core. As previous plans have recommended, these improvements should at least include distinctive signage but also potentially landscaping, crosswalks, public art, lighting or other treatments, with coordinated maintenance between the State Department of Transportation, Department of Public Works and the Parks Department. The intent is to improve wayfinding but also the look and feel of Downtown as an excellent place to operate a business. Primary locations include multiple intersections along Court and Main streets (at North Shore Drive, the Public Library, the River, and on the west side at Front Street) but also on State Street (at Hawley Street and at Lewis Street), Chenango (near Lewis Street) and the Exchange Street and Washington Street bridges. The Front Street Gateway Project is poised for early implementation, with the first phase of reconstruction possible by 2015. A second phase of improvements should include amenities such as decorative street lighting and landscaping improvements on vacant lots, to improve drivers' perceptions as they approach Downtown. East of Downtown, the Court Street Gateway project should be extended from Exchange Street to Chapman Street.

In addition, simpler treatments focused mostly on distinctive signage and wayfinding should be considered farther afield to help promote Downtown and lead visitors to key destinations. Potential locations include Court Street near Century Drive, Main Street at Floral Avenue and at Glenwood Avenue, Front Street at the Southern Tier Expressway (17) off ramp, the NY-17 and NY-363 intersections and points along the Vestal Parkway. Rail bridges also create gateways within the City, with their overpasses presenting highly visible surfaces poised for signage, branding, and beautification.

GATEWAYS



PRIMARY GATEWAY

SECONDARY GATEWAY

FIGURE 21: Gateways - MAP

GOAL:

05

ENCOURAGE LOCAL ENTREPRENEURIAL ACTIVITY AND HELP SMALL BUSINESSES THRIVE

Compared to other cities, there are few chain retail stores in Binghamton making the City a center for small, locally-owned businesses. However, starting and maintaining a business presents major challenges, which result in the closure of many independent retailers. To promote more local retailers in Binghamton, the City can help to reduce the risks faced by entrepreneurs including minimizing their costs, streamlining permitting, and connecting them with local business support services. The following economic development recommendations support Goal 5:

5.1

EMBRACE THE IDEA OF POP UP SHOPS AND RETAIL INCUBATORS TO ENCOURAGE ENTREPRENEURIAL ACTIVITY

The use of "pop up shops" (temporary retail shops that fill vacant storefronts) is a great way to turn a negative, the empty or underutilized storefronts throughout the City, into a positive. Pop up shops serve a few purposes that could have an impact on the City:

- They fill empty storefronts giving building owners the chance to earn some money back while putting their real estate in a more positive light in the community
- They let entrepreneurs have a chance to test an idea without the capital needed to invest in opening a full retail operation
- Even if a pop up shop is not successful in transitioning into a full time retail operation it could still generate foot traffic and conversation around its location, leading to future development at the site

The existing Downtown Business Association should identify a cluster of storefront spaces with the potential to host pop up shops that might be ready to serve shoppers during July Fest and holiday shopping in 2014. Existing local merchants and well-known businesses from other communities will enhance the experience of Downtown and allow entrepreneurs to tap into these windows of time when Downtown enjoys high visitation.

FIGURE 22: Potential pop-up shop on Clinton Street

5.2

SUPPORT AND GROW THE BUY LOCAL CAMPAIGN

A Buy Local campaign will bring needed attention to the independent businesses in Binghamton, and the Binghamton Economic Development Office (BEDO) has been working on such a strategy locally. The Buy Local campaign will bring heightened awareness to both citizens and elected officials in Binghamton and surrounding areas on both the economic and qualitative benefits of supporting businesses that are locally owned and operated.

A key benefit to this strategy is that locally-owned businesses keep more money in the local economy. A recent study (http://www.civiceconomics.com/aba-study-series/) demonstrates that local, independent businesses (retail and restaurants in weighted average) re-circulate 52.3% of total revenue into the local economy, while chains re-circulate only 15.8% of total revenue. This is especially important in an area like Binghamton since there are no corporate, retail chain headquarters that typically provide local benefits. In addition to employing more people on a revenue basis, local businesses employ local attorneys, accountants, IT professionals, etc. National chains tend to mostly use professionals in their headquarters for such support services, while employing fewer people at their stores per dollar of revenue.

There are two main umbrella organizations that can help assist Binghamton's Buy Local campaign:

- The Business Alliance of Local Living Economies (BALLE) is the larger of the two organizations. Broome County already has a chapter of this organization, though at the time of this writing it was limited in scope and could benefit from a broader organizational base. BALLE is involved in more than just creating a Buy Local organization and offers guidance in many aspects of creating a sustainable economy.
- The American Independent Business Alliance (AMIBA) has a greater focus on assisting Buy Local organizations get started and maintain their operations in a community. There is currently not a chapter in Binghamton, but this may be an effective organization to grow and strengthen Binghamton's Buy Local campaign.

A successful Buy Local campaign will help increase sales for existing independent businesses while increasing the market for additional independent businesses and keeping more money and jobs within the City of Binghamton.

5.3
STREAMLINE THE REGULATORY PROCESS FOR SMALL, INDEPENDENT RETAILERS

Binghamton needs to make sure the regulatory process is simple enough that it can be navigated by the small, independent businesses it is trying to attract. This does not mean that there should not be regulations but rather that there should be a clear and transparent process that guides prospective businesses from idea to reality. The City has taken a great step by enacting a 27-point strategy of **BUSINESS FRIENDLY REFORMS AND DEVELOPMENT REVIEW IMPROVEMENTS**, which simplified many parts of the development process, lessens requirements such as parking for small retail spaces, and ensures that the process is as open and accessible as possible. It also includes a process for providing ongoing "feedback in making the development review process more efficient and convenient without compromising [a] commitment to quality development consistent with local laws and community-based plans." This will allow smaller retailers to have a voice moving forward to make sure the development process allows them to succeed in Binghamton.

Chattanooga Buy Local Campaign

GOAL:

06

CREATE STRONG NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL HUBS

Binghamton was built around walkable, commercial corridors with a range of stores easily accessible to nearby residents. Today, while each commercial corridor in the City has a distinct identity, many no longer offer the services that residents require. Residents, therefore, need to shop, and spend their money, outside of their neighborhood, and often outside of Binghamton. Improvements to local commercial hubs will help to keep more economic activity in Binghamton and provide more services in close proximity to local families. The following economic development recommendations support Goal 6:

Shops on Leroy Street

6.1

ALLOW THE PRESERVATION OF NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT TO GIVE RESIDENTS THE OPTION TO SHOP AND EAT IN THEIR NEIGHBORHOODS

Commercial development will be critical to the long-term success of the neighborhoods in the City of Binghamton. The urban core of the City of Binghamton retains pockets of early 20th century commercial and mixed use space that provide entrepreneurs and neighbors with opportunities for inexpensive revitalization. Neighborhood retail should be available to provide a convenience for residents as well as improve traffic, health, and property values within the City, increasing retail options and retail sales in Binghamton rather than losing them to surrounding jurisdictions.

- Nearby retail options can help lower vehicle miles traveled throughout the region. Substituting one trip per week in a neighborhood as compared to driving to a regional retail center can save 500 miles traveled over the course of a year. This translates to savings of time and money.
- Having a neighborhood with greater walkability or ease of navigation by residents of all ages and abilities can lead to the improved health of citizens. A number of studies (http://www.walkscore.com/professional/public-health-research.php) have linked the walkability of neighborhoods to long-term improved health as people become more mobile.
- A report conducted for American Express' Small Business Saturday (http://www.civiceconomics.com/featured-projects/american-express-open/) found that neighborhoods with greater concentrations of independent businesses had realized increased property values as compared to the rest of the city or county in which they were located.

Additionally, from a practical matter, once existing retail pockets are converted to other uses, it becomes extremely difficult to turn them back into retail districts of any meaningful size and scope. Preserving neighborhood commercial properties and buildings is important for the City's overall economic health.

6.2 PROACTIVELY GUIDE THE REDEVELOPMENT OF KEY AREAS SUCH AS BINGHAMTON PLAZA AND CHENANGO STREET

Binghamton Plaza is the lynch pin for the North Side. Many have noted that its successful redevelopment would mean added services for an underserved population as well as supporting jobs. As one of the largest redevelopment opportunity sites in the City, this is also an opportunity to boost economic growth in Binghamton. Recognizing this opportunity, the City has received BOA funding to develop a plan for Binghamton Plaza and Chenango Street. The results of this plan include a greater diversity of uses, new connections to the River and Riverwalk trail, as well as an improved connection to the Frederick Street interchange which would help to reposition this area and support reinvestment in the North Side. The City should use the results from the BOA study to determine the specific investments necessary to attract private capital and development.

6.3 CONSIDER BROADER APPLICATION OF NEW ZONING TO ENCOURAGE MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT

While the initial planning effort for **BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON** involved a proposed form-based code only for the Court Street - Main Street corridor, the longer-term vision should include adopting elements of this new zoning for application in commercial districts city-wide. Modifications will be needed to reflect the nature of each neighborhood's commercial area, but the same basic concept of a form-based code that clarifies development expectations and streamlines the review process could exist in a neighborhood just as it does on a main street if the City moves forward with its adoption. The intent is to simplify the rules guiding development for the entire City by using the form-based code to develop a clear set of expectations and timeframes for receiving all of the necessary permits. In neighborhoods with promising commercial activity, a form-based code can facilitate an orderly expansion of business opportunities that enhance neighborhood life and minimize disruptions.

Chenango Street and Binghamton Plaza

FIGURE 23: Main Street at Matthews block study

- **A** LOURDES HEALTH
  - » Open up Main Street facade with storefront windows
  - » Add small out parcel building at the corner of Main and Matthews
- **B** NEW INFILL WITH TUCK UNDER PARKING
  - » Grade drops from Main down Matthews
  - » Allows for parking tucked behind and underneath buildings
- **C** WEIS REDEVELOPMENT
  - » 4 stories, 75% build-to
  - » Up to 35,000 SF of ground floor retail
  - » 150 residential units (ground and upper floors)
  - » Includes central courtyard and structure parking
  - » Landscape and height transition to neighborhood
- **D** BURGER KING/BANK REDEVELOPMENT
  - » 2 stories, 75% build-to
  - » Up to 22,000 SF ground floor retail
  - » 16 to 24 residential units above (1 building only)
  - » Surface parking behind
- **E** EXISTING PARKING
  - » Cross-access
  - » Screening along street
- **F** APARTMENT REHAB
  - » Consolidates parking to the rear
- **G** GAS BACKWARDS
  - » Convenience store pulled up to the street
  - » Gas pumps and parking to the rear
- **H** STREETSCAPE
  - » 2 travel lanes
  - » 2 bike lanes
  - » 1 parking lane

6.4

CULTIVATE, BRAND, AND MARKET DISTINCT RETAIL CORRIDORS IN DIFFERENT NEIGHBORHOODS

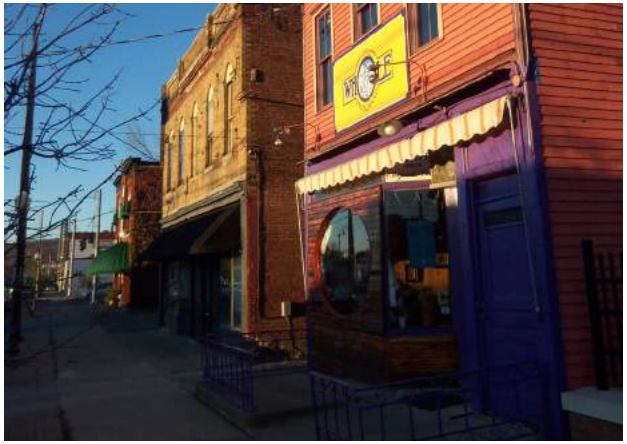
Cultivate, brand, and market distinct retail corridors in different neighborhoods

Ideally, over time each neighborhood will have access to essential goods and services and business districts that reflect the unique nature of each. Initially, neighborhood businesses might meet the needs of the adjacent residential areas with daily services such as a small format grocery and drug stores, dry cleaners, and service businesses. The distinctive features of these corridors cannot be ordained in advance; rather they emerge over time as agglomeration effects take hold. Common agglomerations include:

- Home goods and antiques stores, which in turn attract other businesses that seek the same customers such as lunch spots and wine bars
- New and vintage fashions, which may spawn a cluster of funky businesses appealing to young professionals and students as well as coffee houses, bars, and music venues
- Eating and drinking clusters often emerge organically as a single innovative restaurant creates a new destination. If parking and traffic challenges are addressed early, these corridors can enliven broad residential areas nearby.

Each neighborhood will have a different amount of retail by the simple fact that they are all different sizes and serve different populations. The one item that all neighborhoods have in common is that they are underserved in the restaurant category. The current needs are being met by the large number of restaurants in Downtown Binghamton along with the chain restaurants in Vestal and Johnson City. Options close to home will provide additional, walkable options for residents and could serve as a neighborhood hub and help provide distinct identities to the various districts.

- **THE WEST SIDE,** with the largest population base, has the highest retail demand of the six neighborhoods outside of Downtown. Based on shopping studies of retail leakage, currently the greatest needs for the neighborhood are hardware stores, pharmacies and drug stores, and clothing stores. Other possible niches that show a need are specialty food stores, sporting goods, hobby, and game stores. Main Street is the central opportunity for retail, carries the most traffic, and provides opportunities for better marketing to support local businesses.



South Washington Street

- **THE SOUTH SIDE EAST** neighborhood has the next highest retail demand. The greatest needs for this neighborhood are a hardware store, office supply store, and specialty food store. Other smaller niches include the need for a children's clothing store, florist, and gift store. Conklin Avenue is the primary corridor around which business expansion should be considered.

- **THE EAST SIDE** neighborhood is the third largest market in terms of retail demand. This area, unlike the other neighborhoods outside of Downtown, has more sales than demand, which indicates consumers are coming into the area to shop. This area was developed to serve this purpose and is meeting most local needs for its residents. The two areas that have sales below demand are furniture stores and clothing stores. Either category could locate in the neighborhood to help meet demand, preferably along Robinson Street near the existing supermarket.

- **THE SOUTH SIDE WEST** neighborhood has the fourth largest retail demand in Binghamton. This area only has about half of its retail demand met. As such it has a variety of retail needs that have virtually no presence in the neighborhood. Hardware stores, clothing stores, and many of the smaller stores categorized in the miscellaneous retailers category are the largest omissions from the neighborhood and would help to diversify the retail offerings along S. Washington Street and Vestal Avenue.

- **THE FIRST WARD/ELY PARK** neighborhood area ranks fifth of the neighborhoods in terms of retail demand, just behind the South Side West area. This area is also underserved in terms of retail by a wide margin. The primary need is a full size grocery store for the neighborhood. The market clearly exists for this retail category, and this is a routine need that must currently be met outside the neighborhood by its residents. A health and personal care store is also a strong need along with clothing stores. Clinton Street has a distinct character and is one of the few opportunities in the City (along with South Washington Street on the South Side) to create a pedestrian-oriented unique shopping street outside of Downtown.

- **THE NORTH SIDE** is the smallest of the neighborhoods in terms of retail demand and meets overall demand while having some gaps in specific categories. The need for a small hardware store exists along with a specialty food store and a clothing store. However, the North Side is also relatively isolated due to rail lines and highways that separate it from other shopping areas. This factor, combined with a population in need makes the redevelopment of key sites like Binghamton Plaza all the more important. The North Chenango BOA Market and Feasibility Assessment also states that market opportunities are limited in this area but that the rehabilitation of existing buildings for new retail is possible along with improved access to the River. Specifically, the assessment states that Binghamton Plaza presents "the opportunity to attract grocery tenants or regional and national retailers who would serve both the surrounding community and draw residents from surrounding areas."

Public realm improvements that beautify, brand, and help people find smaller shopping districts will help support hubs of commercial activity in Binghamton's neighborhoods. Economic Development Recommendations 4.5 and 4.6 discuss the need for and benefits of wayfinding, signage, public art, street furniture, and landscaping. Transportation Recommendations 3.5. and 4.4, which emphasize the need for Complete Streets and pedestrian amenities further elaborate on improvements that will support pedestrian-oriented shopping experiences at the local level.

Clinton Street

GOAL:

07

FOSTER THE LOCAL ARTS AND HERITAGE TOURISM

The arts and heritage tourism have played a major role in generating economic activity in cities of all sizes across the country. In Binghamton, there is an active and growing interest in the arts. Local organizations are working to support local artists, raise capital and improve Downtown with public art. Similarly, efforts are underway through the County's Susquehanna Heritage Area Commission to promote heritage tourism in Binghamton. With its historic carousels, zoo, and museums, as well as its natural landscape, the City hosts many of the region's tourism attractions. Both arts and tourism initiatives need encouragement and a direct connection to local economic development activities. Strategic investment in the arts and heritage tourism industry will lead to business growth. The following economic development recommendations support Goal 7:

Grassroots efforts by the Department of Public Art worked with local youth to create these murals in the Boscov's parking lot

7.1
CREATE A VOLUNTEER PUBLIC ART COMMISSION TO FOSTER THE LOCAL ARTS

Create a volunteer Public Art Commission to foster the local arts

There are a growing number of residents and organizations focused on the local arts. Currently the Broome County Arts Council, the Department of Public Art (DPA), Gorgeous Washington Street Association, and Quarter Yellow are all engaged in promoting the arts in Binghamton. This increased interest has made the First Fridays Art Walk a monthly success story and continues to influence new public art projects. These kinds of events and improvements have real economic benefit for Downtown businesses and the City's overall economy.

To help connect these activities and create one, effective voice for the local arts, a Public Art Commission should be created. The Public Art Commission would be comprised of volunteers and representatives from the primary local arts organizations but should also include business and City leadership to ensure that the arts are connected with economic development. As with many cities looking to foster the arts, art commissions take on many roles including:

- Creating partnerships with local business associations, community based nonprofits, and institutions to work collaboratively in promoting the City's creative culture
- Writing grants and securing resources to fund local art initiatives and to promote the work of local artists
- Organizing periodic multi-destination arts events in addition to the First Fridays Art Walk and help to actively market them
- Representing the local arts community in networking with the many creative organizations outside the region

In addition, a Public Art Commission would take a leadership role in identifying opportunities for new public art in Binghamton. Local arts and Downtown business organizations should start the conversation by recruiting leaders to take part in forming this Commission and setting regular meetings to define a framework for organizational goals and structure.

7.2

ENCOURAGE VISIBLE AND LARGE-SCALE PUBLIC ART TO PROMOTE THE LOCAL ARTS AND DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION

Despite the growing interest in the arts and the success of the First Fridays Art Walk, there is a noticeable lack of public art in Downtown or the City as a whole. A full survey of commercial corridors in Philadelphia found that there is a correlation between the success of the commercial area (number of businesses, lower vacancy) and the presence of public art and murals.

Binghamton provides many opportunities for large-scale, unique, and beautiful public art. It is critical that public art be visible and make a tangible contribution in creating a more attractive environment for businesses and residents. As such, the Public Art Commission and/or partner arts organizations should create a mini-public art action strategy that identifies the key locations for public art in Downtown. These may include large, blank walls for murals, small plazas, bridges, and visible park space along the Rivers. Securing approvals from property owners will help determine which sites can move forward quickly.

Pink Balls installation on a commercial street in Montreal by Claude Cormier

Mural Arts in Philadelphia has created murals and other public art projects throughout the city. Shown are the Philly Painting project by Haas and Hahn spanning several blocks along a commercial corridor in north Philadelphia (above and bottom left), and Steve "Espo" Powers' Love Letters along a major transit corridor in the city (top left).

7.3
CREATE TEMPORARY GALLERIES IN LOCAL BUSINESSES

Established retail businesses, bars, restaurants, and entertainment venues can - and do - provide an effective avenue for local artists to show and sell their work. With a concentration of employment and a growing nightlife Downtown, there is enough foot traffic to bring tremendous attention to the work of local talent. The Public Art Commission should facilitate arrangements with business owners enabling artists and makers to create displays of their work in storefronts. Storeowners could also reserve some amount of floor or wall space for local art. This art and commerce partnership would give artists opportunities to show and sell their work and benefit business owners by diversifying their patronage and increasing foot traffic to their business. Downtown businesses such as Brewed Awakenings and Lost Dog Café have already adopted the practice of showcasing local art on their walls. Business owners here should be tapped as models, arts ambassadors, and collaborators in encouraging more businesses to participate in the growth of the arts community.

7.4
USE TEMPORARY ARTS AND EVENTS TO ENLIVEN VACANT COMMERCIAL SPACES

Commercial market demand in the City and Downtown is currently not robust enough to fill every vacant storefront. Though market dynamics may improve, vacant storefronts can be used in the meantime as space to promote the work of local artists, as well as improve perception and the experience of Downtown and commercial corridors by minimizing the visual impacts of vacancy. Viewed only from the street, these temporary window displays could serve as one interim strategy to reactivate vacant storefronts. Several storefronts read together in close proximity to one another have the combined effect of essentially making a part of a block a linear gallery. The Public Art Commission should approach property owners with protected but open [not shuttered or otherwise covered] storefront windows and business owners with blank wall space about hosting temporary exhibits.

Taking the concept one step further, initiatives like the Charlotte Street Foundation's Urban Culture Project in Kansas City repurpose vacant commercial spaces as readily-occupied temporary gallery spaces until permanent tenants can be secured. This type of incremental strategy may work well in Downtown, as it tests the viability of future permanent arts venues while reactivating underutilized storefronts. The First Fridays Art Walk could incorporate these storefront galleries into its offerings as well.

7.5 SPONSOR AN ARTIST STOREFRONT/ ARTIST IN RESIDENCY SPACE

In addition to temporary art events that activate vacant storefronts, opportunities should be explored for creating longer term reuses of vacant storefronts as artist-in-residency space. For property owners willing to participate, an artist would be allowed to use the space as a work studio and gallery at below-market rents. In exchange, the artist will improve and upgrade the space during their tenure but also provide an opportunity for future potential retail tenants to see the space. The property owner has the benefit of an active storefront and free marketing of the space for future retail uses. The **BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON** Pop-Up Gallery followed this exact model where the planning team re-occupied what was the former First National Bank on Court Street and drew over 1,000 people into the space over the course of the planning process.

7.6 PARTICIPATE IN LOCAL AND REGIONAL EFFORTS TO BOOST TOURISM AND HERITAGE TOURISM

The Roberson Museum and Science Center currently hosts Binghamton's Visitor Center, serving as a front door to the City for visitors from out of town. The Center provides maps and brochures with information of area attractions and also hosts a Heritage Gallery for the Susquehanna Heritage Area, telling the story of the area's industrial past and educating people about the community's architecture and social and cultural fabric. The City should partner more actively with the County's Susquehanna Heritage Area Commission to support its heritage tourism initiatives and collaborate on new efforts to showcase Binghamton as a starting point for those exploring the Southern Tier's hills and history.

The City should work with the Visitor Center to provide current information about new businesses and restaurants, trails and park spaces, events and festivals as well as provide up-to-date and evolving content to the State's ILOVENY tourism website. Events in the City are attracting a growing number of people and could benefit even further through these venues. As an example, the first Sci-Fi/Fantasy convention at Roberson in 2013 had relatively little advertisement but brought so many attendees that it will be expanded this year.

Both venues the Visitor Center and the ILOVENY tourism website are important places to continue to share information about the City's wealth of museums, its zoo, its historic carousels, and its historic architecture. Ross Park Zoo and the Discovery Center in particular should be further promoted as they are underutilized assets and unique to a City of this size. Upgrading and maintaining these facilities, as well as improving access to them through the development of the Park Avenue area, will help attract young families.

WANT TO KEEP READING?

BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON HAS 7 MAIN CHAPTERS

A ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

B HOUSING

C TRANSPORTATION

D INFRASTRUCTURE

E ENVIRONMENT & OPEN SPACE

F LAND USE & ZONING

G COMMUNITY BUILDING

CHAPTER V

B

THE BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON MINI-PLAN ON

HOUSING

A PLAN FOR THOSE AT HOME IN THE CITY

BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON

HOUSING: A PLAN FOR THOSE AT HOME IN THE CITY

B

The housing chapter or **BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON MINI-PLAN ON HOUSING** addresses the needs of homeowners, landlords, renters, policy makers, public agencies, investors, and developers, alike - all people affected by Binghamton's housing stock and housing market. Recommendations encompass strategies for maintaining the City's aging housing stock, opportunities to diversify housing typologies to bring beautiful buildings back to life and better serve certain market segments, and tactics to preserve affordability and the integrity of neighborhoods.

Houses in the West Side

NEIGHBORHOODS

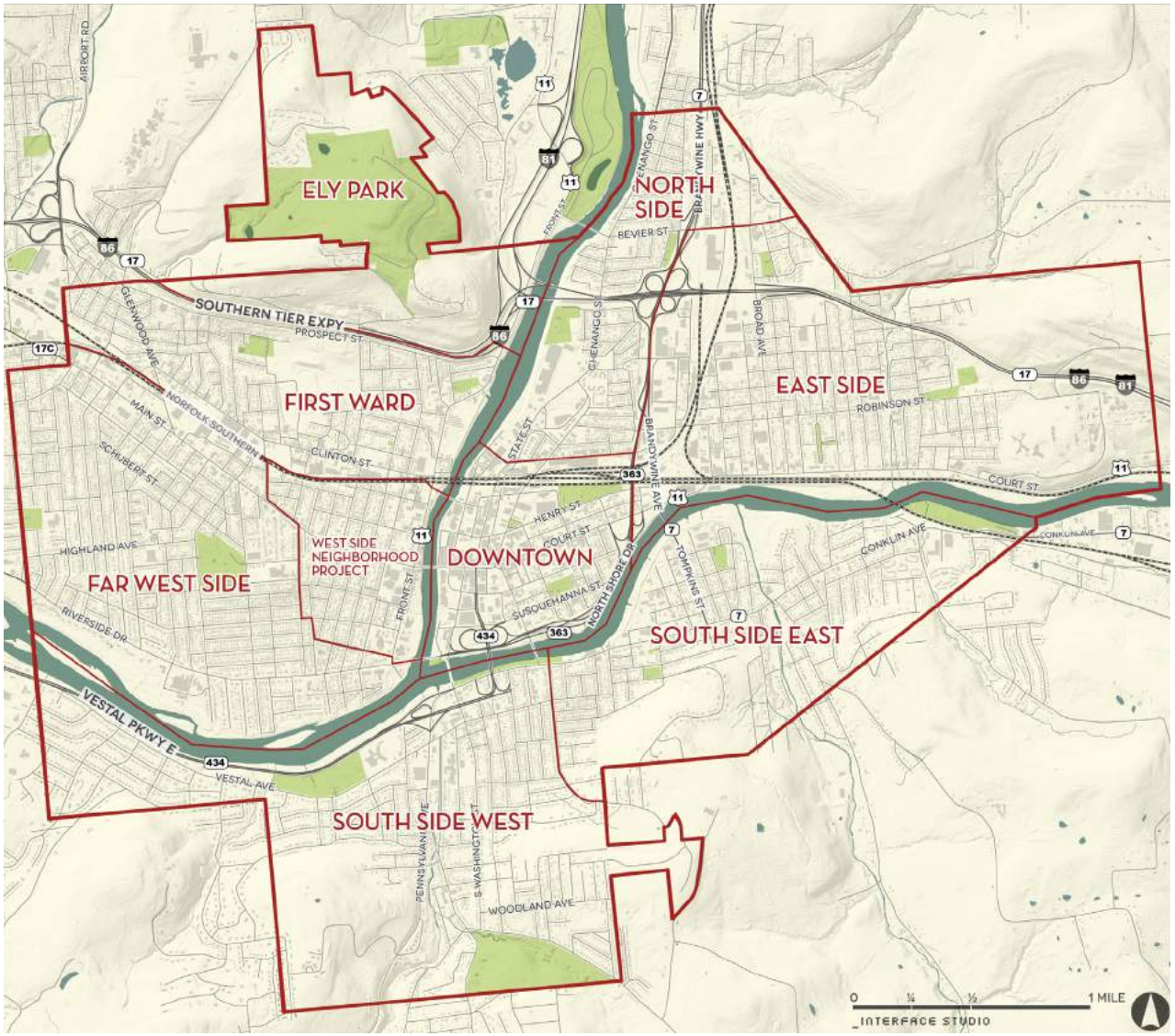


FIGURE 24: Neighborhoods - MAP

EXISTING CONDITIONS

DEMOGRAPHIC AND ECONOMIC TRENDS

DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS

Changes in the demographic characteristics in Binghamton, Broome County, and the Binghamton MSA have influenced residential development patterns and demand for housing in the City of Binghamton. The City"s population was stable during the period from 2000 to 2010, but projections in the American Community Survey (ACS) and by ESRI indicate additional declines from 2010 to 2012/13. While the City added 63 households from the 2000 to 2010 Census, both data sources show decline since 2010, and ESRI projects additional decline through 2018. If actual losses are consistent with projections, household growth in the City and the broader region will not be a factor that drives demand for new housing units.

Household size has also decreased since the 1990s, consistent with national trends. The average household size in Binghamton was 2.18 persons in 2010, compared with a national average of 2.59. More than 70 percent of the City's households had one or two people, which indicates greater demand for smaller housing units. Conversely, Broome County and the MSA had higher percentages of larger families which, in turn, indicates greater demand for three-bedroom or larger residential units in those areas not located in the City.

In 2013, the estimated median age of persons who live in the City is 36.0 years, which is lower than the median age for persons who live in Broome County (40.7 years) and in the MSA (41.2 years). Two age-related demographic trends are projected for Binghamton that may affect demand for housing. The percentage Binghamton's population that is 65 and older is lower than it is in Broome County and the MSA; however, that percentage is projected to increase from 2010 to 2018, consistent with the aging of the Baby Boom generation and in line with the national trend. Another major trend that may affect demand for housing is a likely increase in the number of young people 18 to 24 years old, resulting from a corresponding increase in the number of Binghamton University students who reside in the City. The latter demographic trend may continue, or may even accelerate, as a result of actual growth in the number of rental housing units available to students in the City and by anticipated growth in the overall number of students enrolled annually at Binghamton University.

FOR MORE ON DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS, SEE OVERVIEW ON PAGE 12.

ECONOMIC TRENDS

Economic conditions have a strong influence on the demand for housing because household growth generally occurs as a result of job growth. Household growth, in turn, results in demand for additional housing units. Moreover, households with stable employment in jobs with positive prospects are more likely to be comfortable making investments in new housing units. Finally, increases in income will generate "trade-up" demand for newer, larger, more expensive housing units.

A critical statistic influencing current and prospective demand for housing is the total employment in the MSA, which continued on a downward trajectory between mid-2008 and 2012. Most economic reports indicate that job losses in the Binghamton MSA have been adversely affecting housing demand. One positive economic factor in the MSA is the presence of Binghamton University, which is the region's largest employer. The economy in

QUALITY OF LIFE CONSIDERATIONS

Broome County and the City of Binghamton is expected to continue benefitting from the University's growth and the development of the Southern Tier High-Technology Incubator in Binghamton.

The City itself benefits from a concentration of jobs especially in the health, education and government sectors. However, 80% of all workers who held primary jobs in Binghamton during 2011 lived outside of the City, according to data from the U.S. Bureau of the Census database, Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics OnTheMap. From the perspective of housing demand, Binghamton is not deriving all of the benefits workers could provide if they also lived in the City. Enticing higher percentages of these workers - and especially younger workers who often find city living attractive -- would result in improvements in the City's housing market, including higher demand for both rental and for-sale housing units.

In addition to economic and employment considerations, factors related to quality of life are major influences on the performance of housing markets. Two factors, schools and the perception and/or reality of crime and safety issues, are particularly relevant, and there are issues with both in the City of Binghamton. Stakeholders reported that the City's schools do not compete well with suburban districts, most notably Vestal, when families have school-age children. Data related to crime and safety show that the City is not as safe as the Binghamton MSA, which was ranked fifth of mid-sized metros by Sperling's **BEST PLACES** during 2011. Issues with crime and safety - whether real or perceived - were cited by seniors who participated in stakeholder groups as a deterrent to Downtown housing. Enhancing the quality of schools is an important consideration in the City's competitive standing within the region; addressing issues associated with crime and safety is another key factor in retaining and attracting households to live in the City, especially older empty-nesters and senior households.

The Binghamton MSA achieves good rankings on a number of other competitive quality of life and location factors. Moody's Economy.com places both the cost of living and the cost of doing business in the MSA below the U.S. with the cost of living at 88% and the cost of business at 90%. The U.S. is 100%. Other strengths include the presence of a concentration of high-tech workers in the MSA, the City's role as a regional healthcare center with increasing payrolls, a revitalizing Downtown, and access to nature in the surrounding area.

HOUSING STOCK AND INVENTORY

Binghamton has a large stock of older housing units, including many historic homes that are unique and neighborhoods that have been preserved very well over the years. However, the housing stock is aging and even units that have been maintained well may be lacking the features and amenities characteristic of newer housing units. Examples include homes with more than one bath and modern heating and cooling systems. Less than one percent of the City's housing stock was built in 2000 or more recently, while more than three-quarters - 78% - were built before 1960, including 51% built before 1940.

Vacancy issues and associated problems with the ongoing maintenance of housing units are of major concern because the number of occupied housing units declined between 1990 and 2010. The pattern is projected to continue through 2018. This increase in the total number of vacant residential units includes many units classified as "Other Vacant Units," which usually means they are not habitable because they are in deteriorated or substandard condition. The number of owner-occupied housing units also declined from 1990 to 2010, although ESRI projects an increase in the number and percentage of owner-occupied units between 2013 and 2018.

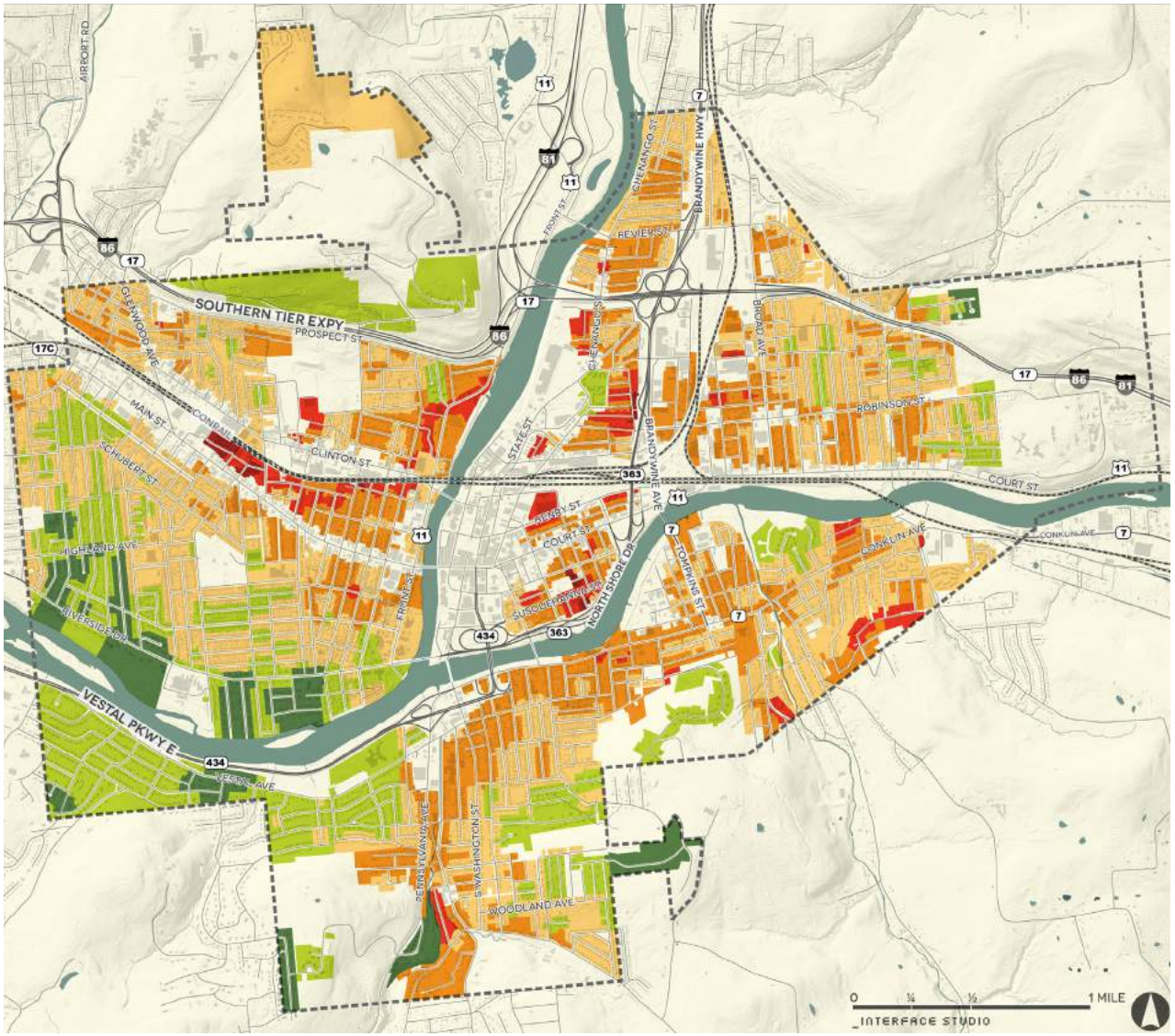
Housing conditions in Binghamton differ dramatically.

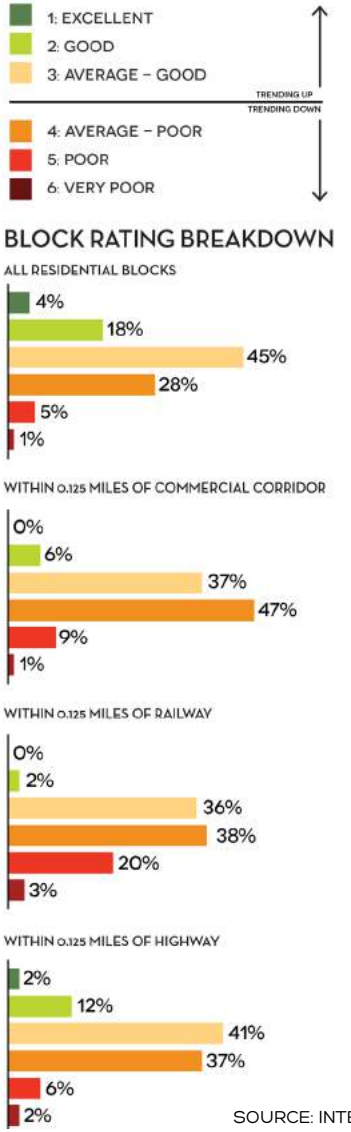
Interface Studio conducted a block-by-block survey of the residential areas in the City. The purpose of the survey was to gauge the overall health and condition of each block in order to gain an understanding of housing conditions in the City and their locational variations. The survey considered such factors as vacancy, housing conditions, property maintenance, infrastructure, functional obsolescence, and the public realm, such as sidewalk and yard conditions. Each block was assigned a rating to indicate its general trend on a scale from Excellent to Very Poor. About two-thirds of the City's residential blocks are trending up, with many blocks exhibiting average-good conditions. The highest rated residential blocks are located on the far West Side, along Riverside Drive and the western side of South Side West. The lowest rated residential blocks tend to be located near major infrastructure such as rail and highways, close to commercial corridors, and in the floodplain.

River and creek flooding in 2006 and 2011 had a major impact on homes in Binghamton. Over 2,000 parcels suffered damage in the 2011 flood, of which 22% were considered majorly damaged. FEMA's new floodplain map and a reform of the National Flood Insurance Program with higher flood insurance rates will greatly influence how and where housing is concentrated in the future.

Housing conditions affect the market value of housing, as well as sales prices, housing occupancy and vacancy. Therefore, the data gathered during the survey are a very useful starting point for the design and targeting of programs to rehabilitate and upgrade existing residential units and also to make decisions about blocks where infill housing might be a viable approach to strengthen neighborhoods. For example, an infill housing program targeted for blocks with existing homes in excellent or good condition would be more likely to be successful than a similar program in blocks with existing homes in average - poor or poor condition.

RESIDENTIAL BLOCK RATING





SOURCE: INTERFACE STUDIO FIELD SURVEY

FIGURE 25: Residential Block Rating - MAP

EXCELLENT

GOOD

AVERAGE-GOOD

AVERAGE-POOR

POOR

VERY POOR

The survey criteria included factors such as vacancy, housing conditions, property maintenance, infrastructure and the public realm.

HOUSING DEMAND

Demand for housing units is typically generated by one or more of the following conditions:

- Increases in the number of households either through new household formation or the in-migration of additional households
- The need to replace deteriorated or functionally obsolete housing units
- Changes in the age and income profiles of households and the resulting demand for housing different in size, style, pricing, and tenure

Since the number of households in Binghamton is not expected to increase through at least 2018, household growth is not a driver of demand for housing units. Therefore, it is especially important to look to other potential drivers of demand. There is some demand for new housing units generated by the need to replace older, obsolete housing units. However, the need is not overly robust with five year replacement demand estimated to be a total of 380 units for owners and renters combined. Some new for-sale housing development is recommended so that the City will have housing choices available for households wanting to live in Binghamton. Tabulations of households by income and age cohort and lifestyle data indicate the likelihood that there will be some gaps in the City's housing supply in the next five or more years. There will be less demand for housing units suitable for families with young children - barring major in-migration. Since household sizes also are trending downward, demand will be higher for housing units to accommodate smaller families, especially singles and households with two people.

Three main household types are likely to be the dominant drivers of housing demand: students, young professionals, and seniors. The first household type, students, currently live in the West Side Neighborhood Project (WSNP) area, Far West Side, and in Downtown Binghamton, and have been a major force in the revitalization of Downtown. The primary motivations driving decisions by students are the proximity to Downtown entertainment venues including bars and restaurants, and the availability of housing units offered for-rent to students at varying price points, including student-only rentals priced on a per-bed basis. As a group, the buying power of students, including direct expenditures and indirect or "spin-off" benefits, is very beneficial for the local economy.

The limited housing options in the City for younger professionals indicates that an emphasis on providing additional employment opportunities in the City and the broader region could increase housing demand by retaining young adults in Binghamton and attracting new residents in younger age cohorts. LEHD data presented previously show that large numbers of young households working in the City are living in suburban areas outside Binghamton. While young professionals in other urban areas have shown a preference for Downtown living, Binghamton does not have a stock of rental units with features and amenities to appeal to these households. New units - whether new construction or conversions of buildings from other uses - are marketed to students. There are very few rental units for young professionals seeking similar features and amenities including interesting buildings, state-of-the-art cable and internet, modern kitchens and baths, and attractive common areas. Increased opportunities for these households to live in Binghamton clearly are needed, and estimated demand indicates that there is likely market support.

Finally, increases in the number of people 65 and older will result in added demand for smaller housing units and housing to accommodate middle- and higher-income seniors who are no longer able to cope with stairs and home maintenance responsibilities. In addition to the projected household demand measured by growth in the number of senior units, the waiting lists for attractive, senior units for middle-income seniors provides additional evidence that this type of housing is needed in the City. Senior housing in multifamily structures designed for independent living facilitates provision of management and maintenance services and oversight of frail seniors who may require medical assistance.

HOME SALES:
2011–2013

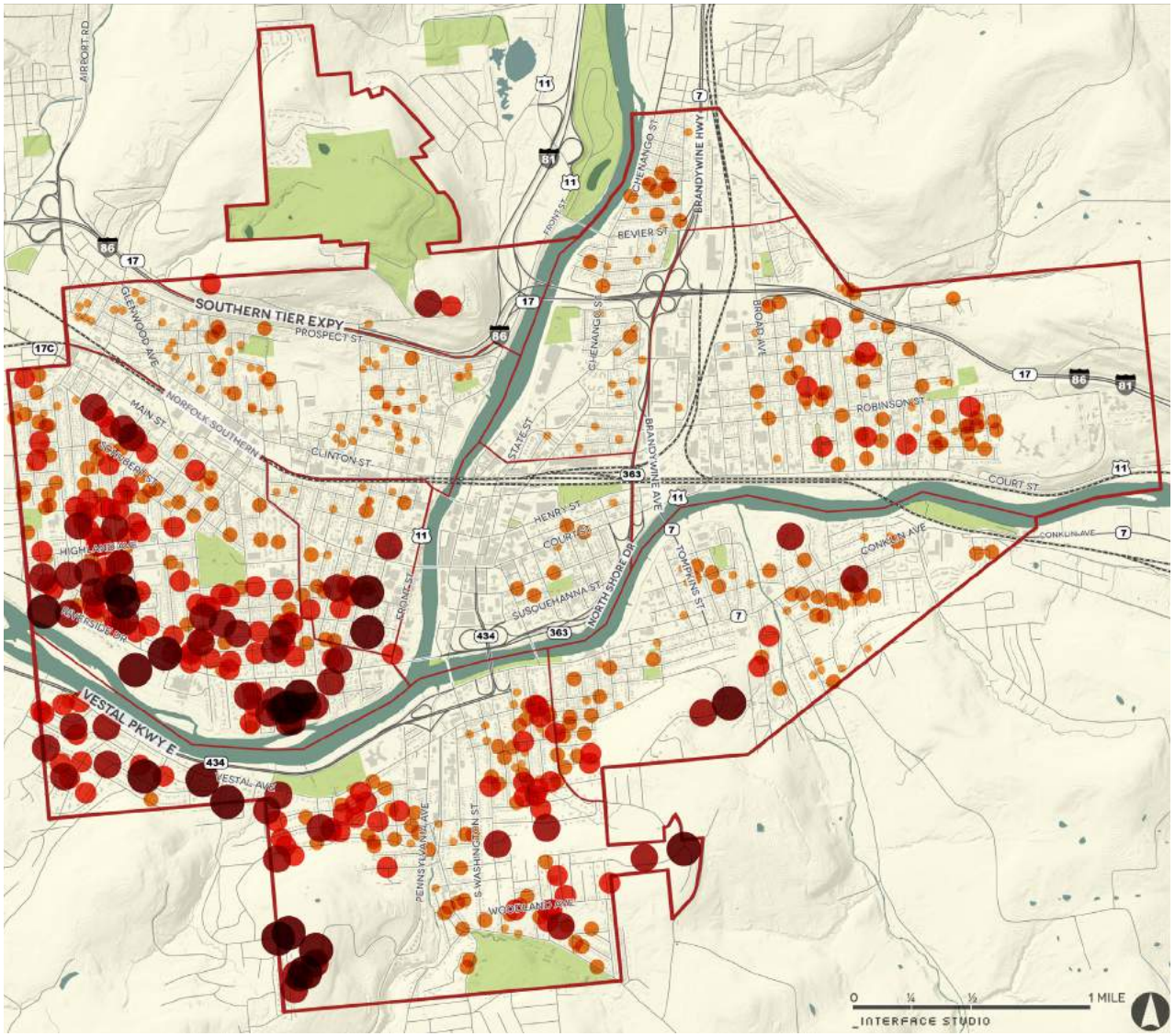


FIGURE 26: Home Sales: 2011-2013 - MAP

HOUSING SUPPLY

HOME SALES AND PRICE TRENDS

One of the often-cited advantages of the Binghamton MSA as a positive quality of life consideration is the affordability of the housing stock in comparison with other metropolitan areas in New York. In Binghamton, the median sales price in the second quarter of 2013 was $109,300, a decline from 2011 sale prices. Sales of distressed properties, including foreclosed homes, have adversely affected prices in Binghamton. However, a positive trend is a decline of 50% in foreclosure filings from October 2012 to October 2013. The market for sales of existing homes continues to be weak in the City and the broader metropolitan area, a situation the National Association of Realtors attributes to ongoing job losses and poor economic growth.

SOURCE: WIN2 DATA BY CORELOGIC

- $3,000 – $66,400
- $66,401 – $115,000
- $115,001 – $187,500
- $187,501– $293,000
- $293,001 – $500,000
- NEIGHBORHOOD BOUNDARIES

HOME SALES:
2011

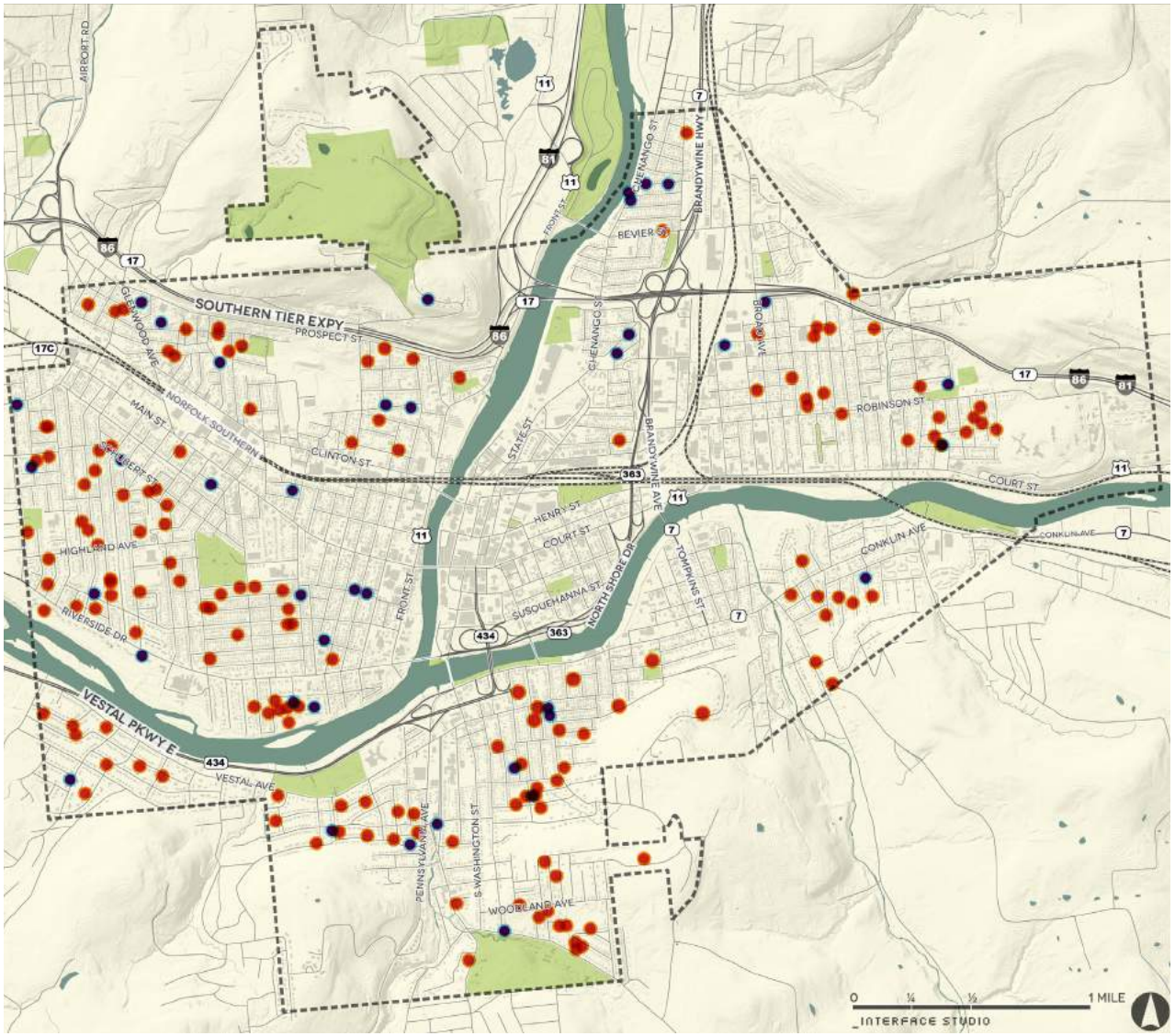


FIGURE 27: Home Sales: 2011 - MAP

Data on home sales during the period from January 2011 through October 2013 provide insight about the number of homes sold in Binghamton, sales prices, and neighborhood locations. Also relevant are the number and location of homes sold to owner-occupants as opposed to those sold to investors offering them for-rent. Of the 606 sales recorded between 2011 and 2013, 339 homes (56%) were sold to owner-occupants, and the remaining homes were sold to owners not occupying the homes. Overall, the Far West Side and South Side West commanded the highest median sales prices and the largest number of sales. The percentage of sales to owner-occupants was highest in the South Side West, East Side, and First Ward neighborhoods.

SOURCE: WIN2 DATA BY CORELOGIC

OWNER OCCUPANCY

NON – OWNER OCCUPANCY

HOME SALES:
2012

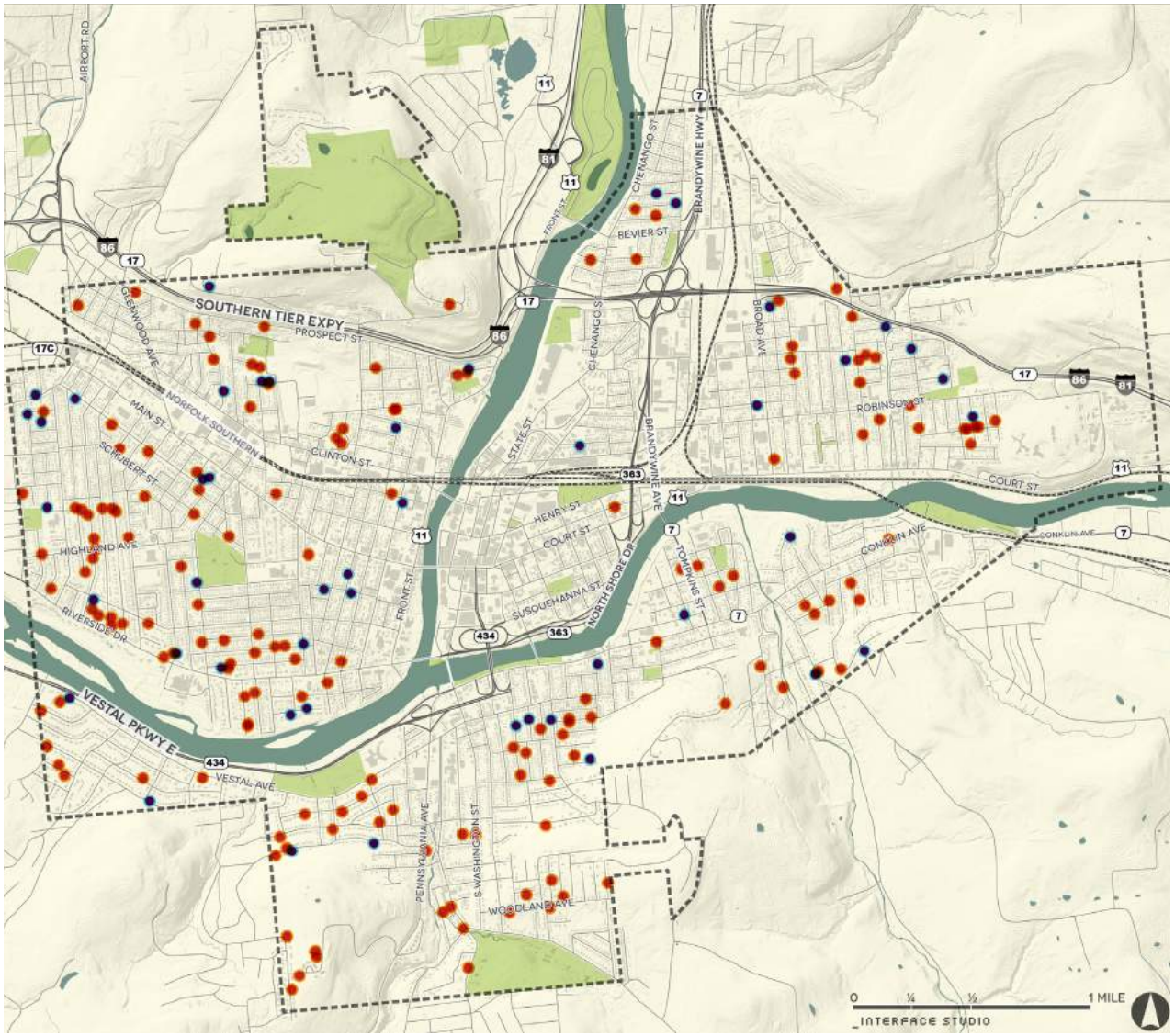


FIGURE 28: Home Sales: 2012 - MAP

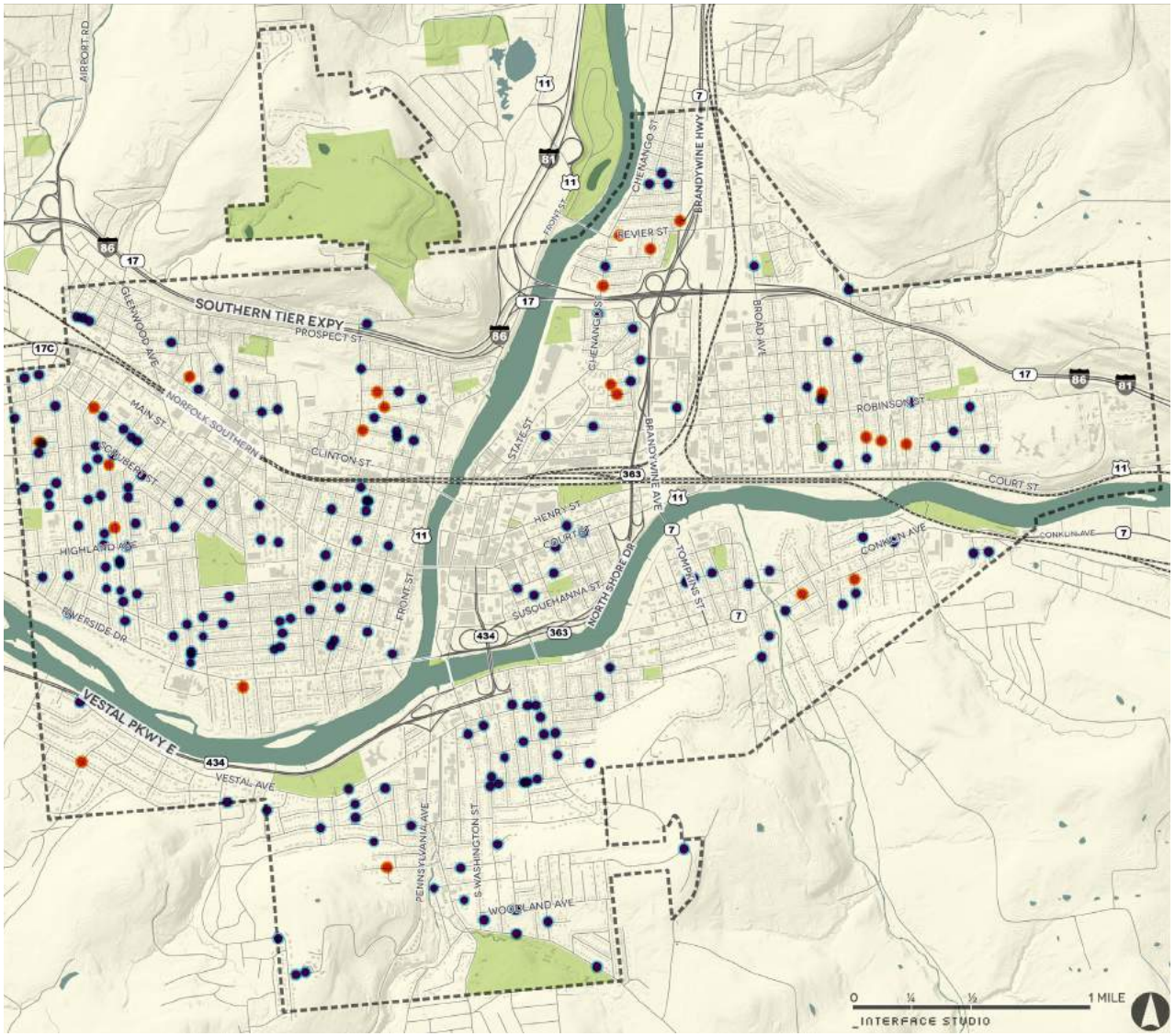
Examining the same data to show sales to owner-occupants versus non-owner occupants on a year-by-year basis reveals a dramatic reversal between 2011 and 2013 from mostly sales to owner occupants (82% in 2011) to mostly sales to non-owner occupants (89% in 2013). In 2013, a growing number of sales can be seen in the WSNP neighborhood, the east side of Downtown, and the North Side. Of all sales to non-owner occupants during 2013, 44% of the purchasers had addresses outside the City of Binghamton. The high number and percentage of 2013 sales to non-owner occupants may be a result of an easing of financial requirements for investors, the general trend in U.S. housing markets of additional investor purchases of homes that are offered for-rent, or the anticipation of higher demand for student housing because of increases in enrollment at Binghamton University.

SOURCE: WIN2 DATA BY CORELOGIC

OWNER OCCUPANCY

NON – OWNER OCCUPANCY

HOME SALES:
2013



SOURCE: WIN2 DATA BY CORELOGIC

OWNER OCCUPANCY

NON – OWNER OCCUPANCY

FIGURE 29: Home Sales: 2013 - MAP

RENTAL HOUSING

Rental housing is generally concentrated in the WSNP neighborhood, Downtown, Ely Park, and along Main Street. Monthly gross rents for market-rate rental units in Binghamton and nearby areas are very affordable in comparison with rents in major northeastern cities. Aside from the new construction of student housing complexes, market-rate multi-family rental properties in Binghamton are older, with most constructed between 1965 and the 1980s. There was a clear pattern of high occupancy rates at the multi-family properties surveyed and several had waiting lists. Rents at larger market-rate multifamily complexes are low. The highest priced two-bedroom units in Binghamton and within a 10-mile radius had asking rents below $1,200 per month. While this is an advantage for renters and also contributes to the high occupancy levels reported, the current rent levels are too low for new multifamily residential construction to be financially feasible without some form of financial assistance. Financial feasibility and related cost issues no doubt have been constraints in the development of new multifamily rental complexes. The exception is new student housing with higher per-bed monthly rentals that can generate sufficient rental income to be financially viable. However, even these properties typically have some assistance in the form of special financing or Historic Preservation Tax Credits.

Only one market-rate senior rental property having no tax credits or subsidies was identified in the City. The property is Good Shepherd Fairview Home, which is located on Fairview Avenue in the East Side Neighborhood. Participants at a stakeholder meeting that focused on seniors noted that options for seniors are limited. Waiting lists are long for affordable independent living properties that have subsidies and tax credits, and there is a shortage of nursing homes.

Several assisted housing programs in Binghamton provide ongoing subsidies that enable residents to pay gross rents (including utilities) that are based on 30% of income. These include public housing, Project-Based Section 8, Section 202 Elderly and Handicapped Housing, Homeless Housing Assistance, and Housing Choice Vouchers. The inventory is estimated to include 1,491 assisted units including 634 units for families/general occupancy and 857 units for occupancy by seniors, disabled persons, and handicapped persons. A survey of managers indicated that occupancy is generally high and most properties have waiting lists that are used to fill vacancies.

Student rentals are generally concentrated in the WSNP neighborhood, the Far West Side and Downtown. Based on a rough estimate of housing supply and the estimate of Binghamton University students living off-campus, the number of beds available in these properties is more than adequate to accommodate all students wanting to live in the City and projected future increases in enrollment at Binghamton University.

• PLEASE REFER TO THE FULL BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON HOUSING STUDY (UNDER SEPARATE COVER) FOR A MORE DETAILED HOUSING REPORT.

SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES

Binghamton's neighborhoods offer a range of choices from urban apartment living to almost rural, secluded environments. The affordability of housing makes Binghamton attractive to prospective buyers and renters but at the same time, places constraints on new residential construction because rents higher than are now typical in the City are required to support today's construction costs. There are, however, opportunities to improve the condition of housing and neighborhoods in the City for existing residents, and to attract a broader range of residents.

The recommendations in this chapter address one or more of the following objectives:

- Eliminate residential blight, and maintain quality housing and attractive neighborhoods to foster pride and quality of life
- Revitalize neighborhoods through balanced housing development throughout the City
- Encourage student housing where it will best benefit the surrounding community and City as a whole
- Develop diverse and distinctive housing options to attract various types of households to live in and help grow in the City

COMMUNITY VOICE

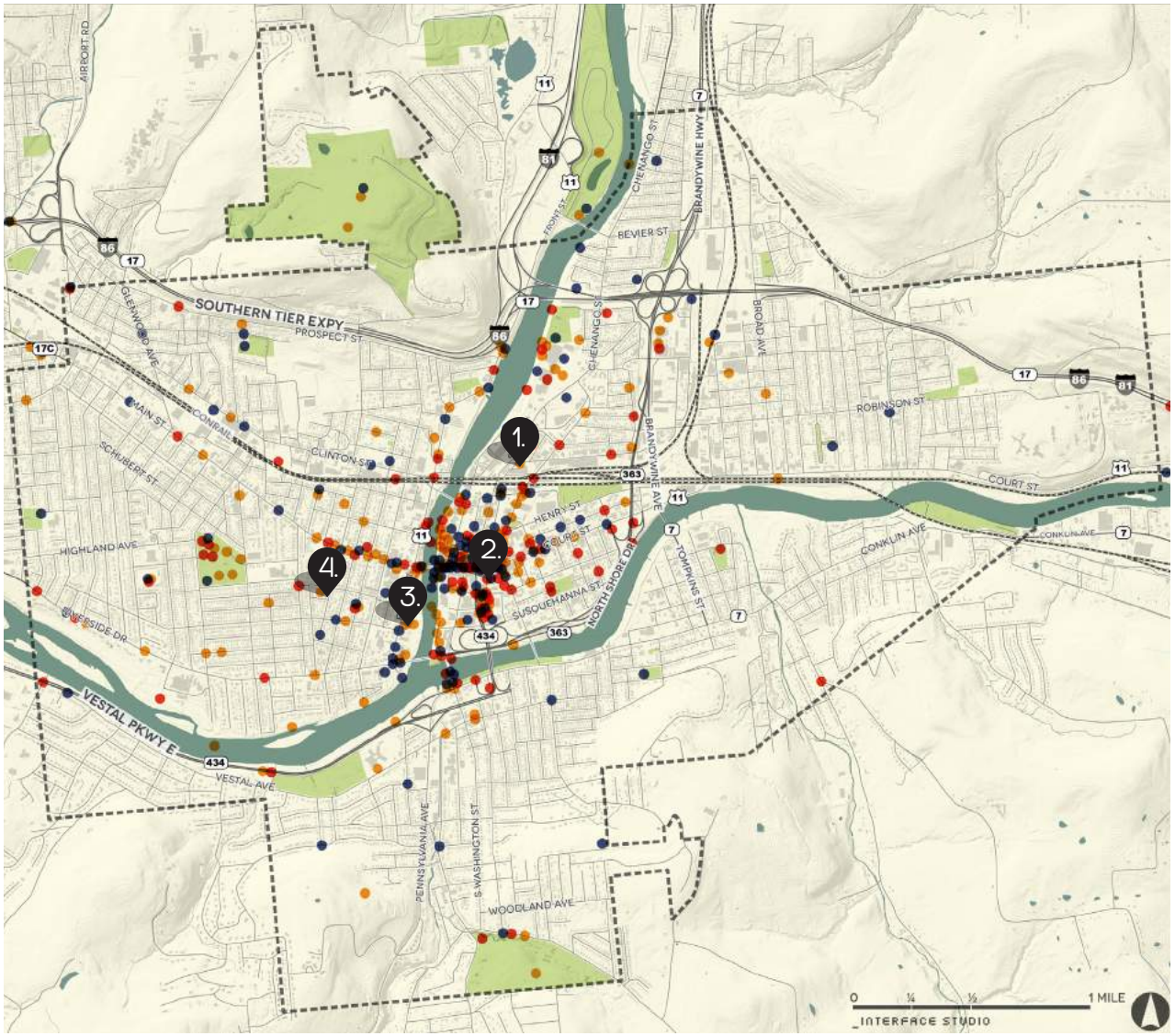
BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON asked YOU for your thoughts and ideas, concerns and priorities related to housing.

Your ideas for the **COLLABORATIVE MAP** addressed the need to improve the quality of housing for better neighborhoods, create affordable housing for populations in need, and think creatively to offer more housing options:

- "Would love to see Depot Street and train station continue loft development, restaurant or bar"
- "Enforce property codes to maintain/improve appearance of neighborhoods. Provide assistance to low income families to fix places."
- "Less vacant buildings; more quality, affordable rental housing, more trees!"
- "More housing for elderly, disabled, and low-income"
- "Downtown living should be for people wanting to downsize & retire - not just students"

COLLABORATIVE MAP

IDEAS. INSIGHTS. BARRIERS



1. "WOULD LOVE TO SEE DEPOT STREET AND TRAIN STATION CONTINUE LOFT DEVELOPMENT, RESTAURANT OR BAR"

2. "DOWNTOWN LIVING SHOULD BE FOR PEOPLE WANTING TO DOWNSIZE & RETIRE - NOT JUST STUDENTS"

3. "REDEVELOP OLD NURSING HOME ON FRONT STREET FOR HIGH END RESIDENTIAL USE FOR AGING POPULATION"

4. "ENFORCE PROPERTY CODES TO MAINTAIN/ IMPROVE APPEARANCE OF NEIGHBORHOODS. PROVIDE ASSISTANCE TO LOW INCOME FAMILIES TO FIX PLACES"

- IDEA
- INSIGHT
- BARRIER

FIGURE 30: Collaborative Map Comments

POSTCARDS FROM THE FUTURE

Your **POSTCARDS FROM THE FUTURE** describe a vision for a City with a distinctive look and strong neighborhoods:

"ABSENTEE LANDLORDS FOR STUDENT HOUSING & LOW INCOME HAVE IMPROVED THEIR BUILDINGS AND OLD VACANT DECAYED BUILDINGS ARE GONE."

"THE CITIZENS ARE INVOLVED AND TAKE PRIDE IN THEIR NEIGHBORHOODS."

"A MIX OF MODERN STYLE & HISTORIC PRESERVATION."

"IT IS A VERY CLEAN CITY WITH WELL-MAINTAINED HOMES. I HAVE NOT SEEN A SINGLE NEGLECTED BUILDING OR BOARDED UP DWELLING."

"THE ARCHITECTURE IS UNIQUE, VARIES, AND MAJESTIC."

"THE FRAT HOUSES ARE GORGEOUS ALL OF OUR NEIGHBORS LOVE EACH OTHER."

"THERE SEEMS TO BE A LOT OF YOUNG PROFESSIONALS BUYING HOMES AND MAKING A REAL SENSE OF COMMUNITY."

When **5TH GRADERS** in the Binghamton City School District imagined their **DREAM NEIGHBORHOOD**, they imagined beautiful and harmonious neighborhoods:

I WANT THE PERFECT NEIGHBORHOOD. IT WOULD HAVE EVERYTHING NICE. IT WOULD HAVE NICE PEOPLE, FLOWER BEDS, AND MOWED LAWNS. IT WOULD BE PERFECT. PEOPLE WOULD BE VERY NICE. THEY WOULD NEVER GET IN FIGHTS. THEY WOULD ALWAYS CLEAN THEIR YARDS. THE PEOPLE WOULD HAVE KIDS THAT WOULD BE MY BEST FRIENDS. SOME OF THE PEOPLE WOULD HAVE CANDY HOUSES.

EVERYBODY'S HOUSES AND YARDS WOULD BE SPOTLESS AND NOT ONE PIECE OF LITTER ANYWHERE. THERE WOULD ALSO BE GARBAGE CAN ON MY STREET SO NOBODY WOULD LITTER. THIS IS MY PERFECT NEIGHBORHOOD AND THE WAY I WOULD WANT IT TO BE SO NOBODY FEELS DISGUSTED WHEN THEY SEE IT.

BIG IDEAS

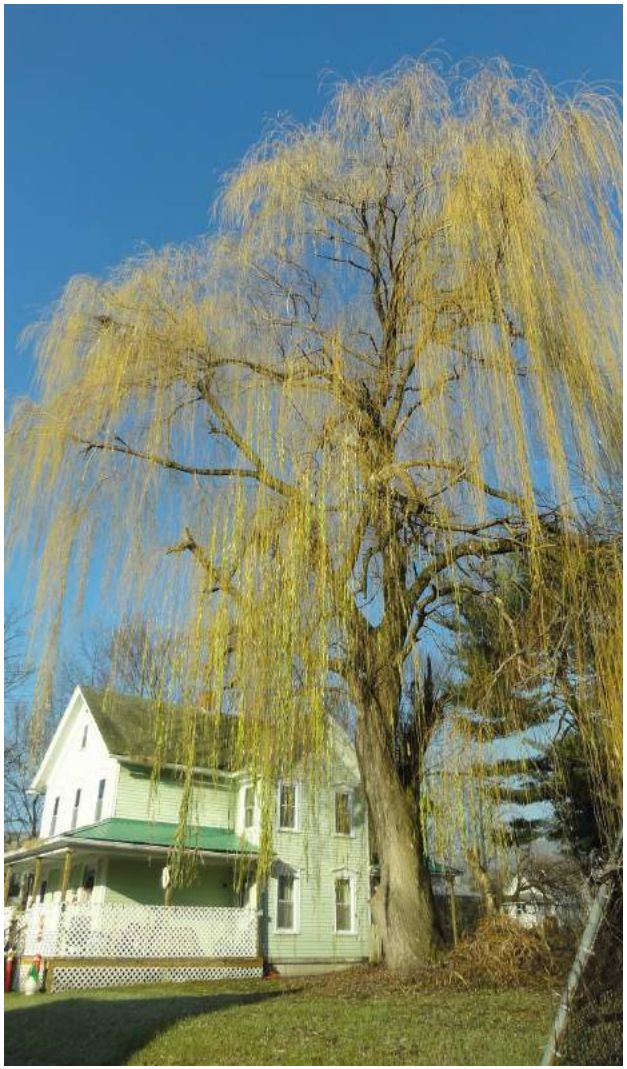
Your **BIG IDEAS** inform the recommendations for improving housing in Binghamton:

Images from the "Photo Suggestion Booth"

CITYWIDE SURVEY

And your responses on the **CITYWIDE SURVEY** showed an appreciation for the affordability of housing and access to amenities, but felt that the types of housing available could be improved:

58% Like your house or apartment
51% Like your access to amenities
48% Like the affordability of housing
18% Dislike the types of housing available



HOUSING GOALS & OBJECTIVES

The recommendations that comprise **BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON'S MINI-PLAN ON HOUSING** [a plan for those at home in the city] are organized into five goal areas, each titled by a key housing goal:

01

PRESERVE THE EXISTING HOUSING STOCK

02

EXPAND HOUSING CHOICE IN BINGHAMTON

03

MANAGE THE QUALITY OF RENTAL AND STUDENT HOUSING

04

REVITALIZE DOWNTOWN WITH A MIX OF HOUSING OPTIONS

05

MARKET BINGHAMTON HOUSING TO ATTRACT DIVERSE RESIDENTS

Taken together, the Housing Goals and their related objectives and strategies support the following themes of **BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON'S** vision for the future of our City:

- **RESILIENT & SUSTAINABLE** - homes and neighborhoods that are resilient in the face of changing weather patterns and that will be preserved for future generations
- **PROUD** - empowered citizens active in effecting positive change who take pride in their homes, their neighborhoods and their City
- **ALIVE** - neighborhoods invigorated by engaged residents whose efforts reinforce quality of life and attract others who choose to make Binghamton their home

FOR FULL VISION STATEMENT, SEE PAGE 40.

GOAL:

01

PRESERVE THE EXISTING HOUSING STOCK

Binghamton's neighborhoods are well-established, walkable, and centered around services and amenities. By investing in existing housing and reducing blight in residential areas, the City will be ensuring the long-term strength of its neighborhoods and in turn supporting economic development. The following housing recommendations support Goal 1:

1.1

IDENTIFY TARGET AREAS FOR NEIGHBORHOOD STABILIZATION AND HOUSING REVITALIZATION THAT BUILDS ON STRENGTHS

Rehabilitate houses in areas targeted for stabilization

A high percentage of Binghamton's housing stock is old, and many units are in need of rehabilitation. Based on the survey of residential block conditions and perceptions of the City garnered through discussions with stakeholders, a strategic approach to neighborhood stabilization and revitalization was developed. Neighborhoods targeted for stabilization are those which were given block condition ratings of average but which have the potential to slip if efforts are not made to position them for long-term viability. Among other areas, the City should target specific streets and areas in the WSNP neighborhood and along Main Street. Other areas to be targeted include the First Ward, the North Side, the East Side south of Robinson Street, South Side West near the hospital and commercial areas, and South Side East.

NEIGHBORHOOD STRATEGY

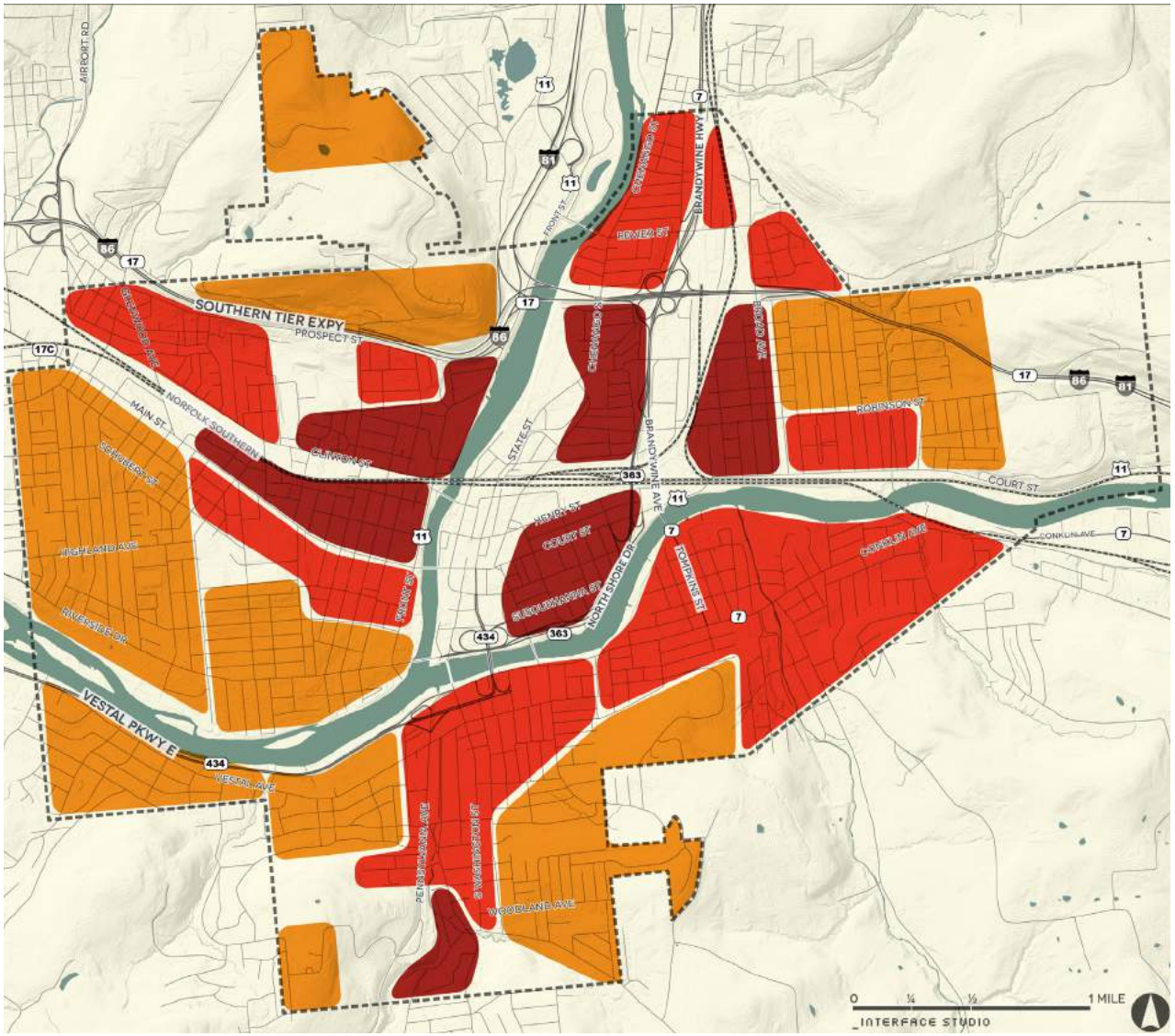


FIGURE 31: Neighborhood Strategy - MAP

For those areas that have the greatest challenges, whether due to crime, vacancy and deterioration, or flooding, it is recommended that a strategy of renewal be applied that combines rehabilitation with re-envisioning and redevelopment that may include other uses such as open spaces for areas within the floodplain or job-generating businesses and industries around highway and rail infrastructure. New Federal flood insurance requirements mean that homes in the floodplain will be required to pay higher flood insurance premiums or elevate their homes to comply with new floodplain standards. More detailed recommendations regarding flood control and helping residents reduce the impact of flooding on their homes can be found in the Infrastructure chapter of the plan.

To fund rehabilitation efforts, the City should utilize short public dollars to leverage private funds. Other cities, such as Pittsburgh, have worked with local lending institutions to establish a revolving loan fund to provide rehabilitation loans for owner-occupied homes at favorable interest rates. Multifamily properties might be eligible as long as one unit was owner-occupied.

1.2
ENCOURAGE HISTORIC PRESERVATION TO MAINTAIN NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER

Binghamton is fortunate to have maintained a number of historic properties, among them many homes. These buildings are an important part of the City's urban fabric and are what sets it apart from newer surrounding communities. Renewed interest in living in urban cores such as Binghamton is often linked to a desire for unique housing stock that leads to distinctive neighborhood characteristics. The City currently has four historic districts: Abel Bennett Tract, the Rail Terminal, State and Henry Streets, and Court Street. Property owners throughout the City, and in these districts in particular, should be encouraged to rehabilitate historic properties so that they contribute to the character of the neighborhood. The City's Design Guidelines for Historic Properties offer important information for those working with historic properties. As historic preservation is a complicated and expensive process, the City can help minimize the hurdles involved by working with the Commission on Architecture and Urban Design (CAUD) to streamline the review and approvals process, help property owners access financial incentives such as Historic Preservation Tax Credits and New Market Tax Credits, and consider donations of easements for historic preservation.

Buildings in the Rail Terminal Historic District

Historic Home in the West Side

1.3

WORK WITH THE BINGHAMTON HOUSING AUTHORITY, PRIVATE DEVELOPERS/OWNERS, AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATIONS TO PRESERVE AND EXPAND QUALITY AFFORDABLE RENTAL HOUSING

Demand for affordable housing is strong and growth is projected in the number of extremely low income households 65 and older. This underscores the continued need for the City and a range of potential partners to ensure the availability of quality affordable rental housing for families, seniors, and special needs populations. Depending on the type and location of housing, potential partners would include non-profit and for-profit developers, community development corporations, City CHDOs, and social service agencies focused on providing housing for special needs populations. Community Building Recommendation 2.1 also discusses the need to develop supportive housing.

Much of the existing stock of public housing and housing with project-based Section 8 subsidies is older and in need of upgrading. Although funding programs are highly competitive, it would be useful to pursue assistance programs to renovate older subsidized housing reported to be in poor or deteriorating condition. One such program would be the preservation provisions of the LIHTC program, which can assist with modernization. For senior properties in need of renovations, the funding can be used to convert efficiencies to larger residential units. HUD also has worked with property owners to convert a component of units in a subsidized senior property to assisted living.

For public housing and projects with project based Section 8 subsidies, the HUD Choice program is another opportunity that local officials may want to pursue to improve public housing as part of a comprehensive approach to neighborhood transformation. The HUD Choice program offers planning and implementation grants. The focus is on housing, people, and neighborhoods and not just the reconstruction of a subsidized housing project. This approach could be considered for the Saratoga Apartments and surrounding neighborhood in South Side East, based on the high poverty level in the area and a housing strategy of stabilization. The Woodburn Court II development Downtown might also be considered as it is constantly under the threat of flooding. Also see Housing Recommendation 4.5

1.4
ASSIST RESIDENTS IN NEED (LOW-INCOME, SENIORS) WITH MAINTENANCE AND REPAIRS

Most of the housing stock in Binghamton is aging, and the number of homes in poor condition increased between 2000 and 2010. In order to prevent these homes from deteriorating and negatively impacting the lives of their residents and neighbors, the City can help with assistance programs for maintenance and repairs that bring houses up to code and improve overall block and neighborhood conditions. The City has one program in place to assist owners of single-family homes with repairs up to $25,000 (or higher to address lead issues). Additional rehabilitation programs might expand on this initiative to include single-family attached and smaller multifamily homes when an owner occupies a unit.

These programs include as eligible rehabilitation costs in addition to code violations and energy improvements, addressing conditions critical to the viability of a structure such as roof repairs, porch reconstruction, exterior finishes (paint or siding); foundation maintenance and repair; structural reinforcement; and basement repairs. In Baltimore, the Capable Project (Community Aging in Place, Advancing Better Living for Elders), with funding from the National Institutes of Health and Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, is assisting seniors with home repairs and modifications that will help them stay in their homes and remain independent. Action Housing in Pittsburgh has a similar program to assist seniors.

Aging housing stock in need of maintenance

1.5

PARTNER WITH LOCAL NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS TO EXPLORE MECHANISMS THAT ASSIST ELDERLY HOMEOWNERS SEEKING TO AGE IN PLACE IN THEIR HOMES

Many seniors lack the means to make the repairs or modifications necessary to remain in their homes though they have roots in their neighborhood and would like to stay. Their ability to age in place is an important stabilizing factor for a neighborhood. One solution to consider is the creation of a community land trust, a non-profit tool that is complementary to municipal land banks. Municipal Land Banks (MLB), like the Broome County Land Bank Corporation, are public or quasi-public corporations that take ownership of land temporarily to clear title and assemble land, and prepare and position land for redevelopment, at which time the land is conveyed to a private owner. Community Land Trusts (CLTs), in contrast, are private, nonprofit corporations created and controlled by community members and City representatives who sit on the CLT Board and non-profit entities; CLTs can exist as a program of an existing non-profit or as a standalone non-profit. CLTs hold land in perpetuity for different community-serving purposes, such as affordable housing. Buildings on the land (existing or newly constructed) are sold to (or retained by) homeowners, small businesses, or other nonprofits who gain exclusive use of the underlying land through a long-term ground lease. The lease includes restrictions on the use and resale of the buildings upon the land, enabling the CLT to ensure that the property serves a community need, such as affordable homeownership, over time.

In this case, elderly homeowners could donate their property (the land and the home upon the land) to the land trust but continue to live on it through a "life estate." In exchange for the property, the land trust would handle maintenance of the property during that period. This arrangement would help seniors stay in their homes and also preserve housing and the integrity of the neighborhood as people age out by preventing land from being sold off to speculators who might convert the homes to rental properties. Upon death, or when the elderly homeowners are ready to sell, the land trust would help them sell the home to another family or individual that meets the objectives of the trust (in this case, preserving affordable housing options for seniors or families); the land trust would retain ownership of the land, thereby ensuring that the home retains its affordability and single-family use. Though CLTs are nonprofit entities, owners continue to pay property tax to the City, as the land is not exempt.

1.6

CONSIDER WORKING WITH ONE OR MORE FHA-APPROVED LENDING INSTITUTIONS TO DEFINE THE PARAMETERS OF A BINGHAMTON HOUSING ACQUISITION AND REHABILITATION PROGRAM USING FHA 203(K) MORTGAGE INSURANCE FOR LOANS

Many lenders have successfully used the Section 203(k) program in partnership with state and local housing agencies and non-profit organizations to rehabilitate properties, often combining the mortgage insurance with other financial resources. Section 203(k) can be used by prospective purchasers to purchase and rehabilitate homes bought out of foreclosure. Under Section 203(k), the mortgage amount on a one- to four-family home is based on the projected value of the property after rehabilitation, meaning that a borrower does not have to obtain interim financing until the rehabilitation has been completed. Down-payments are low - 3.5%. The mortgage has a long-term fixed or adjustable rate and covers the cost of both acquisition and rehabilitation of the property. Major rehabilitation is not required; Section 203(k) can be used when purchasers are proposing minor renovations. The property must be a primary residence; investors are excluded. Although lenders are insured by FHA against losses, the program is staff-intensive, and many larger lenders are reluctant to use it. Smaller regional and community banks are more active in the program. Non-profit organizations can be eligible borrowers under 203(k), and can use the program to acquire and rehabilitate foreclosed properties including HUD- and City-owned properties.

Homes in Need of Repair

1.7

DEVELOP "FIX TO OWN" PROGRAM FOR CITY-OWNED PROPERTIES TO TRANSITION TO OWNER-OCCUPIED PROPERTIES

A "Fix to Own" program would allow renters of City-owned properties to become owners by investing their money and sweat equity to improve the properties over time. Such a program would improve the condition of the property and its impact on the neighborhood, and increase the level of homeownership, which has been linked to higher levels of maintenance, more social stability, and higher home values. The previously referenced Section 203(k) program might be used to help prospective purchasers to finance acquisition and rehabilitation.

This should work in tandem with the existing "$1 Healthy Homes Initiative" which sells city owned properties for $1 to which the new owners are eligible for $100,000 in Restore NY funding to help improve the property. Given that the State has ended the Restore NY Program, the City should look to the Broome County Land Bank to help continue these housing initiatives. Like the successful $1 Healthy Homes Initiative, priority should be given to owner occupants over investors.

Vacant Home in the North Side

GOAL:

02

EXPAND HOUSING CHOICE IN BINGHAMTON

Over three-quarters of Binghamton's housing stock is over 50 years old, and less than one percent of the housing stock has been built since the beginning of 2000. Binghamton needs to refresh its housing offerings to compete successfully with its neighbors and plan for changing demographic characteristics. The following housing recommendations support Goal 2:

2.1

IDENTIFY POTENTIAL SITES FOR NEW HOUSING DEVELOPMENT (FOR-SALE, FOR-RENT, SENIOR)

Different strategies for new housing development should be based on location and target populations. Considerations for developing for-sale, rental and senior housing include whether the available land is an infill site or larger development site, its location in the City and proximity to services and transportation, and the desired characteristics of the target population. New for-sale units that are added in the City could be on infill sites in existing neighborhoods, especially when property values can be maintained or enhanced by providing new units with features and amenities that are comparable to suburban alternatives. Examples would be the development of low density single-family homes in the Far West Side, South Side West and East, and Ely Park neighborhoods. These are stable neighborhoods that can benefit from initiatives to enhance their competitiveness.

The Charles Street Business Park, Greater Binghamton Health Center and Binghamton Plaza are large development sites that have the potential to offer a mix of uses that includes some housing (see Land Use & Zoning Recommendation 1.3). Over the long term, residents of neighborhoods in the First Ward and East Side that are threatened by flooding could have the opportunity to relocate to housing outside of the floodplain but still within their original neighborhoods -- most notably Charles Street Business Park for the First Ward and Greater Binghamton Health Center for the East Side. Binghamton Plaza, part of the North

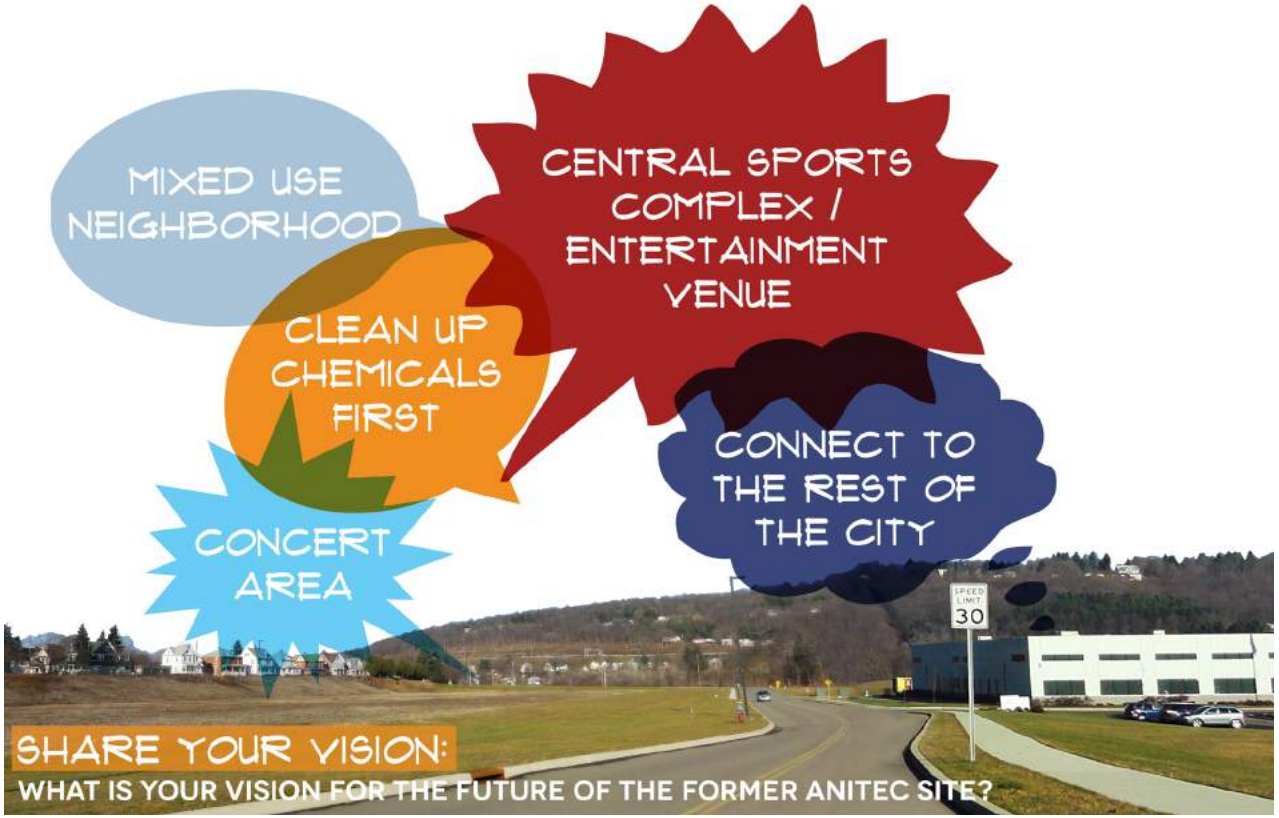


FIGURE 32: "BIG IDEA" Comments - Charles Street Business Park

Chenango BOA, has potential as a larger scale mixed-use residential and retail development that could tap into development assistance programs. HR&A's 2013 market analysis also recommends a long-term strategy of a senior housing development.

Demand for additional housing for seniors at several different income levels is evident from the tabulations of households by income band and age. Moreover, the low vacancies and long waiting lists for more modern senior housing with deep subsidies and LIHTCs and the general lack of alternatives for higher income seniors all indicate that Binghamton's supply of housing for seniors should be increased. An objective should be to work with one or more private developers to identify potential sites for which funding applications are appropriate. Based on the long waiting list at East Hills Senior Housing and the appropriateness of its income targeting, a good first step would be to pursue a LIHTC development for seniors.

Assuming that a potential site in Binghamton can be identified for an assisted living or nursing home development, there is apparent market support for this type of development because of the projected increases in the number of seniors 75 and older. Since these developments are staff-intensive, they also are a good source of additional jobs. A cooperative working relationship with one or both of the City's hospitals would be beneficial, as would a location near a medical center.

"PROMOTE AREA FOR A RETIREMENT COMMUNITY – WE HAVE ALL THE AMENITIES – CULTURAL, MEDICAL, EDUCATIONAL, RECREATIONAL, ENTERTAINMENT."

Source: Binghamton Resident Comment

Left to right: Greater Binghamton Health Center, Binghamton Plaza, East Hills Senior Housing

2.2

WORK WITH BROOME COUNTY LAND BANK TO ASSEMBLE REDEVELOPMENT SITES FOR NEW FOR-SALE HOUSING UNITS

As documented in the **BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON HOUSING STUDY**, the housing market is expected to improve overall. The main constraint for housing development, however, is the availability of land suitable for new homes. The City should work with the Broome County Land Bank to assemble sites for the development of new for-sale housing units. The Broome County Land Bank provides a vehicle for taking a coordinated, long-term approach to bringing distressed, vacant and underutilized land back into productive use, and doing so at a scale that can effect lasting change. The Greater Syracuse Land Bank, representatives of which spoke at a **BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON** Community Discussion, presents a good model for Binghamton moving forward.

Vacant and distressed properties can be assembled through the County Land Bank.

2.3

REQUIRE ENERGY EFFICIENCY, GREEN BUILDING PRACTICES, AND UNIVERSAL DESIGN PRINCIPLES IN PUBLICLY-FUNDED PROJECTS

New publicly-funded projects should incorporate energy efficiency and green building practices to decrease their environmental footprint and improve the environmental quality of life in the City. Today, greener living is no longer an exception but the rule. This recommendation will help the City meet the goals outlined in its Energy and Climate Action Plan and also ensure lower utility costs for residents. Universal design principles result in products and environments that are usable by everyone, regardless of age or physical ability. By incorporating these design principles into public projects, the City will send a powerful message of support for all of its residents; public projects also will be a model for private developments.

2.4 DEVELOP NEW MARKET-RATE RENTAL HOUSING FOR GENERAL OCCUPANCY

Since the City has no new rental housing developments for general occupancy, consider identifying a site for this type of development. As the market for general occupancy is not as strong as the student rental market, the City should welcome developments that include a small increment of affordable units (up to 20%), which can help bridge financing gaps and improve project feasibility. Studies increasingly show that affordable family housing is best provided in properties with a mix of incomes. For example, in other cities, developers have successfully incorporated a component of housing units for households with incomes below 50% of the median in new and substantially rehabilitated properties that include market-rate housing. Special financing programs that can be tapped for mixed-income housing also can help in creating financially feasible projects.

2.5 DEVELOP AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND MIXED INCOME DEVELOPMENTS ADJACENT TO SERVICES AND TRANSPORTATION

Binghamton has a shortage of affordable housing; occupancy is generally high at assisted rental properties and most have wait lists for future vacancies. The City should work with for-profit and non-profit developers to ensure that applications for additional affordable housing and affordable units in mixed-income developments are submitted to New York State Homes and Community Renewal each year. Since transportation costs associated with owning a car are high and residents seeking affordable housing may not be able to afford a car, it is important that new developments are sited in areas that have good access to services and public transportation.

Metro Plaza Apartments in downtown Binghamton

GOAL:

03

MANAGE THE QUALITY OF RENTAL AND STUDENT HOUSING

Binghamton has a large supply of market-rate rental housing and student housing in older, existing structures. Rental housing is found throughout the City's neighborhoods, but concentrated in the WSNP target area, Downtown, and the North Side. These same areas also have relatively high levels of vacancy for reasons that include the decline in the number of households in Binghamton, the condition of the housing stock, and recent additions to the student rental inventory. To protect the integrity of all the City's neighborhoods, quality rental housing must be maintained.

Student housing has been a central discussion topic over the past few years. The influx of students into Downtown and portions of the West Side have brought many benefits. Students have helped to breathe new life into Downtown by providing a market for restaurants and services, and their expenditures in Binghamton have bolstered the City's economy. Moreover, the influx of students has also provided a means by which to repurpose older homes that, for years, had limited market potential.

But as in other cities with large amounts of student housing, there are also challenges. While many landlords are responsible and maintain their student housing portfolios, others do not. Without proper code enforcement, these properties can deteriorate to the point where there are few options for their reuse. Similarly, while many students are good neighbors, others are not and this causes tensions with nearby homeowners. Another central concern is the conversion of larger, older homes into multiple apartment units which diminishes their integrity and value. These challenges must be addressed to maximize the positive benefits associated with student housing.

As other cities have learned, there is no one solution to managing rental housing. Many actions are required simultaneously including better code enforcement, outreach to landlords/investors, incentives to encourage rehabilitation and a proactive approach to encouraging new student housing developments in areas that can provide the best return on investment and benefits to the surrounding community. The following housing recommendations support Goal 3:

Rental housing on the West Side

3.1

DEVISE A NEW URBAN VILLAGE/MIXED USE ZONING CLASSIFICATION TO LEGALIZE AND BETTER REGULATE RENTAL HOUSING WHILE ALSO MANAGING EXTERNALITIES

Reinvestment opportunities on the east side of downtown Binghamton

Establishment of a new zoning classification, an Urban Village/Mixed Use Zone, where rental and student housing is an allowable use will be a positive step toward regulating rental housing and promoting safety, maintenance, and quality of life. The past practice of enforcement when complaints have been filed has not been useful in establishing effective controls on investments by landlords wanting to rent units to students and the preservation of housing in established neighborhoods of homeowners. Shared rentals in these neighborhoods is not legal under the current residential zoning; spot enforcement is not a viable long-term solution. The legislation that establishes this new zoning classification should build on prior debates and analyses in connection with an Urban Village Overlay District while also enabling local officials and organizations to establish positive requirements for this new classification to address such matters as allowable commercial uses, parking, setbacks, occupancy standards, and others related to the intensity of use associated with student housing. Fees associated with rental registration should generate additional revenue to help cover added costs associated with inspections of properties. The clear identification of areas where student housing is permitted, along with registrations and inspections should result in better maintenance and upkeep of properties by property managers and investor-owners.

It is recommended that the new Urban Village/Mixed Use Zone be considered for the areas currently under the existing Urban Village District Overlay, as well as the east side of Downtown on both sides of Court Street and the northern section of the South Side along Conklin and Vestal Avenues. All of these locations are served by the Off-Campus College Transport (OCCT) bus connecting students to the BU campus; consideration of direct BC Transit service might provide an additional incentive. The east side of Downtown Binghamton, which is in need of reinvestment, could benefit greatly from reinvestment incentives to enhance the revitalization of Downtown while also alleviating student housing market pressure in the Downtown core and West Side neighborhoods that are not within the Urban Village District Overlay. The South Side is very close to Downtown and also has its own commercial corridors around the hospital, Washington Street, and Conklin Avenue. While housing conditions in the South Side are generally average to good, the targeted area just south of Downtown could benefit from focused investment in housing, including student housing, to shore up conditions and strengthen the South Side as a whole.

RENTAL HOUSING ZONES

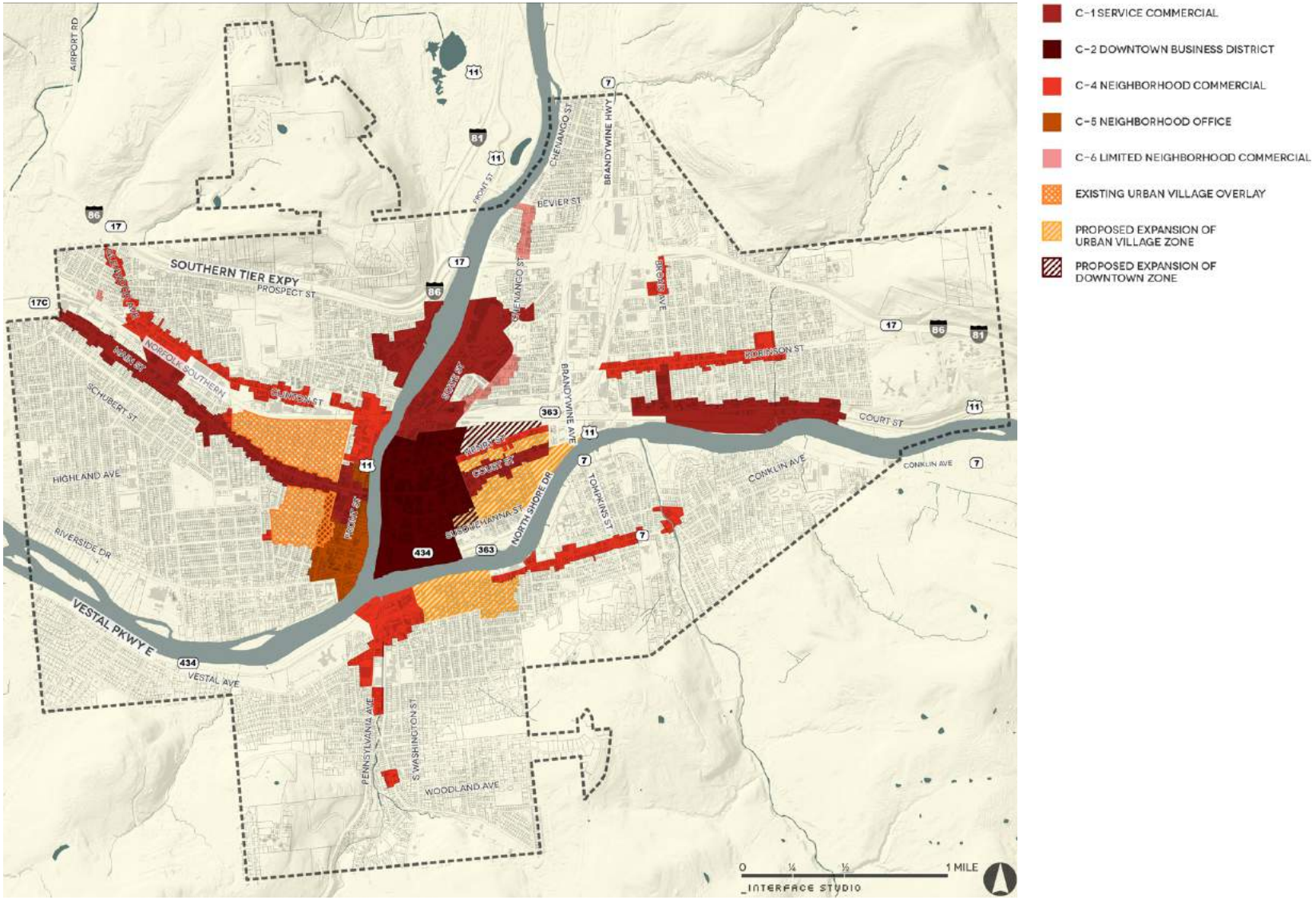


FIGURE 33: Rental Housing Zones - MAP

3.2
IDENTIFY OPPORTUNITY SITES AND INCENTIVES FOR NEW STUDENT HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

Student housing is permitted in all areas zoned for commercial use and in areas that may be in the proposed Urban Village/Mixed Use zone. In addition to the east side of Downtown, Main Street is recommended as an opportunity site for the development of student housing. This area is zoned commercial which permits student housing, and it is served by the OCCT bus. Offering direct service to the University via BC Transit could provide another incentive for student housing to be located along Main Street. The proposed new zoning for Main Street along with incentives to design places attractive to students could have an enormous impact on transforming this corridor. Directing the development of student housing to this area will help to relieve pressure on Downtown and spread the positive impacts of revitalization brought about by students choosing to live in the City. In concert with this effort to direct new student housing development and legalize and better regulate existing student rentals, the City should also explore the creation of development standards such as density limitations or limiting the number of permits per year for multi-family projects involving dwelling units with more than four bedrooms per unit.

3.3
STRENGTHEN CODE ENFORCEMENT AND FOLLOW UP TO IMPROVE RENTAL PROPERTIES

Improving the quality of housing is an important objective for the City of Binghamton, as well as Broome County. The recently completed Broome County Comprehensive Plan supports grant applications for renovating substandard housing with a focus on urban centers such as Binghamton. The City recently enacted legislation that requires all residential rental units throughout the entire city, regardless of size and with the exception of two-family, owner-occupied structures, to be registered. A fee is required to complete registration. Rental units subject to registration will be inspected, at least once every three years, as allowed by municipal resources, and with penalties for non-compliance. This Rental Registration Program will improve housing conditions and help ensure that all residential rental properties are safer, more habitable and more consistently compliant with NY State Code and related local municipal regulations. In combination with the proposed Urban Village/Mixed Use zone, the Rental Registration program should make it easier for the City to proactively manage housing issues. Additional means of adjudicating criminal cases, such as a "housing court," may be another means by which code enforcement services could be improved throughout the City. Current limitations on judicial resources, combined with high demand for court services, can impair the length of time required to adjudicate individual court cases. When or where code violations have an impact on health and safety, it is especially important for adjudication to occur in a timely fashion.

3.4 WORK WITH THE BINGHAMTON HOUSING AUTHORITY TO ENSURE THAT PROPERTIES LEASED TO FAMILIES WITH HOUSING CHOICE VOUCHERS HAVE BEEN INSPECTED AND ARE IN COMPLIANCE

HUD regulations mandate inspections of units leased by households with Housing Choice Vouchers. If the units have been inspected by BHA, the City should consider accepting a copy of the HUD inspection form in lieu of conducting a separate inspection. Similar rules should be applicable for the City's Emergency Solutions Grant program. The City should continue working with the DSS, by coordinating their Rental Registration and public housing subsidy programs, to the extent legally feasible. Housing data that is a matter of public record and which has been obtained through the Rental Registration program or the triennial inspection program should be made available to DSS, as needed to support existing housing regulations, such as the Spiegel Act, that link code compliance and enforcement with subsidy payment programs.

3.5 ENCOURAGE LANDLORDS TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF THEIR PROPERTIES

The City can complement its code enforcement measures by working with landlord associations to assist landlords working to improve their properties. The City could create incentives for landlords to reinvest in properties to help them upgrade obsolete, deteriorated rental housing. For example, the Baltimore City Lead Abatement Project provides money to property owners to renovate residential or rental properties so that units are lead safe. Some cities have employed Good Landlord Programs to promote quality, crime-free rental housing by training landlords about how to register their property, how to screen tenants, how to evict problem tenants, how to maintain buildings to city code, and how to prepare for Rental Registration inspections. Another alternative would be to work with investors to offer units for-rent to households with Housing Choice Vouchers, and possibly provide Project-Based Vouchers to encourage owners to improve the condition of housing units and provide enhanced maintenance on an ongoing basis. A counseling program to assist low-income households to understand their responsibilities as tenants would help to alleviate some of the reported reluctance to leasing units to households with vouchers. To the extent that similar programs are operating in Broome County, a cooperative effort between City and County officials to coordinate initiatives should be pursued.

3.6

DEVELOP INCENTIVES FOR CONVERSION OF OBSOLETE RENTAL HOUSING TO OWNER-OCCUPIED (MULTI-FAMILY/SINGLE-FAMILY) HOUSING

Allowing limited commercial uses such as professional offices is an incentive that could help with converting larger homes to owner-occupied housing.

Converting obsolete rental housing - structures with code violations and long-term vacant structures - to owner-occupied housing is a challenge for cities and requires a creative response. Incentives to help offset some of these costs will encourage developers and homebuyers to take on the challenge. One alternative might be to work with a HUD-approved Section 203(k) consultant to explore use of the program to market units to prospective owner-occupants (see Recommendation 1.6). Another option might be to offer special financing for owner-occupants. Pittsburgh's Friendship neighborhood offers a successful example of collaboration between the Friendship Development Associates, a local community development corporation, and the City's Urban Redevelopment Authority to encourage rehabilitation of larger single-family homes with low- and no-interest loans when the property's owner occupies a unit. In other cities, large employers or institutions such as hospitals and universities have employee-assisted housing programs like down payment assistance that encourage employees to buy homes and live closer to their work.

Owners of some of the larger rental properties in Binghamton might benefit from this type of incentive especially when combined with Rental Registration and the required triennial inspection. In this case, special financing could be available to developers/investor owners interested in undertaking the conversion, such that the incentive is for the developer rather than the buyer. The National Development Council and the International Economic Development Council offer training programs for municipal officials about how to develop appropriate incentive packages.

Another possibility would be to offer added flexibility in allowable uses of larger residential properties. Aside from properties in the C5-Neighborhood Office District along Front Street and in the WSNP target area and R3 zones, the use of property for purposes such as professional offices is not allowed under current zoning regulations, without prior approval of a variance issued by the Zoning Board of Appeals. This process can be long and expensive and thereby make successful adaptive reuse that much more difficult. The City could develop incentives to make this process easier in areas outside C5 and R3 zoning, such as allowing a home office on the ground floor of a home when the owner is living upstairs (see Land Use and Zoning Recommendation 2.4 as well).

GOAL:

04

REVITALIZE DOWNTOWN WITH A MIX OF HOUSING OPTIONS

The influx of students Downtown has sparked a revitalization that has positioned Downtown Binghamton for its next stage of redevelopment. New businesses and activities have enlivened the streets and set in motion a change in perception about Downtown that will make it easier to market to a broad range of residents. Other cities have experienced a renewed interest in living Downtown on the part of young professionals, singles, couples without children, and empty-nesters. Binghamton should be able to capitalize on this trend, given the revitalization that has already occurred, the sizeable employment base Downtown, and the stock of historic structures that might be converted to provide interesting housing choices for these demographics in addition to students. The following recommendations support Goal 4:

Historic buildings help define the character of Downtown Binghamton

4.1

ENCOURAGE HISTORIC PRESERVATION AND REUSE TO PROVIDE UNIQUE, ATTRACTIVE HOUSING OPTIONS

Other cities have attracted young professionals with higher incomes to Downtown rental properties in rehabilitated historic buildings by working with private developers to convert buildings from other uses. Some of this activity already is occurring in Binghamton, but more is needed. Local officials can work with developers to tap financing sources and special programs such as Historic Preservation and New Markets Tax Credits, and other financing mechanisms might generate higher levels of Downtown redevelopment. These types of housing appeal initially to young professionals, but as revitalization takes hold and Downtown develops an identity, the momentum can incorporate additional rehabilitation and infill development, and likely attract older households. As the momentum builds and pricing increases, the next phase should be construction of new housing offered for-rent and also for-sale.

4.2

ENCOURAGE MARKET RATE HOUSING WITH A VARIETY OF UNIT PLANS FOR RESIDENTS SEEKING DOWNTOWN AMENITIES

Downtown Binghamton needs a stock of housing that is suitable for occupancy by households of varying ages and with incomes at different levels. Market-rate residential properties in the City and within a ten-mile radius have very low - or no vacancies. There is solid evidence of household demand in the City based on tabulations of households by income band and age cohort. The City presently has two properties Downtown that have been developed exclusively for students. Rents are quoted on a per-bed basis, and the properties have a wide range of features and amenities appealing to students. Other building owners and developers are now proposing conversions and rehabilitations with unit plans targeted toward students - such as units containing five to seven or more bedrooms.

While some properties designed specifically for students are appropriate, recent conversions in Downtown Binghamton have been primarily targeted for occupancy by groups of students to the exclusion of other types of households. Owners run the risk of having vacant properties if the student market becomes saturated. Similarly, the result for the City is a lack of housing for other types of households who may be interested in living Downtown, and who did express interest during the Blueprint Binghamton planning process. Housing should be able to accommodate a variety of users over the long-term, and the City should encourage building owners and developers to consider projects that are attractive to a wide range of occupants. While young households - students and young professionals - are the first to move Downtown, empty nesters and seniors should follow as perceptions change.

4.3 DEVELOP MODERATE-INCOME SENIOR HOUSING NEAR AMENITIES

The senior population at virtually all income levels is growing, as is the number of more affluent older households in the City overall. Downtown Binghamton has several subsidized senior properties, but there are no properties for moderate-income or higher income empty-nesters or senior households. While Downtown Binghamton presently lacks one key amenity, a grocery, there are numerous entertainment and recreational venues and special events, restaurants, shops, and a health club that make the City an interesting place. These amenities make Downtown Binghamton an attractive location for a new senior housing property for moderate- and higher-income households, possibly one offering different levels of service. There are several underutilized parcels that might be sites for this type of housing, including the surface parking lot across from the Doubletree Hotel and the former nursing home site on Front Street, just across the river from Downtown.

4.4 CONSIDER PARKING MAXIMUMS OR LOWER PARKING MINIMUMS FOR NEW HOUSING CONSTRUCTION DOWNTOWN

The advantages of Downtown living - walkability, street life, thriving businesses - are diminished by the dominance of surface parking lots that create gaps in activity. This makes walking unpleasant and creates a cycle; fewer people on the street make it feel inactive and unsafe, leading people to resort to driving which fuels a demand for more parking and creating ever bigger gaps in the urban fabric that makes Downtown interesting in the first place. One way to break this cycle is to introduce parking maximums rather than minimums or lower parking minimums for new housing. Benefits of this strategy include preventing developers from building excessive lots, allowing for the redevelopment of parking lots, improved pedestrian experience and safety Downtown, and reducing the heat island effect and stormwater runoff generated from the large expanses of impermeable parking lot surfaces. This proposal along with the potential of shared parking on existing lots, should be carefully evaluated in the upcoming Downtown parking study to be commissioned by the City and no action should be taken until the completion of the proposed Downtown parking study (see Transportation Recommendation 2.1).

4.5

APPLY FOR A CHOICE NEIGHBORHOOD INITIATIVE PLANNING GRANT FOR WOODBURN COURT II

Choice Neighborhoods is a HUD program that supports the development of plans to transform distressed public and/or HUD-assisted housing and bring about improvements in neighborhood assets through public and private investments. North Shore and Woodburn Court I and II residents had to be evacuated from the properties in the 2006 and 2011 floods. While the Binghamton Housing Authority's North Shore Towers and Village, and adjacent subsidized rentals at the Woodburn Court I high-rise have received a four million dollar grant for flood proofing, the low-rise Woodburn Court II development remains wholly in the floodplain and vulnerable to repeat flood damage and therefore a good candidate for the grant program. A Choice planning grant would enable the Housing Authority, in partnership with other public and private organizations, to develop plans for redevelopment or alternative uses in a delineated Choice neighborhood that would encompass Woodburn Court II and surrounding properties. Since the High-Technology Incubator is located nearby, it might be possible to involve Binghamton University, which is likely to enhance the competitive standing of a Binghamton application.

Former nursing home on Front Street

Woodburn Court I

Woodburn Court II

GOAL:

05

MARKET BINGHAMTON HOUSING TO ATTRACT DIVERSE RESIDENTS

The recommendations described thus far aim to produce high quality housing stock that can serve different types of households and contribute to safe and attractive neighborhoods. The recommendations under this final objective connect residents and potential residents to the advantages of living in Binghamton. The following housing recommendations support Goal 5:

5.1

DEVELOP BRANDING STRATEGY FOR DIFFERENT TARGET POPULATIONS AND NEIGHBORHOODS

Each neighborhood has distinctive characteristics that are attractive to different segments of the population. The activity, density and housing stock Downtown is appealing to the student population but may also fit the preferences of other populations such as young professionals and empty nesters. A family with children, on the other hand, may prefer more space and a yard or proximity to good schools and parks. Hospital workers may be enticed by neighborhoods close to work. First time buyers may be enticed by the affordable Victorian fixer uppers found north of Main Street. A branding and marketing strategy can be developed for each neighborhood to highlight defining characteristics and reach out to prospective new residents. Police and real estate agents must be a part of both defining a neighborhood brand and getting the word out to potential renters and buyers. Space should also be dedicated for each district on the City's website. The **BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON HOUSING STUDY** provides information about lifestyles in each Binghamton neighborhood, together with summary information about the characteristics of each lifestyle. The data are from the ESRI Tapestry system that divides households based on factors that include demographic, socioeconomic, residential, and consumer shopping and leisure time preferences. The characteristics used to describe the different lifestyles speak to household preferences that can be incorporated into marketing materials appealing to households in these lifestyles.

Binghamton has varied and distinctive neighborhoods and housing types.

5.2 WORK WITH INSTITUTIONS TO OFFER EMPLOYEE INCENTIVES TO LIVE IN BINGHAMTON

Several major employers are located in Binghamton, however, 80% of workers with primary jobs in Binghamton live outside the City. Binghamton could benefit greatly if some of these workers moved into the City, and workers would enjoy a shorter commute and have a bigger stake in the community where they work. The City and the Binghamton Homeownership Academy could work with employers to create an employer-assisted incentive program for employees to live where they work by offering grants to help with down payments. As in other cities, the benefits to institutions include having employees living nearby and not subject to commuting problems, improved safety, and reduced parking demand. All of these save money over time.

5.3 EXPAND BINGHAMTON HOMEOWNERSHIP ACADEMY (BHOA) SERVICES AND PARTNERSHIPS

The Binghamton Homeownership Academy (BHOA) partners with local and regional agencies to connect prospective homebuyers and existing homeowners to local, state and federal resources that help to defray the costs associated with purchasing and rehabilitating a home. Through its partners, the BHOA offers homeownership programs, including classes, down payment assistance, grants for rehabilitation and repairs, foreclosure prevention, and financial management assistance. To support homeownership in the City, the BHOA should actively seek to expand its services and partnerships and engage in an active outreach campaign to provide information about available programs to active neighborhood assemblies, local institutions, realtors, and developers.

WANT TO KEEP READING?

BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON HAS 7 MAIN CHAPTERS

A ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

B HOUSING

C TRANSPORTATION

D INFRASTRUCTURE

E ENVIRONMENT & OPEN SPACE

F LAND USE & ZONING

G COMMUNITY BUILDING

CHAPTER V

C

THE BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON MINI-PLAN ON

TRANSPORTATION

A PLAN FOR A CITY THAT WALKS, BIKES, RIDES TRANSIT... AND DRIVES TOO

BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON

TRANSPORTATION: A PLAN FOR A CITY THAT WALKS, BIKES, RIDES TRANSIT... AND DRIVES TOO

C

The transportation chapter or **BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON MINI-PLAN ON TRANSPORTATION** is about how Binghamton moves - more specifically about the multiple ways in which people travel through the City and how the City can better balance its public rights-of-way to serve those traveling on foot or by wheelchair, by bicycle, by bus, and by car to get where they need to go for work, for school, and for fun. The transportation strategies address the existing network of streets and parking areas, bike trails and transit services while seeking to add amenities, options, and alternatives to boost safety, convenience, and mobility via multiple modes.

Binghamton's transportation network provides a wide range of options for getting around the City; people can drive Binghamton's streets, ride a bicycle on a bike lane or trail, use BC Transit, or simply take advantage of the City's excellent grid system by walking to a destination. Despite the multiple modes of transportation available, the majority of people who live and work in Binghamton choose to drive. For most, it is quicker, safer, and easier to drive than to take transit, walk, or ride their bike, but driving is not always more affordable. Transportation is the largest cost for households in Binghamton, accounting for over 38% of the cost of living in the City. This is primarily due to the cost of owning, operating, and maintaining an automobile. Improving the safety and convenience of transit, walking, and biking is essential in addressing the severe economic challenges faced by a large number of individuals and families in Binghamton. Walking, biking, and taking transit also support healthier lifestyles and a healthier environment.

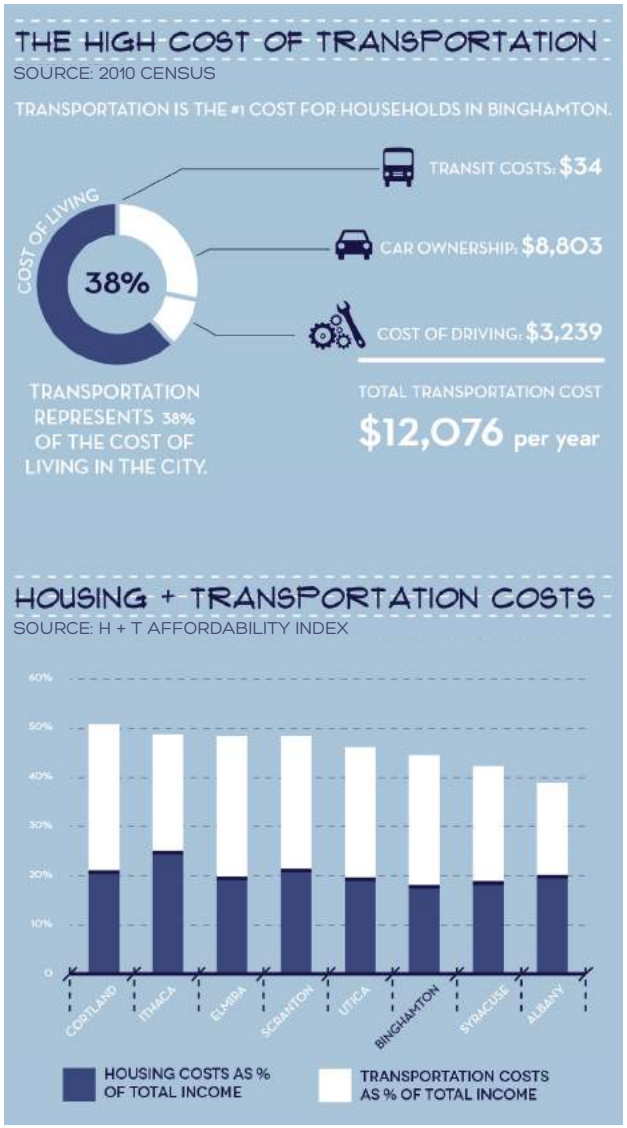
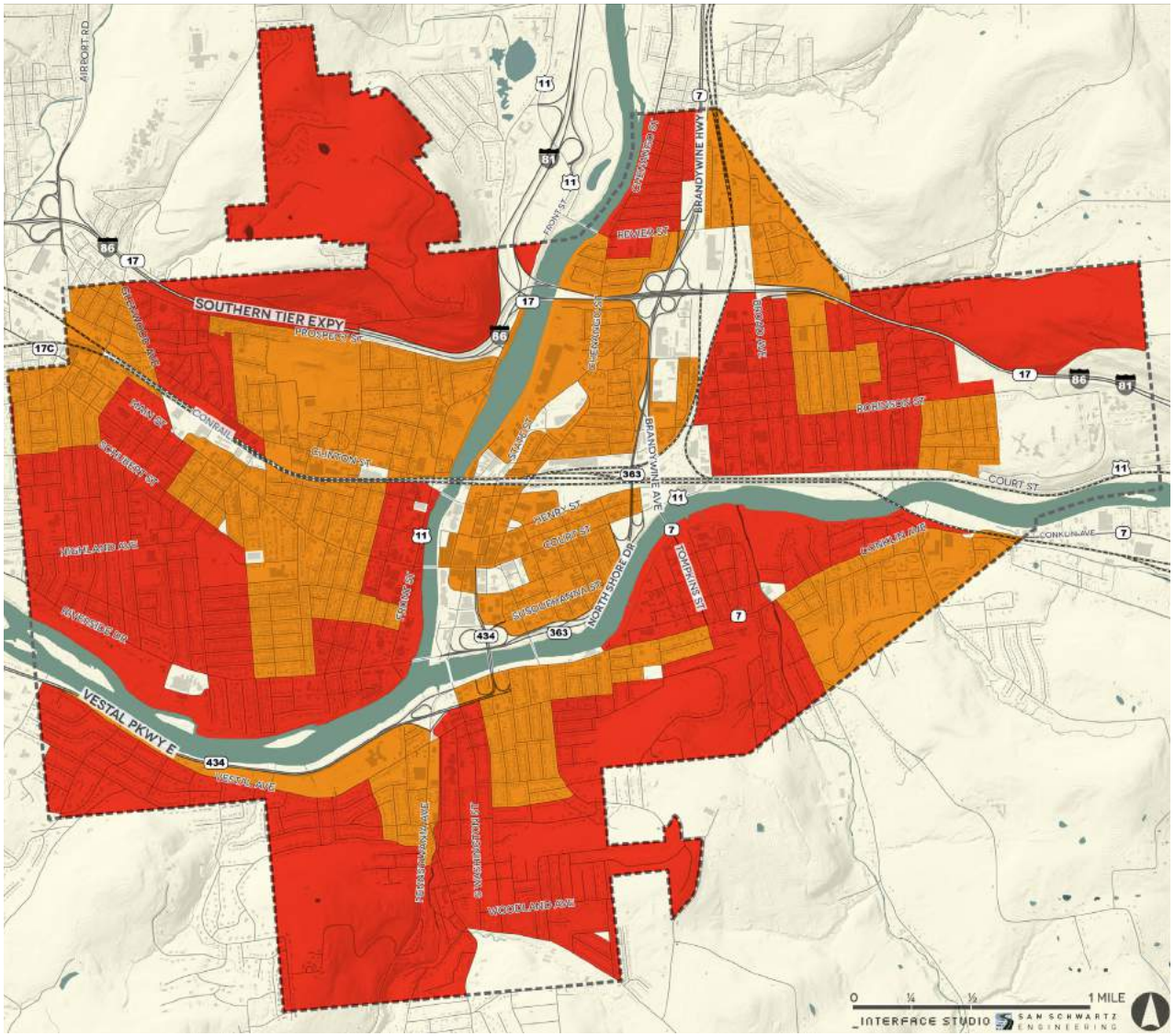


FIGURE 34: Housing + Transportation Costs

HOUSING + TRANSPORTATION

AS A PERCENTAGE OF INCOME



SOURCE: H + T AFFORDABILITY INDEX

- NOT A RESIDENTIAL AREA OR INSUFFICIENT DATA
- < 45% OF HOUSEHOLD INCOME SPENT ON HOUSING AND TRANSPORTATION COSTS
- 45% + OF HOUSEHOLD INCOME SPENT ON HOUSING AND TRANSPORTATION COSTS

TYPICAL HOUSEHOLDS
IN BINGHAMTON:

$45,068 INCOME PER HOUSEHOLD

2.35 PEOPLE PER HOUSEHOLD

1.03 WORKERS PER HOUSEHOLD

FIGURE 35: Housing + Transportation Costs - MAP

EXISTING CONDITIONS

STREET NETWORK

Most of Binghamton's street network was built in the mid-20th century and designed to accommodate the cars generated by a growing residential and employment population. Though the number of residents and employees has dropped over the last sixty years, the amount of roadway infrastructure has stayed the same. These roadways now carry about half the volume of cars they were designed for, which makes it fairly easy to drive to and around Binghamton, evidenced by the fact that there were no concerns raised by the public regarding traffic congestion. Traffic crashes are not a significant problem and the majority of crashes registered in Binghamton Police report data are located along the Main Street Corridor, and near the intersection of NYS Route 434 and Washington Street.

The City's street network consists of approximately 203 centerline miles of regional (interstate and state highways) and local (commercial and residential streets) connections.

REGIONALLY, three interstate highways (I-81, I-88, and I-86) and a number of state highways (US 11, NY 7, NY 434) provide connections between Binghamton and the rest of Broome County. These highways allow vehicles to travel at high speeds to get in and out of town. They also create barriers between neighborhoods and disconnections within the City's grid network. A major construction project is currently being completed that will reconfigure the interchanges at NYS Route 17/I-81 and NYS Route 7.

LOCALLY, the street network consists of a number of grids that allow easy travel from one neighborhood to another. The variety of scales of Binghamton's streets further strengthens the grid network, with traffic flow evenly dispersed rather than funneled into a minimal number of arteries, as is the case in many suburban communities.

Historic Map of Downtown's street network

CITY OF BINGHAMTON

STREETS MAP

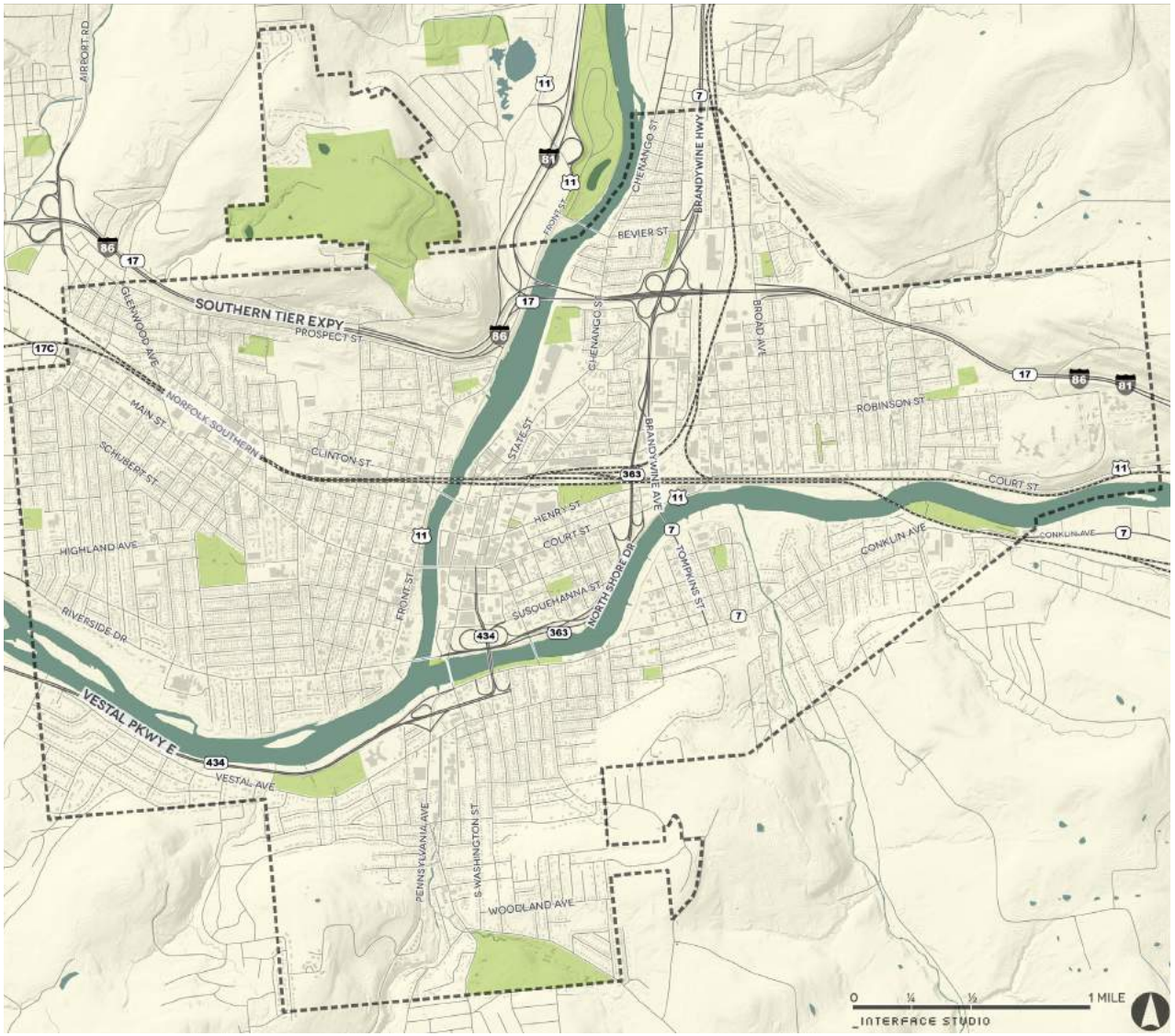


FIGURE 36: City Streets - MAP

There is no clear consensus among the City, County and State on where trucks should and should not travel within the city, nor is there a system in place to comprehensively designate the City's roads as an acceptable or advisable truck route. This forces truck drivers to map out their own routes, which leads to trucks on Downtown streets and other roads that may not be best suited for truck activity.

The grid network and urban density of Binghamton make it a very walkable city for the most part, navigable by pedestrians of all ages and abilities. Downtown offers a unique pedestrian experience, one that is not replicated anywhere in the region. It has smaller block lengths, and the wide sidewalks and mixture of wide and narrow streets make it easy and comfortable for most people to walk to their destinations. However, many intersections lack basic pedestrian accommodations to keep pedestrians of all abilities safe and comfortable, such as crosswalks, ADA ramps, and pedestrian countdown timers.

A number of streets in Binghamton, including Hawley Street and Court Street, have on-street bike lanes that make it safer to bike within Binghamton and provide connections to the area's regional bicycle system. Many of the on-street lanes have been installed as part of re-striping/re-surfacing projects where lanes are narrowed or reduced to provide space for bicyclists. This is an extremely efficient way to build bike facilities, but there are a number of bike lanes that suddenly appear and disappear, which reduces the connectivity of the overall network. The rivers are natural barriers to bicycle connectivity, but a number of bridges have bicycle facilities, including bike lanes on the Clinton and Court Street bridges and the South Washington Street pedestrian bridge. "Share the Road" signage has been installed throughout the City. Although the City's partnership with the Broome County Health Department has resulted in the installation of bike bollards in strategic locations, there remains a lack of bike parking which forces bicyclists to lock their bikes to other objects, which is not desirable.

One of the primary challenges for Binghamton is the cost of maintaining a roadway network that was built for a much larger population. The City owns and is responsible for maintenance of approximately 160 of its 203 centerline miles. In most cases, the streets are in fair or poor condition, based on observations and stakeholder interviews. The City recently developed a Pavement Management System (PMS) with the assistance of the Cornell Local Roads Program. The PMS is a tool which will allow better use of resources, save time, and help the City make better decisions about which street repairs to use and when to use them. The cost of repairs to a road can dramatically increase if not done at the appropriate time. It is therefore less expensive to keep good roads in good shape. The PMS will help the City select the proper repair treatments and apply it at the appropriate time.

The PMS is a network-level pavement management system implemented using a computer-based software package. It provides information on the condition, traffic, and importance of roads in a network to create a long-term maintenance program. This will assist the City in applying limited budget resources where they will provide the greatest road quality benefits.

The PMS gives each street in the City a score called a Pavement Condition Index (PCI) number. The streets in the City range from 8 to 94 with 100 as the high score. The City plans to continue to develop the PMS by utilizing the Cornell Local Roads Program and its Pavement Internship program. By continuing to utilize the PMS, the City will be able to maximize its limited funds to keep its streets in good condition

The City is also in the process of inputting the streets into the Public Works Database to track when the City workforce performs maintenance on each street segment. The City rehabilitates approximately 30-40 streets (usually in one to two block sections) each year, typically by milling and repaving. If the underground utilities need rehabilitation, the City usually replaces these utilities, followed by milling and paving during the following year. Historically, street selection was determined through a number of different methods, including public input, windshield condition surveys, manual review of historical paving records, and the need to perform utility work on the same street segment. Maintenance of curbs and sidewalks in the City is generally

the responsibility of the respective property owner; however, the City does have a Curb and Sidewalk Assistance Program to provide funding assistance to property owners. In cases where utility work negatively impacts curbs and sidewalks, the City will replace these right-of-way elements.

The City has had issues with public utility companies cutting trenches down City streets and not adequately replacing the pavement, thus causing the roadway to deteriorate. The City began enforcing the proper reconstruction of these trenches, which will require the City to do less repair and maintenance of its own.

The City owns and is responsible for maintenance of approximately 15 bridges or large culverts and four pedestrian bridges. The New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) owns and maintains 26 bridges; Broome County owns and maintains three bridges. The NYSDOT is responsible for inspecting all vehicular bridges with a span greater than 20 feet every two years. There are 23 railroad bridges within the City limits that pass over roadways. The railroad companies are responsible for inspecting these bridges once every two years. Two of the City's bridges (Memorial and Court streets) have recently been rehabilitated. The Exchange Street Bridge will be rehabilitated in 2014 ; it will carry a 15 ton weight posting after the rehabilitation. The East Clinton Street Bridge rehabilitation is currently in the design phase, and South Washington Street Bridge will be repainted in 2014. The City is looking to place six other bridges on the Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) five-year plan in order to utilize FHWA and NYSDOT funding to make repairs. Currently the Exchange Street Bridge is posted for a maximum of 15 tons; none of the other bridges are currently deemed deficient. Federal funding is required for bridge rehabilitation, as the City does not have the capital funds available to undertake any bridge rehabilitation projects.

Bike lane on Chenango Street bridge over rail yard

Court Street Bridge, recently rehabilitated

PARKING

Surface and structured parking takes up 48 acres of land in Downtown Binghamton, or over 22% of all of the developed land in Downtown, which creates a noticeable footprint. There are three public structured parking garages (ramps), one underground parking garage for permit holders at the Government Plaza, and a number of public and private surface parking lots, ranging in size from a few spaces serving one land use to the 475-space surface lot that serves the stadium. There are many blocks in Downtown where more land is taken up by parking than by buildings.

The highest demand for parking during the day is in the area near the City and County buildings, where there is the most employment. There is a mix of public and private parking lots in this area. Some of the larger surface lots are only used as guest parking for special events, like the lots at ballpark or area hotels. There is little information available online for visitors about where to park.

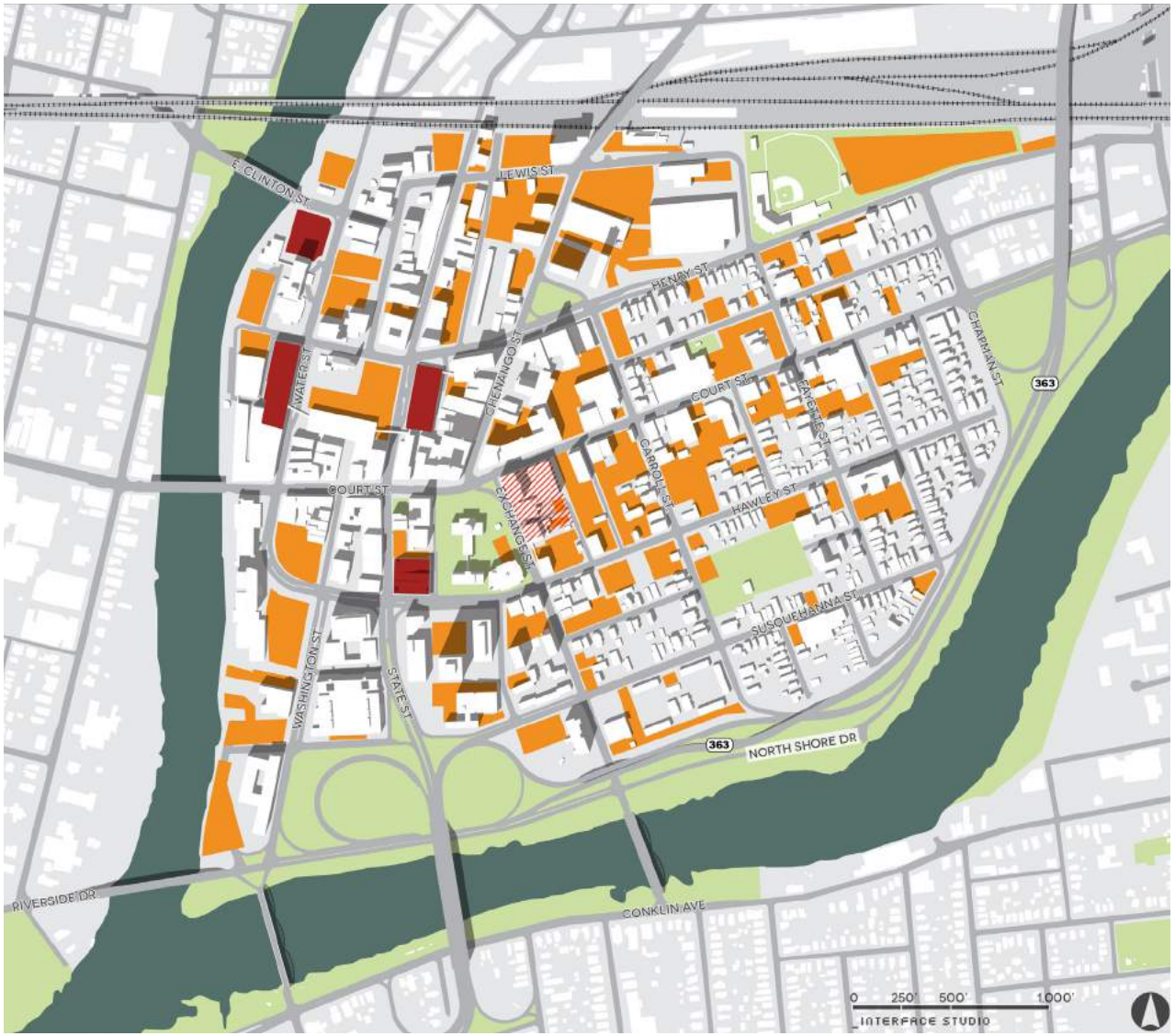
The public raised a number of concerns during the public outreach process regarding the safety of parking in the structured parking ramps, both due to their physical condition and the perceived lack of security for people walking to their vehicle, particularly at night. Security concerns include poor lighting, empty hallways and stairs, and no staff or security in place at the ramps.

The cost of parking at the parking lots or garages is relatively affordable, though more expensive than parking on-street. It was observed on a number of occasions that users could simply wait for the attendant to leave the structure on Hawley and Collier Street to avoid paying for parking. On-street parking is metered on many streets Downtown. It costs $0.25 per hour, and the meters only accept change. All meters are free after 6:00 PM.

One of the recent changes to Downtown was the installation of back-in angled parking on Hawley Street and Court Street. While back-in angled parking is much safer for vehicles and bicyclists, special accommodations must be made for the loading and unloading of those in wheel chairs using handicap shuttles or personal vehicles. The city is continuing to evaluate the back in diagonal parking and may make adjustments in the future based on user feedback and the effectiveness of this parking scheme

Overall, the large quantity of free or inexpensive parking only invites people to drive to Binghamton, creating a cycle with diminishing returns. The abundance of parking encourages people to drive, which in turn drives up demand for parking. The poor condition of the facilities and the perceived lack of parking encourages more driving Downtown as people "cruise" for the perfect parking spot. The desire for parking next to every store or restaurant creates gaps in activity along the street that makes Downtown feel unsafe. These negative perceptions encourage more people to drive, which further creates a demand for parking. To foster a Downtown that is vibrant and safe, the parking situation in Downtown must be addressed to enable sustainable growth in the future.

DOWNTOWN PARKING



SOURCE: FIELD SURVEY

- SURFACE PARKING LOT
- STRUCTURED PARKING
- UNDERGROUND PARKING

48 ACRES
OF SURFACE PARKING IN DOWNTOWN

THAT'S 22% OF ALL DEVELOPED LAND IN DOWNTOWN

4
STRUCTURED PARKING GARAGES

1
UNDERGROUND PARKING GARAGE

FIGURE 37: Downtown Parking - MAP

TRANSIT SERVICE

There are a number of transit options in Binghamton, and it is a critical element of life for many, including seniors, those who cannot afford a car, and those who do not have a license. These segments of the population rely on transit for basic daily needs, such as going to their job, the store, or doctor. Like many cities of similar size, the majority of people taking transit do so because they "have" to and not necessarily because they "want" to. Improving transit service in Binghamton will improve the quality of life for those who currently use it, and also encourage others to take it.

Greater Binghamton Transportation Center

BROOME COUNTY TRANSIT (BC TRANSIT)

Broome County Transit provides bus service to the City of Binghamton as well as the other municipalities in the County, including Endicott and Vestal. The entire service has 17 fixed routes and the agency's 2013 adopted budget is $12,246,410. While this is a 1% increase from the 2012 budget of $11,332,457, it is a 1% decrease from the 2011 budget of $14,523,425.

BC Transit provides bus coverage across the City, as most neighborhoods have at least one bus route that can be accessed fairly easily. There are a total of 14 bus routes that typically radiate outward from Downtown Binghamton (including two designated "commuter" buses), plus three regional shuttle routes.

BC Transit's fixed bus routes are similarly structured without much variance. Out of the 12 regular routes, three have no Saturday service and five have no Sunday service. Those routes with greater bus frequency have weekend service and generally longer hours. On average, weekday headways are 40 minutes between buses for 10 out of the 12 routes; the other two have about one hour headways - 17 Legacy Bay and 47 Vestal.

The regular bus fare for BC Transit is $2.00. Passes are available for multiple days or reduced fares for senior citizens and students. To encourage multi-modal connections, bike racks are attached to the entire bus fleet; the standard model rack fits two bikes. Most BC Transit buses are wheelchair-accessible. A minibus "lift" ride is available for those who need the service, such as the disabled and elderly.

A critical aspect of successful transit systems is safe and comfortable infrastructure to access a bus stop and wait at a bus stop. There are sidewalks along almost every street in the City, and thus almost every bus stop is adjacent to a sidewalk. There are many BC Transit stops that have neither facilities nor shelters, just a sign on a pole. Where there are shelters, in some cases, the shelter door faces away from the bus, so people have to walk out into the weather to board the bus. Oftentimes, the sign are hard to locate when posted in one direction only; there are some instances where "bus stop" is stenciled on the back of a sign, but this is rather improvised. Even in Downtown at Court and Water streets, the bus stop is just a small sign and easy to miss. Bus stops are provided by the County as an amenity, but maintenance responsibilities are not specifically assigned and left to the City; better coordination between County and City regarding maintenance and deployment of these transit amenities would benefit the system and its riders.

BROOME COUNTY

BUS TRANSIT MAP

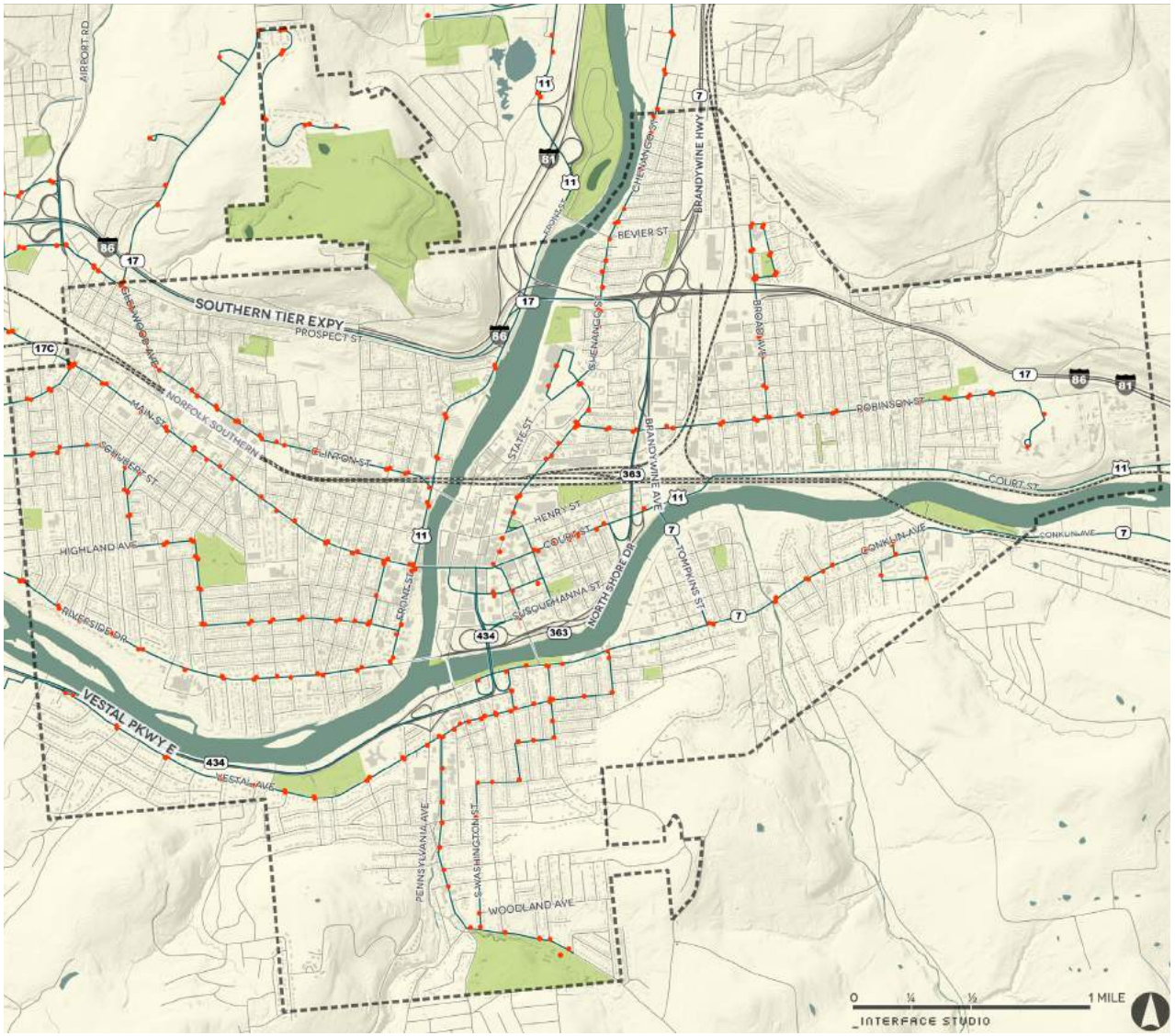


FIGURE 38: Broome County Bus Transit - MAP

General service information and detours/alerts are available at www.ridebctransit.com. The BC Transit website does mention Google Transit, mobile applications and real-time bus information, acknowledging that there have been many riders requesting these services. BC Transit is currently gathering and analyzing data, with the goal of exporting to Google Transit, which will enable "apps" and real-time transit information.

BUS ROUTES
BUS STOPS

OFF-CAMPUS COLLEGE
TRANSPORT MAP

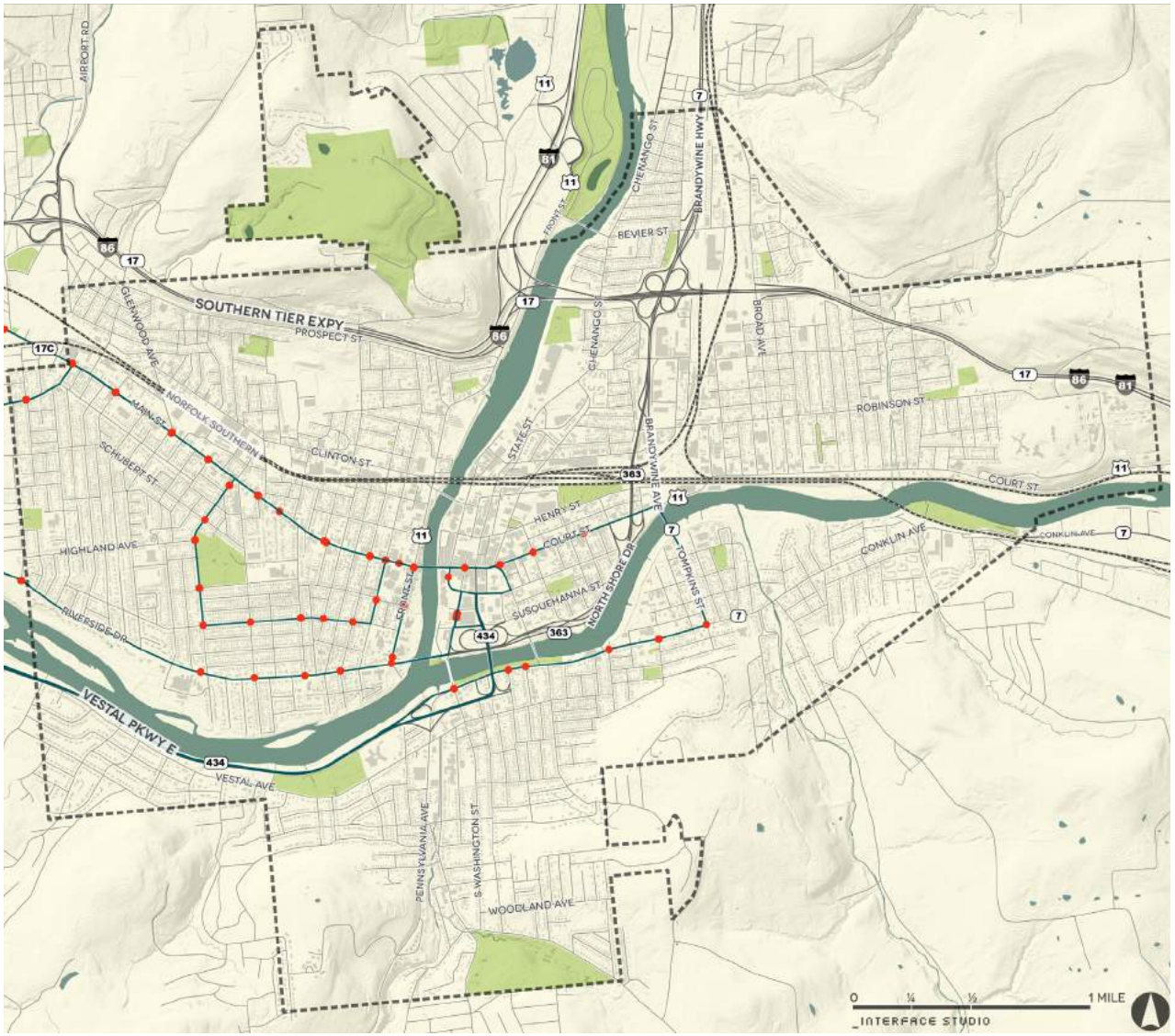


FIGURE 39: Off Campus College Transport - MAP

BINGHAMTON UNIVERSITY OFF-CAMPUS COLLEGE TRANSPORT BUS (BU OCCT)

BU Off Campus College Transport Bus (BU OCCT) is a student driven, managed, and operated bus service (since 1971) that transports students between campus to residences, retail hubs, and Downtown Binghamton. Passengers must be Binghamton University students, faculty, or affiliates (a guest is allowed). Riders scan identification cards to board buses, as it is a free service.

OCCT fulfills its service of running at convenient times for students during weeknights and weekends. The extended weekend nighttime service is also good for safety, as students can patronize bars and restaurants late at night and avoid driving a car back to the BU campus. OCCT's policy after midnight during the weekend is that buses are considered full once all seats are taken so that there is no standing on buses. Unfortunately, the Leroy Southside Route, which is the most direct route from the Student Union to the Greater Binghamton Transportation Center, only operates every two hours during weekday mornings and afternoons. This hinders it from being a reliable way to get to and from campus.

The Downtown Center Riverside (DCR) and the Westside Shuttle (WS) routes do connect to the Transportation Center and have very frequent

BUS ROUTES
BUS STOPS

REGIONAL DESTINATIONS

MAP

FIGURE 40: Regional Destinations - MAP

service that is often more heavily utilized than BC Transit traveling the same routes. The disadvantage of these loop routes is that passengers must ride the entire route to get to their destination if they desire to go the opposite direction as the routing. In sum, OCCT fills many gaps in service and frequency from BC Transit to help with students' needs and schedules; its importance grows as more students live, study and leisure Downtown.

REGIONAL TRANSIT OPTIONS

Regional bus service is provided by Greyhound, Adirondack Trailways, and Megabus. The primary connection is to New York City, but additional routes are provided to Albany, Buffalo, Syracuse, Rochester, Toronto, Scranton, and Ithaca. There is currently no passenger rail service to Binghamton.

The Greater Binghamton Airport is located in Maine, New York, and provides a regional connection to the City. Delta, United, and US Airways all have flights at the airport.

SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES

Binghamton is remarkably walkable due to its urban street grid, and this aspect should be emphasized with all future transportation planning. There are a number of opportunities to improve the City's transportation to reduce the cost of living in Binghamton, attract new residents, and help encourage economic development and livability.

All of the recommendations address one or more of the objectives listed below:

- Improve the **CONNECTION** between **DOWNTOWN** and the **UNIVERSITY** through improved multi-modal infrastructure and service
- Improve **WALKING AND BIKING ACCESS** to parks and open space and other destinations
- Prioritize **MAINTAINING** and **MODERNIZING** existing **INFRASTRUCTURE**
- **REDUCE** infrastructure **BARRIERS** that fragment the City
- Continue to build a **MULTI-MODAL** foundation that makes it easier to live, work, and get around Binghamton without a car

COMMUNITY VOICE

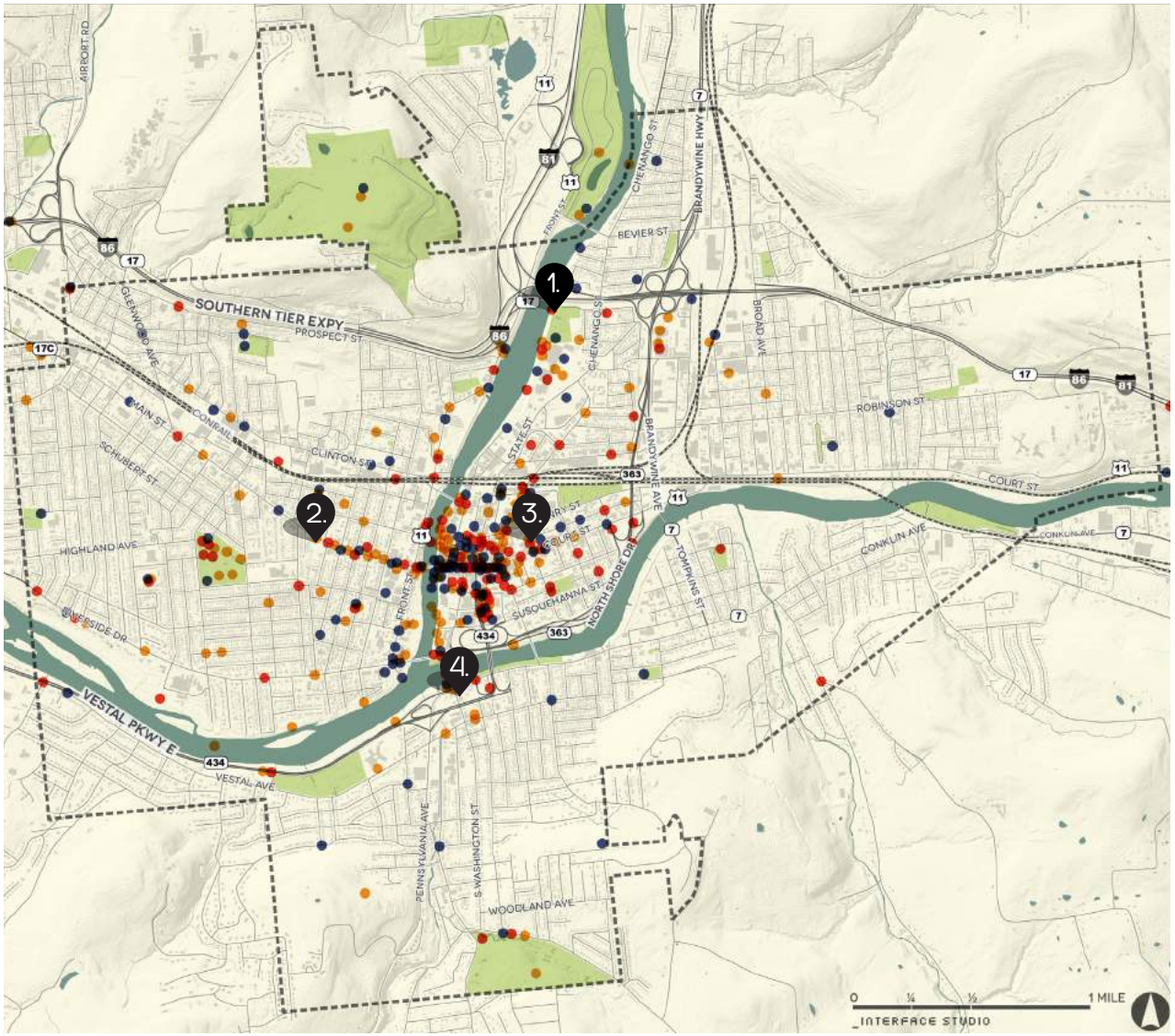
BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON asked YOU for your thoughts and ideas, concerns and priorities related to transportation. Your ideas for how people move through Binghamton, now and in the future, encompassed public transit, driving and parking, walking and biking, and even skating, canoeing, and soap box derbies.

Almost one quarter (22%) of all **COLLABORATIVE MAP COMMENTS** addressed transportation issues, more than any other category. You offered your insights and ideas on topics from biking to parking, trails to roundabouts, and transit to walking.

- "Better bus services, faster so that people without cars can travel better."
- "Connectivity between neighborhoods is blocked by perceived barriers, i.e. railroad underpasses, intersections perceived as unsafe."
- "Please connect the trail to Otsiningo Park."
- "Bicycling to BU on Riverside Drive is hazardous - need a dedicated route with "perks" for cyclists - water fountains, bike racks, etc."

COLLABORATIVE MAP

IDEAS. INSIGHTS. BARRIERS



1. "PLEASE CONNECT THE TRAIL TO OTSININGO PARK"

2. "MAKE MAIN STREET AND COURT STREET (ESP. WEST SIDE) MORE VISUALLY ATTRACTIVE SO THAT PEOPLE CAN SEE EVERY DAY THAT THERE ARE PEOPLE HOPEFUL WHO CARE FOR THE CITY (BROKEN WINDOWS THEORY)"

3. "BETTER BUS SERVICES, FASTER SO THAT PEOPLE WITHOUT CARS CAN TRAVEL BETTER"

4. "THE PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE (WASHINGTON) AND NEW TRAFFIC CALMING ON SOUTH SIDE WORKS WELL"

- IDEA
- INSIGHT
- BARRIER

FIGURE 41: Collaborative Map Comments Locations

POSTCARDS FROM THE FUTURE

Your **POSTCARDS FROM THE FUTURE** describe a vision for a multi-modal and sustainable city, setting the tone for this mini-plan on transportation:

FIGURE 42: Postcards From the Future

I'M LIVING IN THIS GREAT TOWNHOUSE THAT OVERLOOKS THE RIVER. I HAVEN'T HAD TO DRIVE MY CAR IN DAYS. I WALK DOWN TO STARBUCKS IN THE MORNING FOR COFFEE AND THEN MAKE MY WAY TO THE ORGANIC MARKET AND PICK UP STUFF FOR DINNER. TOMORROW NIGHT WE ARE OFF TO DINNER AT THIS GREAT RESTAURANT AND THEN WALKING OVER TO THE MOVIES. LIFE IS GOOD IN RETIREMENT.

GOOD LUCK FINDING AN EMPTY BUILDING NOW! YOU WOULD THINK TRAFFIC WOULD BE TERRIBLE, BUT WITH ALL THE BIKING INFRASTRUCTURE AND PEDESTRIAN-FRIENDLY DOWNTOWN, THE ONLY TRAFFIC COMES WHEN ONE OF THE 2 MEGAWATT WIND-MILL BALES IS GOING DOWN THE HIGHWAY FROM RENEWABLE COMPOSITES.

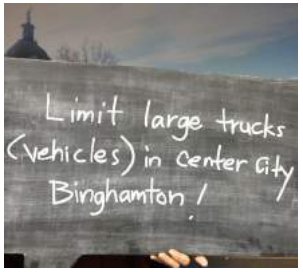
DOWNTOWN HAS BECOME A VERY VIBRANT WALKABLE COMMUNITY YET IS VERY ACCESSIBLE AND USER-FRIENDLY FOR 'GREEN' CARS & ENERGY ALTERNATIVES. IT IS A GREAT TECHNOLOGY HUB PARTNERING WITH LOCAL DEVELOPMENT, THE LOCAL COLLEGES & COMPANIES ATTRACTED TO BINGHAMTON!

When **5TH GRADERS** in the Binghamton City School District imagined their **DREAM NEIGHBORHOOD,** they too were concerned about the City's streets and sidewalks:

THE PERFECT NEIGHBORHOOD WOULD HAVE GREAT SAFETY. THERE WOULD BE BIKE SPACES IN THE ROAD, SO KIDS AND PEOPLE COULD RIDE THEIR BIKES AND SCOOTERS AND OTHER THINGS SO NOBODY WOULD GET HIT BY A CAR. THERE WOULD BE COPS ON EVERY OTHER CORNER. ALSO CROSSING GUARDS ON EVERY CORNER.

BIG IDEAS

You'll find your **BIG IDEAS** inform most of the transportation recommendations.



Images from the "Photo Suggestion Booth"

CITYWIDE SURVEY

And your responses on the **CITYWIDE SURVEY** echoed your desire for transportation improvements:

57% Better sidewalks and safer streets
31% New waterfront connections
30% Improved public transportation
25% New bicycle lanes

Chenango Street in Downtown

TRANSPORTATION GOALS:

The recommendations that comprise Blueprint Binghamton's Mini-Plan on Transportation [a plan for a city that walks, bikes, rides transit… and drives too] are organized into five goal areas, each titled by a key transportation goal:

01

UPGRADE AND MAINTAIN TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

02

ADDRESS PARKING AND MAINTENANCE ISSUES

03

PROMOTE ALTERNATIVE MODES OF TRANSPORTATION

04

IMPROVE THE PEDESTRIAN EXPERIENCE ON CITY STREETS

Taken together, the Transportation Goals and their related objectives and strategies support the following themes of Blueprint Binghamton's vision for the future of our City:

- **THRIVING** - a diverse transportation network ensures that customers from throughout the City and region can access local jobs and support local businesses
- **RESILIENT, SUSTAINABLE & HEALTHY TOO** - investment in alternative modes of transportation (walking, biking, transit, and electric vehicles) reduces auto-dependence, results in improved air quality, and supports safe and active lifestyles for residents of all ages
- **ALIVE** - a walkable city with an active street life and a bike trail network that is connected to the natural landscape reinforces a quality of life central to a city that feels alive

FOR FULL VISION STATEMENT, SEE PAGE 40.

GOAL:

01

UPGRADE AND MAINTAIN TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Every dollar spent today on fixing and maintaining existing infrastructure will help avoid more costly and disruptive repairs in the future. Investment in such infrastructural assets also creates an opportunity for improvement. The following transportation recommendations support Goal 1:

1.1 EXPAND AND REGULARLY UPDATE A CITYWIDE ROADWAY INFRASTRUCTURE PLAN

The City of Binghamton has a considerable amount of roadway infrastructure, all of which needs to be maintained. However, at present, the City has limited funds and manpower to address all of these needs. It is highly unlikely that any new roadway infrastructure will be required in the future, but it is imperative that the existing infrastructure be modernized and maintained. Doing this will efficiently meet the future needs of the City and make the best use of limited funds.

A Citywide Transportation Infrastructure Plan should be developed and annually updated. The plan should identify the actions that are needed now, as well as identify planning actions

for large projects, like bridge repairs and road reconstruction. The plan should be annually updated and include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Develop priority list for modernizing existing traffic signals and removing signals that are not warranted by the Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD). The City is currently studying signal removal and developing a 5 year plan.
- Continue to update the Pavement Management System every year to provide a road rehabilitation program/schedule that includes the use of asphalt seal coating on all City streets to reduce the degradation of street surfaces, prolong mill and pave cycles, and create cost savings
- Adopt Complete Streets policy as part of the City of Binghamton street repair and rehabilitation operations (see Transportation Goal 3 for a definition of Complete Streets)
- Develop priority list for pedestrian countdown signals in Downtown and on Main Street
- Identify assets that can be removed to reduce maintenance costs
- Update bridge condition status for bridges with less than a 20 foot span.
- Identify high crash locations and develop quick, affordable solutions
- Create a "Road Diet" list, with both short-term (striping) and long-term (moving curbs/ increasing sidewalk widths) measures
- Develop restriping priorities

Newly paved street in Binghamton

Cracked pavement on Webster Street

1.2
WORK WITH PRIVATE RAIL COMPANIES TO IMPROVE RAIL INFRASTRUCTURE

Rail serves a significant role in Binghamton's economy. Like all infrastructure, rail lines are aging and will need to be improved to allow future industry growth. However, this is quite costly and will require the City to work closely with the rail companies to ensure that these assets are preserved for continued use. As preservation and maintenance work is undertaken, the City and public art advocates should take the opportunity to coordinate with rail companies on potential aesthetic improvements to the rail overpasses as well (see Economic Development Recommendation 4.6).

Freight rail overpass at State Street

1.3
DEVELOP GUIDELINES AND STANDARDS TO INTEGRATE GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE IN STREET REHABILITATION PROJECTS

Managing stormwater is a huge challenge in Binghamton, and street rehabilitation projects represent and opportunity to integrate green stormwater infrastructure. Such efforts will not completely solve the problem but will be part of the overall solution; investments in green stormwater infrastructure are also necessary for building true Complete Streets. The City should develop guidelines, based on previous work that other cities have completed, so public and private projects integrate green stormwater infrastructure elements into their work.

Landscaping on Court Street

1.4

REDUCE CITY COSTS BY REMOVING EXCESSIVE INFRASTRUCTURE WHERE POSSIBLE

Much of the roadway infrastructure that serves Binghamton was designed for a larger population than exists today, and therefore, for more vehicles. While this infrastructure makes it very easy to get anywhere in the City by vehicle, it is also costly to maintain and creates a barrier between city neighborhoods and the area's natural assets such as the rivers and parks. North Shore Drive and the Vestal Parkway ramps are two examples of overbuilt roadways that are more burden and barrier than asset.

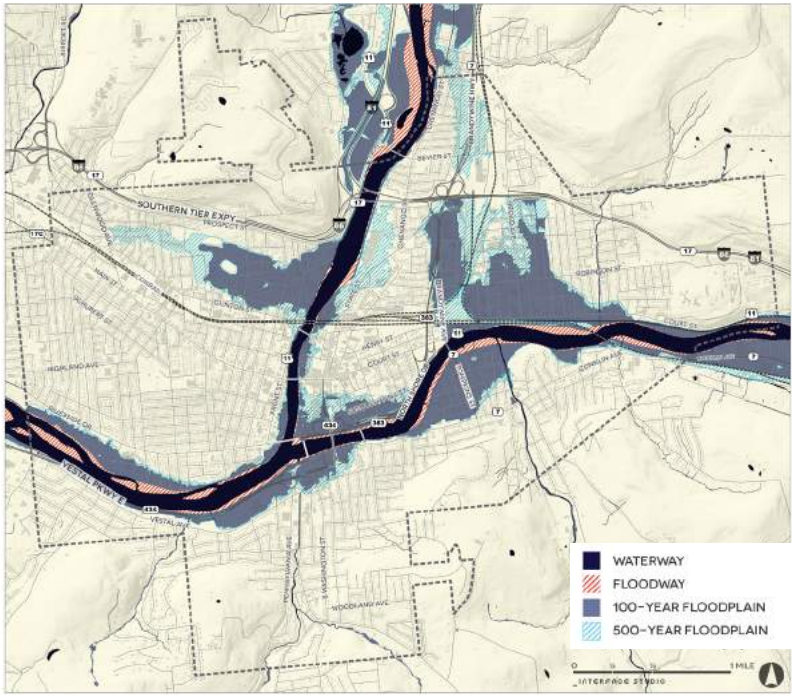
FIGURE 43: "BIG IDEA" Comments - North Shore Drive

Many cities in the United States, including Syracuse and Buffalo, are reexamining roadway infrastructure to determine if it suits the livability qualities that they envision for their City's future. There are numerous examples of expressways and limited access highways being transformed into high-capacity, at-grade boulevards that allow people to walk, bike, and take transit.

As the highway infrastructure in Binghamton ages and decisions are made on how to maintain and rebuild, the additional option to transform unnecessary highways should be included. Based upon the experience of other cities, it will be less costly for the State to transform these highways into boulevards than to spend limited dollars in rebuilding the infrastructure as it currently exists. Potential ideas include :

- Remove the Vestal Parkway ramps, between Pennsylvania Avenue and Conklin Avenue, and redesign as a typical urban street grid

FEMA PROPOSED FLOODPLAIN



Susquehanna Street redevelopment concept. Source: NY Rising Community Reconstruction Program

- Remove North Shore Drive and rebuild as a smaller scale green boulevard, repurposing some of the land reclaimed from the highway deconstruction as green space for parks and stormwater management. This concept has been explored through the NY Rising Community Reconstruction Program.
- Remove North Shore Drive entirely and provide more capacity on Susquehanna Street, affording a considerable amount of additional land for stormwater management and riverfront recreation. North Shore Drive could be repurposed as a multi-purpose trail that would connect the East Side of the City to Downtown and the University. This idea has been considered in the past by both the City and State. The existing grid network, particularly New York State Route 7, could handle the reallocation of vehicular traffic.

Because these roadways are State-owned, the transformation of the Vestal Parkway ramps and North Shore Drive requires a detailed traffic study, feasibility analysis, close coordination, and partnerships with New York State DOT Region 9 as well as BMTS. The potential transformation brings added benefits from reduced maintenance costs, improved access to the riverfronts, and the opportunity to create new stormwater management systems that will better protect Downtown and local businesses from flooding. Of course any removal of highway infrastructure must effectively continue to move traffic as a precondition for moving forward with this strategy.

CIRCULATION

DIAGRAM

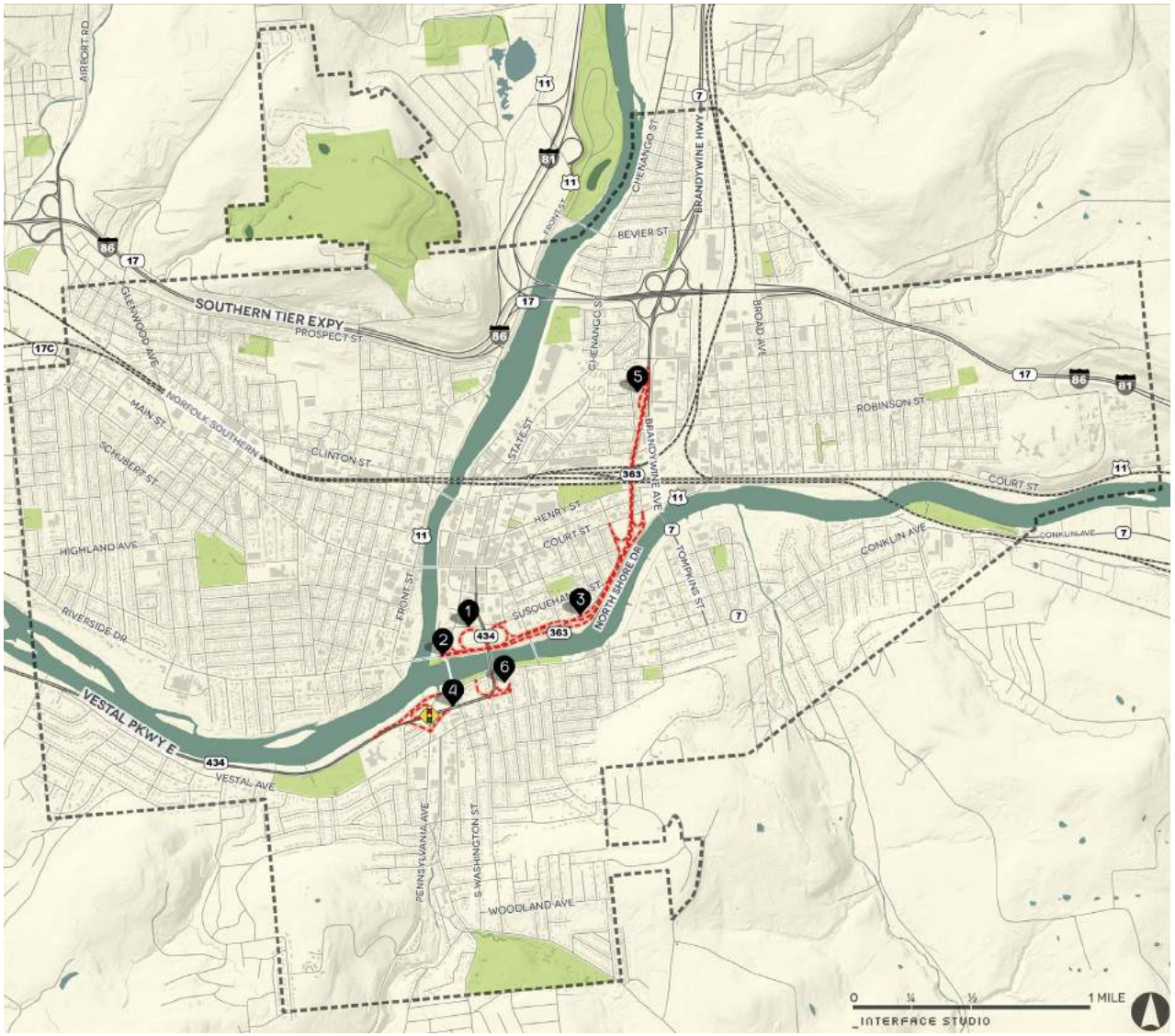


FIGURE 44: Proposed Circulation Interventions

1. **REALIGN SUSQUENHANNA STREET**
   Create a new signalized intersection at Susquenhanna Street and State Street.

2. **REMOVE RAMPS TO WASHINGTON STREET**
   Remove the right turn slip lane from westbond North Shore Drive to Washington Street northbound.

3. **RE-IMAGINE NORTH SHORE DRIVE**
   Eliminate the role of North Shore Drive as a high capacity and high speed road between Washington Street and Brandywine Highway. North Shore Drive is either removed completely or repurposed in part as a multi-use waterfront trail.

4. **ELIMINATE RAMPS AT PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE**
   Remove ramps between Vestal Parkway and Pennsylvania Avenue to create a new signalized intersetion at-grade.

5. **REALIGN NY STATE ROUTE 7**
   With the removal of North Shore Drive, Route 7 is realigned between Frederick Street and Robinson Street.

6. **REMOVE RAMPS TO CONKLIN AVENUE AND TREMONT AVENUE**

ROAD SEGMENTS REMOVED

NEW TRAFFIC SIGNALS

FIGURE 45: Rendering of proposed Susquehanna Street boulevard, trail along North Shore Drive, and stormwater management / park space as buffer from river

1.5 EXPLORE OPPORTUNITIES TO CONVERT ONE-WAY STREETS TO TWO-WAYS

One-way streets reduce traffic delay, but also make it harder to get around the City in a car, bus, or via bike. One-way streets are confusing not only to visitors, but also to people that use the City streets on a daily basis. Where possible, wide one-way streets throughout the City should undergo at road diet and be converted to two-way to improve overall mobility and connectivity as well as to create greater visibility for area businesses, particularly in Downtown. Each street should be evaluated on an individual basis to determine its suitability for conversion.

1.6 CONTINUE TO PURSUE OUTSIDE FUNDING SOURCES

Transportation infrastructure and maintenance funding will continue to be difficult in the short term. The City must continue to seek additional outside funding sources for transportation and be creative with how they fund different parts of projects to take advantage of as many funding sources as possible. This may include new partnerships with the private sector and institutions, working with foundations, and leveraging funding from non-transportation programs to implement street design recommendations.

GOAL:

02

ADDRESS PARKING AND MAINTENANCE ISSUES

With so many auto-reliant residents, parking is an issue that affects the daily lives of many Binghamtonians, but providing more parking alone is not the answer to a perceived parking problem. Parking solutions vary by neighborhood and present opportunities to generate revenue, support improvements to the public realm, encourage people to travel via alternative modes of transportation, and keep the peace in neighborhoods that suffer from a mismatch in parking supply and demand. The following transportation recommendations support Goal 2:

2.1 UNDERTAKE A COMPREHENSIVE DOWNTOWN PARKING STUDY

Parking supply is an important part of any city's multi-modal transportation system, and Binghamton is no different. A comprehensive parking study should be conducted for Downtown that addresses all aspects of parking. This includes the supply/demand of all public on- and off-street parking, structural evaluation of the parking ramps, and a review of parking pricing, management, and enforcement. The recommendations of the study should focus on how parking can help support smart growth in the Downtown without becoming a limiting factor. It should also include where additional on-street parking can be provided, either by removing turn lanes at intersections that are not necessary or by converting parallel parking spaces into angled parking spaces.

Water Street Parking Ramp

The Downtown parking study should consider the application and weigh the benefits of the following parking best practices, recommended by the EPA's Essential Smart Growth Fixes for Urban and Suburban Zoning Codes :

- Fee-In-Lieu - creates a system in which developers can pay a set fee in lieu (FIL) of providing parking spaces for a new development. The FIL revenue can be invested in public parking supply or in improvements to the public realm to support alternative modes of transportation.

- Parking Maximums or Lower Parking Supply Minimums - reduced parking minimums for new developments support new business and investment and thus new land uses (see Housing Recommendation 4.4 as well). The urban context, including on-street parking supply, and alternative transportation options should be considered in lowering parking supply minimums. Alternatively, a form-based code can substitute for, simplify, or eliminate the need for more detailed parking minimum regulations in some districts.

- Off-Site Parking - Binghamton's current zoning code allows parking minimums to be met off-site, within a certain distance depending on the zoning classification. These could be private joint parking facilities or public facilities. The developer is still responsible for the cost of parking, but in some cases, it may be feasible to "unbundle" parking from residential projects, allowing parking to be provided by the open market.

- Shared Parking - allows different users to make use of a common parking resource; these arrangements require provisions to govern their creation and operation (to ensure that parking supply commitments made by developers are honored over time) as well as contracts or leases by businesses or landowners who then use the space to meet their parking needs.

- Diagonal On-Street Parking - as already demonstrated in Downtown Binghamton, the conversion of parallel on-street parking to diagonal parking can increase the parking supply per block by up to 30%, increasing parking directly in front of commercial and office uses.

- Enforcement - anticipated lack of parking enforcement invites drivers to overstay their allotted time in a given parking space, and in the case of prime on-street parking, employee cars often occupy desirable spots that should be reserved for business patrons. Ticketing not only generates revenue, but also elicits response from drivers who take advantage of under-enforced parking restrictions.

2.2

DEVELOP A PARKING IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT IN DOWNTOWN, AND UTILIZE A PORTION OF REVENUE FROM PARKING FOR DOWNTOWN IMPROVEMENTS FOR PEDESTRIANS AND BICYCLISTS

The City's meter parking revenue is currently allocated to the general fund, but all ramp revenue is dedicated to the parking fund. A Downtown Parking Improvement District should be established by utilizing a portion of this revenue for multi-modal improvements for pedestrian, bicyclists, and transit riders. Improvements could include improved bus stops, new crosswalks, or bike parking. This recommendation should be carefully evaluated in the upcoming Downtown parking study to be commissioned by the City and no action should be taken until the completion of the proposed Downtown parking study.

Collier Street Parking Ramp

2.3

INTRODUCE SHARED PARKING ARRANGEMENTS OR RESIDENTIAL PERMIT PARKING IN NEIGHBORHOODS WITH STUDENT HOUSING ZONES

One of the challenges with student housing in residential neighborhoods is parking. Whereas most single-family residences have one or two cars, single-family homes that students occupy often have many more vehicles because there are more drivers. This puts pressure on residential streets to handle all of this additional parking and creates an issue that affects almost every neighborhood located adjacent to an urban campus.

The short term solution is to identify additional supply that can be used for parking. This will require the City to facilitate partnerships with private lot owners to lease unused parking overnight or during other peak parking hours. The City should also consider a pilot residential parking permit system in one neighborhood. The City could expand the existing parking permit program near NYSEG Stadium to include student housing zones. Vehicles parking on-street in the neighborhood would be required to display the permit to park on-street. Permits could be issued to drivers that show permanent residence or a maximum number of permits could be issued to each address so property owners could re-sell the permits if they do not need them. This program would help match parking supply and demand, and people without a permit would have to park outside of the neighborhood.

The long term solution to this issue is to address demand and reduce the number of students that own a car. This will only be accomplished if the City and the private sector make it easier to live without owning a car.

2.4 CREATE A PARKING CREDIT SYSTEM TO ENCOURAGE DEVELOPMENT

The City should explore creating a parking credit system to better match parking needs with available spaces and serve as an economic development tool. In the credit system, the City would develop an inventory of available spaces in a district and issue credits to businesses in that district, rather than rely on the inefficient allocation of parking through parking requirements. This would allow more flexibility to businesses that may otherwise find it difficult to meet parking requirements or be locked into uses that may not be the best and highest use of the property due to the constraints of the parking requirements. In Los Angeles, the program was adopted in 2012 and welcomed by the business community as a way to address commercial stagnation and vacancy where potential businesses were unable to meet parking requirements and forced to lease surplus spaces at high cost.

2.5 INCENTIVIZE GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE WITHIN SURFACE PARKING LOTS

Surface parking lots take up a considerable amount of space in Downtown and are almost exclusively constructed with asphalt. Any new surface parking lot over 20 spaces should provide green infrastructure to help manage stormwater, either with pervious pavers, landscaping, or other green technology. This will allow parking lots to serve two purposes, storing vehicles and managing stormwater. This has been completed successfully at Southside Commons and the UHS parking lot on Pennsylvania Avenue, which is an example of successful implementation of Binghamton Code Chapter 227. Continued enforcement of Chapter 227 is important and will foster public-private collaboration in addressing one of the City's main threats, flooding. A program could be developed with an incentive for development using green technology. The funding could come from savings in the maintenance and improvements not needed on the sewer system.

GOAL:

03

PROMOTE ALTERNATIVE MODES OF TRANSPORTATION

Binghamton has many aspects of a multi-modal city: walkable neighborhoods, a well-used transit system, and bike lanes. Continuing to build the framework of a multi-modal transportation system will allow people the freedom to choose how they want to reach their destination, as well as reduce the cost of doing so. A robust multi-modal transportation network is imperative to encouraging economic development growth in urban areas as well as expanding the types of housing that can be built in the City.

A number of the recommendations are focused on creating Complete Streets, which are streets that are planned, designed, operated, and maintained for all users, regardless of age and ability. This marks a change from traditional roadway engineering that focused solely on the operations and safety of automobiles. The City currently has a Complete Streets Policy where "all street projects shall be designed and executed in a balanced, responsible, and equitable way to accommodate and encourage travel by public transportation vehicles and their passengers, bicyclists, and other wheeled modes of transportation, and pedestrians of all ages and abilities." The County and State also have similar policies. Building Complete Streets will improve the mobility of all, reduce future maintenance costs, and encourage economic development. The following transportation recommendations support Goal 3:

3.1 IMPROVE TRANSPORTATION CONNECTIONS BETWEEN BINGHAMTON UNIVERSITY AND DOWNTOWN

The success of Downtown Binghamton and Binghamton University are interrelated. More students are living Downtown, there are additional new student developments proposed, and new businesses are opening to attract students. This reflects an overall trend of younger people wanting to live in cities and Downtowns to take advantage of all of the amenities these places offer.

Improving the connection between Downtown Binghamton and the Binghamton University Campus will encourage more students to live, visit, and support businesses Downtown, and while also providing more flexibility and capacity for the University to grow. Some considerations to improve this connection include:

- Transit: providing two-way bus route service on OCCT (opposed to the one-way loop routes that currently exist), market bus service to students
- Bicycling: finish the Route 434 Greenway trail (NYSDOT Project #903808) currently in design phase, add bike parking in Downtown, promote Binghamton University Bike Share to all students to take advantage of connection between Downtown and BU
- Walking: improve/add crossings on Vestal Parkway, work with Broome County and the City of Vestal to consider new pedestrian/bicycle bridge over the Susquehanna River near Beethoven Street to connect the University population directly to Main Street.

3.2 IMPROVE THE PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION EXPERIENCE

Like most public transportation systems in the United States, transit ridership in Binghamton consists mainly of people who have to take transit, as opposed to those who want to. This population typically lacks an automobile, a driver's license, or both. However, many of the transit riders in Binghamton are students at Binghamton University, and this segment of the population are potential future permanent residents of the City. By providing a positive experience for students and new residents of the City, it will encourage them to choose transit in the future when they are deciding where to live and how to commute. Improving public transit supports numerous other goals of this plan and is necessary to support both existing residents and businesses as well as future economic growth. It also aligns directly with the livability principles of the Partnership for Sustainable Communities.

There is currently discussion about Broome County privatizing BC Transit. While this is a County decision, it will have a considerable impact on the City's residents and employees. If BC Transit is privatized, it is likely that the City will have to monitor the impact on Binghamton's economy. Regardless of this decision, the City should work with the transit provider to improve transit service and operations. The City and the County must work closely together to improve transit in the area.

FIGURE 46: "BIG IDEA" Comments - Main Street

BC Transit bus at Washington Street Bridge

As noted in the BMTS study "Transportation Tomorrow 2035 - Creating a Sustainable Future, adding more transit service and frequency would tremendously improve the situation for existing riders. A larger investment is needed in transit service, but this is a long term recommendation.

In the short term, the focus of any transit efforts should be to improve the transit experience and the reliability of service for existing riders. This can be accomplished in a number of ways, including:

- Initiate a bus tracker program that integrates both BC Transit and OCCT. If people know when the bus is coming, they do not have to wait at the bus stop and hope. This allows people to plan their schedule and do other things so they minimize time actually waiting for bus. A bus tracker program would provide real-time information on when the next bus will arrive. This information can be displayed on bus stops or on monitors in businesses or public space as well as in mobile apps. Bus tracker programs require that all vehicles have GPS and that the data be made available to mobile app developers.
- Improve bus stops. Making waiting for the bus safe and comfortable, even in inclement weather, improves the transit riding experience, and bus shelters accomplish this. More bus shelters should be added in Binghamton, either by the transit provider or private businesses/institutions. The City can create an "Adopt a Bus Shelter" program to allow businesses, institutions, or community groups to maintain the bus shelter and alert the transit provider to any damage and repair needs. This type of program also provides an opportunity for advertisement and marketing of local businesses.
- Improve pedestrian connections. Most trips on transit begin and end with a pedestrian trip. It should be safe and comfortable for riders to walk to and from transit. This requires sidewalks, crosswalks, ADA crossings, and adequate lighting to ensure people can get to/from the bus. An audit of all bus stops should be conducted and improvements should be prioritized by demand and potential. This audit should be a collaborative effort between the City and the County.
- Keep buses running on time. This may seem like an obvious recommendation, but providing a focus on this aspect of transit while addressing the other issues related to the transit experience will improve satisfaction of existing riders and help grow ridership in the future.

In order to grow transit ridership, it is important to understand which segments of the population are potential transit riders and market or incentivize transit use to them. This could simply be done by working with Downtown businesses to provide a small discount one day a year if people show their transit pass. Large employers and the University can help provide insight and information of transit ridership among their constituencies.

In the long term, a full study of transit service should be completed to evaluate existing service and operations and identify potential improvements that could increase ridership and revenue. One of the considerations of this study should be to improve transit along Main Street to create a better connection to Downtown.

From Main Street Collaborative Brainstorm Board:

"TROLLEY/STREET CAR!" "BUS RAPID TRANSIT"

Bus Shelter on Upper Chenango Street

3.3 PROMOTE AND ENCOURAGE CAR SHARE, CAR POOLING, AND TRANSPORTATION DEMAND MANAGEMENT

Owning a car is a considerable expense, particularly for younger residents. One of the ways for people to live Downtown, or anywhere in Binghamton, more easily without a car is the availability of car sharing. Car sharing services allow people to join as members and then rent cars on an hourly basis. The fee typically includes all of the costs of car ownership, such as gas, maintenance, and insurance. Hertz currently runs a car sharing program at Binghamton University, but only three cars are provided. The City and the University should be aggressive in bringing additional car share programs to Binghamton. One way to accomplish this would be to require developers to provide a car share vehicle in lieu of parking. The car could be available to the public, should the car not be used, the developer would supplement the monthly revenue required by the service.

Making it easier for employees of Binghamton University or other businesses in the City to get to work without a car should be encouraged. Carpool matching is currently provided by Broome Tioga Rideshare (www.btrideshare.com), and the City should explore ways to make this service better known and reduce any additional barriers to entry. In March 2014, there were 602 rideshare accounts and between July 2009 and March 2014, 377 ride share match searches were performed.

In-town ride share services should also be supported by the City to supplement existing taxi services. Companies like Uber and Lyft make mobility in cities easier and allow the supply of rides to better match demand.

3.4 INCENTIVIZE EV CHARGER STATIONS WITH NEW DEVELOPMENT, AND INSTALL AT KEY LOCATIONS IN EACH NEIGHBORHOOD

Sales of electric vehicles are growing (sales nearly tripled in the US in 2012), and purchase prices for these vehicles are going down. The City must be able to respond to the future demand for these vehicles by having an infrastructure that will support their power needs. This calls for network of EV Charger Stations, to be built out by both the public and private sector. New York currently has a statewide initiative, Charge NY, to create a statewide network of charging stations. The program is run by the New York Power Authority and the New York State Research and Development Authority. The City should work with the County to install EV Charger Stations in the existing parking ramps and other government owned properties, as well as key locations in neighborhoods. The City should require large, new developments to install EV Charger Stations that are open to the public. This is a minimal cost that brings marketing benefits for the developer and is a recommendation included in the City's Energy and Climate Action Plan.

3.5 DEVELOP COMPLETE STREETS HIERARCHY FOR STREET DESIGN

The City currently has a Complete Streets Policy where "all street projects shall be designed and executed in a balanced, responsible, and equitable way to accommodate and encourage travel by public transportation vehicles and their passengers, bicyclists, and other wheeled modes of transportation, and pedestrians of all ages and abilities." The next step on this policy is to develop an overall user hierarchy for street design. Pedestrians should always be considered first, as they are the most vulnerable user. If streets are safe for pedestrians to walk along and cross, they will be safe for all users.

3.6 DEVELOP CROSSWALK POLICY

There are many different types of crosswalks in the City. To create a safe environment for drivers and pedestrians, the City should develop a consistent and uniform crosswalk policy. At intersections with high pedestrian volumes, such as in Downtown or on Main Street, the international crosswalk style (http://goo.gl/maps/nr1DY) should be used, as they are more visible to drivers. On other streets with lower volumes of pedestrians, the crosswalk style of two parallel lines is sufficient.

Various crosswalk typologies across Binghamton

3.7

AMEND THE CITY CODE TO REQUIRE CONSIDERATION OF COMPLETE STREETS INFRASTRUCTURE FOR ALL CITY ROW PROJECTS INCLUDING MILL AND PAVE PROJECTS

The City has completed a number of bike lanes during typical maintenance projects, such as mill and pave or reconstruction, by simply narrowing lanes and striping the additional space for bicyclists. This is an excellent and efficient way to build bicycle infrastructure. This program should be expanded to include pedestrian safety improvements, like new crosswalks and pedestrian refuge islands, in addition to bike lanes.

3.8

MARK ALL NEW YORK STATE BIKE ROUTES IN THE CITY WITH EITHER DEDICATED LANES OR SHARROWS BY 2016

All New York State bike routes in the City are currently marked with signs. To boost driver awareness, all routes should either be striped with protected bike lanes, standard bike lanes, or sharrows.

Map of regional bicycle infrastructure

3.9 DEVELOP A CITYWIDE BIKE NETWORK

The majority of the current bike infrastructure in Binghamton has been developed by striping bike lanes during typical street maintenance projects. This has allowed a considerable number of bicycle lane miles to be implemented at a very low cost. However, it has not yielded a full network of facilities that connects the entire City. A full bike network plan should be developed, in conjunction with Binghamton Metropolitan Transportation Study, to provide a bike network that connects the entire City and identifies the type of facilities that should be provided on each street. The bicycle network plan should:

- Identify priority destinations for commuter and recreational bicyclists
- Identify gaps in trail connectivity
- Improve connectivity to Downtown from all Binghamton neighborhoods
- Identify the type of infrastructure that should be built. The highest protection, cycle tracks or side paths, should always be evaluated as the first option.

3.10 CONSIDER A SMALL BIKE SHARE PROGRAM

Bike share is a program that allows people to share bikes to make short trips in an area. It has proven successful in large cities, such as New York, Chicago, Washington DC, and San Francisco, and many smaller cities are considering it, including Albany, Syracuse, Buffalo, and Rochester. Binghamton University has started its own bike share program for students. A citywide bike share system could be successful in Binghamton with the correct financial model and business plan. The City should consult with other similar cities in New York and possibly conduct its own feasibility and business plan for a future bike share service.

3.11 ADD MORE BIKE PARKING

Increasing bicycle ridership requires secure places for people to store their bike. Currently, the majority of bike parking in the City is infrastructure that is meant for another purpose, like a parking meter or tree. Bike parking is fairly affordable and easy to implement. It is also an excellent way to integrate artists into public infrastructure and reinforce neighborhood/City branding. The City should establish a goal of installing 20 bike racks a year and one on-street bike corral.

3.12
BUILD A BICYCLING COMMUNITY

Encouraging more people to ride bikes in Binghamton will require the physical infrastructure described above, but investments in the public realm must be coupled with investments in social infrastructure. Building a local bike culture can take the form of a grassroots volunteer organization or a non-profit that markets biking, educates the public and new riders, and advocates for improvements. Such an organization can also help organize events that will encourage ridership, such as family rides, helmet checks, or educational seminars.

3.13
HOLD REGULAR BIKE THE DRIVE EVENTS

North Shore Drive provides some excellent views of the City and natural assets, but can only be accessed by car. North Shore Drive should be closed to vehicles some weekend days of the year to allow bicyclists and pedestrians to use it as a trail. This would have a minor impact on traffic, and the costs could be offset by requiring a small registration fee. NYSDOT is currently in the planning stages for a similar event on the eastbound side of Vestal Parkway. These type of events could be held on other streets in the City as well.

Bicycle locked to fence on Court Street

GOAL:

04

IMPROVE THE PEDESTRIAN EXPERIENCE ON CITY STREETS

Residents agree that Binghamton is a walkable city, with room to embrace and celebrate its walkablility as a character trait central to its identity. By retrofitting intersections or roadways to make safe space for pedestrians to walk and linger, creating moments best (or only) appreciated on foot, building a culture of walking among residents young and old, and limiting truck traffic, the City can do its part to boost pedestrian traffic by improving the overall experience. These improvements have been shown to not only encourage economic development, but also place more eyes on the street, which improves the perception of personal security. The following transportation recommendations support Goal 4:

4.1 RECLAIM UNDERUTILIZED ASPHALT SPACE ON WIDE STREETS AND INTERSECTIONS

There are a number of streets and intersections in Binghamton where the available capacity exceeds the vehicular demand. This presents an opportunity to reclaim some of that street space for other uses. Cities across the U.S. have successfully taken back space and created places for people, like pocket parks, street cafes, art installations, and places for yoga or dance. The City should pilot a program to reclaim roadway space and temporarily use it for people by coordinating the City departments responsible for implementation and maintenance. If the pilot evaluation proves a success, the program should be institutionalized.

Underutilized asphalt space on Hawley Street

"Before" Photo of the State Street - Hawley Street Intersection

FIGURE 47: Rendering of proposed improvements at intersection of State & Hawley showing a narrowed gateway to slow speeds as drivers enter Downtown

4.2
DEVELOP A LIST OF STREETS IN NEED OF A "ROAD DIET"

There are many streets in Binghamton that can accommodate greater capacity than the number of vehicles they host on a daily basis. This often leads to drivers speeding and creates safety issues for all users. The City should partner with BMTS to identify all of these streets that are in need of a "road diet," where lanes can either be reduced in size or removed, and that space should be repurposed for other users of the transportation system. This will make the City's streets safer for all users and create opportunities, like wider sidewalks, room for landscaping, parking, bicycle lanes, or transit lanes, to provide additional facilities for other multi-modal uses. Many of these projects would require simply re-striping, which would be a low-cost effort.

North Shore Drive in need of a "Road Diet"

4.3
MAKE THE BRIDGES DISTINCTIVE THROUGH LIGHTING AND HIGHLIGHTING ARCHITECTURAL DETAIL

Pedestrians move at slower speeds, with time to absorb details and beauty in the world around them. Small investments in beautification along sidewalks and bridges, while perhaps lost on drivers passing by at high speeds, become cherished reasons to walk, and retrace steps along favorite routes through the city. A new LED lighting scheme highlighting the architectural detail of Binghamton's bridges, for example, could serve multiple purposes, including enhanced safety and lighting, an artistic element in the streetscape, and another reason to walk for residents and visitors, alike.

Washington Street pedestrian bridge

FIGURE 48: Rendering of Binghamton bridges with distinctive lighting

4.4

ENCOURAGE MORE PEDESTRIAN ACTIVITY

Binghamton is an extremely walkable City, with its dense neighborhoods and extensive sidewalk network. Pedestrians use Binghamton's sidewalks to get to work, go to the store, and simply for recreation and exercise. However, more can be done to take advantage of this unique urban asset and help make Binghamton known as New York's Most Walkable small city. It will also increase the health of the City, improve business revenue, and reduce traffic and parking demand Downtown.

A citywide information and wayfinding system will help reduce the perception that places are farther apart than they really are. This is traditionally accomplished with maps/kiosks, but there are a number of other creative ways that municipalities have used to make this connection such as stamping/painting directions to Downtown on sidewalks to using color on street furniture.

The City should also be creative in developing programs that encourage pedestrian activity. There are a number of different programs that cities have successfully implemented that have had tremendous impacts on the number of pedestrians. Things like lunch walks, games, or even competitions can be completed for little to no money. New apps can help people track their steps, measure progress, and engage in healthy competition with coworkers. The City should work closely with the County on this endeavor and focus initial efforts on government employees.

4.5

ADDRESS THE NEEDS OF BINGHAMTON CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT STUDENTS WHO WALK OR TAKE THE BUS TO SCHOOL

Transportation challenges are but one barrier to education for children. With a network of neighborhood elementary schools, many younger students walk to school, but with just two public middle schools and one public high school citywide, many older students must travel farther to and from school each day. Students in all age groups would benefit from programs tailored to those who walk, bike, or ride the bus to get to school, as such programs would promote healthy, active habits and combat truancy.

For students traveling on foot, particularly elementary school children, the City and School District should partner with Broome County's Safe Routes to School initiative to encourage more students to walk to school along safe routes and with parental supervision when possible. Safe Routes to School was a Federal program to encourage more children to walk or bike to school; it provided funding and technical assistance for improved infrastructure, education, and programming including parent involvement. The Broome County Health Department has undertaken some Safe Routes to School initiatives with the Binghamton City School District as part of the Broome County Comprehensive Plan, including a survey about walkability at the Roosevelt School. Via the survey, administered at parent night, parents noted that a key barrier to walking to school was the lack of crossing guards or crossing guard placement.

> **WALKING SCHOOL BUS!**

Source: Resident suggestion for Main Street

As the County, the City, the School District, and local families all share a desire for healthy children who lead active lives, a commitment to fostering a safer public realm for kids traveling to and from school should be a priority and a responsibility embraced by all. Although Safe Routes to School was eliminated in the new transportation bill, there are still similar type programs that can be implemented. The City should participate in these efforts by providing staff expertise in engineering and public health as well as funding.

Older students traveling by BC Transit face challenges related to bus scheduling (or busses running off schedule) as well as weather due to the lack of bus stops protected by bus shelters. The School District and City should work with BMTS to evaluate options for increased morning service along bus lines accessing Binghamton High School, as well as protected bus shelters along those routes.

4.6 LIMIT TRUCK TRAFFIC DOWNTOWN

Trucks are vital to the success of cities and downtowns. However, the presence of trucks on local streets can be a disturbance. There is no clear consensus among the City, County, and State on where trucks should and should not travel in Binghamton. The City should work with the County and State to identify the proper truck routes to minimize the amount of truck activity in Downtown and residential neighborhoods. A truck route could be designated on other downtown streets to minimize the traffic on Court Street.

An example of a truck - automobile conflict on Clinton Street

4.7 ENFORCE SIDEWALK SHOVELING

The City of Binghamton requires that property owners remove snow and ice on sidewalks within 24 hours of accumulation or after snow accumulation stops. The City should strictly enforce this policy and encourage residents to alert the City of property owners who are not complying with the ordinance. Potential programs and partnerships should be explored to assist property owners who may encounter barriers to compliance, such as seniors. These may include youth work programs to assist with snow removal.

WANT TO KEEP READING?

BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON HAS 7 MAIN CHAPTERS

- **A** ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
- **B** HOUSING
- **C** TRANSPORTATION
- **D** INFRASTRUCTURE
- **E** ENVIRONMENT & OPEN SPACE
- **F** LAND USE & ZONING
- **G** COMMUNITY BUILDING

CHAPTER V

D

THE BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON MINI-PLAN ON

INFRASTRUCTURE

A PLAN FOR WHERE THE RIVERS MEET THE CITY

BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON

D

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The infrastructure chapter or **BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON MINI-PLAN ON INFRASTRUCTURE** recognizes the realities that Binghamton faces as a City trisected by rivers. In addition to strategies that address energy, utilities, and operating costs in an era of budget cuts, this portion of the Plan puts forth strategies to address the volume and quality of water flowing downstream which threaten Binghamton's riverfront and low-lying properties during riverine flood events; stormwater regulations and opportunities for smaller-scale interventions that mitigate flash flood events caused by rainfall; and the relationship between water and urban land use decisions in the future.

The City of Binghamton, similar to other cities of comparable size, has a fair amount of City-owned infrastructure. Tracking the age, condition, repairs, and replacement of this infrastructure is critical to the efficient operation of the City. The Departments of Public Works, Water and Sewer, and Engineering oversee the City's water, sewer, street lights, parks, and road maintenance. The Department of Public Works is responsible for road maintenance, refuse collection and street lighting, as well as the maintenance of City-owned property and vacant property through the Department of Parks and Recreation. The Water and Sewer Department oversees the water filtration plant, water distribution services, water meter services and sewer collection services which include sanitary, storm, pumping, and combined sewer overflow (CSO) discharge facilities. The Engineering Department provides engineering services for City projects that include street reconstruction, water and sewer systems, parks, bridges and all infrastructure, as well as administration of the Sidewalk Assistance Program and Street Work Permits.

Susquehanna Flood Wall along North Shore Drive

WATER SYSTEM

A fundamental purpose of the City's water storage and distribution system is fire protection; manufacture of potable water is also a primary purpose of the system. The City owns and operates a water filtration plant that produces potable water by treating surface water sourced from the Susquehanna River. The City's secondary water source is a well located off of Omstead Street with a million gallons per day capacity. There are also interconnections with all the surrounding towns and villages. The interconnections are primarily for selling water to those municipalities, providing municipal water supply where other sources of potable water are not available or viable in the current regulatory environment, and allowing for mutual aid support in the event of catastrophic failure or system maintenance requirements. Currently, the Towns of Vestal, Binghamton, and Dickinson and the Village of Port Dickinson purchase water from the City on a regular basis.

The City's water filtration plant has capacity to produce 20 million gallons per day. The current daily production varies between six to nine million gallons per day. There are fixed costs at the plant that do not change based on the amount of water produced. Based on this, it costs the City $137,000 per year for each additional one million gallons produced per day. The revenue from one million gallons per day is approximately $900,000 per year. The City could realize some of this additional revenue by attracting high water use (low sewage discharge) industries and by selling water to municipal and private outside users. The City could provide a reduced water rate for these users while still realizing a cost savings on the production of water.

The City has approximately 177 miles of water main in its transmission and distribution system. The majority of the water mains in the aging water system are cast iron pipe, which is less durable and more susceptible to corrosion than ductile iron or high density polyethylene (HDPE) pipe. The City spends about $1 million each year on capital improvements of the water system. They replace roughly a couple thousand feet of water main each year and have replaced approximately 15% of the cast iron pipe within the City, mostly with HDPE pipe.

Currently the City cannot account for the disposition of approximately 30-40% of the water that is filtered at the plant. The water is lost through non-metered locations, leaks, meter inaccuracies or unauthorized usages. The City should ensure that all locations that use City water are metered, either permanently or temporarily, while the water is being used so the City can track consumption accurately. The City had a water system model built over 10 years ago, but it has not been updated, and the program it was modeled in is no longer supported. If the City were to have a new model built and input the usage information from all locations using City water, they would be able to identify where water system improvements are warranted to target leaks and water loss.

The City has a Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) system that controls the water flow between the plant and the pump stations and tanks. This allows for more efficient operation of the plant as the water demand is monitored in real-time. The system also gives the City some indication of large water main breaks by monitoring pump run times and water flows in a specific zone.

Solar Array on the Binghamton Water filtration plant

SOURCE: CITY OF BINGHAMTON

Currently the City has very few wireless meters. Therefore, the vast majority of meters have to be read in person. This is a labor intensive process but the cost of implementing a wireless system (upwards of $5 million) and ongoing operational overhead costs have delayed any plans for implementing a wireless system.

Water treatment is a very energy intensive process. In 2011 the City installed solar panels on the water plant to control energy costs of the plant. The City estimates these panels will save $560,000 over the life of the system.

The City should continue to make upgrades to their system, update their water model, meter all water usage, and investigate additional opportunities to utilize renewable energy at the plant. These actions will allow the City to reduce the operating costs of the water system and increase revenue from any previously unauthorized use or water losses.

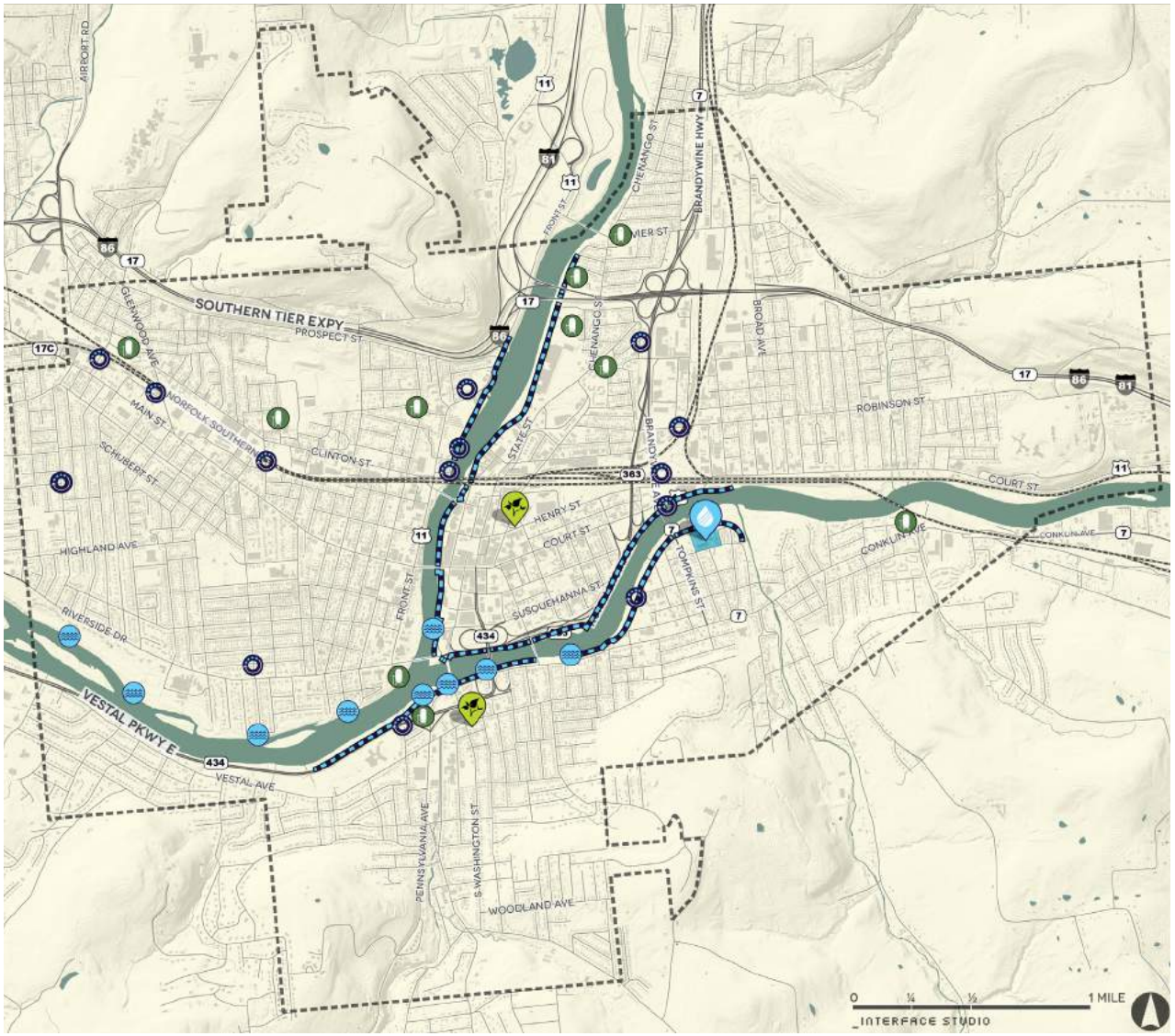
SANITARY SEWER

The City owns and maintains roughly 460 miles of sanitary sewer system, approximately 40% of which is combined with the storm sewer, 3,647 manholes, 10 sanitary sewer pump stations, and nine permitted Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs). Four of the CSOs are for emergency use only and must be operated manually. Half of the system is 63 years old or older, with 30% having been installed 88 years ago or more. The City invests approximately $1 million each year into sewer upgrades and improvements. Portions of the City's sewer carries sewage from neighboring towns and villages to the Binghamton-Johnson City Joint Sewage Treatment Plant. The City of Binghamton is a 54.8% owner of the Treatment Facilities.

The Joint Sewage Treatment Plant (Plant) is presently permitted by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) to discharge a maximum 12-month rolling average hydraulic flow of 35 million gallons per day (MGD) treated effluent into the Susquehanna River. The Plant is designed to receive and provide treatment for a peak hourly wet-weather hydraulic flow rate of 60 MGD. Even though the Plant is operationally capable of receiving and providing treatment up to these maximum rates and capacities, the actual flows received at the Plant for treatment are ordinarily much less than the Plant's hydraulic capacity. Dry weather flow has declined at the Plant over the last few years due to the installation of water saving measures and a substantial decrease in demand for water use in Binghamton.

Exceptions to these norms in flow occur during significant wet-weather events and high groundwater table conditions when the additional volume of infiltration and inflow (I/I) - the largest component of which is inflow from storm water in the remaining combined sewers of the City's sewer collection system - is mixed with sanitary sewage. The resulting flow volume is greater than what the City's conveyance system to the Plant can accommodate and results in discharges through the CSOs. The CSOs are permitted to discharge in order to prevent damage to the sewer collection system, as well as minimize sewer system back-ups.

WATER + SEWER
INFRASTRUCTURE



The current Sewage Treatment Plant Administrative NYSDEC Consent Order of 2007 requires that flows received by the Plant from Municipal Users' sewer collection systems be evaluated and managed so as not to overburden the Plant or cause violation of the Plant's discharge permit. Currently the City is in compliance with this order through the use of their permitted CSOs and exceeds the wet weather flow capture limits in the current State Pollution Discharge Elimination System (SPDES) permit for the CSO. The Consent Order mandated the preparation of a Flow Management Evaluation Report and a Flow Management Plan, focusing on the goal of stabilizing annual average flows at a volume less than the Plant's hydraulic and pollutant loading design flows. The Consent Order does not require any specific quantitative or qualitative reduction in inflow or infiltration, but requires no net increase in flows from future development.

- FLOODWALL
- COMBINED SEWER OVERFLOW (CSO)
- STORM WATER PUMPING STATION
- WATER FILTRATION PLANT
- SANITARY LIFT STATION
- GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

FIGURE 49: Water + Sewer Infrastructure

The Flow Management Plan aims to "balance" future growth and expansion with wet weather flows and investments in existing dry weather capacity through four key programs, one of which is the I/I Offset Program. The I/I Offset Program includes a Flow Credit Bank and a one-to-one offset requirement applicable prospectively after December 31, 2012 to new or modified sewer connections adding more than an average 2,500 gallons per day net new sanitary wastewater flow to the sewer system. Municipalities can be allocated new Flow Credits, which can then be sold or granted to developers, through successful planning, construction, and documentation of I/I Remediation Projects that remove infiltration and inflow from the collection system, including pipe and manhole leak and crack repair as well as separation of combined sewers into storm and sanitary sewers. Currently, the City has no long range plan to address infiltration; inflow through combined sewers will be addressed on a street by street basis.

When a combined sewer is separated or when a non-combined sewer is rehabilitated to reduce the amount of infiltration the pipe or manhole is allowing into the system, the City receives flow credits for the amount of storm water inflow and infiltration removed from the system. These credits can be used as incentives to steer development within the City by making the cost of development in the City comparable to greenfield development if building infrastructure is taken into account. The City has separated approximately 60% of its combined sewers. Including retroactive credits for work completed back through 1999, the City has been granted 1,994,364 Flow Credits, which equate to gallons per day of flow that can be added back into the system by new development. The City of Binghamton holds 84% of the Flow Credits existing in the Joint Sewage Board's I/I Offset Bank as of early 2014, with the balance being allocated among the 10 other Municipal Users of the Plant. This gives the City an overwhelming advantage in attracting new development projects given that all Municipal Users discharging to the Plant are subject to the regulations governing new or modified sewer connections.

It is estimated that 2.5 billion gallons, or 55.85%, of the influent flow received at the Plant on the Binghamton Flow Side in 2012 was "non-billable flow" largely attributable to inflow and/or infiltration. This shows the City has more flow credits that it can obtain in the future to continue to promote development within the City.

In 1994, the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) issued a National CSO Control Policy. The Wet Weather Water Quality Act of 2000 requires combined sewer systems to conform to the requirements in the National CSO Control Policy. The requirements include implementing Nine Minimum Controls (NMC) and a Long-Term Control Plan (LTCP). The NMCs are technology-based controls that can be used to abate CSOs. The LTCP consists of more extensive characterization and monitoring of the combined sewer system and the receiving water, as well as selection and implementation of CSO control alternatives, with the intent of minimizing the impacts of CSOs on water quality. The City's CSO are operated under a NYSDEC permit (#0024406) and approved Long Term Control Plan (LTCP). Four of the CSO's are operated manually when emergency situations arise. Eight of the CSO's discharge to the Susquehanna River and one discharges to the Chenango River. The permit and LTCP were last updated in 2013. Within NYS there are two types of abatement categories for CSOs: water quality and technology based. Generally, water quality based abatement options are more expensive to implement. The following are options for abatement of CSO discharges as part of the Long-Term Control Plan:

- Separation of stormwater and sewer lines
- Storage tanks to hold overflow during storm events
- Expansion of waste treatment capacity
- Retention basins to hold overflow during storm events

- Screening and disinfection facilities for the overflow
- Green infrastructure to reduce stormwater flows into combined sewer system

Currently the City employs sewer separation and promotion of green infrastructure to control flows within the CSOs. They employ screening to control the quality of the effluent discharged from the CSOs. Given the Plant's capacity, the City's strategy is to send wet weather flow to the Plant for treatment, which is much less expensive than to attempt to construct individual treatment systems or storage facilities at each CSO.

Facilities with permitted CSO discharges are required by law to post signs at all CSO outfalls to alert the public that the water may be contaminated with untreated sewage after a rainfall event. The City has to file a yearly CSO report that details their efforts to abate the CSOs and their compliance with the LTCP.

Since the waterways around the City are vital components to the City's future, continued effort needs to be made to reduce the CSO overflow discharges.

STORM SEWER

The City owns and maintains roughly 85 miles of storm sewer, 2,616 catchbasins and 2,062 manholes. Stormwater runoff from the City storm sewer system empties into the Susquehanna and Chenango Rivers. During heavy rain events, when the rivers are already at high levels, it can be difficult for the storm sewers to empty into the river, thereby causing localized flooding within the City. The City owns and maintains 14 storm sewer pump stations, which pump the water from low lying areas either to a gravity sewer or to the rivers.

FLOOD PLAIN

EXISTING

FIGURE 50: Existing Flood Plain

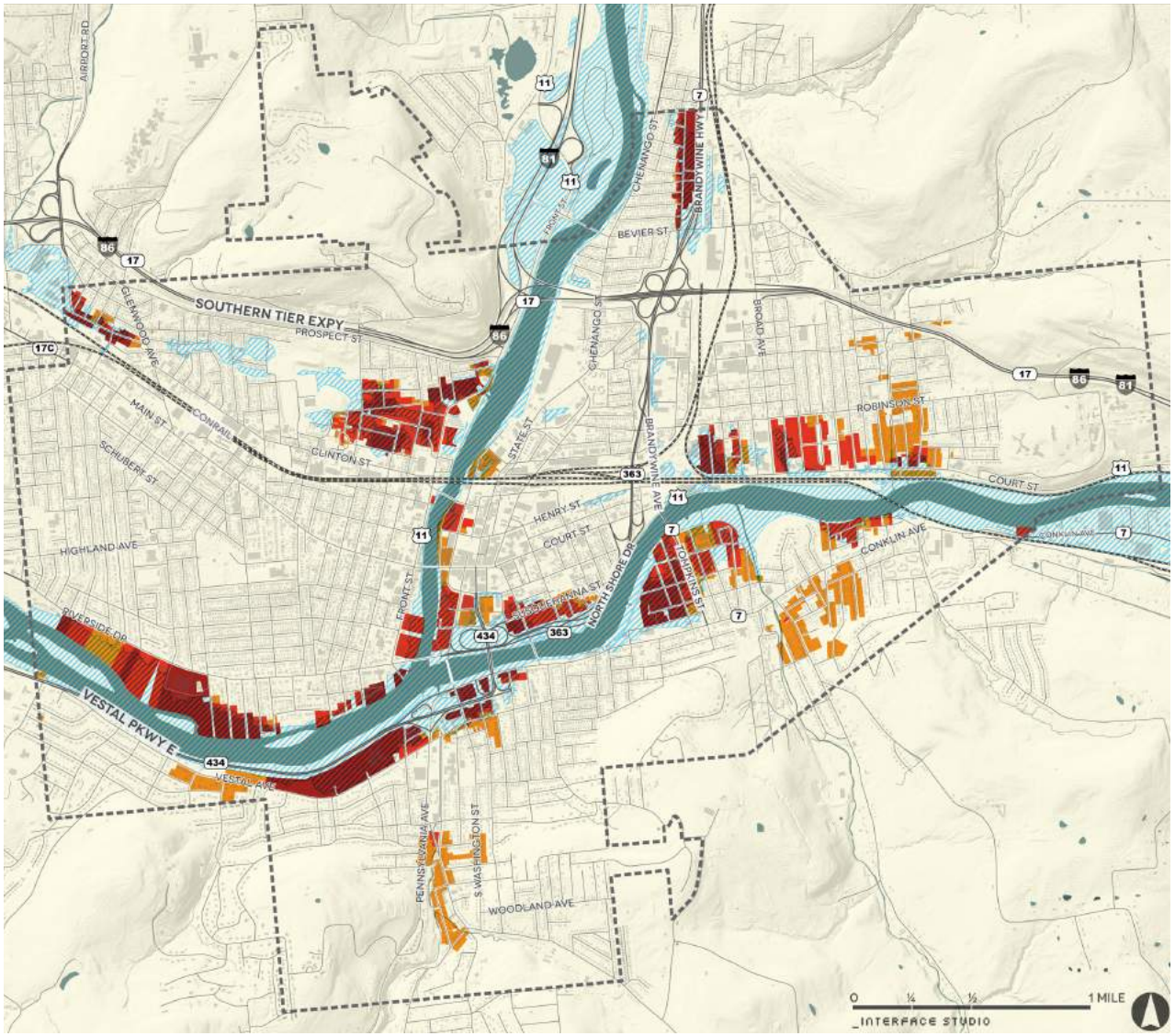
WATERWAY
100-YEAR FLOODPLAIN
500-YEAR FLOODPLAIN

FLOOD CONTROL

The City is protected from inundation from flood waters by approximately 7.2 miles of levees, floodwalls, and channel improvements; the system also encompasses several reservoirs and dams on the Chenango and Susquehanna Rivers. The Binghamton flood protection system was built in response to two floods that devastated the City in 1935 and 1936. Construction of the flood protection system took place between 1940 and 1952. The floodwalls are inspected and maintained by the NYSDEC. They were rated as minimally acceptable during a 2008 inspection, and several construction projects have been undertaken to repair identified deficiencies. The walls were overtopped in several locations during the 2006 and 2011 floods but the infrastructure did not fail.

FLOOD DAMAGE

2011



2,029 PARCELS DAMAGED

12.7% OF ALL CITY PARCELS

- MINOR DAMAGE
- MODERATE DAMAGE
- MAJOR DAMAGE
- 2011 FLOOD

FIGURE 51: Damage from 2011 Flood

The 2006 and 2011 floods demonstrated that multiple factors are responsible for flooding in the City: rising river waters, underground streams, and outdated infrastructure, separately and in combination. The conditions of flooding and its consequences are both local and regional in character. Design solutions and mitigation measures, therefore, must be contingent upon the type of storm event and flooding. In some areas, primarily in the East and South Sides, and in portions of Downtown, the flooding is due to rising river waters, which is one of the most difficult challenges to address. Unfortunately, rising river waters are becoming more frequent due to the increasing number of severe storms. Rainwater begins draining into the river far upstream, which makes river flooding a regional issue that cannot be solved with engineering fixes, such as higher flood walls, in the City or even the County, alone.

In portions of the First Ward and Brandywine BOA, flooded underground streams caused failed pumps, which were rendered inoperable once submerged by excessive water runoff. These conditions can be mitigated through upgraded underground infrastructure as well as new green infrastructure such as wetlands that can slow the water from entering the City's storm sewers. Regardless of the solutions employed, careful engineering and investment are required to ensure that flood waters do not threaten neighborhood residents or businesses. Plans for redevelopment in the City will need to balance the need for creating market-ready, developable land with adequate space and infrastructure to manage rainwater.

Chenango Flood Wall at Front and Prospect Streets

Chenango Flood Wall along the Riverwalk

FLOOD PLAIN

FEMA PROPOSED

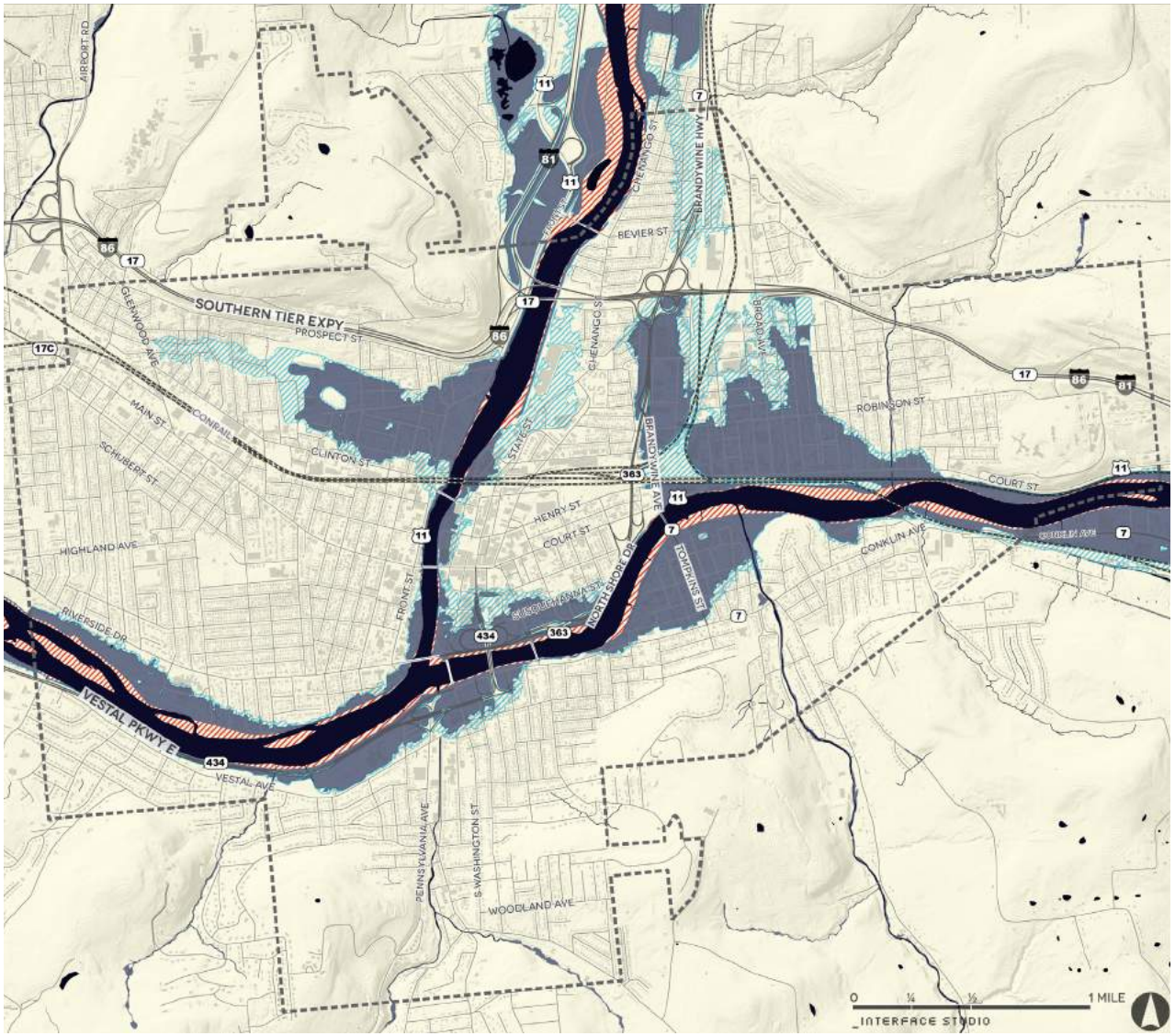


FIGURE 52: Proposed FEMA Flood Plain

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) completed a set of preliminary Digital Flood Insurance Rate Maps (DFIRMs) for Broome County that were submitted to local officials for review on February 1, 2010. The preliminary DFIRMs indicate that 12 sections of the County's levees no longer meet federal requirements for minimum flood protection. Because of this, structures on the other side of the levees will be designated as being in a Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA). According to the new maps, approximately 8,000 structures are located in the flood zone, and consequently, flood insurance for these owners will be required if the structures carry a Federally-backed or Federally-regulated mortgage. The communities most affected by this are the City of Binghamton, the Villages of Endicott and Johnson City, and the Towns of Vestal and Union.

The Biggert-Waters Flood Insurance Reform Act of 2012 further exacerbates the situation for property owners within the floodplain. The act calls on FEMA to change the way the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) is run by making it more financially self-sufficient, which will effectively increase flood insurance rates to reflect the true risk of flood damage and remove Federal subsidies.

- WATERWAY
- FLOODWAY
- 100-YEAR FLOODPLAIN
- 500-YEAR FLOODPLAIN

GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

Green infrastructure is an alternative to traditional infrastructure and can be used by the City to reduce the negative effects produced by flooding and stormwater runoff. Instead of upgrading pipes, which is costly and limits a City's ability to make the most of its limited funds for infrastructure maintenance, green infrastructure systems are engineered landscapes that serve to capture water before it reaches the storm sewer system. Other cities have found that green infrastructure practices such as raingardens, swales, tree trenches and even wetlands (where space is available), are more cost efficient and bring added benefits to the community including a greater awareness of stormwater challenges as well as a more visually appealing urban landscape that helps to attract new residents and businesses.

The NYSDEC implemented new State Pollution Discharge Elimination System (SPDES) rules in 2010 requiring that all projects disturbing over an acre and requiring a full Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) include green infrastructure practices. In addition, the State has incorporated green infrastructure practices into the NYS Stormwater Design Manual. The manual provides guidance on how to design and locate stormwater management practices to comply with State performance standards.

The City, too, is exploring green infrastructure practices, including several built demonstration projects (Kennedy Park and Southside Commons) and, in 2011, the completion of their own Urban Runoff Reduction Plan (UURP) requirements for projects under an acre of disturbance to complement the SWPPP program. The URRP is part of the development review process and requires developers to utilize green infrastructure such as porous pavement, rain gardens and green roofs to minimize the runoff from their sites, which will reduce the runoff that flows into the City's storm sewer and eventually into the rivers, having a significant cumulative effect on discharge over time and across the entire area of the City. The City is also committed to implementing green infrastructure in its own capital projects and has sought grant assistance to incentivize these practices within private developments.

Southside Commons Green Infrastructure Project

Kennedy Park Green Infrastructure Project

POWER AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Power and telecommunications within the City limits are provided by regulated private corporations. New York State Electric and Gas provides electricity and natural gas service, while Time Warner and Verizon provide high-speed internet service; Direct TV and Dish network provide satellite TV and internet, Time Warner, Verizon, AT&T and Choice One Communications provide landline telephone service. The companies with physical Infrastructure are regulated through the Public Service Commission (PSC) to ensure safe, secure, and reliable access for New York State's residential and business consumers, at just and reasonable rates. The PSC reviews the reliability and quality of service the utilities are providing and requires the utility to make corrective measures when issues are found.

The power and telecommunications infrastructure within the City is a mixture of above ground and below ground transmission and distribution lines. Most of the power and telecommunications infrastructure is aging. Many of the facilities have long surpassed their design life, yet are still in service because of the high cost of replacement. The utility owners do not have major upgrade plans but make upgrades when repairs or capacity changes are needed. The companies will periodically review the status of their infrastructure and make upgrades when they have been having a reoccurring problem. The companies will traditionally replace the underground utilities along a street that the City is reconstructing. Both of these practices are reactionary and cost driven in that upgrades are made when the cost of the upgrade will reduce the cost of maintenance or reduce repeated service interruptions.

If there is a need for new service run along a street where the utility currently does not have any facilities or a service must be upgraded for additional capacity, the utility will provide it to the facility or residence at a cost.

Power Lines near Front and Prospect Streets

SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES

Binghamton must be creative in addressing some of the very pressing infrastructure and water issues facing the City. With aging infrastructure, threats of future flooding, and a limited budget, a coordinated effort is needed to tackle these issues in an environmentally and financially sustainable manner.

All of the recommendations address one or more of the objectives listed below:

- **REDUCING** operational and **MAINTENANCE COSTS**
- Maintaining **INFRASTRUCTURE REPAIRS** and upgrades
- Enhancing existing flood protection
- **REDUCING EFFECTS** of small scale and **FLASH FLOODING** through **GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE**

COMMUNITY VOICE

Blueprint Binghamton asked **YOU** for your thoughts and ideas, concerns and priorities related to water and infrastructure. Your ideas for how people interact with the City's man-made and natural waterways, encompass flooding, water quality, energy efficiency, green infrastructure, and various other ways to both respect and enjoy the waterways.

COLLABORATIVE MAP COMMENTS

About **13%** of all **COLLABORATIVE MAP COMMENTS** addressed "environmental" issues, which included areas such as flood plain, parks, riverfront, sustainability, trees, and urban agriculture.

COLLABORATIVE MAP

IDEAS. INSIGHTS. BARRIERS

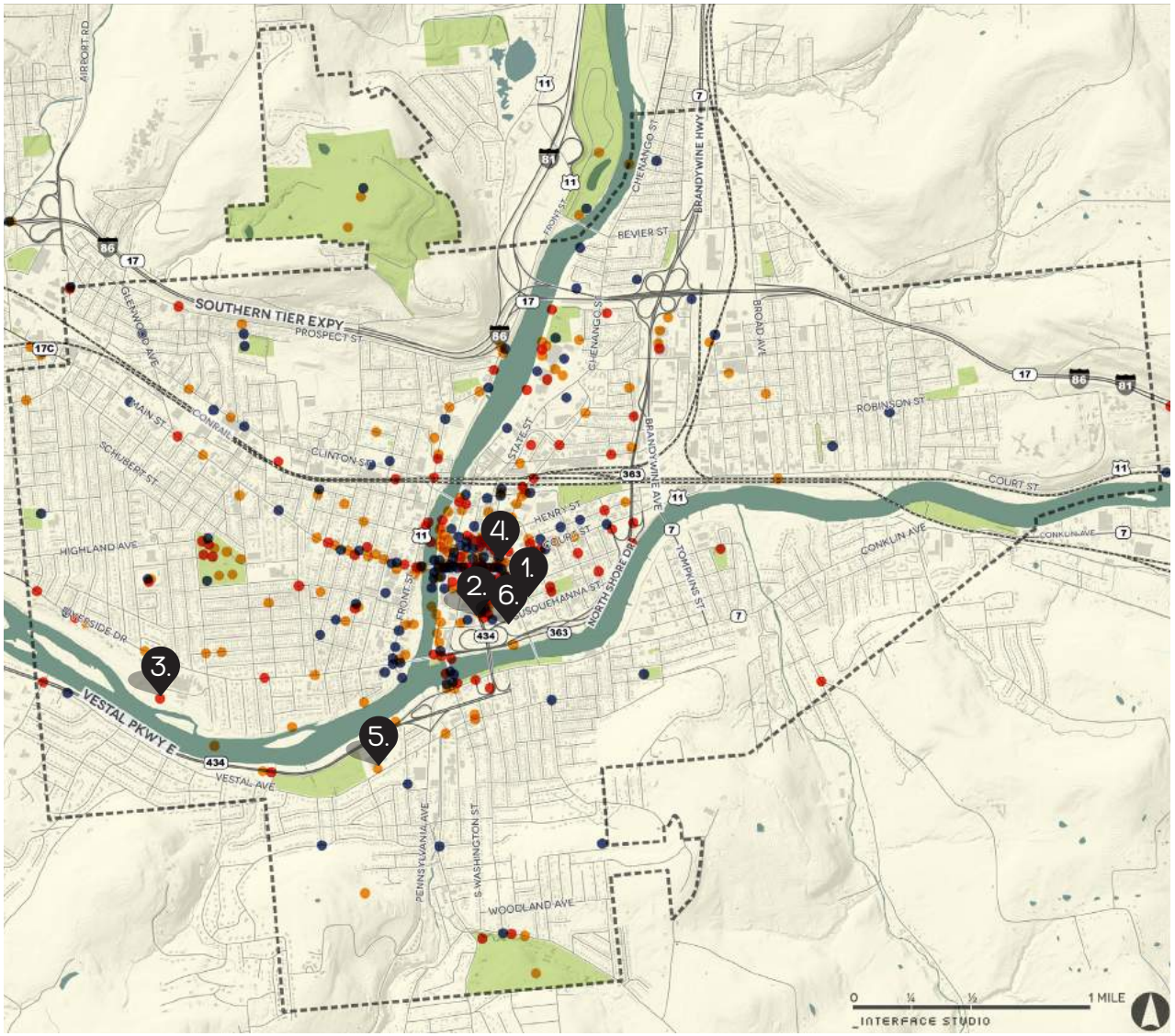


FIGURE 53: Collaborative Map Comments Locations

1. "NIGHT TIME - ADD MORE STREET LIGHTS!"

2. "PUBLIC WORKS NOT EFFICIENT - NOT ENOUGH MONEY - POLITICS"

3. "THE RIVER FLOOD PLAIN IS VERY INTERESTING TO EXPLORE BUT POORLY ACCESSIBLE."

4. "CLEAN UP - TRASH, DUMPSTERS, STREETS."

5. "CARBON NEUTRAL INFRASTRUCTURE ON REBUILT MACARTHUR SCHOOL."

6. "MANY FLAT ROOFS NEED SOLAR PANELS."

POSTCARDS FROM THE FUTURE

WE'VE FORTIFIED FOR FUTURE FLOODING & HAVE MADE USE OF VACANT LOTS FOR RAIN GARDENS, PUBLIC ART, GARDENS, ETC.

IT IS ALSO VERY ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY, AND YOU FEEL THE ESSENCE OF NATURE EVERYWHERE YOU GO.

FIGURE 54: Postcards From the Future

BIG IDEAS

Images from the "Photo Suggestion Booth"

CITYWIDE SURVEY

And your responses on the **CITYWIDE SURVEY** echoed your desire for infrastructure improvements:

38% Proactive Flood Management

31% New Waterfront Connections

INFRASTRUCTURE GOALS:

The recommendations that comprise **BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON'S MINI-PLAN ON INFRASTRUCTURE** [a plan for where the Rivers meet the City] are organized into three goal areas, each titled by a key infrastructure goal:

01

REDUCE THE IMPACT OF FLOODING AND PROTECT BINGHAMTON NEIGHBORHOODS

02

IMPROVE STORMWATER MANAGEMENT AND RIVER QUALITY

03

CONSERVE WATER/ENERGY RESOURCES AND REDUCE OPERATING COSTS

Taken together, the **INFRASTRUCTURE GOALS** and their related objectives and strategies support the following themes of **BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON'S** vision for the future of our City:

- **THRIVING -** a more efficient City that functions in a financially and environmentally sustainable way
- **RESILIENT AND SUSTAINABLE -** conserve water quality and protect neighborhoods through smart planning and coordination
- **ALIVE -** a waterfront and infrastructure system that serves the City and its residents by protecting from future flooding, creating recreational spaces, and improving environmental quality

FOR FULL VISION STATEMENT, SEE PAGE 40.

GOAL :

01

REDUCE THE IMPACT OF FLOODING AND PROTECT BINGHAMTON NEIGHBORHOODS & BUSINESSES

Flooding is an environmental, quality of life, and, most importantly, economic concern for the City. The Broome County Hazard Mitigation Plan estimates that the 2006 flood caused over $5.5 million in damages to the County. Further, the Plan estimates that approximately 30% of the County population lives within the floodplain defined by the current FIRM. In Binghamton over 11,000 residents live in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA) as of 2012, and the property within this flood area accounts for 17.5% of Binghamton's general building stock replacement cost value.[1] Binghamton residents recognize that flooding could be a regular occurrence in the future and the existing safeguards, which protected the City in decades past, are no longer adequate. The City must take a multi-valented approach to protect the City and its residents. The following infrastructure recommendations support Goal 1:

1.1

IMPLEMENT THE CITY'S ESTABLISHED PRIORITY PROJECTS IN THE COUNTY'S 2013 MULTI-JURISDICTIONAL HAZARD MITIGATION PLAN

The City should utilize FEMA/SEMA flood mitigation funding programs to implement the projects listed as priorities in the Broome County Hazard Mitigation Plan in order to assist in reducing future flooding issues. The high priority Proposed Hazard Mitigation Initiatives for the City of Binghamton include administrative, structural and programmatic initiatives, such as working with Broome County to update the floodplain (FIRM) maps, researching the feasibility of mitigating all three HUD housing developments Downtown, and considering non-structural flood hazard mitigation for at risk properties in the floodplain. The recommendations in this Comprehensive Plan are in alignment with those of the County's Hazard Mitigation Plan.

1 Broome County Multi-Jurisdictional All-Hazard Mitigation Plan (2013), http://gobroomecounty.com/planning/hazardmitigation/plandocuments

1.2

COMPLETE CRS APPLICATION TO MAKE PROPERTY OWNERS ELIGIBLE FOR REDUCED INSURANCE RATES

The City should complete the NFIP Community Rating System (CRS) application outlining how the City will assist in reducing flood damage to insurable properties, strengthen and support the insurance aspects of the NFIP, and encourage a comprehensive approach to floodplain management. Completing this process will help property owners by reducing flood risk and making them eligible for discounted flood insurance premium rates. Currently, initiating the CRS has been incorporated into the First Ward BOA project.

Flooding on the Chenango River During Tropical Storm Lee in 2011

1.3

PARTNER WITH BROOME COUNTY IN THE NEW YORK RISING COMMUNITY RECONSTRUCTION PROGRAM PLANNING EFFORTS TO ENSURE CONSISTENCY ACROSS PLANS

Flooding and stormwater runoff in the City are affected by development and changes in areas outside the City. The New York Rising Community Reconstruction Program provides communities affected by Hurricanes Sandy and Irene and Tropical Storm Lee with rebuilding and revitalization assistance and facilitates community redevelopment planning. By partnering with the County, the City can better enhance the effect the plans will have on the City's flood prone areas.

Flood Waters at the Washington Street Bridge

1.4

HELP RESIDENTS REDUCE THE IMPACT OF FLOODING ON THEIR HOMES AND COMPLY WITH NEW FLOODPLAIN STANDARDS TO REDUCE FLOOD INSURANCE COSTS

Residents should be empowered to reduce the impact of flooding on their homes through floodproofing and mitigation measures that address the contributing conditions for flooding. Community floodplain management activities identified through the CRS (Recommendation 1.2) can be implemented through funding from flood mitigation programs to help residents reduce their flood insurance costs. Floodproofing measures include elevating utilities, emptying and floodproofing basements, and elevating homes above the base flood line, a requirement for lower insurance premiums with the new floodplain standards. While elevating homes is expensive, it is likely to cost less in the long run than the added flood insurance cost, and Flood and Hazard Mitigation Grants can provide funding assistance. Residential flood mitigation tactics are designed to reduce the amount of runoff that makes its way to the streams and rivers in the first place. These tactics, which include diverting runoff with rain barrels, rain gardens and tree plantings, will also have a positive impact on quality of life by improving the look and feel of Binghamton's streets and neighborhoods.

STATUS QUO
REOCCURRING FLOODS

OPTION: 01
RAISE OUT OF FLOOD PLAIN

OPTION: 02
RELOCATE TO HIGHER GROUND

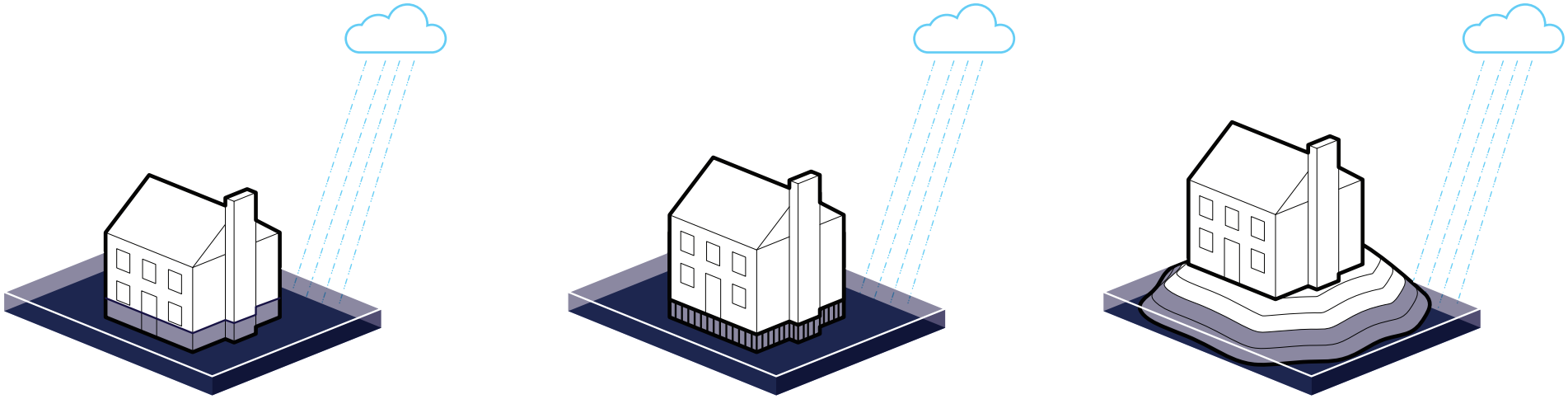


FIGURE 55: Future Housing Options due to Flooding

1.5 PROACTIVELY MANAGE LAND IN THE FLOODPLAIN TO REDUCE BLIGHT AND IMPLEMENT FLOOD MITIGATION MEASURES

As described in Land Use and Zoning Recommendations 1.3 and 2.3, after the new FEMA FIRMs are finalized, the City should revisit the land use and zoning recommendations for parcels within the new floodplain. While existing residents who want to remain in their homes should be assisted to do so, new development in environmentally sensitive locations does not make financial or economic sense because it will require significant capital investment to comply with the new floodplain standards or be subject to far higher new insurance premiums. As a long-term strategy, existing businesses and residents in the floodplain should be offered, when available, relocation assistance to safer / non-flood prone areas in the neighborhood and City. As a part of this process, their flood-damaged properties would be obtained through existing buy-out programs and converted to green infrastructure to help reduce flood impacts on surrounding properties and nearby commercial areas. As an alternative, the Broome County Land Bank could be used to consolidate abandoned or vacant properties in the floodplain.

Once the title on these properties is cleared, long-term ownership should be conveyed to the City for use as open space to protect the surrounding community from future flooding. Steps should also be taken to disconnect building sewers, laterals, and City sewer mains formerly serving bought-out properties in the floodplain. If properly planned, carried out, and documented, this will entitle the City to Flow Credits under the Joint Sewage Board's I/I Offset Program to the extent infiltration and inflow are removed from the sewer collection system. Transportation Recommendation 1.4 also explores the opportunities to align land use and roadway infrastructure maintenance decisions with decisions to support a more resilient City in the future.

1.6 PARTICIPATE IN REGIONAL COOPERATION EFFORTS FOR RIVERINE FLOODING

Flooding due to rising river waters is a regional issue that Binghamton cannot tackle alone. Events upstream have a major impact on all of the river communities. Addressing riverine flooding will require a long-term rethinking of the relationship of the City to its Rivers. The City should continue to participate in regional cooperative flood control efforts such as the Broome County Flood Task Force and the Broome County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan, and work with the US Army Corp of Engineers, Susquehanna River Basin Commission, and NYSDEC to enhance flood protection.

GOAL:

02

IMPROVE STORMWATER MANAGEMENT AND RIVER WATER QUALITY

Binghamton is surrounded by water, and the City has made great strides toward improved water quality. As rainfall and stormwater runoff are directly related to flooding, managing stormwater onsite is a cost-effective opportunity to reduce flooding. Reduction of stormwater flows to the combined sewers will lead to less CSO overflow and lead to improvements in the water quality of the Rivers. In this era of constrained City budgets, green infrastructure solutions can complement grey infrastructure projects like the separation of storm sewers and sanitary sewers to protect neighborhoods from flooding with partially treated CSO flows. The City has to file a yearly CSO report that details their efforts to abate the CSOs and their compliance with the LTCP. In addition, the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is currently auditing cities' Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) stormwater programs to ensure they meet minimum State measures and has already conducted an audit of Binghamton University. Binghamton is also required to meet pollution limits for water quality, including storm water discharges, set by the Chesapeake Bay Total Maximum Daily Load, established by the US EPA to restore clean water in the Chesapeake Bay and the region's streams, creeks and rivers, these requirements are and will continue to be incorporated into the City's MS4 and CSO permits. These provide additional incentives to take proactive stormwater management measures. The following infrastructure recommendations support Goal 2:

Falls on the Susquehanna River

2.1 ENFORCE AND ENHANCE URBAN RUNOFF REDUCTION PLAN (URRP) REQUIREMENTS

The City's URRP requirements for projects that fall below the NYSDEC threshold for a SWPPP, aim to help manage stormwater on-site and reduce runoff into the sewer system by using cost effective green infrastructure. The City has a large number of these smaller projects that cumulatively contribute a considerable amount of runoff into the streams and rivers and contribute significantly to CSOs. The City's URRP requirements should be updated as NYSDEC SPDES permit requirements change.

2.2 CREATE A LANDSCAPE/STORMWATER OFFSET BANKING SYSTEM

The City should explore developing a stormwater offset banking system that will allow developers to construct stormwater best management practices (BMPs) and bank "credits" that can either be used for future projects or be sold to developers that cannot meet landscaping or onsite stormwater management requirements. This approach offers developers more flexibility in meeting landscaping and stormwater management requirements. The City should develop an inventory of sites where stormwater BMPs can be installed to offset redevelopment sites where it is not possible to meet requirements. Baltimore is a model that has established simple banks for city agencies and is in the process of exploring more complex versions for private developers.

2.3

IMPLEMENT STORMWATER MANAGEMENT PRACTICES FOR GREEN MITIGATION AND RUNOFF/ FLASH FLOOD CONTROL

A comprehensive stormwater management program should be implemented that combines the City's efforts with those of private individuals for maximum impact. In addition to managing stormwater in development projects, the City should integrate green infrastructure into road projects, using the City's ongoing separation of combined sewers as an opportunity to coordinate these investments. The NYSDEC SWPPP and the City's URRP require the use of green infrastructure to manage stormwater onsite for projects creating or adding impervious surface area that would affect runoff into the City's rivers and streams. The City should also encourage property owners not regulated by the SWPPP or URRP to undertake stormwater management practices. At a residential level, green infrastructure techniques for consideration might include rain barrels, rain gardens, stormwater planters, and tree planting. Green infrastructure with larger impacts can be encouraged for commercial, institutional or industrial properties. These techniques include permeable paving, green roofs, rainwater harvesting and reuse, bioswales, bioretention areas, tree box filters, vegetated filter strips and swales. Areas prone to flash flooding should be analyzed to determine contributing factors and determine what types of green mitigation practices might best reduce the runoff volume and minimize the impacts of flash flooding. Incentives, such as the City's Stormwater Green Infrastructure 50/50 Fund which, while funds last, can cover a portion of eligible installation costs of green infrastructure for stormwater management on private property, can help defray the costs.

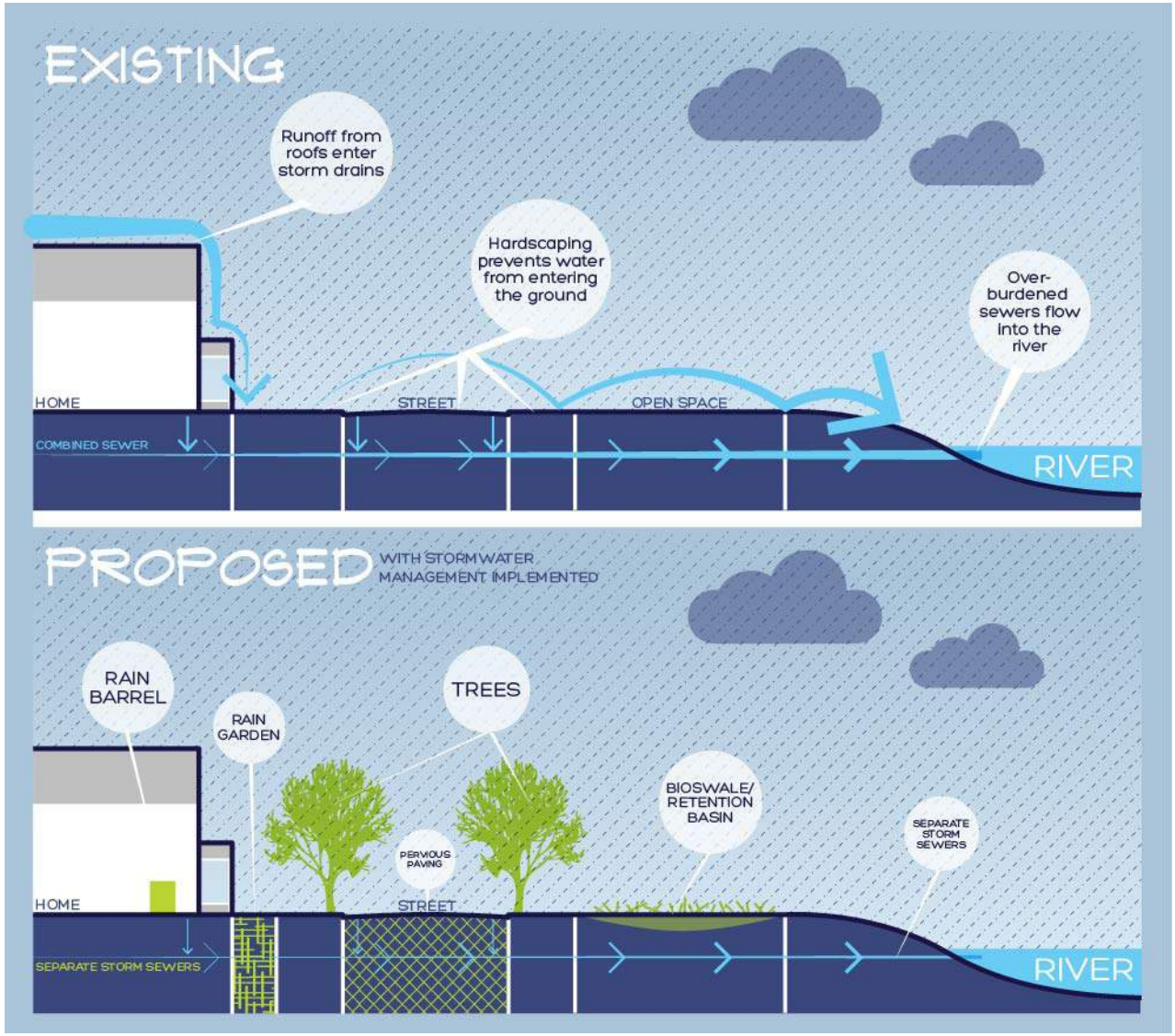


FIGURE 56: Examples of Stormwater Management Techniques

2.4

INTEGRATE STORMWATER MANAGEMENT INTO PARKS, ESPECIALLY RIVERFRONT PARKS AND TRAILS

Parks and trails are a natural opportunity to integrate low cost and aesthetically pleasing green infrastructure. Green spaces in the City, and especially those along the riverfronts, should continue to be designed with stormwater management and retention in mind. Materials and plantings that retain stormwater and allow it to slowly infiltrate not only help protect the City from overflow flooding and result in higher water quality, they also add to the beauty of these scenic places. Stormwater management practices for parks could include rain gardens, pervious pavement, and natural infiltration basins planted with low maintenance native vegetation such as wildflowers and grasses to temporarily store and infiltrate runoff. Along the Rivers, trees, shrubs, meadow grasses and other low maintenance native vegetation should be planted to provide a buffer, though planting restrictions within 15 feet of flood walls or levees must be observed to maintain the integrity of the built infrastructure.

A long-range opportunity exists to create a new wetland park below Susquehanna Street, an area in the floodplain that has suffered repeated flood damage. Several transformative changes must happen to move in this direction; the removal of North Shore Drive (see Transportation Recommendation 1.4), which was built for much higher capacity than is warranted today and is costly to maintain, the relocation of the public housing and privately-owned affordable housing developments to safer ground (see Housing Recommendations 1.3 and 4.5), and the gradual acquisition of property within the floodplain through buy-outs and transfers of abandoned and vacant property to the Broome County Land Bank (Recommendation 1.5). Wetlands provide multiple benefits including an increase of floodwater storage and reduction of flood elevations during higher flows for flood mitigation, and recreational space that provide river access through low-impact paths and viewing decks.

Allegheny Riverfront Park, Pittsburgh
Source: Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates

2.5 CONTINUE TO MAKE SEWER SYSTEM IMPROVEMENTS

The green infrastructure techniques described in the recommendations above work together with important grey infrastructure improvements to reduce flooding and CSO overflows. The City should continue to separate combined sewers, where practical, to reduce wet weather CSO event flows dumping directly into the rivers. The City should also look to raise sanitary manhole covers that are in low areas (sumps) and use covers that do not allow runoff to enter the sanitary manhole through the cover. Making these improvements and separating the sewers will help the City maintain its goals under its CSO Long Term Control Plan and continue to accumulate flow credits that can be used to offset new development in accordance with the Joint Sewage Treatment Plant's Flow Management Plan. Areas prone to flooding (i.e. South Mountain) should be analyzed to determine what the contributing factors are and if peak storm retainage and flow controls are needed or if other practices need to be employed to reduce flooding potential and impact. Reducing flooding events and their impacts will help better the communities where these events regularly occur.

2.6 EVALUATE THE USE OF TRENCHLESS REHAB ALTERNATIVES TO REHABILITATE SEWERS

Trenchless technology techniques can be less expensive than an open cut trench if there is a structural issue with a pipe necessitating replacement. Instead of digging a trench and replacing the existing pipe with a new one, manholes and other smaller dug holes are used to access pipes and add liners inside the existing pipes, such as cured in place pipe (CIPP), spiral wound pipe, pipe bursting, etc. This process also causes less disruption to traffic as streets do not need to be closed down for work, and work can be completed in less time than open cut replacement. The cost savings associated with trenchless technology could allow the City to perform rehabilitation on a greater length of sewer infrastructure each year in comparison to non-combined sewer main replacement requiring open cut trenches.

Trenchless technology can be an effective way to replace a structurally deficient pipe with a structurally sound pipe without having to open cut the area above the pipe. This technology has also been used to reduce the amount of infiltration and inflows (I/I) into the sewers. However, the effectiveness of the I&I reduction depends on the condition of the remaining non-rehabilitated sewer system. The City should evaluate the use of trenchless technology on each sewer system rehabilitation project to determine if it would result in cost savings to the project.

Trenched road reconstruction

Trenchless road reconstruction

The City has developed a Capacity, Management, Operations, and Maintenance (CMOM) Plan in accordance with the Joint Sewage Board Rules and Regulations. The CMOM plan is a living document and must be maintained and updated yearly. Within the CMOM and the accompanying Capital Improvement Plan (CIP), the City outlines its plans to perform Close Circuit Television (CCTV) inspection and capital repairs/replacements for the upcoming year. The CMOM is intended to assist the City and the Sewage Treatment Plant in meeting flow management plan goals and CSO water quality standards by reducing CSO overflows, Sanitary Sewer Overflows (SSOs) and sewer backups. One alternative to meet these goals would be to build separated sewers and laterals, which are roughly equal in length to the City's combined sewer system, thus removing the storm flow from the sanitary sewer system. Rehabbing the aging separated sanitary sewers to reduce the amount of wet weather infiltration is another option. This method can be used by private developers also. The sewer laterals are generally privately-owned and maintained, but collectively contribute I/I to the sewer system as well, such that trenchless technology may be a cost-effective means for a property owners to address sewer maintenance. Reducing I/I will help to reduce the discharge for the remaining combined sewer overflows into the river during wet weather events, thereby helping the City continue to comply with its EPA-mandated CSO Long-Term Control Plan (LTCP). When properly planned, carried out, and documented, the City can earn Flow Credits for I/I reduction in accordance with the Flow Management Plan adoped by the Binghamton-Johnson City Joint Sewage Board (BJCJSB) and endorsed by City Council.

Flow credits can be sold to developers in support of new projects within the City built in the same I/I Remediation Basin upstream of a CSO discharge structure in which the Flow Credits were earned. Because the cost at which the City would sell its Flow Credits correlates to the City's cost for the I/I Remediation Projects that created them, trenchless technology could also reduce the cost for new development in an I/I Remediation Basin that did not have any available Flow Credits, but which involved addition of wastewater flows great enough to require I/I reduction equal to the wastewater flow the new development project would add to the Basin.

2.7

DEVELOP PUBLIC EDUCATION AND AWARENESS CAMPAIGN FOR STORMWATER AND SEWER OVERFLOWS TO ENCOURAGE INDIVIDUAL ACTION AND RESPONSIBILITY

Residents are on the front lines of water runoff, and their efforts and advocacy are key to reducing the amount of runoff that makes its way to the streams and rivers. The City needs to make explicit the connection between individual actions and overflow flooding. Cities across the country are recognizing that managing stormwater with green infrastructure can help keep costs lower than using a purely grey infrastructure (expensive underground storage tanks and pipes) approach, and that to do so requires buy-in from an educated and engaged public. The Philadelphia Water Department's Green City, Clean Waters Program (http://www.phillywatersheds.org/) and Syracuse's Save the Rain Program (http://savetherain.us/) are just two examples of cities reaching out to educate citizens about their role in stormwater management and water quality protection and offer green infrastructure assistance. The Broome-Tioga Stormwater Coalition, of which Binghamton is a member, has launched Water from Rain (http://www.waterfromrain.org), a stormwater media campaign to educate the public about environmental consequences, the link between stormwater and flooding, and how they impact daily life. Public education should be a greater component of all public projects and incorporated into the City's Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System program. Public outreach should be increased to ensure that residents and developers are aware of existing stormwater projects such as Kennedy Park, South Side Commons, and the MacArthur School and what their impact is on stormwater management through interpretive signage on-site.

Stormwater Management System and education campaign in Wilmington, DE

GOAL

03

CONSERVE WATER/ENERGY RESOURCES AND REDUCE OPERATING COSTS

Outdated infrastructure, inefficient energy consumption, and lack of coordination between government agencies cost the City of Binghamton money that could be better appropriated. For example, the City loses track of 30-40% of its treated drinking water, resulting in a significant loss of revenue. By making strategic investments that will pay for themselves in the long run, and increasing coordination between departmental agencies to prevent duplicative actions, the City will take a great step towards reducing costs and increasing efficiency. The following infrastructure recommendations support Goal 3:

3.1

MAKE THE CITY A MODEL OF RESOURCE CONSERVATION AND EFFICIENCY, AND USE PUBLIC PROJECTS TO RAISE PUBLIC AWARENESS

The City should lead by example to show that resource conservation and efficiency initiatives are not only possible to implement but also bring operational cost savings through reduced energy use. The City should conduct an energy efficiency audit and upgrade City facilities to meet the goals of the Energy Climate Action Plan. Actions to conserve resources and reduce emissions can be taken in areas such as procurement, facilities, fleet management, energy, water reduction, and storm water management. Public projects that incorporate conservation actions should be publicized as opportunities to educate and provide a model for issues of sustainability.

Landscaping on Court Street in Downtown

3.2 ESTABLISH ENERGY AND CLIMATE ACTION TASK FORCE TO MOBILIZE THE COMMUNITY TO HELP MEET ECAP GOALS

The Energy and Climate Action Plan outlines a proactive approach to climate change that also seeks to improve the quality of life for residents. The plan identifies actions to reduce emissions to 25% below 2006 levels by 2025 in key sectors that include buildings, energy, land use, waste management, transportation and food networks. The actions proposed in the Plan would improve the local economy and job market, improve transportation options, increase energy efficiency and cost savings, and result in a healthier population and City. Meeting the goals of this Plan will require not only effort by the City of Binghamton but buy-in and participation from community stakeholders that include residents, businesses and institutions, such as schools and hospitals. A task force made up of representatives of these groups should be formed to push forward the ECAP agenda in their communities and work to identify and implement actions that can help to meet the ECAP goals.

3.3 INCENTIVIZE LOW IMPACT DEVELOPMENT PRACTICES

Low impact development practices have a bigger upfront cost but offer property owners reduced costs over time with energy savings. Incentives such as rebate programs can help property owners take advantage of the energy and cost savings of practices such as reflective roofs, green roofs, energy and water efficient systems, greywater use, alternative energy, and construction material reuse. The City's Stormwater Green Infrastructure 50/50 Fund and energy efficiency assistance through grants from the Hoyt Foundation and Network Local Sustainability Matching Fund are examples that could be expanded. Low impact development practices also provide an opportunity to create green jobs in the community. Green Jobs - Green New York offers energy assessments, installation services, low-cost financing and training for green-collar jobs.

3.4

INVEST IN WIRELESS METER SYSTEM FOR ALL WATER USES, ALLOWING THE CITY TO MONITOR WHERE WATER IS BEING USED, AND CORRECT AREAS OF WATER LOSS

According to the EPA, the average water loss in public water systems in the U.S. is 16% of which 75% is recoverable. The City loses 30-40% of the water treated at the Plant, which is considerably higher than the average. Implementing a wireless meter system will help the City recover some of this loss by allowing the City to better monitor water usage and increase potential water billing amounts. It will also reduce operating costs for the Water and Sewer Department by reducing personnel costs, as currently meters must be read in person. The City should hire a consultant to perform a feasibility study and conduct a cost benefit analysis to measure the cost savings and potential revenue increase of a wireless meter system against the capital investment required to implement and maintain it in order to pursue funding opportunities.

3.5

UPDATE WATER MODEL TO ASSIST IN DETECTING AREAS OF CONCERN WITHIN THE SYSTEM TO TARGET FUNDING

Updating the City's water system model, which was built over 10 years ago, will help recover some of the water loss. By tracking usage information from all locations using City water, the City would be able to identify where water system improvements are warranted to target leaks and water loss. Given the significant capital investment required to build a new water system model and maintain it, the City should conduct a cost benefit analysis to measure the cost savings and potential revenue increase associated with a new model in order to pursue funding opportunities.

Road in Need of Repairs

3.6 CONTINUE TO UPGRADE AND REPLACE PIPE

The City's sewer and water system has surpassed its design life and is in the process of being upgraded. The majority of its water mains are cast iron pipe, which are being replaced with more durable ductile iron and HPDE pipe, which has a lifespan of 75 to 100 years. The City should continue its investment in replacing its aging sewer and water infrastructure to control overall operational and maintenance costs in the future.

3.7 UPGRADE WATER FILTRATION PLANT TO INCREASE ENERGY EFFICIENCY

Water treatment is an energy intensive process. With energy costs expected to keep rising, so will the operational costs at the water plant. The City should continue to look for ways to reduce energy usage and increase the use of renewable energy sources at the water filtration plant to reduce operational costs. Anaerobic Digester Gas (ADG)-to-Electricity Systems, which use dairy farm waste and/or dairy product processing waste for energy, are an option to consider. Over $20 million in New York State Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS) funds is available through 2015 for the installation and operation of such systems, and as such, the City should prioritize this grant application.

Water filtration plant on the banks of the Susquehanna

3.8

REPLACE ALL STREETLIGHTS WITH ENERGY EFFICIENT BULBS AND FIXTURES BY 2020

The operational cost of the street light system is a heavy burden on the City. While the City owns the lighting system and owns some of the system's poles, many poles are owned by NYSEG. NYSEG changes the bulbs on the wooden poles (service class 6 lights) and bills the City. The City can reduce operational and maintenance costs by changing to LED lighting which will pay for themselves within several years, and by installing street light meters for NYSEG billing. Most of the system is not metered and the City is billed per light, if the lights were changed to LED and put on a meter, the cost to operate would be greatly reduced. Changing to LED lighting will require the City to take over lighting replacement from NYSEG. However, since LED lighting has a lifespan of 10-15 years, which is three times the life of traditional lighting technologies, bulbs would not have to be replaced as often, reducing maintenance costs. LED lighting also consumes far less energy than traditional lighting technologies which would also reduce operational costs. Cities such as New York City and Raleigh, North Carolina have seen dramatic decreases in operational and maintenance costs with a coordinated up-front investment in LED lighting. A cost/benefit analysis and return on investment (ROI) analysis should be undertaken to determine the fiscal impact of converting Binghamton's streetlights to LED.

3.9

ENFORCE CITY STANDARDS FOR PUBLIC RIGHT OF WAY

Street work permits allow the City to monitor and enforce its standards for street construction when private companies/developers need to impact an existing City street and/or sidewalk. This ensures the street and/or sidewalk is reconstructed consistent with the Engineering Department's Standard Specifications for streets and sidewalks and reduces future maintenance burdens on the City for repairing faulty work. The City should continue to inspect utility trench restorations to ensure streets are reconstructed properly and reduce future maintenance burdens on the City for repairing faulty work. The Curb and Sidewalk Assistance Program can also be utilized to correct code violations related to improvements in the public right of way and ensure that projects eligible for assistance achieve the highest standards for sidewalk and curb work including considerations for landscaping and tree planting.

3.10

OPENLY COORDINATE/COMMUNICATE BETWEEN DEPARTMENTS AND UTILITIES ON ANY MAJOR PROJECTS TO REDUCE REDUNDANCIES

City departments and utilities should hold yearly meetings to coordinate where City street projects will be performed and where utilities might need to perform work. Exchanging information with the utility companies on planned street reconstruction and utility upgrades will allow for a coordinated effort to replace all the utilities in a street during (or before) reconstruction. This will prevent the utility companies from impacting recently upgraded or constructed facilities or roadways as well save both the City and utility companies money.

3.11

CONTINUE TO BUILD A DATABASE THAT TRACKS ASSETS, INVESTMENTS, AND SCHEDULES MAINTENANCE

The City is building a central database using Cartograph for data management and asset management. The City should continue working to build a database of assets, repairs and operational costs that integrates all City departments to realize the full potential for planning, programming, and operational costs savings. Furthermore, the City should work to ensure that its sewer infrastructure data is maintained in a form that is digitally compatible with the Broome County GIS sewer infrastructure overlay. This will allow the City's sewer system to be incorporated into the hydraulic sewer system model developed for the Joint Sewage Board as part of the flow management planning process.

Example of a Street Light on Court Street in Downtown

WANT TO KEEP READING?

BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON HAS 7 MAIN CHAPTERS

- **A** ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
- **B** HOUSING
- **C** TRANSPORTATION
- **D** INFRASTRUCTURE
- **E** ENVIRONMENT & OPEN SPACE
- **F** LAND USE & ZONING
- **G** COMMUNITY BUILDING

CHAPTER V

E

THE BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON MINI-PLAN ON

ENVIRONMENT & OPEN SPACE

A PLAN FOR PRESERVATION AND PLAY

BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON

ENVIRONMENT & OPEN SPACE A PLAN FOR PRESERVATION AND PLAY

E

The environment & open space chapter or **BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON MINI-PLAN ON ENVIRONMENT & OPEN SPACE** focuses on the City's natural landscapes - rivers, riparian edges, and park spaces - as well as opportunities in daily life for Binghamton's citizens to contribute to a healthier City, region, and planet by reducing waste output, increasing the urban forest and flora, and strengthening the connection between people and the parks, playgrounds, rivers, and trails that welcome healthy play so long as they remain clean and safe spaces.

Confluence Park

EXISTING CONDITIONS

PARKS & OPEN SPACE

From its founding at the confluence of two rivers, and its subsequent growth along the river banks and in the surrounding valley, nature very much shapes the City of Binghamton. Along with the natural surroundings, man-made parks are the centerpieces of City neighborhoods, affording space for rest and relaxation, play and recreation. Wealthy residents of years past such as Erastus Ross and George F. Johnson were strategic and generous in the creation of new park space and unique amenities that present generations still enjoy at Ross Park and Recreation Park. Johnson gifted six carousels to the City's park system, which per his instructions, still spin from Memorial Day through Labor Day, free of charge or for an admission of "one piece of litter." The City's tradition of treasuring these common open spaces has continued over time, with City-sponsored grassroots campaigns such as the "Design Your Own Park" program and the ongoing push for more waterfront trails and access.

The Binghamton Parks and Recreation Department maintains 33 separate parks throughout the City. The parks range from large formal parks such as Recreation Park on the West Side to smaller temporary green spaces atop reclaimed City-owned vacant land such as Green Man Green Space at the corner of Court and State Streets.

DESTINATION PARKS

The City's major parks that draw residents from across the City and throughout the larger region include:

ROSS PARK: Located on the South Side and at the edge of the City, Ross Park hosts a wealth of regional attractions such as the historic Binghamton Zoo, The Discovery Center - a hands-on children's museum with a story garden, a carousel, a full playground, picnic area, basketball court, ample open green space, and a parking area for visitors.

RECREATION PARK: The West Side's Recreation Park is perhaps the most prominent park in the City, integrated within the neighborhood and offering a range of park and playground amenities. It consists of large, landscaped areas, a pool, athletic fields, a bandstand, and an iconic carousel that dates back to 1925 and was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1992. Recreation Park plays host to numerous citywide events throughout the year.

ELY PARK: Located within the neighborhood that bears its name, Ely Park is north of the First Ward on the slopes of Prospect Mountain. The majority of the Park is occupied by the City-owned municipal golf course, as well as large wooded tracts of land. The Park's name derives from S. Mills Ely, a local grocer and manufacturing developer who donated his summer home on Mount Prospect to the City in 1907 for use as a park.

OTSININGO COUNTY PARK: Situated on the western bank of the Chenango River, just north of the City boundary along the I-81 / Front Street corridor lays Otsiningo Park. With a combination of bike paths, wooded areas, picnic and athletic areas, water features, community gardens, and riverfront park space, this County park has much to offer everyone and is a popular destination for City residents.

CONFLUENCE PARK: Located at the confluence of the Susquehanna and Chenango Rivers, Confluence Park provides an idyllic landscape from which to view the waterways and nearby bridges. It also serves as the Downtown termination of the Binghamton Riverwalk, a trail that, at present, extends north as far as Cheri A. Lindsey Memorial Park and connects from Confluence Park to the South Side via the South Washington Street pedestrian bridge.

CHERI A. LINDSEY MEMORIAL PARK: Located on the North Side on the eastern bank of the Chenango River and tucked behind Binghamton Plaza, the Cheri A. Lindsey Memorial Park features a recently completed skate park, pool, athletic facilities, playground equipment, and direct access to the waterfront and Riverwalk trail that extends south toward Downtown. The Park marks the starting point of the planned trail extension reaching north along the Chenango River to Otsiningo Park. The fenced dog park known as the Bark Park is a newer addition, built through the Design Your Own Park program and maintained by park users.

NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS

Binghamton's smaller parks provide a range of opportunities for passive and active recreation within the City's neighborhoods. The list below highlights a key community park in each of Binghamton's neighborhoods:

COLUMBUS PARK: East of the Downtown urban core, Columbus Park serves as the neighborhood park for the residents of the Downtown area. The majority of the Park accommodates sports fields (a baseball field and basketball court), but the Park also offers playground equipment, with a small public pool, and a landscaped courtyard with a fountain that is no longer operational. Plans exist to demolish the fountain and install a spray pad, which will provide a unique amenity to the City's park system.

WEBSTER STREET PARK: In South Side East, Webster Street Park hosts a playground, pool, and tennis courts within a green space. The Park, which is located across from the City's water plant, has been a maintenance challenge in recent years, suffering from vandalism, most likely due to its location somewhat isolated from eyes on the street.

MACARTHUR PARK: MacArthur Park, damaged during the flooding of 2011, is the main park in South Side West. The park will be rebuilt with the support of funding from FEMA, and will once again serve the neighborhood and the new school being built on site with its playground, pool, track, ball fields, tennis courts, and exercise stations.

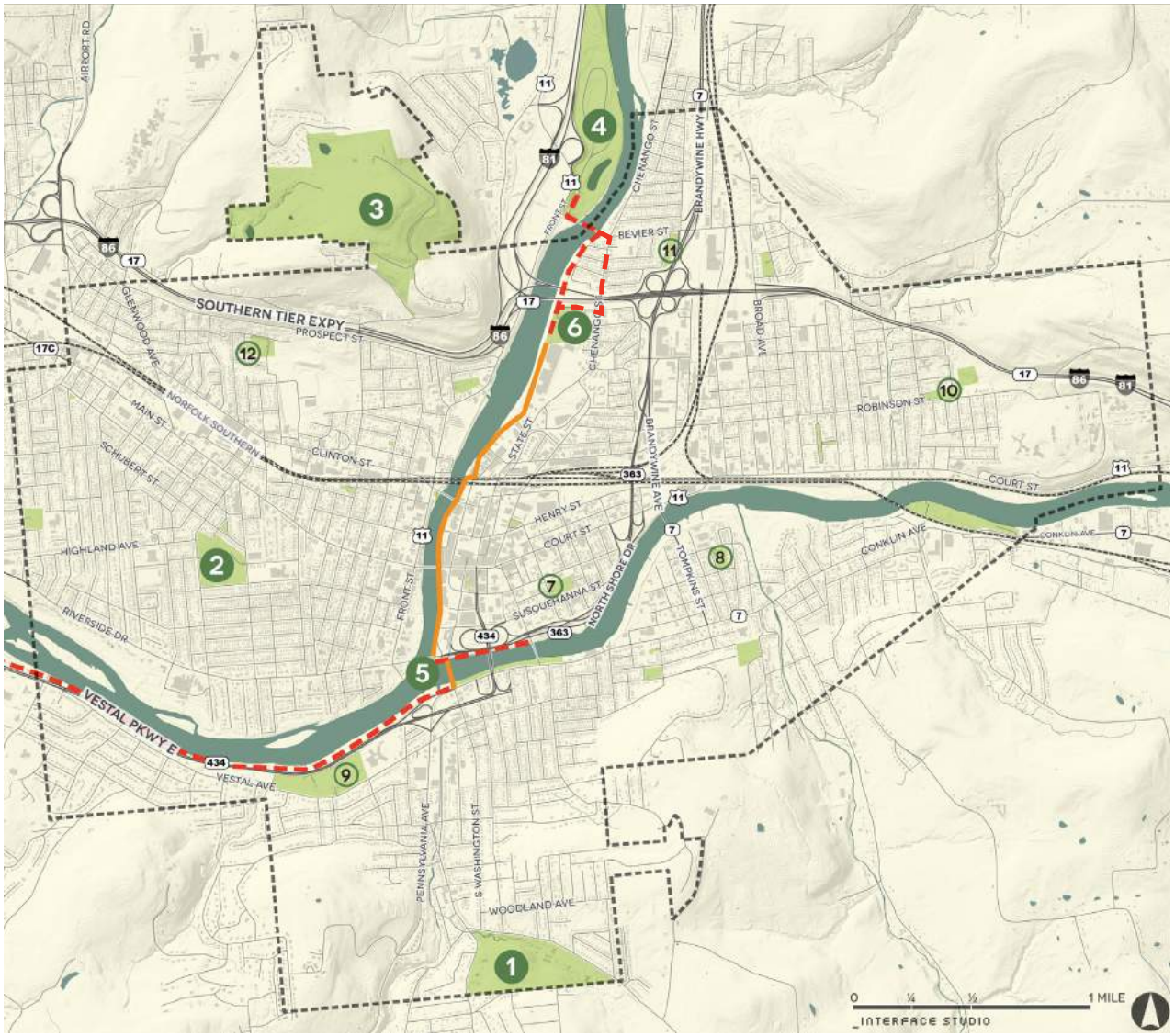
FAIRVIEW PARK: Fairview Park on Robinson Street is the main park on the East Side. It hosts a playground, pool, basketball courts, and baseball fields.

PHELPS PARK: On the North Side, Phelps Park, formerly known as State Street Park but recently rededicated and restored to its original given name, is a 24-acre park on State Street with a playground and swings, a picnic area, basketball courts and ample green space. The citizen-led effort to rename the park reflects renewed interest in this community asset.

VETERANS PARK: Veterans Memorial Park serves as the neighborhood park for the First Ward. The park provides athletic facilities and a playground, but its distinctive pool closed in 2009 due to deterioration and lack of funds for maintenance.

Detail from Walnut Street Park mosaic

OPEN SPACE AND TRAILS



SOURCE: CITY OF BINGHAMTON PLANNING DEPARTMENT
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS & RECREATION

PARK/OPEN SPACE
EXISTING TRAIL
PROPOSED TRAIL

DESTINATION PARKS

1. ROSS PARK
2. RECREATION PARK
3. ELY PARK
4. OTSININGO PARK
5. CONFLUENCE PARK
6. CHERI A. LINDSEY PARK

NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS

7. COLUMBUS PARK
8. WEBSTER STREET PARK
9. MACARTHUR PARK
10. FAIRVIEW PARK
11. PHELPS PARK
12. VETERANS PARK

FIGURE 57: Open space and trails - MAP

PROGRAMS

The Department of Parks and Recreation also runs the City's recreation programs, which include baseball and softball for ages five and older, youth tennis, pee wee football, soccer clinics, a youth wrestling club, adult basketball and volleyball, a Summer Fun camp program for children ages three through 10, and the First Ward Senior Center.

Through its pilot Design Your Own Park program, the Departments of Planning, Housing and Community Development and Parks and Recreation collaborated with community groups on a park/program hybrid that resulted in three revitalized community-driven park spaces: Sunflower Park in the First Ward, the Bark Park at Cheri A. Lindsey Memorial Park, and Walnut Street Park on the West Side, north of Main Street.

The Parks and Recreation Department also manages major events and festivals within the City from the Chris Thater Memorial Bike Race to the Tennis Challenger Tournament. Other events, like the annual Juneteenth Celebration in Columbus Park hosted by the Broome County Urban League and the Broome-Tioga NAACP, the Stand for Children events in Recreation Park hosted by the Broome County Children and Youth Services Council, and National Night Out activities hosted by the Binghamton Police Department Crime Prevention Unit, are important opportunities to activate the City's park spaces, both day and night. Bringing families and children together for festivals in the parks counteracts negative perceptions about public safety that can create deterrents to park usage. For the City's parks to remain healthy and heavily used community assets, people of all ages must feel safe in these spaces, and as they travel to and from. Law enforcement is critical to the public park system, but the police presence must strike the right balance, invoking feelings of safety and calm when a park is active and feelings of safety and protection when a park is not in use.

Juneteenth Celebration at Columbus Park

Juneteenth Celebration at Columbus Park

Stand For Children Event at Recreation Park

TRAILS

Binghamton's main trail is the Riverwalk along the Chenango River. In its current state, the Riverwalk runs from Cheri A. Lindsey Memorial Park on the North Side south to Confluence Park in Downtown, with the trail varying in character along its course. Near the northern end it is a multi-use trail on the river embankment. As it works its way south it meets Water Street and runs on an extended sidewalk path. The trail continues this way until it reaches the Clinton Street Bridge, where it adopts a more structured form, with signature places such as the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Promenade, the Fair Store Plaza, and the stepped embankment just south of Court Street. The Riverwalk then winds closer to the Chenango River along the backside of existing buildings and finally terminates at the confluence of the two rivers.

Additional trails in existing parks such as Otsiningo and Ross Parks provide other opportunities for walking, hiking, and biking.

Binghamton's trail network is poised to expand in the near future, in furtherance of the County's **BINGHAMTON METROPOLITAN GREENWAY STUDY** plan to develop a more extensive regional greenway system. The following alignments are moving forward:

- The City currently has a plan and design to extend the river trail east of Washington Street to the Exchange Street Bridge along the north side of the Susquehanna River. The City will bid the job in spring 2014. The proposed realignment of 363/North Shore Drive (see Transportation Recommendation 1.4) will increase access to this new trail segment.
- The Riverwalk extension to connect Cheri A. Lindsey Memorial Park with Otsiningo Park; while original designs drew the connection along the bank of the Chenango River, road reconstruction at Route 17 and Interstate 81 necessitated a redesign by the City Engineer. The new trail connection travels along Truesdell Street and then onto Chenango Street up to Bevier Street.
- Conceptual plans exist for a Vestal Parkway Trail to connect the Riverwalk and Washington Street Bridge with MacArthur Park, and Binghamton University three miles to the west; this project is currently in the planning stage with no set implementation timeline.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Promenade

Riverwalk trail along Cheri A. Lindsey Park

TREE CANOPY

Lining its streets, providing shade in yards and parks, and blanketing the City's surrounding hills, Binghamton's tree canopy comprises an important part of its natural environment. Studies show the numerous benefits of urban tree canopies to include cleaner air and water, happier residents, and increased property values.

The Department of Parks and Recreation maintains all trees and is responsible for tree plantings and removals on City streets. The **URBAN FOREST MANAGEMENT PLAN** completed in 2010 provides a basic framework for improving urban forestry, and the City sponsors multiple programs to help in that effort. In 2013, the City commenced work with an outside consultant to undertake a sample inventory of trees and ultimately develop recommendations on new tree selection, a tree maintenance schedule, and an ongoing street and park tree survey to be implemented by the Department of Parks and Recreation during the course of its maintenance work.

The **SHADE TREE COMMISSION** is an advisory committee comprising seven members appointed by the Mayor and City Council. The Commission studies the problems and needs of the City's urban forest. They also help select the species of trees planted by the Parks and Recreation Department each season.

The **TREE DONATION FUND** accepts private donations to be used specifically for tree plantings and maintenance.

Residents can request new street trees through the **STREET TREE PLANTING PROGRAM** by filling out a form and submitting the form to the Parks and Recreation Department. The Department aims to plant at least 75 trees per year, though in some years that number reaches 300. Program funding comes through the Tree Donation Fund, Community Development Block Grants, and city tax dollars.

Columbus Park

The **CITIZEN PRUNER PROGRAM** recruits and trains citizens interested in tree health with the goal of developing volunteers able to supplement the tree maintenance work undertaken by the Parks and Recreation Department. Program participants receive training in proper tree maintenance in exchange for a commitment of at least three volunteer hours a month over the course of a season.

Because of the dramatic topography that surrounds the City, the forest that blankets Binghamton's surrounding hills is also a critical part of Binghamton's tree canopy, providing beauty, natural habitat, and a root system that stabilizes the areas steep slopes. In these ecologically sensitive woodland areas, construction is costly and challenging. In some places, there are winding roads that service low-density single family homes on large properties. Streams that run down the mountains add to the landscape, but are at times the culprit of flash flooding and runoff during large storms.

Riverwalk

A NOTE ON FRACKING

Fracking was not addressed in this plan because of litigation that was pending throughout the entire study process of the project, up until January 2014.

In the near future, the City should amend Blueprint Binghamton with a follow up study that explores fracking-related opportunities for economic growth, such as industrial development to accommodate materials storage and transport. The study and amendment should also research and document the possible negative externalities that will require careful planning for and mitigation measures, including increased traffic due to materials transport, road degradation by heavy trucks, disposal of contaminated materials, demand for temporary or rental housing, and demand for water, sewer, and other public services. Cornell Cooperative Extension has been studying the short- and long-term impacts of shale development, and should be consulted as a resource.

SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES

The environment and open space chapter of Blueprint Binghamton seeks to recognize and reinforce the importance of Binghamton's beloved parks and natural landscapes, with the understanding that each citizen can take steps to lessen his or her impact on the environment while also taking new steps to engage more directly with the City's trees and rivers, parks and open spaces.

All of **BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON'S** environment and open space recommendations address one or more of the objectives listed below:

- Adopt new habits to **MINIMIZE** the **WASTE OUTPUT** of the City
- Invest in the **URBAN FOREST** and a new generation of citizen pruners who can support the City's efforts to add more green to the public realm
- **REENGAGE** with the **RIVERS**, both through waterfront parks and trails and water-based recreation
- Celebrate the City's **PARK SYSTEM** and ensure that each neighborhood has **SAFE** and **BEAUTIFUL PLACES** for residents of all ages to relax and play for generations to come

COMMUNITY VOICE

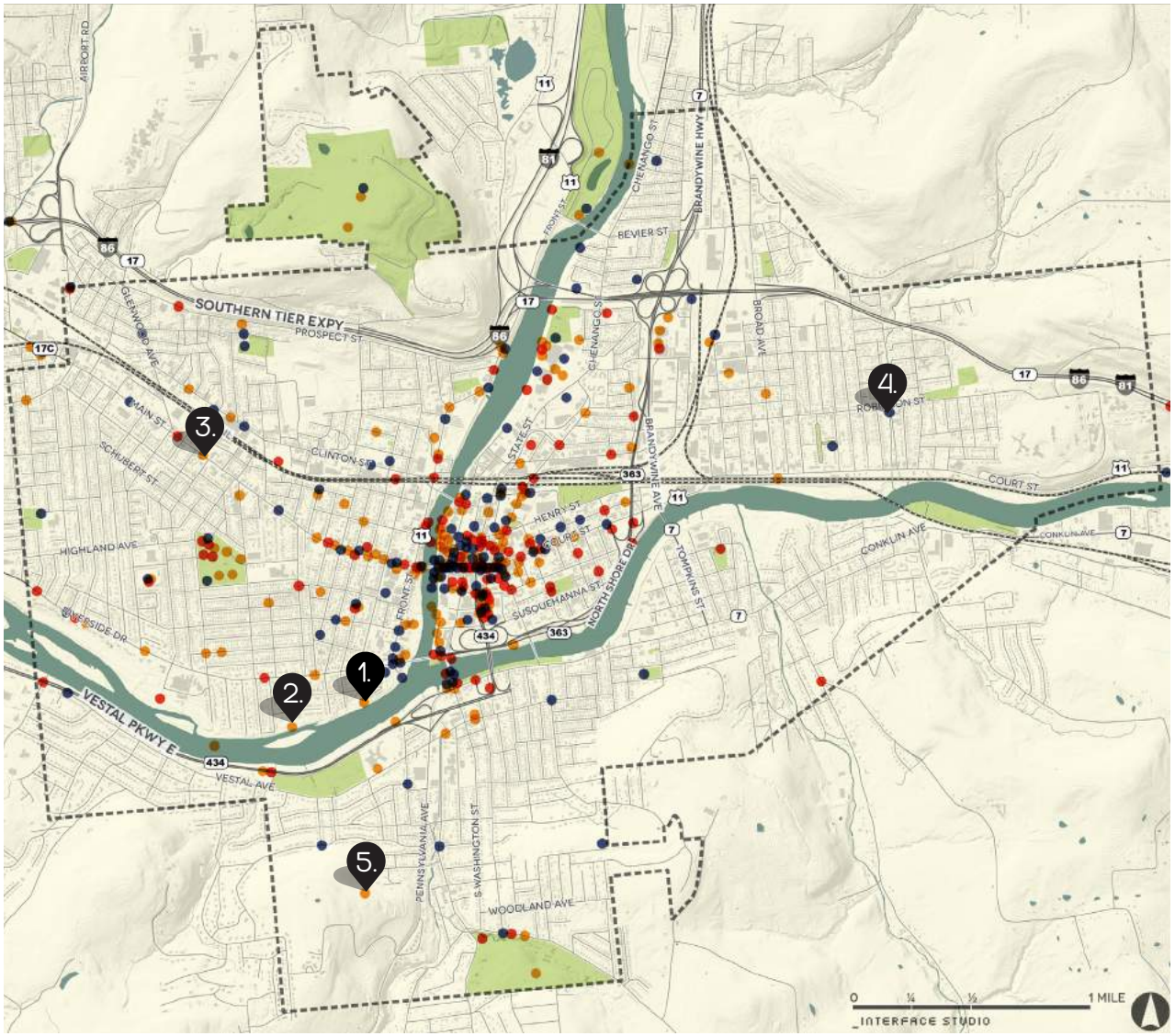
BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON asked YOU for your thoughts and ideas, concerns and priorities related to the environment and open space, and you shared many specific ideas about our City's parks and rivers, trails and hills, trees and flowers.

COLLABORATIVE MAP COMMENTS

Thirteen percent (13%) of the **COLLABORATIVE MAP COMMENTS** addressed the environment: the floodplains, the parks, the riverfronts, trails, trees, and more general ideas about growing greener and lessening Binghamton's ecological footprint. Your comments ranged from appreciation for the City's efforts to beautify the public realm with new landscaping to new ideas for recreation; here is a small sample:

COLLABORATIVE MAP

IDEAS. INSIGHTS. BARRIERS



1. "BOAT ENTRY (NON-MOTOR) SUCH AS CANOE LAUNCH – IS A VACANT WOODED AREA NEAR DEAD-END STREET."

2. "THERE SHOULD BE WALKING TRAILS ALONG THE RIVER CONNECTING DIFFERENT NEIGHBORHOODS TO DOWNTOWN."

3. "BINGHAMTON BLOOMS WITH SPRING FLOWERING TREES – WHAT A DELIGHT!"

4. "THE EAST SIDE NEEDS MORE COMMUNAL AREAS, PARKS, ENTERTAINMENT."

5. "CITY-OWNED PROPERTY THAT COULD BE DEVELOPED INTO HIKING AREA – VERY NICE FOREST."

- IDEA
- INSIGHT
- BARRIER

FIGURE 58: Collaborative Map Comments Locations

POSTCARDS FROM THE FUTURE

Your **POSTCARDS FROM THE FUTURE** describe a commitment to preserving the City's natural environment, and adding to the tree canopy, the trail network, and the park system so that well into the future, residents young and old can enjoy fresh air and play outdoors, taking full advantage of the area's unique open space amenities:

THERE IS A NICE BLEND OF NATURE WITH THE CITY.

THERE ARE TREES EVERYWHERE, THE STREETS ARE CLEAN, THERE ARE COMMUNITY GARDENS IN EVERY NEIGHBORHOOD, AND THE LOCAL RESTAURANTS ARE MAKING FOOD WITH LOCAL INGREDIENTS – THE CITY IS FUN & VIBRANT!

NICE WALKING TRAILS, ESPECIALLY ALONG RIVERS.

THERE IS A VIBRANT RIVERFRONT WITH OUTDOOR CAFES.

THERE ARE GREAT TRAILS CONNECTING ALL THE PARKS. THERE'S A KAYAK LAUNCH BY CONFLUENCE PARK. THERE'S A COMMUNITY GARDEN. THE STREETS ARE SAFE AT NIGHT. IT'S A GREAT PLACE TO LIVE!

When **5TH GRADERS** in the Binghamton City School District imagined their **DREAM NEIGHBORHOOD**, they too had thoughts about being good stewards of the environment and activating City parks for a full range of activities:

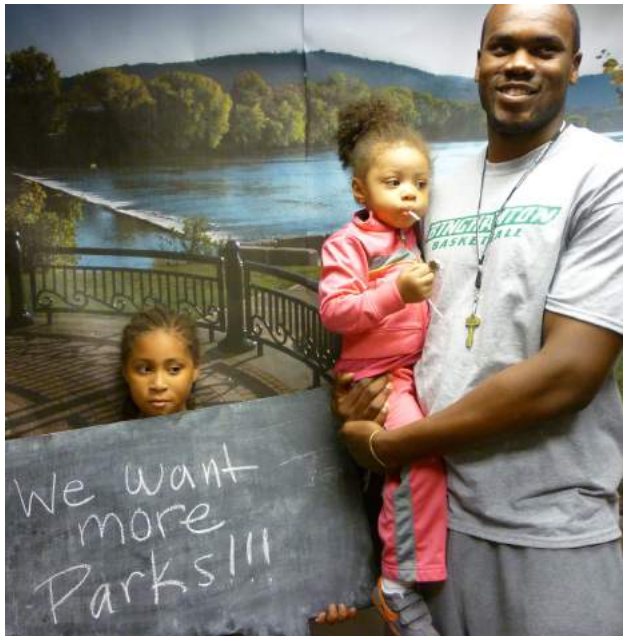
PEOPLE ON MY STREET LITTER A LOT. I HAVE A DAY CALLED "LITTER DAY." I HELP A LOT AROUND MY STREET WITH MY OLD PALS PICKING UP THE GARBAGE AND RECYCLABLES.

MY PERFECT NEIGHBORHOOD WOULD ALSO HAVE NO ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS. TREES WOULDN'T BE CUT DOWN SO WE COULD HAVE MORE AIR AND HOMES FOR BIRDS. ABSOLUTELY NO POLLUTION BECAUSE WHEN YOU BREATH IT YOU COULD GET SICK.

FOR RECREATIONAL SPACES I WOULD LIKE TO HAVE MORE OUTSIDE BASKETBALL COURTS. MY DRIVEWAY IS ON A HILL SO WE CAN'T HAVE A BASKETBALL HOOP. I THINK THAT WHEN IT IS LACROSSE SEASON, SOMEBODY SHOULD CHANGE THE NET TO A LACROSSE GOAL. THE PARK ALREADY HAS A SOCCER GOAL WHEN IT IS SOCCER SEASON. I ALSO THINK THAT THE PARK SHOULD HAVE AN ICE CREAM MAN AND HAVE MUSIC PLAYING.

BIG IDEAS

You'll find your **BIG IDEAS** span a broad spectrum of topics related to the environment and the City's natural environment. Together, they inform many of the recommendations for reactivating the Rivers and riverfronts for recreation, planting beautiful new landscapes, and maintaining City parks as centers of community:



Images from the "Photo Suggestion Booth"

CITYWIDE SURVEY

And your responses on the **CITYWIDE SURVEY** underscored your shared love for Binghamton's parks, hills, rivers, and trails but also indicated a desire for new ways to engage with the Rivers, as well as new and improved parks and trails for recreation:

- What are good things about Binghamton?

67% Parks (more than any other category)
34% Access to natural amenities
34% Trails

- Improvements you would like to see:

31% New waterfront connections
31% New and improved parks
30% An expanded trail network

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Promenade

ENVIRONMENT & OPEN SPACE GOALS:

The recommendations that comprise **BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON'S MINI-PLAN ON ENVIRONMENT & OPEN SPACE** [a plan for preservation and play] are organized into four goal areas, each titled by a key environment and open space goal:

01

REDUCE WASTE

02

INCREASE TREE COVER TO IMPROVE AIR QUALITY AND THE PUBLIC REALM

03

IMPROVE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN THE CITY AND ITS NATURAL ASSETS

04

MAINTAIN PARKS AND PLAY SPACE IN EVERY NEIGHBORHOOD TO BRING RESIDENTS TOGETHER

Taken together, the Environment & Open Space Goals and their related objectives and strategies support the following themes of Blueprint Binghamton's vision for the future of our City:

- **RESILIENT & SUSTAINABLE** - with a commitment to treading lightly on the Earth, replenishing our tree canopy, and balancing the preservation and activation of our natural landscapes so that we can enjoy them for decades to come
- **HEALTHY** - with active citizens who make full use of the recreational opportunities along the City's rivers, among its hills, along its trails, and within its parks
- **ALIVE** - with residents who come together to play, delight in, and take care of the shared resources that are Binghamton's parks, playgrounds, and natural landscapes

FOR FULL VISION STATEMENT, SEE PAGE 40.

GOAL:

01

REDUCE WASTE

Striving to reduce the volume of waste produced by the City and its residents and businesses is a best practice that will save the City money and engage all residents as stewards of the environment. Through citywide outreach and incentive programs, the City can continue its efforts to lessen the waste load traveling to landfills and play a role in educating residents and shaping their actions toward a healthier environment and future. The following environment and open space recommendations support Goal 1:

1.1 INCREASE HOUSEHOLD RECYCLING THROUGH INCENTIVE PROGRAMS

The Department of Public Works (DPW) is responsible for Binghamton's waste management and recycling programs. DPW instated a "pay as you go" system in which residents must purchase trash bags or stickers to identify items for trash pick up with the intent of reducing solid waste by encouraging recycling instead. The fee-based program has succeeded in reducing solid waste by 20%. The fees generated also cover the City's tipping and transfer fees at the landfill. Residents currently recycle about 40% percent of the City's waste output, and DPW hopes to increase the rate to 50%.

One way to further increase household recycling is to incentivize it with rewards rather than savings in fees. Recyclebank is a program that is gaining popularity across the nation; the company partners with municipalities, purchasing the City's recycled waste and providing rewards to residents for their volume of recycled output that can be claimed at local and national businesses, thus driving foot traffic to area stores. In other cities, the program has a track record of saving money for the City government and its residents, as well as significantly increasing the rate of recycling.

Compost for Brooklyn community composting project

Construction and demolition recycling

1.2

ADD RECYCLING CONTAINERS TO PUBLIC TRASH RECEPTACLES IN BUSINESS DISTRICT, AT PUBLIC FACILITIES, AND AT PUBLIC EVENTS

Recycling will increase if recycling is made easier and more convenient. The City should install permanent and temporary recycling bins in areas with heavy pedestrian traffic. Permanent receptacles should be added next to existing trash bins at locations throughout the Downtown core, as well as along some of the major commercial corridors like Main Street on the West Side and South Washington Street on the South Side. Placing the bins adjacent to existing garbage cans will increase the likelihood that recyclables are diverted from the landfill. Large citywide events can generate large volumes of refuse, and temporary recycling receptacles should be provided in tandem with trash bins at these events too.

1.3

LAUNCH A CITY COMPOST PROGRAM

Composting is an environmentally sound method of converting food and yard waste into nutrient rich organic matter than can be used to enrich soils throughout the growing season. Composting requires education on why, what, and how to compost to help residents effectively and responsibly dispose of their natural waste. The Broome County DPW website provides basic information on composting, but in many cities this has created learning opportunities in schools, community building opportunities at local gardens, and small business opportunities for entrepreneurs looking to launch a green business that picks up and processes compostable materials and then resells nutrient-rich organic matter for mulching and soil incorporation. The City should continue to support grassroots efforts of composting and tie in educational awareness with City operations such as a mass mailing jump starting the City's yard waste pick up in the spring.

1.4

ADOPT A CONSTRUCTION AND DEMOLITION RECYCLING ORDINANCE

The construction and demolition process is a significant source of new waste, much of which can easily be recycled or reused. Binghamton should institute a recycling ordinance that emphasizes deconstruction over demolition and aims to reduce the amount of building materials that enters the landfill. The ordinance could include a mandatory building inspection prior to demolition intended to evaluate a structure's potential for material reuse and recycling, a minimum percentage of waste sorted for reuse or recycling, or credits for construction crews who recycle a large percentage of their waste. The advantages of such an ordinance include cost savings for contractors who must pay tipping fees at landfills, as well as environmental benefits for the region.

GOAL:

02

INCREASE TREE COVER TO IMPROVE AIR QUALITY AND THE PUBLIC REALM

The environmental benefits of urban trees are numerous, with studies showing a positive effect on air and water quality, increased property values, lower cooling bills in the summer months, beautiful streetscapes, and even happier city residents. Through its **URBAN FOREST MANAGEMENT PLAN**, and various tree planting and maintenance programs, Binghamton has already laid the groundwork for increasing tree cover for the benefit of air quality, the public realm, and the public good. The following environment and open space recommendations support Goal 2:

2.1

EXPAND THE TREE INVENTORY DATABASE, AND ADD TO THE TREE INVENTORY WITH SIZE-APPROPRIATE SPECIES IN UNDER-PLANTED AREAS

Currently Binghamton is working with an outside consultant to conduct a sample inventory of City street trees. This inventory database will help the City map its tree cover, and identify maintenance needs, areas without shade trees, and areas where street trees are approaching the end of their life expectancy and will require new plantings to maintain healthy succession in the urban forest. While the sample inventory is an important first step, a full inventory of all street trees should be completed in the course of ongoing maintenance work by the Department of Parks and Recreation. The results of the inventory should then be used by the City to inform annual street tree planting decisions.

Shade trees on Washington Street (left) and the Riverwalk (right)

2.2

CONTINUE TO SUPPORT EFFORTS BY SHADE TREE COMMISSION AS A KEY PARTNER FOR PARK AND RECREATION

Beyond the stewardship of City parks and the administration of recreation programs, the Department of Parks and Recreation is charged with tree planting and maintenance. The Shade Tree Commission is an advisory board of appointed and knowledgeable volunteers in place to support Parks and Recreation's work to maintain a healthy urban forest. The Shade Tree Commission makes recommendations on tree selection and planting locations - expert decisions that guide expert implementation by Parks and Recreation.

The Shade Tree Commission also offers advice on how and where to best incorporate trees and greening in private and public development projects. To reduce confusion about the Shade Tree Commission's role with regard to decisions by the Planning Commission and Zoning Board of Appeals, future updates to the zoning ordinance should clarify the role of the Commission and its recommendations for projects of different scales.

2.3

ENLIST THE COMMUNITY IN TREE PLANTING EFFORTS THROUGH EDUCATION

In addition to Shade Tree Commission volunteers, members of the public can be tapped to help the City grow greener on every block. The Shade Tree Commission is charged with dissemination of news and information regarding tree selection, planting, and maintenance, and the Citizen Pruner Program goes a step farther in providing hands-on training to interested residents who would like to donate their time and energy toward maintaining Binghamton's trees. The Citizen Pruner Program should proactively reach out to civic associations across Binghamton, recruiting new participants each growing season. Graduates of the program should receive priority status through the Street Tree Planting Program, ensuring that they can put their new skills to work. Businesses can be partners in maintaining the streetscape too; as a model, the City has worked with Burger Mondays to help with watering street planters.

GOAL:

03

IMPROVE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN THE CITY AND ITS NATURAL ASSETS

Binghamton's natural assets - its rivers and hills - can at times feel both at hand or beyond reach. Inside the City, nature's presence is both felt and seen, with hills framing the views and bridges crossing the two waterways to connect Downtown with other neighborhoods. However, with the local topography and presence of heavy road infrastructure and flood walls, reaching the hills or accessing the rivers can seem impossible. Removing some of these barriers to Binghamton's natural landscapes has great potential for the City - offering improved connectivity and progress toward implementing BMTS's Binghamton Metropolitan Greenway Study, new green spaces for parks and programs, and a stronger relationship between residents and nature. The following environment and open space recommendations support Goal 3:

3.1 IMPROVE EXISTING RIVERWALK

The Riverwalk travels through a variety of different and unique spaces throughout Downtown and the North Side, from Cheri Lindsey Park to the north to Confluence Park and the South Washington Street Bridge to the south. The Riverwalk is a great asset to the City but it has not yet realized its full potential as a vibrant urban space due to a lack of programming, uneven maintenance, difficult pedestrian crossings and properties that are vacant or turn their back to the Riverwalk.

MAINTENANCE

- Some parts of the trail would benefit from additional maintenance, particularly the trail immediately to the south of Court Street. Maintenance work by the Parks and Recreation Department can be supplemented by the Downtown Business Association (see Recommendation 4.4).
- Other creative maintenance ideas should be explored, such as an "adopt a garbage can" program, and "adopt a mile" program, hiring high school students on a part-time basis throughout the school year, and creating a youth cleaning program with CDBG funds. To involve community members in efforts to maintain the Riverwalk, the City should also update its website to make information about clean-ups more accessible.

PROGRAMMING

- The plaza outside River Read Books and the former Fair Store is perfect for outdoor markets, local beer festivals, and other types of programming. It will be important to coordinate programming with events taking place at the Metrocenter Plaza to prevent overlap.
- The steps down to the River just south of Court Street could be programmed for various uses such as small concerts, outdoor movies, or anything else that takes advantage of its amphitheater style seating.

PEDESTRIAN CROSSINGS

- The lack of a pedestrian crossing at the Court Street Bridge breaks up the continuity of the Riverwalk. Pedestrians must travel a block down to the intersection of Court and Hawley Street or take the steep steps down to the River and walk underneath the bridge, a barrier for the elderly, disabled, or bicyclists. The City should look into the feasibility of creating a pedestrian crossing across Court Street to create one, continuous trail.

VACANT & BACKSIDE OF PROPERTIES

- Any future investment in Binghamton Plaza should incorporate the Riverwalk Trail and River through its design and site plan.
- The redevelopment of the Fair Store building has catalytic potential. Plans for adaptive reuse as housing should activate the ground floor with commercial space that can take advantage of the ample room for outdoor seating and the large mature trees.
- Similar to Binghamton Plaza, the buildings south of Court Street turn their back to the River and Trail. Measures should be taken to activate the rear of those buildings and enhance their relationship to the Trail.

FIGURE 59: Improve the Riverwalk

Left to right: The plaza outside the Fair Store Building; steps south of Court Street (middle), the trail behind Binghamton Plaza

3.2

EXTEND THE RIVERWALK TRAIL NORTH TO OTSININGO PARK AND EAST/WEST ALONG BOTH BANKS OF THE SUSQUEHANNA RIVER

Potential space for a trail on the south side of the Susquehanna River

Plans exist to extend the Riverwalk north past Cheri A. Lindsey Memorial Park to Otsiningo County Park, connecting Downtown and the North Side with a major regional open space amenity. While the original plans proposed an alignment along the existing riverfront levee to the memorial plaza at the corner of Chenango and Bevier, meeting up with bike lanes and sidewalks on the Bevier Street Bridge to Otsiningo Park, construction at the Route 17/Interstate 81 interchange created a need to redirect the trail in the near term. The new trail connection proposed by the City travels along Truesdell Street to Chenango Street and then connects with Bevier. As this connection is achievable with funding in the near term, it is a good option to improve connectivity along the Trail. However, the original alignment, which offers a dedicated path along the River and removed from the automobile roadway, remains an attractive option to be advocated for in the future.

Currently the Riverwalk Trail exists solely on the eastern bank of the Chenango River, while the Susquehanna River is blocked off from public access by highways and floodwalls. On the north side of the Susquehanna, there is ample room to place a trail between the floodwalls/levees and the River, extending the trail from the Washington Street Bridge east to the Rockbottom Dam. Designs for this Trail segment have been drafted, and the City will bid the work in spring 2014. Transformation of North Shore Drive into a greener boulevard in the future (see Transportation Recommendation 1.4) will allow for additional trail configurations and greater access to the northern bank of the Susquehanna.

On the south side of the Susquehanna, the floodwalls are closer to the River, making it difficult to add a trail. However, there is currently a large green space between the floodwall and Conklin Avenue with an existing sidewalk. The sidewalk should be widened to create a trail that allows for two-way bicycle traffic, extending from the South Washington Street Bridge to the Exchange Street Bridge. This investment will create a continuous trail loop on both sides of the Susquehanna between bridges. Additional investments in improved landscaping will make this large green space on the south side a more inviting, active, and beautiful space.

3.3

REACTIVATE THE RIVERS WITH WATER-BASED RECREATION

Kayaking on the Milwaukee River in Downtown Milwaukee

Source: Chelsey Lewis, www.wisconsintrails.org

Boating and fishing activities are a great way for residents to interact with the rivers, and despite great interest voiced by residents throughout the planning process, there are presently no dedicated boat launches or dedicated fishing locations within the City. Calmer water sports, such as canoeing, paddle boating, or paddle boarding, are recommended on the Chenango River rather than along the Susquehanna, which has multiple falls at Rockbottom Dam and Confluence Park. While thorough outreach and a feasibility study would need to be done before locations for waterfront recreation are decided, Cheri A. Lindsey Park would be an ideal place as it is already owned by the City, has road access for trailers, and enjoys a moderate grade down to the River. Fishing piers do not face the same restrictions as boat launches, resulting in more options for placement.

The falls along the Susquehanna River present a different opportunity for waterfront tourism and recreation, an idea first explored in the 2006 Rock Bottom Dam Site Assessment, which evaluated the potential for whitewater recreation. If the Dam were to be made passable, the River offers over 20 miles of continuously navigable water for kayakers or other vessels, and an investment in a whitewater course could prove a significant recreational attraction and economic development opportunity for the City. The concept and feasibility study received wide support from the County, the City, BMTS, and NYSDOT as well as from NYSDEC and the US Army Corps of Engineers. Transportation Recommendation 1.4, which calls for the deconstruction and transformation of North Shore Drive and the 363 cloverleaf, would support enhanced riverfront access for this kind of recreational destination.

3.4

ACQUIRE EASEMENTS ALONG ENTIRE WATERFRONT AND REQUIRE EASEMENTS AS A CONDITION FOR FUTURE WATERFRONT DEVELOPMENT

In order to keep the Rivers and riverfronts publicly accessible, an easement should be applied along all of the City's waterfront parcels. This easement, which would require land owners and developers to allow a public right of way adjacent to the waterway, is integral to the success of riverfront trail extensions as well as other potential access points. As noted in Land Use and Zoning Recommendation 1.5, updates to the zoning ordinance should include an edit to the subdivision regulations to require public easements for improved access to the Rivers.

GOAL:

04

MAINTAIN PARKS AND PLAY SPACE IN EVERY NEIGHBORHOOD TO BRING RESIDENTS TOGETHER

Parks can serve as important community gathering spaces and give neighborhoods a sense of place and pride. But parks are living spaces, changing with the weather ,and over time they require a blend of City resources and care as well and resident use and stewardship to thrive as healthy and vibrant places. The following environment and open space recommendations support Goal 4 to maintain parks and play space in all of Binghamton's neighborhoods:

4.1

IMPROVE ACCESS, VISIBILITY, ACTIVE RECREATION AT TARGETED PARKS

Some of Binghamton's parks feel beautiful and safe, easily accessible to pedestrians, bicyclists, and persons traveling by car. Others suffer from being cut off from surrounding residential areas or being surrounded by deteriorating blocks. Cheri A. Lindsey Park is tucked away behind a residential block and Binghamton Plaza. The North Chenango BOA presents a major opportunity to improve connections to the Park as the Plaza is redeveloped and riverfront access is prioritized. Truesdell Street, which leads to the Park and the River, can be improved as part of the plan to route the Riverwalk Trail along Truesdell and Chenango Streets to Otsiningo Park. Columbus Park's north and eastern edges evidence distressed conditions and offer few

Story Garden

eyes on the street which negatively contributes to perceptions of the Park's safety. The Webster Street Playground is another park where it is acknowledged that its design, location across from the City Water Plant, and poor illumination at night contribute to vandalism and unsafe/criminal use.

As the **BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON** planning process showed, residents have many ideas about their community park spaces - ideas that encompass programming, new elements for passive recreation, as well as trees and flowers for added beauty. As park improvements are undertaken across the City, community groups and neighborhood residents should be invited to collaborate in brainstorming ideas for change as well as take ownership in helping to build and maintain such improvements. Partnership with the Binghamton Police Department's Crime Prevention Unit should also be sought, as the City and community members work to keep the City's parks safe and active to all to enjoy.

FIGURE 60: "BIG IDEA" Comments - Veterans Memorial Park

FIGURE 61: "BIG IDEA" Comments - Columbus Park

4.2 FORMALIZE AND PROVIDE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO FRIENDS OF PARKS GROUPS TO MAINTAIN AND PROGRAM NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS

A lesson learned through the Design Your Own Park program is the power and importance of community partners who are invested in park stewardship. Neighbors who take on projects to beautify, customize, and maintain their community open spaces breathe new life into these gathering places, encouraging new programs and patterns of use to take root. The Bark Park, with a committed group of dog owners, had been a success story; grassroots leaders have succeeded in asking for and collecting donations to support ongoing maintenance and add necessary features. Similarly, with Sunflower Park in the First Ward and Walnut Street Park on the West Side, neighbors have made great improvements in public art and park facilities through partnerships with the City. To formalize these relationships and help build capacity for sustained stewardship and activity, the City should develop a technical assistance program that encourages neighbors and park lovers to form "Friends of" groups to take partial ownership of public spaces and complement City efforts. Seed funding for small projects would incentivize program participation.

4.3 EXPAND COMMUNITY SERVICE MAINTENANCE PROGRAM TO SUPPLEMENT PARKS AND LANDSCAPE MAINTENANCE

The Department of Parks and Recreation runs the day-to-day operations of the City's compulsory community service program, managing crews of workers sentenced to provide between 14 and 80 hours of community service. The majority of crews are assigned to street cleaning duty in Downtown, but the community service arrangement should be expanded and coupled with training and labor opportunities that benefit the City's parks and landscapes as well, offering crews exposure to and experience with additional skills, building pride for neighborhood-based parks maintenance projects, and increasing the man-power of the Parks and Recreation Department.

4.4

CONTINUE TO EXPAND BUSINESS PARTNERSHIPS FOR LANDSCAPE MAINTENANCE IN BUSINESS DISTRICTS

Some of the City's most unique park spaces are the urban open spaces integrated within denser business districts that provide room for people to gather and socialize - a backdrop for streetlife and the best of urban living. Indeed, the Parlor City Commons and Chenango River Promenade are listed among the City's "parks," and the streetscape along Court Street in Downtown appears parklike too. Southside Commons on South Washington Street is another such park space in close proximity to a business district. These well-manicured landscapes provide great amenities for local businesses, but they also require much maintenance. The City should replicate business partnerships such as those successfully achieved with Gorgeous Washington Street Association, Downtown Business Association, and Security Mutual Life, to explore shared maintenance opportunities where businesses could contribute to enhanced streetscape elements or cleaning efforts, in exchange for coordinated marketing and upkeep.

South Side Commons

Court Street

WANT TO KEEP READING?

BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON HAS 7 MAIN CHAPTERS

- **A** ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
- **B** HOUSING
- **C** TRANSPORTATION
- **D** INFRASTRUCTURE
- **E** ENVIRONMENT & OPEN SPACE
- **F** LAND USE & ZONING
- **G** COMMUNITY BUILDING

CHAPTER V

F

THE BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON MINI-PLAN ON

LAND USE & ZONING

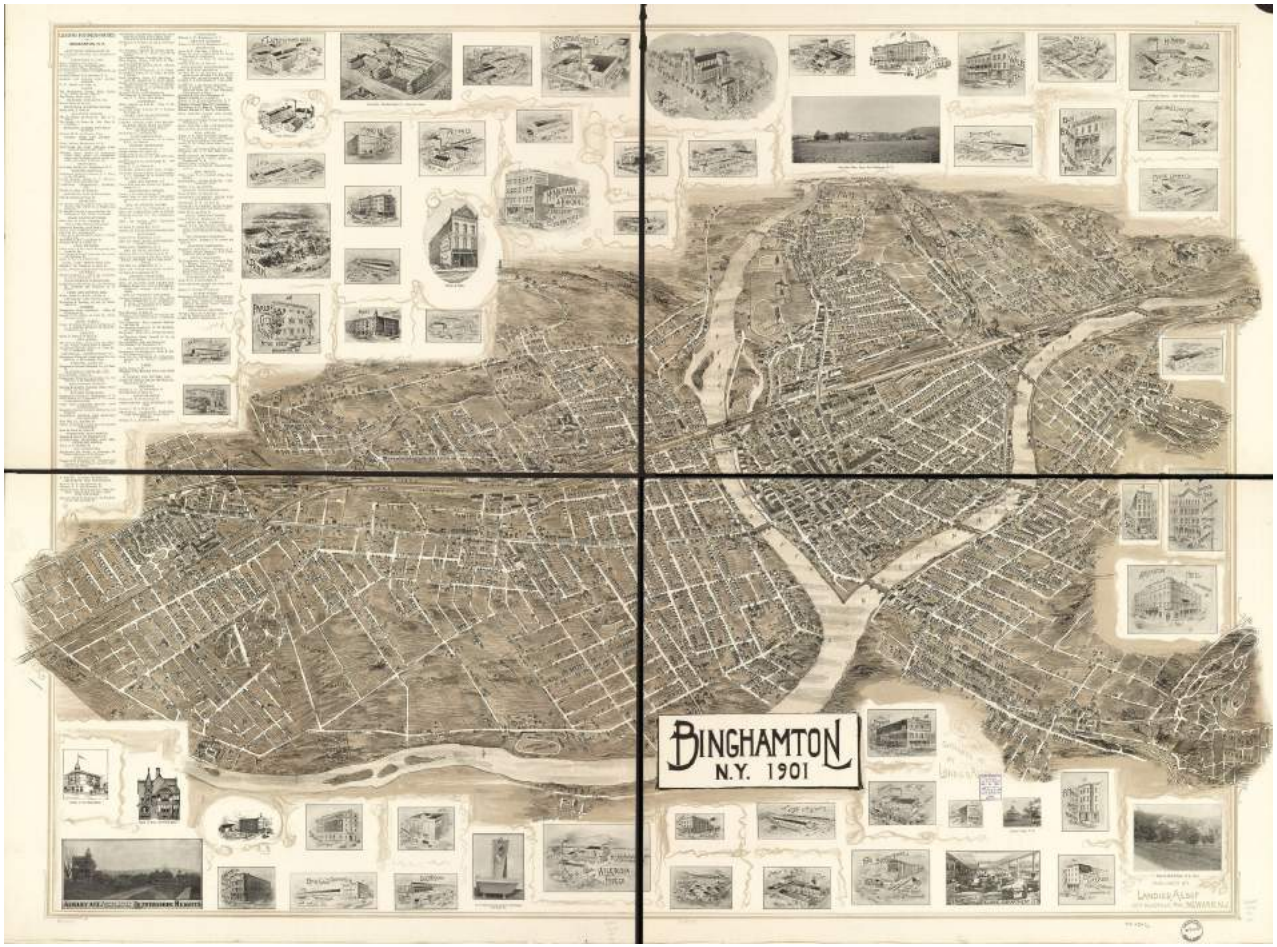
A PLAN FOR THE LAND

BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON

F

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The land use and zoning chapter or **BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON MINI-PLAN ON LAND USE & ZONING** includes one of the most important elements to emerge from a comprehensive planning process, a future land use map, which is a tool that indicates where existing land uses should be preserved, and where property should be positioned for redevelopment to accommodate a mix of new uses. The future land use recommendations will inform updates to the City's Zoning Code as well as decisions by the Planning Commission and Zoning Board regarding development proposals for properties throughout Binghamton. With recommendations about housing, commercial, and industrial property, parklands and floodplains, as well as the development and design review processes, this mini-plan highlights where **BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON'S** recommendations hit the ground.



1901 map of Binghamton

NEIGHBORHOODS

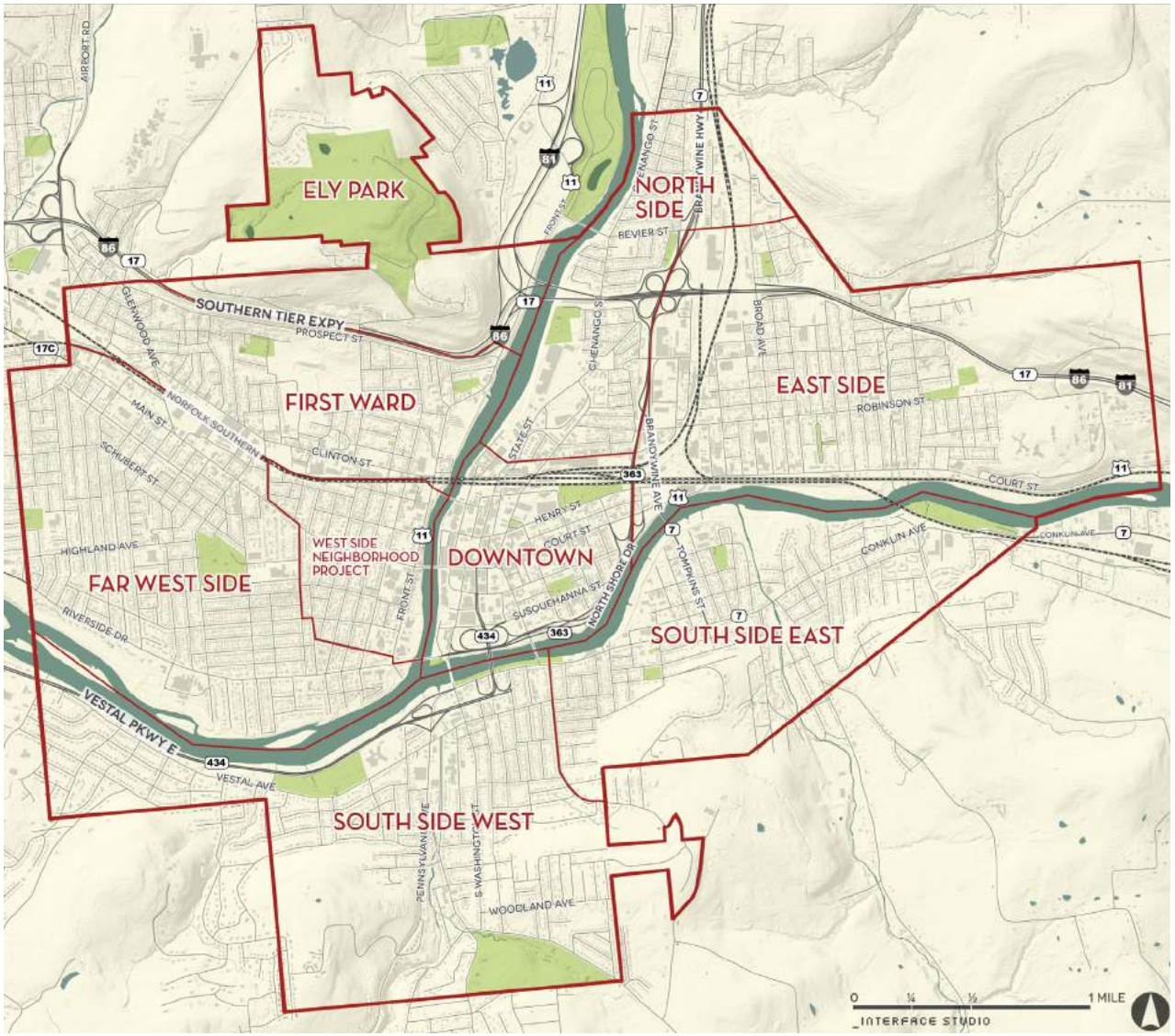
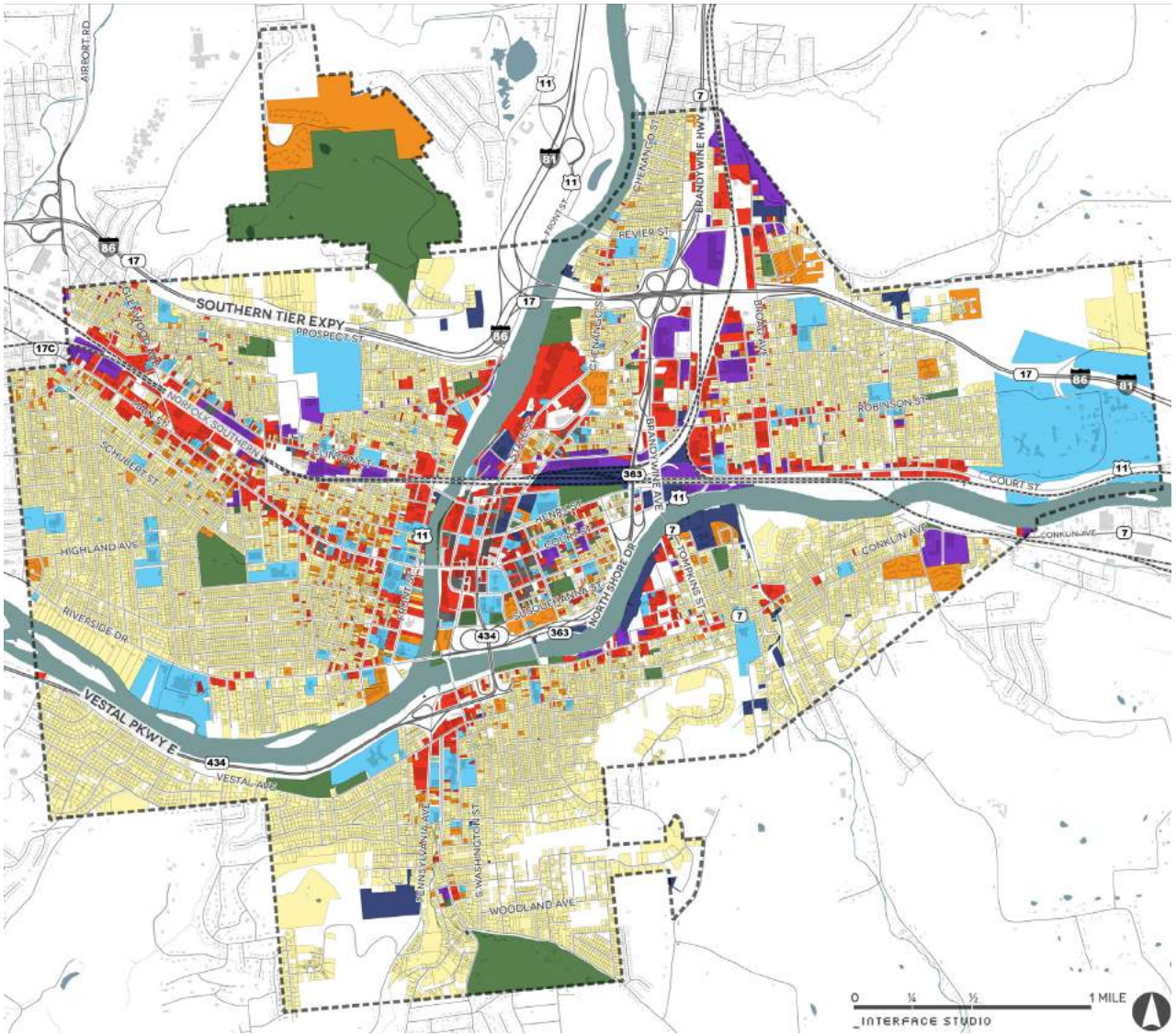


FIGURE 62: Neighborhoods - MAP

CURRENT LAND USE

Land use in Binghamton varies from neighborhood to neighborhood; some are strictly residential while others host a broader mix of uses. Before considering future land uses recommended in this blueprint for our City, let us first take a quick tour of Binghamton's neighborhoods for a refresher on existing land use patterns.

EXISTING LAND USE



SOURCE: CITY OF BINGHAMTON

- COMMERCIAL
- COMMUNITY SERVICES
- INDUSTRIAL
- MULTI-RESIDENTIAL
- PARKING
- PUBLIC SERVICES
- RECREATIONAL
- RESIDENTIAL

FIGURE 63: Existing Land Use - MAP

DOWNTOWN, bound by the rivers to the south and west, rail to the north, and Route 363 to the east, is the commercial heart of the City and has the greatest mix of land uses. Downtown boasts the highest concentration of commercial buildings in Binghamton, and that "commercial core" is bound roughly by Carroll Street to the east, both rivers, and the freight rail line to the north. Parking comprises 22% of Downtown's developed area, supporting area businesses, office and denser residential uses. East of Carroll is the Center City neighborhood, which is on the fringe of Downtown encompassing a mix of residential uses and some smaller commercial spaces along Court and Hawley streets. Downtown also contains the majority of the City's cultural institutions, with the Broome County Forum Theatre, Broome County Veterans Memorial Arena, Phelps Mansion Museum, NYSEG Stadium, and Broome County Public Library, to name a few, as well as various City, County, and State governmental offices. Park space can be found at Columbus Park, Parlor City Commons, and Confluence Park, as well as along the Riverwalk that travels up the eastern bank of the Chenango River. The riverfront edges of Downtown suffered extensive flooding during 2011, particularly south of Susquehanna Street along the bank of the Susquehanna River.

River Walk Downtown

Court Street Downtown

The **NORTH SIDE,** which encompasses the area north of Downtown and the Norfolk Southern rail line, between the Chenango River and the Brandywine Highway, hosts large infrastructure routes (highways and rail lines), which fragment the neighborhood and create distinctly different land use areas. The area north of Bevier Street and east of the Brandywine Highway is home to some large industrial uses along the base of the hills, and in close proximity to a pocket of single-family residential along Travis Avenue. North of I-86 and west of the Brandywine Highway, the North Side is almost entirely single-family residential with some commercial along Chenango Street. South of I-86, Chenango Street acts as a dividing line, with the area east of Chenango comprising a mix of single-family residential and large multi-family developments, as well as a degree of vacancy (including vacant structures as well as vacant lots, abandoned from previous use) rarely seen elsewhere in the City. West of Chenango Street, the North Side is defined by the large-scale strip malls and auto-oriented commercial along the Chenango and State Streets. There are also some industrial and institutional uses west of State along the River. Cheri Lindsey Park, tucked behind Binghamton Plaza, is the primary park space in the neighborhood, though the recent citizen-led effort to rededicate State Street Park as Phelps Park marks renewed interest in this 24-acre park on State Street just south of Bevier Street, gifted to the City in 1930 by Z. Bennett Phelps.

The **EAST SIDE,** which lies north of the Susquehanna River and east of the North Side, consists of five distinct areas; industrial uses along the Brandywine Highway and freight corridor, commercial corridors along Court Street and Robinson Street, medical uses atop the hill on the far eastern side of the neighborhood at the Greater Binghamton Health Center, educational facilities including Calvin Coolidge Elementary and East Middle School, and single-family residential blocks populating the remaining portions of the neighborhood. The southern edge of the north side, south of Robinson, experienced extensive flood damage in 2011, due to its low, bowl-like elevation surrounded by hills and its proximity to the Susquehanna.

Binghamton Plaza on the North Side

North Side housing

South Side East housing

Binghamton's South Side, located south of the Susquehanna River, is divided into two halves, east and west, divided by Mill Street. **SOUTH SIDE EAST** is mostly residential, with commercial spaces along Conklin Avenue and industrial sites north of Conklin and west of Tompkins. The residential community populates the land from the River into the south hills until the steep topography no longer enables development. Webster Street Park is the main green space, with additional play fields associated with Benjamin Franklin Elementary School on Conklin Avenue. As on the East Side, much of South Side East experienced extensive flood damage in 2011 in the lower-lying areas between the Susquehanna and Conklin Avenue.

SOUTH SIDE WEST is also mostly residential with a small but vibrant commercial core around Vestal Avenue, South Washington Street, and Pennsylvania Avenue. UHS General Hospital between Park and Mitchell has a strong presence in the neighborhood as does the MacArthur School, soon to be rebuilt, and Ross Park, home to the Binghamton Zoo and Southern Tier Discovery Center, which attract residents both local and from the broader region. Again, the lower elevations adjacent to the River and flanking the Vestal Parkway suffered flood damage in 2011.

South Side East housing

South Side West housing

Binghamton's **WEST SIDE** is a large neighborhood, west of Downtown and the Chenango River, between the Susquehanna River and the rail corridor. For the purposes of this Plan, the West Side is discussed in two parts, the **WEST SIDE NEIGHBORHOOD PROJECT** target area, which corresponds to the "Near West Side" and spans from Front Street to Chestnut Street, the rail south to the River, and the **FAR WEST SIDE**. The Near West Side hosts a mix of residential, institutional, retail, and office uses, and its residential fabric hosts both single-family homes as well as a sizable college student population. Front Street enjoys an interesting mix of traditional commercial properties, as well as offices in converted residential buildings. Main Street is almost entirely commercial (except for the large Binghamton High School campus) and divides this area in two. The residential blocks wedged between Main Street and north to the rail line have faced considerable difficulties with respect to blight and crime and are the active focus of the Safe Streets community organization.

The **FAR WEST SIDE**, west of Chestnut Street, is primarily a single-family residential neighborhood, with the historic Abel Bennett Tract spanning from Chestnut to Beethoven, and the remainder of the Far West Side beyond that. Where the Near West Side meets the Far West Side, tensions exist related to the encroachment of student rental housing into traditionally owner-occupied family-oriented blocks. Main Street serves as the lone commercial corridor with few other commercial options. Educational facilities such as Seton Catholic High, Horace Mann and Thomas Jefferson Elementary Schools, West Middle School, and Lourdes Hospital all have a strong institutional presence in the neighborhood. Recreation Park's significant attractions of playing fields, a carousel, bandshell, and large green space draw the City's broader population.

Far West Side housing

Housing in the West Side

In the **FIRST WARD,** which is located west of the Chenango River and between the rail corridor and the Southern Tier Expressway, commercial uses follow a linear path along Clinton Street and up Glenwood Avenue, with industrial uses clustering along the freight line. The remaining neighborhood is overwhelmingly residential. Spring Forest Cemetery comprises a significant portion of land and is a defining feature. The area immediately west the cemetery is defined as the Charles Street Business Park, partially occupied with large tracts of cleared/vacant land ready for new development. Veterans Memorial Park is the main open space in the First Ward and contains playing fields, a pool, and playground. Portions of the First Ward were inundated during the 2011 flood as well, though in this case, the damage was created not by riverine flooding as occurred along the Susquehanna, but by a failing pump, which created backups along the underground Trout Brook.

Topography plays a large role in shaping the land use in **ELY PARK,** which sits atop the hill north of the Southern Tier Expressway. The vast majority of the neighborhood is devoted to the large Ely Park and publicly-owned Ely Park Golf Course. Large single-family homes and tracts of woodland areas line the few winding mountain roads. Near the outskirts of the City is Legacy Bay, which hosts a number of condo, multi-family residential units.

Clinton Street in the First Ward

Housing in the First Ward

Ely Park houses

ZONING

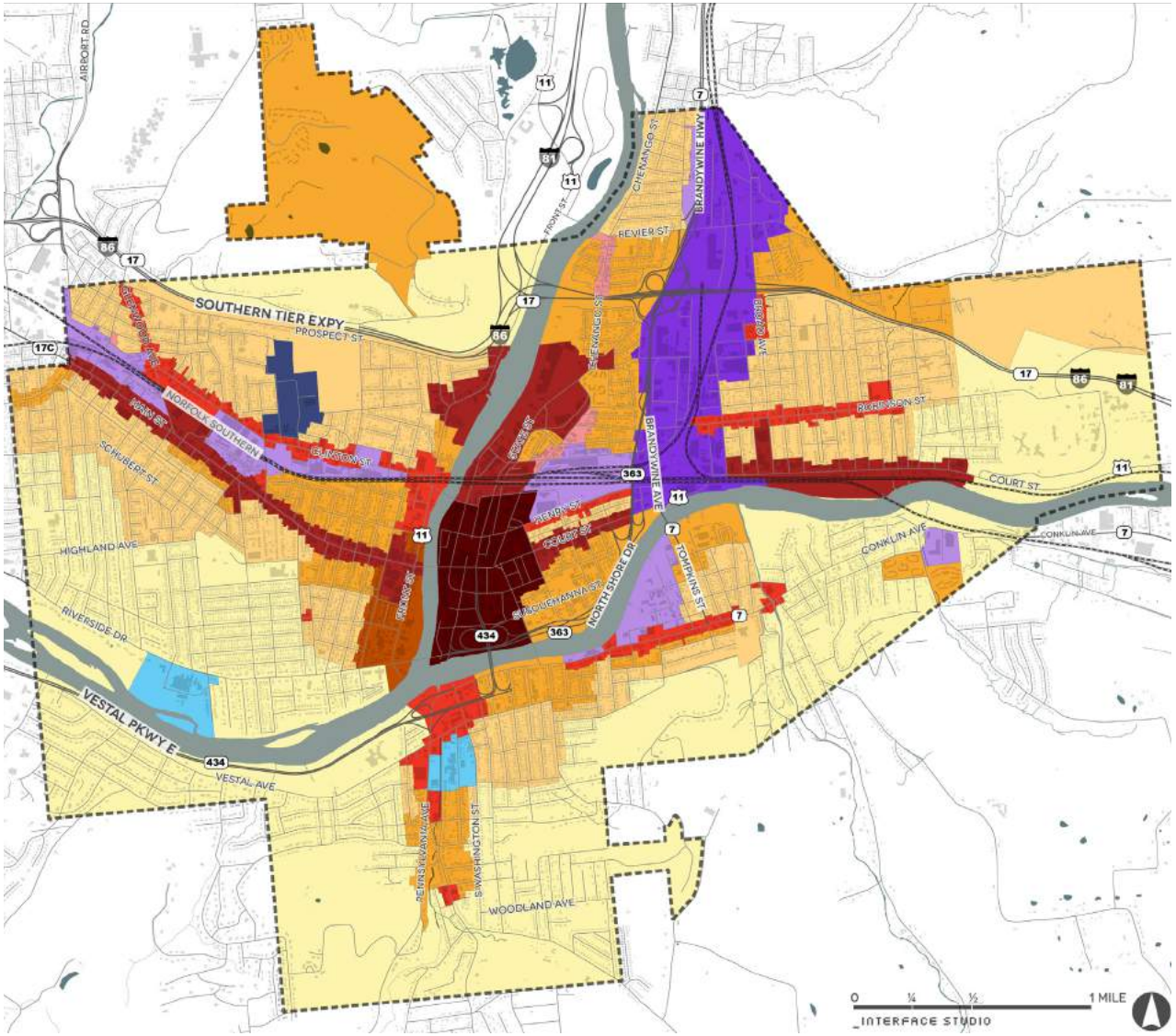


FIGURE 64: Zoning - MAP

CURRENT ZONING

There are 13 classifications within the current Binghamton Zoning Code, which was revised following the completion of the 2003 Comprehensive Plan and adopted in 2006. The current Zoning Code has three residential categories, six commercial categories, three industrial categories, and one overlay district. The descriptions below paraphrase the Binghamton Zoning Code definitions.

SOURCE: CITY OF BINGHAMTON

- C-1 SERVICE COMMERCIAL
- C-2 DOWNTOWN BUSINESS DISTRICT
- C-3 MEDICAL
- C-4 NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL
- C-5 NEIGHBORHOOD OFFICE
- C-6 LIMITED NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL
- I-1 URBAN BUSINESS PARK
- I-2 LIGHT & MEDIUM INDUSTRIAL
- I-3 HEAVY INDUSTRIAL
- R-1 RESIDENTIAL SINGLE UNIT DWELLING
- R-2 RESIDENTIAL ONE & TWO UNIT DWELLING
- R-3 RESIDENTIAL MULTI UNIT DWELLING

RESIDENTIAL CLASSIFICATIONS

R-1 RESIDENTIAL SINGLE-UNIT DWELLING DISTRICT: allows for low-density, one-unit dwellings with substantial restrictions on land uses and density.

R-2 RESIDENTIAL ONE- AND TWO-UNIT DWELLING DISTRICT: allows for a mix of one-unit dwellings, two-unit dwellings, and townhouses to create a low-to-moderate population density. R-2 zones typically serve as a buffer between the less dense R-1 zones and commercial corridors.

R-3 RESIDENTIAL MULTI-UNIT DWELLING DISTRICT: allows for a broad range of housing options including multi-family rentals and a moderate-to-high population density. R-3 zones are typically found close to clusters of commercial activities.

A NOTE ON RESIDENTIAL ZONING: Binghamton Law requires that housing units in residentially zoned areas have either a single family or the "functional and factual equivalent" of a family living in them. Typical college student rental living arrangements rarely meet the legal test for the functional and factual equivalent of a family[2] as legally defined by the State, and thus present a zoning issue if more than one unrelated adults are living together within a residential zone.

2 New York State Law defines **FAMILY** *as any number of individuals related by blood, marriage or adoption; or any number of individuals not related by blood, marriage or adoption living together and who meet the legal definition of a functional and factual family equivalent.*

FUNCTIONAL AND FACTUAL FAMILY EQUIVALENT *- A group of unrelated individuals living together and functioning together as a traditional family. In determining whether or not a group of unrelated individuals comprise a functional and factual family equivalent, a petition shall be presented before the Zoning Board of Appeals, who will consider, among other things, the following factors:*

1. *Whether the occupants share the entire dwelling unit or act as separate roomers.*

2. *Whether the household has stability akin to a permanent family structure. The criteria used to determine this test may include the following:*

- *Length of stay together among the occupants in the current dwelling unit or other dwelling units.*
- *The presence of minor, dependent children regularly residing in the household.*
- *The presence of one individual acting as head of household.*
- *Proof of sharing expenses for food, rent or ownership costs, utilities and other household expenses.*
- *Common ownership of furniture and appliances among the members of the household.*
- *Whether the household is a temporary living arrangement or a framework for transient living.*
- *Whether the composition of the household changes from year to year or within the year.*
- *Any other factor reasonably related to whether or not the group of persons is the functional equivalent of a family.*

COMMERCIAL CLASSIFICATIONS

C-1 SERVICE COMMERCIAL DISTRICT: allows for a mix of commercial service, storage, and light industrial processing activities of citywide or regional significance. Restrictions and development standards are intended to protect adjacent residential areas and important natural features.

C-2 DOWNTOWN BUSINESS DISTRICT: allows for large retail stores, specialty shops and services, business services, financial institutions, offices, theaters, hotels, government buildings, and sports and entertainment facilities, which have citywide and regional significance. Residential development is also permitted in this and other commercial classifications, free of the functional or factual family definition that applies to residentially-zoned areas, restricting the number of non-related adults living together. The C-2 classification applies to the Downtown commercial core, bound by the rivers, freight rail, and Carroll and Exchange streets to the east.

C-3 MEDICAL DISTRICT: allows for medical services and facilities that have developed within existing residential neighborhoods and where the continued availability of such services is desired. The C-3 classification applies to parcels hosting Lourdes Hospital on the West Side and UHS Hospital on the South Side.

C-4 NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL DISTRICT: allows for general retail, service, and office activities providing convenience goods and services to Binghamton neighborhoods but not typically on a citywide or regional scale. This classification exists on neighborhood-oriented commercial corridors where non-residential land uses have mixed with, and often superseded, residential development.

C-5 NEIGHBORHOOD OFFICE DISTRICT: allows for professional offices and specialized commercial, personal service, civic, and cultural activities of city-wide and regional significance as alternative uses of existing large residential structures. The C-5 classification applies only to the formerly residential, now-office uses on Front Street in the West Side Neighborhood Project target area.

C-6 LIMITED NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL DISTRICT: allows small-scale, commercial establishments to coexist with residential neighborhoods for the purpose of providing adjacent residents with convenience goods and personal services. C-6 zones exist in two locations on Chenango Street in the North Side, just north of the freight line, and north of I-86 to Bevier Street.

INDUSTRIAL CLASSIFICATIONS

I-1 URBAN BUSINESS PARK DISTRICT: allows for technology-based business and industrial uses, and was recently adjusted to allow for medical services as well. This classification currently pertains only to the Charles Street Business Park in the First Ward.

I-2 LIGHT AND MEDIUM INDUSTRIAL DISTRICT: allows for light and medium-intensity industrial development. This classification is located in a few distinct locations, usually along freight rail.

I-3 HEAVY INDUSTRIAL DISTRICT: designates areas suitable for heavy industrial uses. The sole I-3 zone is located in the Brandywine Industrial Corridor - the district in the immediate vicinity of the freight rails that extend north of the City.

OVERLAY DISTRICT

URBAN VILLAGE OVERLAY DISTRICT: the intent of the Urban Village Overlay District, adopted in 2011, is to protect housing stock and property values in the City of Binghamton, as well as designate those areas that are appropriate for mixed uses and subject to design guidelines to create a vibrant and cohesive neighborhood. Investment and development within the Urban Village Overlay District should support the City's commitment to "Complete Streets" that balance the needs of pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders and drivers, shared parking arrangements, the adaptive reuse of existing buildings, and context sensitive architectural design of residential structures within the District. Currently, the Urban Village Overlay District encompasses the West Side Neighborhood Project boundaries, north and south of Main Street.

SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES

The proposed future land use for Binghamton seeks to reinforce areas of stability within our City and adjust the land uses allowed in underperforming areas to make room for development that meets emerging or demonstrated market potential, all while balancing development with the need for environmental sensitivity in the City's flood-prone zones.

All of **BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON'S** land use and zoning recommendations address one or more of the objectives listed below:

- Embrace policy changes that reinforce **RESILIENT LAND USE PATTERNS** and proactively tackle land use challenges
- Reinvent **MAJOR OPPORTUNITY SITES** with new, market-driven, **MIXED USE DEVELOPMENT** that will breathe **NEW ECONOMIC LIFE** into neighborhoods and Downtown
- Encourage appropriate types and intensities of development and **IMPROVE FLOODWATER INFRASTRUCTURE** in areas rendered vulnerable, both physically and economically, by the shifting floodplain
- **REWRITE THE ZONING CODE** to ensure that the intent of the future land use map is supported by appropriate zoning and zoning procedures that work with and for the development community

COMMUNITY VOICE

BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON asked YOU for your thoughts and ideas, concerns and priorities related to patterns of land use and zoning in our City. The community had **MANY IDEAS** about new land uses to encourage in Binghamton and land use changes to support a more dynamic and resilient City.

COLLABORATIVE MAP COMMENTS

As land use is a broad subject that encompasses housing, entertainment, parks and open space, commerce, and transportation, the majority of **COLLABORATIVE MAP COMMENTS** (70%) addressed land use issues. Your comments ranged from generally applicable across the City to site-specific ideas for changes in land use; here is a small sample:

- "Binghamton needs a comprehensive and consistent City plan to be applied to all future developments and infrastructure."
- "Increase street vibrancy. I've heard people tell me that Bing's unofficial motto is, "Where is everybody?""
- "Improve empty parking lots and find a way to make them more useful." "Brandywine Industrial area is currently inaccessible by roads/highways. Improving this would assist industrial development."

COLLABORATIVE MAP

IDEAS. INSIGHTS. BARRIERS

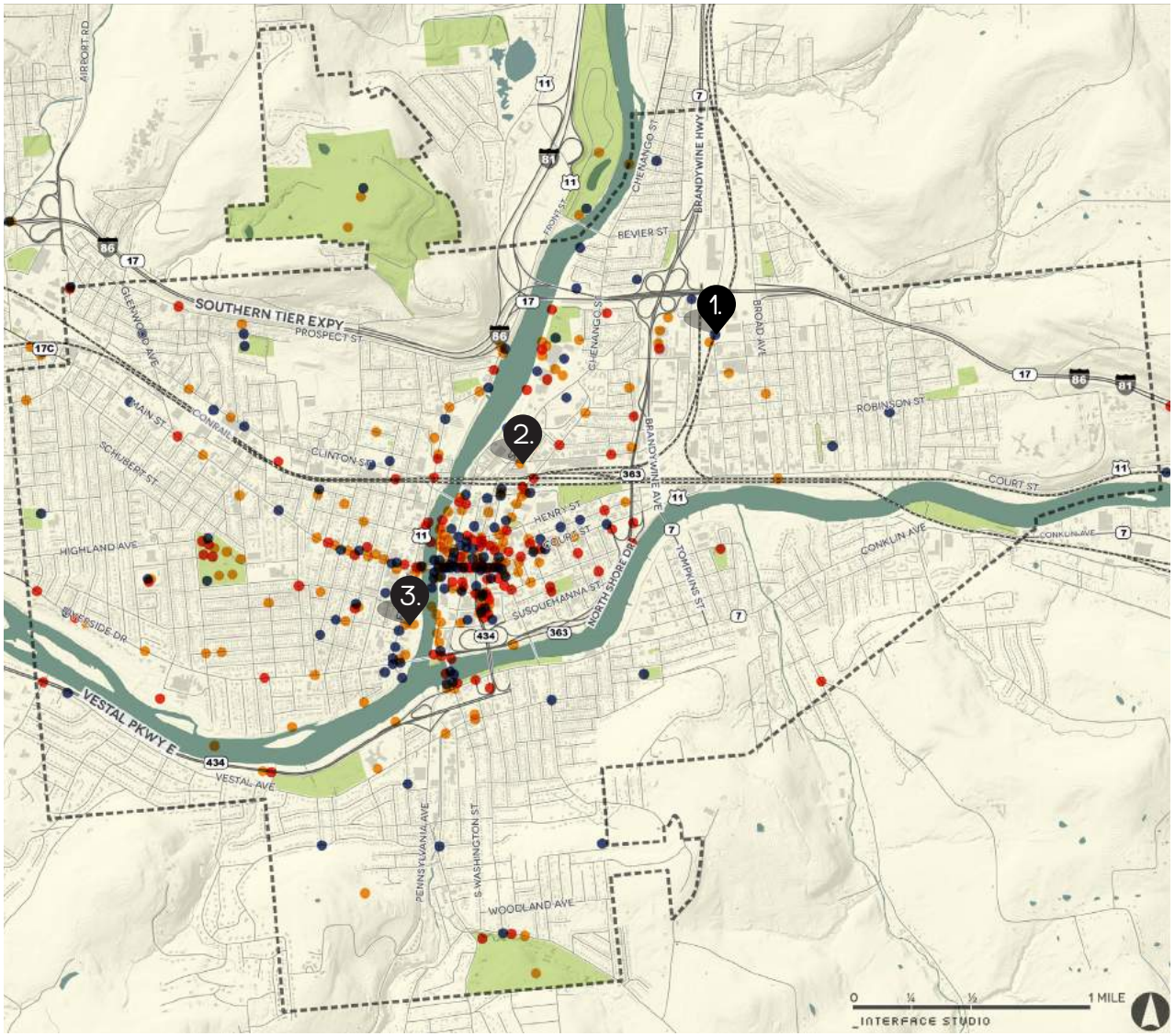


FIGURE 65: Collaborative Map Comments Locations

1. "BRANDYWINE INDUSTRIAL AREA IS CURRENTLY INACCESSIBLE BY ROADS/HIGHWAYS. IMPROVING THIS WOULD ASSIST INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT."

2. "WOULD LOVE TO SEE DEPOT STREET AND TRAIN STATION CONTINUE LOFT DEVELOPMENT, RESTAURANTS, OR BARS."

3. "START ACTIVELY MARKETING PURCHASE AND FIXING OF FORMER AND CLOSED ASSISTED LIVING FACILITY NEAR ROBERSON MUSEUM ON FRONT STREET."

- IDEA
- INSIGHT
- BARRIER

POSTCARDS FROM THE FUTURE

Your **POSTCARDS FROM THE FUTURE** describe a vision of growth and diversity, a City that hosts an eclectic mix of land uses, which provide jobs and services in proximity to housing and open spaces while together forming the backdrop for a vibrant public realm and energized street life:

THE CITY & ITS PARTNERS CONTINUE TO PROVIDE ALTERNATIVE PATHWAYS FOR DEVELOPMENT & GROWTH. I WAS THERE ON SATURDAY NIGHT & THERE WAS HOCKEY, AN EVENT AT THE FORUM & THE LOOK OF A BUSY CITY. STOP BY. FLORIDA IS FOR OLD PEOPLE.

I HAVE NO TROUBLE BIKING AROUND TOWN. MY STREET HAS A COMMUNITY GARDEN AND BEAUTIFUL STREET TREES, THE NEIGHBORHOOD HAS A WELL MAINTAINED, SAFE & MUCH USED PARK, AND THERE ARE GREAT RESTAURANTS. THERE IS COMPETITION FOR DOWNTOWN STOREFRONT SPACE & THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN OFF-CAMPUS STUDENTS & THEIR NEIGHBORS HAS IMPROVED. WE'VE FORTIFIED FOR FUTURE FLOODING & HAVE MADE USE OF VACANT LOTS FOR RAIN GARDENS, PUBLIC ART, GARDENS, ETC.

YOU SHOULD SEE ALL THE NEW STORES AND THE BEAUTIFUL LANDSCAPING AT THE BINGHAMTON PLAZA. IT'S GREAT ONE PLACE STOP AND SHOP. IT'S BETTER THAN WAL-MART.

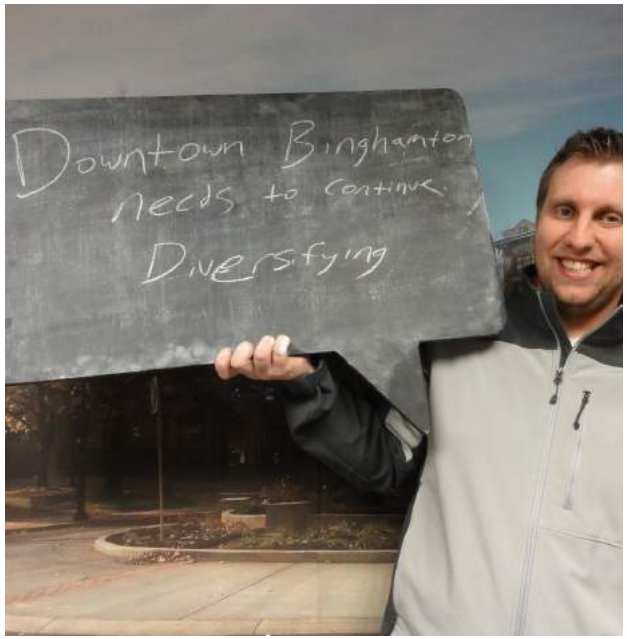
A VITAL COMMUNITY INTEGRATION OF MUSIC, ARTS, STUDENTS, FAMILIES, COMMERCE & TECHNOLOGY INTO A DYNAMIC VIBRANT TAPESTRY.

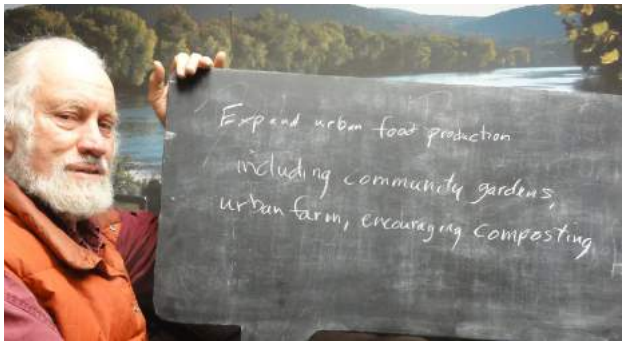
When **5TH GRADERS** in the Binghamton City School District imagined their **DREAM NEIGHBORHOOD,** they too had thoughts about how land should be used in the future… and very wisely, one student acknowledged that sometimes what is best, is to keep things the same:

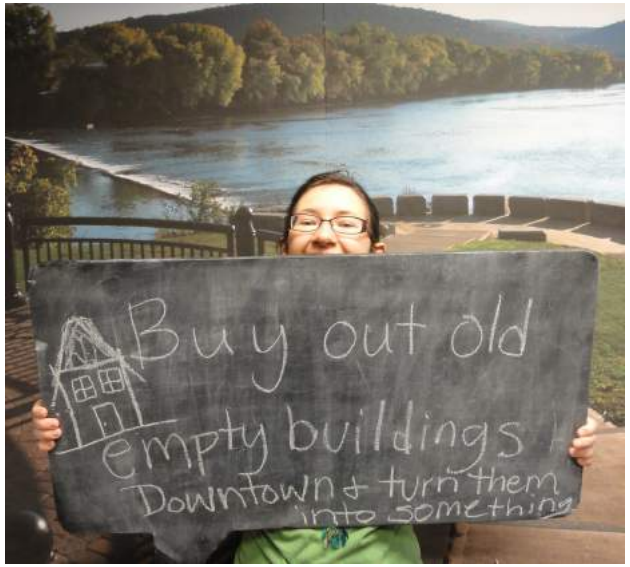
I REALLY LIKE MY NEIGHBORHOOD THE WAY IT IS. THE ONLY THING THAT WOULD MAKE IT BETTER IS TO HAVE TWO ROLLER COASTERS: ONE FOR LITTLE KIDS AND ONE FOR BIGGER KIDS. IT WOULD ALSO HAVE A PUBLIC POOL WITH A BIG WATERSLIDE. THE REST OF IT WOULD BE THE SAME. THAT'S MY DREAM NEIGHBORHOOD.

BIG IDEAS

You'll find your **BIG IDEAS** span a broad spectrum of land use topics from housing to urban agriculture, development to sustainability, business to entertainment, and new construction to adaptive reuse. Together, they inform many of the recommendations for growth and land use change.







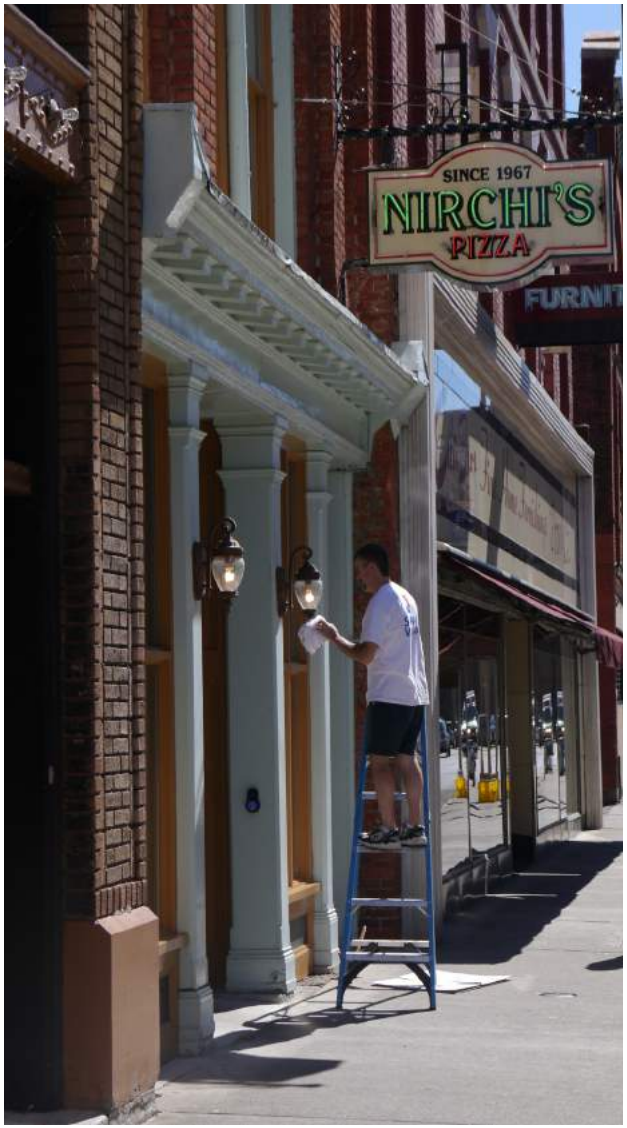
Images from the "Photo Suggestion Booth"

CITYWIDE SURVEY

And your responses on the **CITYWIDE SURVEY** underscored the advantages of urban living in Binghamton but also indicated room for improvement on matters of land use and zoning:

- Things you like: distance to work & access to amenities, parks too!
- Things Binghamton's land use pattern must make more room for:

64%	Improved job opportunities
58%	Downtown revitalization
52%	More small and locally owned businesses
40%	New and renovated housing
38%	Proactive flood management



Downtown

LAND USE & ZONING GOALS

The recommendations that comprise **BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON'S MINI-PLAN ON LAND USE & ZONING [A PLAN FOR THE LAND]** are organized into five goal areas, each titled by a key land use and zoning goal:

01

UPDATE MAPS CODES AND PROCEDURES

02

ALLOW GREATER HOUSING CHOICE AND PROTECT THE LIVABILITY OF BINGHAMTON'S NEIGHBORHOODS

03

ENCOURAGE NEW COMMERCIAL USES DOWNTOWN AND ALONG TRADITIONAL COMMERCIAL CORRIDORS

04

EXPAND OPPORTUNITIES FOR NEW INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT

05

PROTECT BINGHAMTON'S HISTORIC CHARACTER AND ENCOURAGE DESIGN EXCELLENCE

Taken together, the Land Use & Zoning Goals and their related objectives and strategies support the following themes of **BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON'S** vision for the future of our City:

- **THRIVING** - with a mix of new businesses Downtown, at hubs along commercial corridors, and on large sites that represent major opportunities to bring catalytic change to Binghamton
- **RESILIENT & SUSTAINABLE** - with development patterns that slowly shift to high and dry land and emerging landscapes along the riverfronts designed to absorb rainfall and floodwater to protect the City's residents and businesses
- **PROUD** - with infill and reinvestment that stabilizes neighborhoods, preserves the City's architectural assets, and maintains a variety of places to work, shop, and play
- **ALIVE** - with a balanced population of young and old, students and long-term residents, all of whom find ample and attractive places to live, work, and relax at home in Binghamton

FOR FULL VISION STATEMENT, SEE PAGE 40.

GOAL:

01

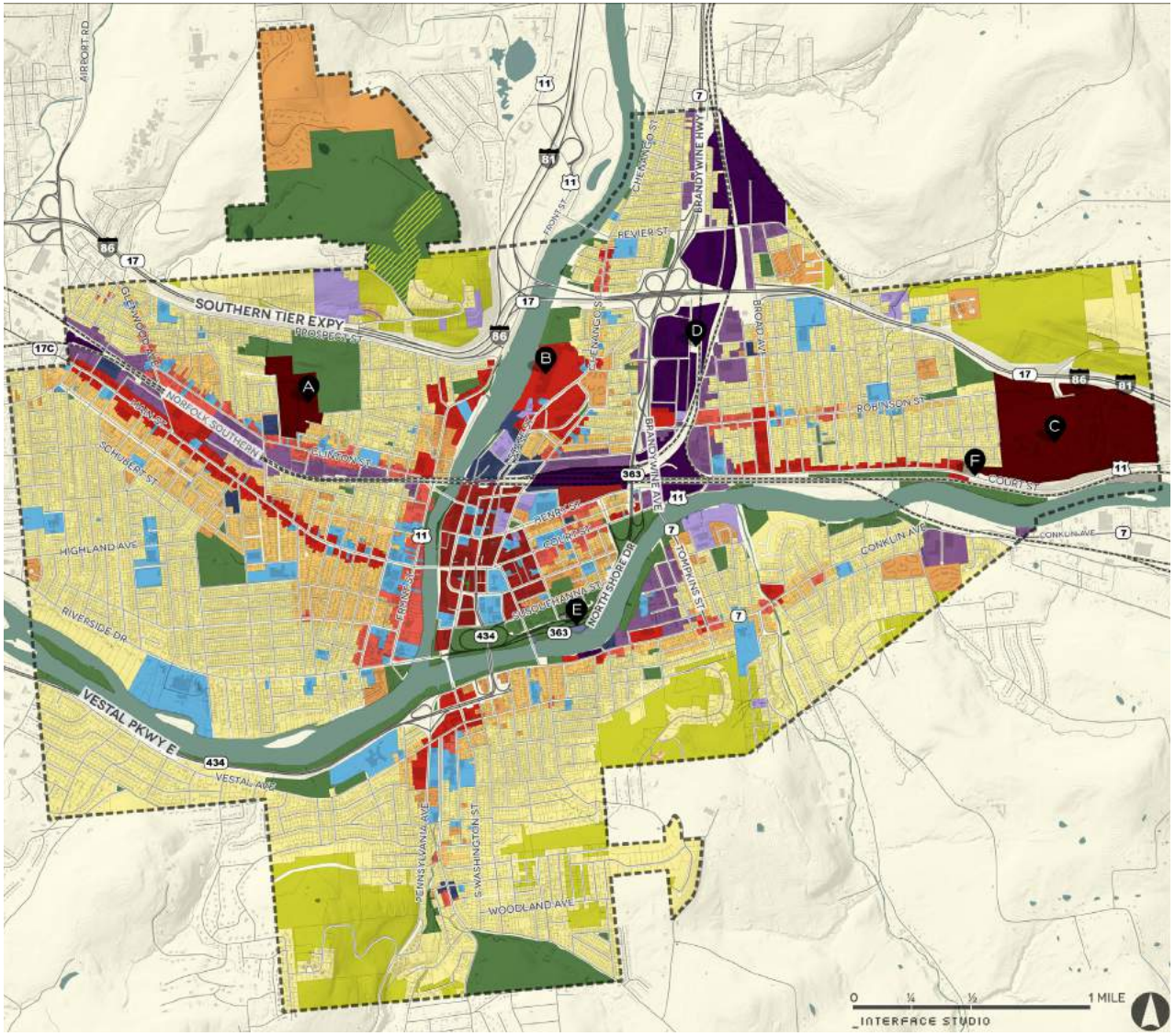
UPDATE MAPS, CODES AND PROCEDURES

The first steps to proactively guiding growth and development within the City of Binghamton are to establish a vision for desired land use patterns, to write that vision into the Zoning Code, and to communicate that vision to community members and developers interested in investing in the City. Streamlining development review procedures can also create a more transparent and navigable process, which benefits investors and developers, City agencies, and residents alike. The following land use and zoning recommendations support Goal 1:

1.1 UPDATE THE LAND USE MAP

The future land use map illustrates proposed land use changes for properties within the City that are either not being used to their maximum potential, or where the current use is no longer appropriate due to changing demand, population shifts or other factors that negatively impact redevelopment. Changes on the map will not translate to immediate on the ground changes in land use; rather, these recommended changes should help guide land use decisions by the Planning Commission and Zoning Board, and may inform the creation of new zoning classifications within the Zoning Code and the rezoning of property.

FUTURE LAND USE



- DOWNTOWN
- TRADITIONAL COMMERCIAL
- GENERAL COMMERCIAL
- GENERAL INDUSTRY
- LIGHT INDUSTRY
- PRODUCTION / MIXED-USE
- URBAN BUSINESS PARK
- SINGLE - FAMILY DETACHED
- SINGLE + TWO FAMILY
- MULTI - FAMILY
- ESTATE RESIDENTIAL
- ESTATE RESIDENTIAL - GOLF COURSE
- INSTITUTIONAL
- UTILITIES
- PARKS & OPEN SPACE

A: CHARLES ST. BUSINESS PARK
B: BINGHAMTON PLAZA
C: GREATER BINGHAMTON HEALTH CENTER
D: BRANDYWINE INDUSTRIAL CORRIDOR
E: SUSQUEHANNA RIVERFRONT DOWNTOWN
F: FLOOD-PRONE COMMERCIAL, COURT STREET

FIGURE 66: Future Land Use - MAP

NEW CLASSIFICATIONS

The existing land use map (Figure 63) illustrates the City's current land use pattern using eight categories: residential, multi-family residential, commercial, industrial, community services, public services, recreational, and parking. Parcels that are undeveloped or not in active use read as white on that map.

The future land use map, in contrast, includes land uses that are more descriptive and intended to indicate both use and character. The future land use categories include Urban Business Park, Single-Family Detached Residential, Single & Two-Family Residential, Multi-Family Residential, Institutional, Utilities, and Parks & Open Space. All of these categories reference existing zoning classifications. In addition, the future land use map also identifies new categories[3] that help to further distinguish different character areas within the City:

- **DOWNTOWN:** mixed use, with the highest densities allowable for development
- **TRADITIONAL COMMERCIAL:** pedestrian-oriented, walkable, mixed use corridors or districts, with retail or office uses on the ground floor and office or residential uses on upper floors
- **GENERAL COMMERCIAL:** allows for auto-oriented commercial land use patterns
- **GENERAL INDUSTRY:** property that can accommodate heavier manufacturing and larger distribution and warehousing activities that need to be buffered from residential uses
- **LIGHT INDUSTRY:** areas suited for advanced manufacturing, assembly, and industrial flex space for activities that can be located closer to residential uses
- **PRODUCTION/MIXED USE:** properties suited for light manufacturing, artisanal uses, offices, and even housing; parcels suggested for this use typically host buildings eligible for adaptive reuse for creative uses
- **ESTATE RESIDENTIAL:** this land use designation applies to undeveloped properties with environmentally-sensitive site conditions (woodlands and steep slopes) and suggests that properties of this use are suitable only for very low-density, low-impact residential development such as large "estate homes" built upon large lots.

3 *In the next five years, once FEMA's draft Flood Insurance Rate Maps (dFIRM) are finalized and passed, the City should revisit the land uses recommended for properties within the new 100-year floodplain. For additional discussion, see Recommendation 2.3 below and 1.5 in the Infrastructure chapter.*

1.2

REWRITE THE ZONING CODE TO ENSURE THAT APPROPRIATE ZONING SUPPORTS THE FUTURE LAND USE MAP

New York's zoning enabling statutes, the state statutes that give cities, towns, and villages the power to enact local zoning laws, all require that zoning laws be adopted in accordance with a comprehensive plan. **BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON,** as the City's Comprehensive Plan, must therefore provide the backbone for local zoning law, and Binghamton's zoning code will require a rewrite to ensure that appropriate zoning classifications support the intent of the future land use map. The rewrite will most likely result in small changes to the Zoning Map rather than a large scale re-zoning, though the rewrite also presents an opportunity to restore consistency and continuity within the Code itself and across all other related municipal codes. Properties subject to zoning change would include the "Major Opportunity Sites" identified on the map and discussed in greater detail in Recommendation 1.3, as well as locations that have the new "Production/Mixed Use" and "Estate Residential" zoning classifications. The update to the Code itself (as opposed to the Zoning Map) should also consider changes to address ideas proposed in Recommendations 1.4 through 1.6 and throughout the remainder of the recommendations in this chapter.

1.3

INCORPORATE A SPECIAL PURPOSE CLASSIFICATION FOR KEY SITES

In the case of Major Opportunity Sites with the potential to effect transformative change within Binghamton, a zoning classification does not offer enough information to guide redevelopment in keeping with the community's vision, market potential, and intent of **BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON.** For these sites, the Zoning Code should instead apply a Special Purpose classification, with a descriptive narrative outlined in the Code to inform the future reuse and redevelopment of key properties. In addition to the ideal mix of uses for each site, the descriptive narratives should also include design principles that relate back to the policy recommendations of **BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON.**

MAJOR OPPORTUNITY SITES

The future land use map highlights six major opportunity sites or groups of sites, each of which holds potential for land use changes and development that would result in catalytic and positive change for the City. Site-specific visions for each of the six sites are described below, with recommendations on the mix of land uses and design concepts to inform the Special Purpose narratives for the Zoning Code:

A CHARLES STREET BUSINESS PARK

The large open tract of graded, developable land and existing infrastructure make this site prime for development. However, challenging truck access, zero rail access, and surrounding residential neighborhoods render it less than ideal as a standalone business/industrial park, and a large portion of the Charles Street Business Park has stood vacant for years. The site should instead welcome a broader mix of uses ranging from lighter industrial uses to new residential development. If residential uses are considered for this site, careful consideration of any remaining environmental issues is necessary. The vacant and wooded areas surrounding Veterans Park are outside the flood zone and ideal for infill residential, particularly in the First Ward, where new housing opportunities outside of the floodplain would offer residents within the floodplain an opportunity to move but remain in their community. The remainder of the site should host businesses that require buildings with a large footprint, but that rely less on the shipping of materials/goods, including but not limited to medical offices. Accordingly, the uses permitted in the Urban Business Park zoning classification must be expanded to allow a mix of housing, office, and light industrial, which together could bring the site back to life. See Recommendation 3.1.

FIGURE 67: "BIG IDEA" Comments - Charles Street Business Park

Charles Street Business Park

B BINGHAMTON PLAZA

In its current state, Binghamton Plaza is an unattractive and underperforming commercial property. Its dated design and site plan hark back to previous ideas of auto-oriented development which are now understood to be a poor use of a city's valuable land and resources. With a prime location along the Chenango River and above major flood zones, Binghamton Plaza can be a vastly improved space that could serve as an anchor for the North Side, attract shoppers and residents from the broader city/region, contribute to the expanding park and trail network, and dramatically improve the public image of the City as viewed from I-86. Its existing condition as a single use commercial space is not conducive to the current market conditions and does not serve the community's needs. This is evidenced by the large number of vacancies within the complex. Inviting a more diverse set of land uses, including some residential, as well as a site plan that meets the street and offers a connection to the River and trail would greatly benefit the community and City. The North Chenango BOA Study will include conceptual site plans for redevelopment.

FIGURE 68: "BIG IDEA" Comments - Binghamton Plaza

C GREATER BINGHAMTON HEALTH CENTER

The Greater Binghamton Health Center, a portion of which lies within Binghamton City limits, is partially used by SUNY Upstate Medical University, but large portions of the site host scattered, vacant, and historic hospital buildings and swaths of underutilized open space. Given the lack of developable land in Binghamton and the site's elevation, which affords fantastic views of the valley and protection from the flood zone, this sizable parcel offers great potential to diversify its land uses to include residential, office, and enhanced open spaces, along with the existing medical facilities. Residential development (single and multi-family) rehabilitated vacant buildings and new construction will provide an opportunity for residents to move out of the flood plain in the East Side to a safer location within their existing community and support system. Though the site does benefit from transit service on Robinson, because the area is somewhat remote, new housing should not target special needs populations but rather mobile residents with access to cars. The beautiful vistas of Downtown Binghamton and the surrounding landscape are a unique amenity and will attract neighbors from across the City as potential residents and visitors to new and improved park space on site. Redevelopment of this property would require partnership with the adjacent Town of Kirkwood as well as the State.

Greater Binghamton Health Center

D BRANDYWINE INDUSTRIAL CORRIDOR

Loosely defined as the area between the Brandywine Highway and the freight rail lines, the Brandywine Industrial Corridor has the potential to be the preeminent industrial corridor in the region with its excellent rail and highway access. It is currently underutilized, with some out-of-place residential properties (especially along Whitney Avenue and Montgomery Street) and large vacant properties. Existing infrastructure (freight lines, the Brandywine Highway, and Interstate 81) create a clear delineation between industry and the surrounding residential neighborhood. The future land use of this site shows the residential and vacant property transitioning to light and heavy industrial uses to create a singular industrial preservation district.

Brandywine Industrial Corridor

E SUSQUEHANNA RIVERFRONT DOWNTOWN

Between North Shore Drive and Susquehanna Street

Flooding in Downtown is primarily concentrated between Susquehanna Street and the Susquehanna River. To prevent future damage to these parcels and to protect the rest of Downtown's businesses and residents, this low-lying area should be retrofitted as a green open space and wetland floodwater retention area. Such a change would require two large moves: 1) the relocation of affordable housing at Woodburn Court II, and 2) the transformation of the overbuilt North Shore Drive to a pedestrian-friendly boulevard. The results would be dramatic, creating safer conditions for residents and businesses, a more resilient City, a reconnected street grid, and a new linear park space that affords access to the Susquehanna River. See Recommendations 1.3 and 4.5 in the Housing chapter, 1.1 and 2.4 in the Infrastructure chapter, and 1.4 in the Transportation chapter for additional detail.

North Shore Drive

F FLOOD-PRONE PORTIONS OF COURT STREET

The neighborhood adjacent to Court Street on the East Side saw significant flooding in 2006 and 2011. Though the City's Engineering Department is devising infrastructure improvements to help mitigate future flood risks, a similar strategy to the one for Opportunity Site E should be used along the Court Street corridor, on the south side of Court Street, transitioning away from active commercial use to storm and floodwater retention space that can prevent future property damage and protect the adjacent neighborhood. Court Street should retain its commercial district on the north side of the street. These recommended changes are also reflected in the proposed new zoning for Court and Main currently under consideration.

Court Street

1.4

STUDY CURRENT LAND USES ALLOWED BY THE ZONING CODE AND EXAMINE WAYS TO SIMPLIFY THE CODE

As currently written, Binghamton's Zoning Ordinance utilizes a "pyramidal" approach to zoning, permitting uses allowed in more restricted zoning classifications as of right in less restricted zones. Think of the Zoning Code as a pyramid with the least restricted heavy industrial classification at the bottom, the most restricted single family residential classifications at the top, and all other classifications in between. With pyramidal zoning, all classifications "above" are permitted in any or most classifications "below;" the reverse is not true.

Hence, single-family residential is allowed in a commercial zone and commercial uses are allowed in an industrial zone, but an industrial use would not be allowed in a single-family zone. This relationship threatens residents and residential properties that may be located in close proximity to heavy industrial uses. It also threatens the inventory of industrial land, as commercial users, permitted as of right by the current ordinance, can compete to acquire land, thereby cutting into limited and much needed space for job-producing industrial operators. By updating the Zoning Code to simplify allowable uses and get rid of pyramidal zoning, the above risks are prevented, and the highest and best use of land is attainable.

1.5
UPDATE SUBDIVISION REGULATIONS

When updating the Zoning Ordinance classifications, the City should also revisit its subdivision regulations, with an eye toward conformance with **BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON'S** policy recommendations as well as improved clarity, consistency, and a streamlined development review process. Updated subdivision regulations should, for example, include requirements that waterfront parcels include a public easement along the rivers for improved access to the rivers. The subdivision regulations should also include project size thresholds for review such that smaller projects (of fewer than four units) have a shorter, more straight-forward review process.

Court Street

Main Street

1.6
CONSIDER NEW ZONING FOR THE COURT STREET - MAIN STREET CORRIDOR

Form-based codes are a type of zoning that focuses on the "form" of buildings and public spaces rather than solely the "use" of a building. In many cases, cities use form-based codes as a supplement to a more traditional zoning code, and that is the intent with the Court Street - Main Street code currently in development.

The genesis of form-based codes was in reaction to the auto-oriented development that has taken root in the past 50 years, evident on the Court Street - Main Street corridor outside of Downtown. The overall goal of this type of code is to streamline regulations, set clear expectations for development and maintain the tradition of cities having walkable, dense, and pedestrian-friendly streetscapes. **BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON** facilitated an extensive outreach and design charrette process to gather the public's input on elements of the form-based code for Court and Main. The proposed Code requires more study prior to adoption and is included as an appendix to **BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON**. The City should review these potential amendments to the zoning ordinance to improve the business corridors, including a review of form-based code or other zoning amendments that improve development standards.

1.7
FACILITATE TRANSPARENCY IN THE DEVELOPMENT REVIEW AND PERMITTING PROCESS

Currently, development projects must weave their way through a review and permitting process that is time intensive and can deter interested investors. Creating an online platform with a simple step-by-step guide to the development process, including a process map, and automated permit application portal will save time and money for both City staff and project developers. While this is an upfront investment in technology, on-line permitting has saved other cities a significant amount of money over time while also encouraging more private investment.

Example of on-line permitting in Oregon

1.8
ACTIVELY ENCOURAGE THAT DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS MEET COMPREHENSIVE PLAN GOALS AND STRATEGIES

As the Comprehensive Plan provides the land use vision for the City and is to serve as the backbone for the local Zoning Ordinance, all future developments that come before the Planning Commission for review or the Zoning Board of Appeals for approval must prove that they further the goals, land use strategies, and policy agendas of **BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON**. Therefore, a narrative describing a project's consistency with the Comprehensive Plan or a checklist of goals met should accompany each development proposal reviewed by the City, Planning Commission, or Zoning Board.

It will be important for the City to set an early precedent in order for **BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON** to have legitimacy with developers. Planning Department staff should create a checklist of **BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON** goals and priorities for use at the pre-development meetings and should be prepared to talk to developers about how a given project supports or could better support the Plan's goals. The checklist will make the strategies outlined in the plan readily available and digestible for developers, and it should be known that the reviewing agencies and boards will expect all new developments to adhere to the Plan's vision and strategies. This should result in greater transparency and fairness for all parties and the City and result in projects that are mutually beneficial.

GOAL:

02

ALLOW GREATER HOUSING CHOICE AND PROTECT THE LIVABILITY OF BINGHAMTON'S NEIGHBORHOODS

The majority of residential neighborhoods in Binghamton host single-family homes with some homes converted to rental and student housing. Many homeowners are wary of encroaching rental housing as a first step to the degradation of a neighborhood, citing absentee landlords who allow properties to decline, thus bringing down surrounding property values, as well as renters (particularly some students) who detract from quality of life. But the need for rental housing is vital to a vibrant growing city, where not only students but the young working class would many times rather rent before making a commitment to owning property. Blueprint Binghamton suggests a variety of steps the City can take to allow for greater housing choice within neighborhoods while also maintaining strong neighborhoods and residential communities. The following land use and zoning recommendations support Goal 2:

Residential block in the West Side

2.1

CONVERT THE URBAN VILLAGE DISTRICT OVERLAY INTO A ZONING CATEGORY, AND EXPAND ITS APPLICATION

The current Urban Village District is an overlay enacted by City Council and focused on the WSNP target area. The intent was to ultimately enable and legalize student housing in this location such that it could be better managed while serving as a method to prevent large homes from being subdivided into smaller units. However, as an overlay district this goal cannot be achieved because the underlying zoning still remains residential.

Due to the definition of Functional Family from the State of New York, the City has limited options to promote legal, student housing rentals in other residentially zoned areas. However, student housing is permissible in commercially zoned areas where the application of functional family does not apply. Given that it would be detrimental to the housing market to re-zone large portions of the City to commercial use (not to mention the tensions that would be created with residents), the best option is to convert the Urban Village District Overlay into a specific zoning category whose underlying use is commercial. The allowable commercial uses can be restricted to limit the intrusion of large-scale enterprises that would disturb the fabric of the community.

The application of this new zoning category must be carefully considered. It should target areas that require new investment but also areas that are readily accessible to BC Transit and OCCT bus service and Downtown amenities. These are the areas where students will naturally look to rent. This criterion makes the following locations best suited for an Urban Village designation: WSNP target area (current Overlay area), the east side of Downtown on both sides of Court Street (Center City neighborhood), and the northern section of the South Side along Conklin and Vestal Avenues. The clear identification of areas where student housing would be permitted, along with registrations and inspections should result in better maintenance and upkeep of properties by property managers and investor-owners.

The combination of the Urban Village District Zone with commercially zoned land accounts for 22% of the City's area suitable for student housing; at present, without these proposed changes, only 12% of Binghamton's developable area can legally host student rental housing. The proposed changes include expanding the Downtown zoning category to include the Binghamton University incubator and the baseball stadium, thus enabling a greater mix of uses in the future should these sites change use.

2.2

ENCOURAGE FLOOR PLANS IN MULTI-FAMILY DEVELOPMENTS THAT ARE SUITABLE FOR A VARIETY OF END USERS

New demand for residential units in Binghamton has been driven mostly by students in the past few years. Developers are tapping that demand by creating either new or converted student rentals. This investment is a breath of fresh air for Binghamton which has seen too few in past decades. However, the layouts are catered solely to student living and restrict the potential for different types of inhabitants in the future. The small, multi-bedroom residences that students enjoy are much different from the needs of a family, working class professional, or a retired senior couple. The City's Planning Commission and CAUD (should there be a design review process as described in Recommendation 5.1 of this chapter) should take the step of encouraging developers to create more open/adaptable floor plans with a balance of common living space and bedroom areas that will allow for a broader mix of future renters/owners. Also see Housing Recommendation 4.2.

2.3

CREATE A NEW, LOW DENSITY ZONING CLASSIFICATION FOR ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE AREAS

As previously stated in Recommendation 1.1, the new "Estate Residential" classification encourages extremely low density housing and open space. This zone is intended to address the challenges of developing and maintaining property within environmentally sensitive areas like steep slopes or existing woodlands.

As described in Infrastructure Recommendation 1.5, FEMA's draft Flood Insurance Rate Maps (dFIRM), once finalized and passed in the coming years, will significantly alter the landscape deemed environmentally sensitive. As a critical step in protecting Binghamton's neighborhoods, the City should revisit the land use recommendations and zoning classifications applicable in the areas within the new floodplain once it is enacted. While existing residents who choose to remain in flood-prone areas should be supported, properties purchased through a Floodplain Buyout Program and properties that are left vacant and abandoned by owners who opt not to elevate their homes or pay the elevated insurance premiums should be converted to green space that can help absorb floodwaters and mitigate risk for developed parcels nearby.

2.4

PERMIT HOME-BASED BUSINESSES AS A CONDITIONAL USE IN R1 AND R2 ZONES

Some of Binghamton's housing stock is beautiful and historic but also very large. The size of some of the larger homes limits the opportunities for their reuse, as the residential market is not strong enough for single-family buyers to take on these homes. In order to protect the integrity of these structures and limit the possibility for their conversion into student housing or fraternities, the Zoning Code should allow for more flexibility in the types, sizes and locations of home-based businesses.

Under the current Zoning Code, "minor" home occupations, defined as home businesses that do not result in customers coming and going from the house (like computer programming, an artist's studio, or a telephone answering service), are permitted as of right in R1, R2, and R3 districts. However, "major" home occupations, or those that do have limited customer traffic such as music/dance/art teachers, real estate or insurance agents, lawyers, accountants, or architects to name a few, are only allowed by right as in R3 zones.

The reality is that even in R1 and R2 zones, some realtors already market properties as opportunities for home-based businesses to potential buyers. However, in some cases, a home-based business requires a variance from the Zoning Board of Appeals, which can be a disincentive for the buyer. For R1 and R2 areas, both home-based businesses and office use on the first floor (provided the user lives upstairs) should be allowed as a conditional use to encourage protection of the City's historic housing stock. Portions of Riverside Drive, Front Street, Robinson Street, and Oak Street, in particular, are good candidates for this type of reuse and already include some office use.

2.5

ALLOW THE DEVELOPMENT OF PARKING FACILITIES IN THE URBAN VILLAGE DISTRICT SUBJECT TO STRICT DESIGN GUIDELINES

A core concern of residents in neighborhoods that have experienced a significant increase in student housing is parking. The homes originally designed for single-family use offer only so much space for off-street parking. When these homes are converted to student housing, some including eight or more beds, that use brings eight or more cars to the same property. Students, however, use their cars differently than residents. The combination of limited parking on campus and easy access to the University via BC Transit and OCCT buses, means that many students use their cars much less frequently than nearby families. The majority of student trips are on the weekends for shopping, visiting home, etc. This brings about the possibility of identifying and developing sites for student parking. The City should update the Zoning Code to allow parking lots for students with the provision that their location and design must be carefully considered to limit any potential impacts on neighbors. Also see Transportation Recommendation 2.3.

2.6

ALLOW NEW SENIOR LIVING FACILITIES IN R2 AND R3 ZONES AND ALONG COMMERCIAL CORRIDORS

With its historic Downtown, surrounding landscape, and affordability, Binghamton could position itself as a model city for senior living. The appeal of urban living for seniors derives from the close proximity to arts, culture, everyday amenities, and decreased car usage. Currently there are few housing options available to seniors who typically prefer housing with limited maintenance and upkeep requirements, a trait that the majority of single-family homes in Binghamton do not offer. Placing new senior facilities in denser commercial districts is beneficial in two ways: first it increases the demand for new stores and services on those corridors, and second it locates seniors in close proximity to the services that they require. Binghamton should work to incorporate these living facilities into the R2 and R3 zoning classifications. Also see Housing Recommendation 2.1.

2.7

ENABLE HIGHER DENSITY HOUSING ALONG MAIN STREET WEST OF DOWNTOWN

Main Street west of Downtown is an auto-oriented commercial corridor that serves the West Side Neighborhood Project, the Far West Side, and the First Ward neighborhoods. Neighbors north and south of Main Street expressed concern about deteriorating conditions along the corridor, and the block conditions surveyed by Interface Studio (Figure 25) confirm that the corridor has a blighting influence on adjacent residential areas. Redevelopment along Main Street offers the potential to address multiple challenges facing the West Side. Enabling the development of higher density housing in mixed use developments along Main Street would diversify Binghamton's housing stock, provide new housing options close to retail and services that would appeal to the student population, increase foot traffic along the corridor and thereby support local businesses, and stabilize adjacent single-family neighborhoods by lessening the demand for student rentals within historic homes. The new proposed zoning for the Court Street - Main Street corridor includes several block studies that illustrate the mixed-use development potential of Main Street, which could host new commercial as well as student-oriented, though not student-exclusive, apartments.

2.8 AMEND THE ZONING CODE TO ALLOW FOR AND MANAGE URBAN AGRICULTURE AS AN INTERIM USE PRIOR TO REDEVELOPMENT

During the planning process, community members expressed deep and diverse interest in community gardening, urban agriculture, and local food systems. Currently, urban agriculture is a land use that exists in a grey area within the current Zoning Code with no definitive classification. Rather, the Zoning Code speaks to non-commercial and community or neighborhood gardens. As cities search for innovative ways to reuse flood-prone land or reactivate vacant land until site assembly and redevelopment is feasible, activists work to increase access to fresh, local, and affordable food and foster small business efforts, and neighbors collaborate on community building initiatives that can reduce crime and blight, urban agriculture presents great opportunities. By proactively writing urban agriculture into the zoning code update, the City can identify suitable locations for urban agriculture as an interim use and regulate some of the externalities and potential land use conflicts caused by urban farming.

FIGURE 69: Block Concept for Main Street at Schiller Street

A SINGLE-STORY RETAIL
- » Smaller sites infilled with single story and/or live-work or residential
- » Surface parked behind

B 4-STORY MIXED USE BUILDINGS
- » 2 level parking deck
- » Top of deck accessed from side and rear streets

C AARON'S REDEVELOPMENT
- » 2-story mixed use
- » Surface parked behind

Urban farm east of Downtown

GOAL:

03

ENCOURAGE NEW COMMERCIAL USES DOWNTOWN AND ALONG TRADITIONAL COMMERCIAL CORRIDORS

Increased commercial activity is beneficial to the City and its residents. By driving new businesses to locate Downtown or along existing commercial corridors, new retail and services will help to reinforce those districts as commercial hubs as well as stabilize neighboring residential areas. The following land use and zoning recommendations support Goal 3:

3.1

CHANGE MIX OF USES PERMITTED WITHIN THE URBAN BUSINESS PARK (UBP) ZONING CLASSIFICATION

The Urban Business Park classification presently allows for technology-based business and industrial uses, and the Charles Street Business Park is the sole property with UBP zoning. As the site has failed to find a new tenant, instead remaining vacant for many years, City Council recently approved medical offices as a use permitted within the district. As described in Recommendation 1.3, Blueprint Binghamton recommends applying UBP zoning to the portion of the Greater Binghamton Health Center site within City limits was well, and broadening the mix of allowable uses to include residential where the land is deemed clean and suitable, office, and industrial.

Charles Street Business Park

3.2
CONSIDER REZONING UNDERUTILIZED PORTIONS OF COMMERCIAL CORRIDORS

Binghamton has a lot of property zoned for commercial use. This reflects the fact that these uses once served a City with a much greater population. In some cases, commercial use has all but left or may be an inappropriate use due to flood restrictions. In these cases, consideration should be given to re-zoning these properties for different use. In the case of portions of Robinson Street and Conklin Avenue, for instance, unused vacant commercial properties could be re-zoned for multifamily use thus removing the glut of commercial property from the market and providing space for more residents to support existing commercial uses. The south side of Court Street on the City's east side is squarely in the floodplain. The future land use map shows this potentially becoming green space to help better manage flood waters and protect the East Side neighborhood. This transition would happen slowly as existing commercial businesses leave and the cost to redevelop the property in the floodplain is too excessive due to national flood insurance laws.

Robinson Street

Court Street

3.3
EXPLORE PARKING MAXIMUMS OR LOWER PARKING MINIMUMS FOR DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT

Large surface parking lots hamper the City's ability to nurture a dense, walkable, and active Downtown. Downtown has over 48 acres of surface parking lots, which create voids of inactivity that disrupt the otherwise urban fabric. Large lots such as the Metrocenter surface lots, the corner of Washington and Hawley, and Water Street between Henry and Clinton, should represent opportunities for redevelopment. As the planned comprehensive parking study for Downtown moves forward (see Transportation Recommendation 2.1), the City should encourage the parking consultant to explore the idea of parking maximums, rather than parking minimums, or lower parking minimums for Downtown development, however no action should be taken until the study is completed. By instituting such a policy and writing it in to the Zoning Code, the City can assist in stitching Downtown's urban fabric back together by lessening a development burden and in turn encouraging new commercial uses and residential redevelopment Downtown.

3.4
LESSEN OFF-STREET PARKING REQUIREMENTS FOR COMMERCIAL REDEVELOPMENT ALONG TRADITIONAL COMMERCIAL CORRIDORS

Because much of Binghamton was developed before cars, many of the City's traditional commercial corridors lack off-street parking, relying instead on on-street spaces. This means that the off-street parking requirements for different land uses, as listed in § 410-53 of the Zoning Code, can create barriers for new businesses looking to open in Binghamton. Some barriers were removed with the August 2013 Business Friendly Reform amendments but there is more that can be done. By providing relief from the off-street parking requirements demanded of small businesses, Binghamton and its neighborhoods will be better able to cultivate local businesses that provide needed services and foster more vibrant - and walkable - shopping corridors.

Small businesses on Clinton Street

3.5
UPDATE THE SIGN ORDINANCE

Current sign regulations are outdated and confusing. A new sign ordinance is needed to streamline permitting and set clear expectations for all kinds of signs in the City. City staff has been working on an updated ordinance which is currently being considered by City Council, and this should be adopted as a part of the updated Zoning Code.

Downtown signs

GOAL:

04

EXPAND OPPORTUNITIES FOR NEW INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT

With an extensive freight rail network and multiple highways crisscrossing the City, Binghamton benefits from two of the "three Rs" that drive industrial activity - Roads, Rail, and Rivers navigable for freight. Where Binghamton falters in its ability to attract industrial growth and investment is in its supply of land for such uses. Outside of the Brandywine Industrial Corridor and the Charles Street Business Park, there are few locations currently suitable for industrial development. Land available for industrial development is further constrained by the City's topography and propensity to flood during major storm events. Attractive sites are concentrated in a few specific locations, most of which are already developed and in varied degrees of active use. Binghamton must make strategic land use decisions to allow development that positions industry (and well paying industrial jobs) to become an economic growth sector for the City. The following land use and zoning recommendations support Goal 4:

Rail in the Brandywine Industrial Corridor

INDUSTRIAL OPPORTUNITIES

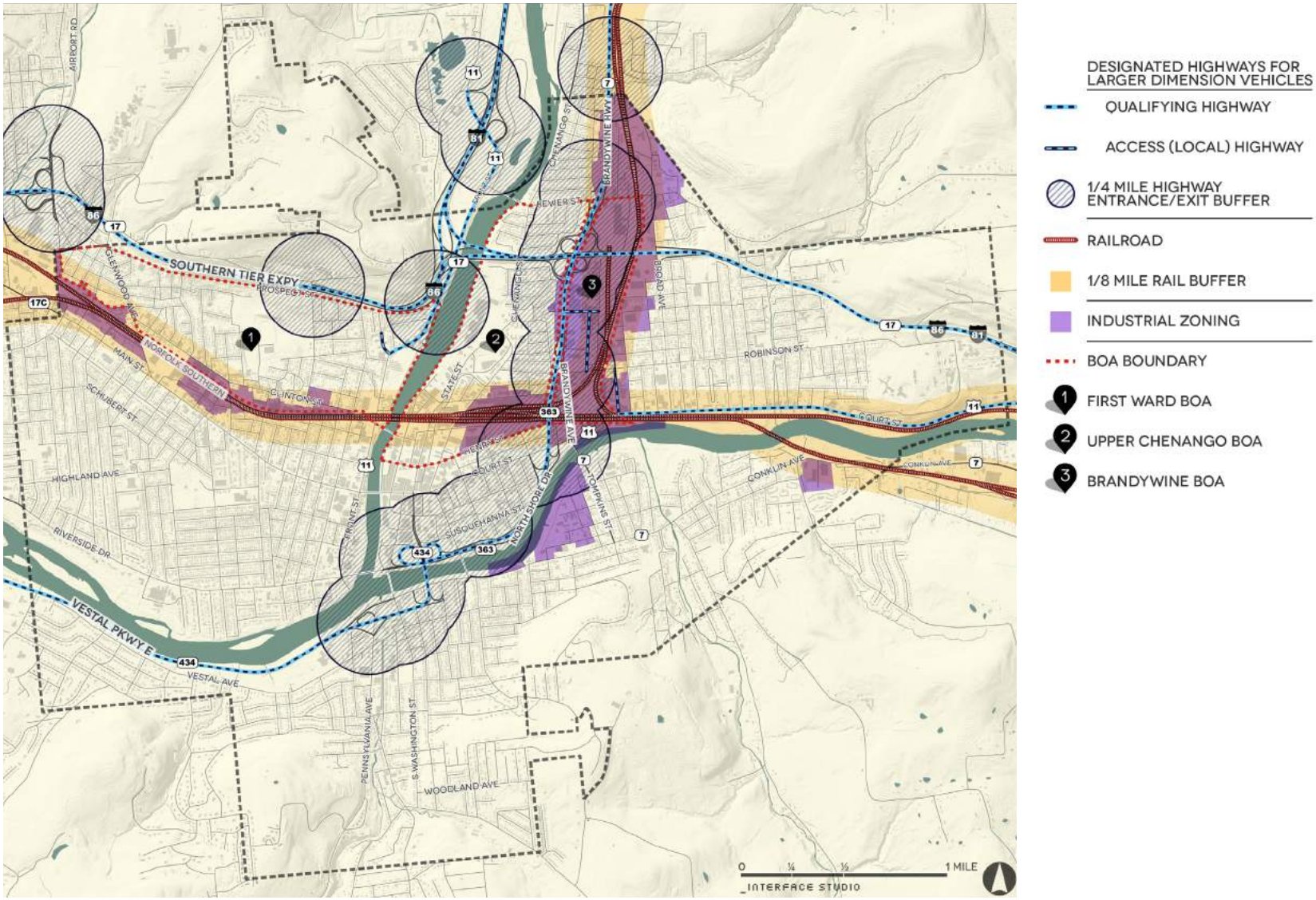


FIGURE 70: Industrial Opportunities - MAP

4.1

IDENTIFY AND CODE AN INDUSTRIAL PRESERVATION AREA WITHIN THE BRANDYWINE INDUSTRIAL CORRIDOR

The lack of good, well-paying jobs in Binghamton is the number one concern of many residents. The City and region have lost manufacturing jobs, and with the erosion of industrial operators in the City, comes the encroachment of other uses within industrial districts. Industrial uses, despite perceived challenges of noise, air quality, and truck traffic, are critical to the health and growth of the City. They boost the tax base and provide jobs that enable residents to stay in Binghamton and be proud of their City. Given the lack of developable land in the City, the City must actively protect its remaining industrial districts and even seek to expand them where industrial sites are close to distressed and conflicting land uses, in order to make room for new industrial uses.

The Brandywine Industrial Corridor is the industrial corridor in the City, with a mix of uses at its periphery. The City should update its Zoning Code to recognize the Brandywine Industrial Corridor as an Industrial Preservation Area, establishing a clear vision for the area and a list of acceptable manufacturing, warehousing, and other industrial uses. For a pre-determined period of time, non-industrial uses would not be allowed in the Industrial Preservation Area to ensure that businesses can operate freely and without economic pressure of commercial or residential uses. The County's Brandywine BOA initiative also provides land use recommendations for the site, and thus the County should be a partner in devising the Industrial Preservation Area requirements and time span until the preservation period sunsets.

Land in the Brandywine Industrial Corridor

4.2
BUFFER INDUSTRIAL AREAS FROM RESIDENTIAL COMMUNITIES

Industrial areas can detract from the quality of life in nearby residential communities, and it is important to mitigate these land use conflicts whenever possible. Many industrial areas in Binghamton have pre-existing buffers in the form of highways and railroads that separate housing areas from active industrial uses. This is especially true in the Brandywine Industrial Corridor, which is isolated from most residential spaces. However, where industry stands adjacent to residential or other uses, softer screens in the form of a green landscape buffer or a tapering of building uses can ease the transition from industrial to residential.

Side by side residential and industrial uses

4.3
RE-ZONE TO ALLOW SMALL-SCALE PRODUCTION AND A MIX OF USES IN TARGETED AREAS

The proposed future land use map suggests adding a "Production/Mixed Use" classification to the Zoning Code that allows for flex zones to encourage small-scale entrepreneurship and production. Properties within this zone would welcome a mix of small manufacturers, creative office space and even some housing or live/work space as well. Binghamton contains numerous buildings that are perfectly suited for small-scale production, artisanal, or light industrial uses that can coexist with residential. This new classification would have the largest impact on the neighborhood immediately to the north of Downtown and the freight rails along North Depot Street and Water Street. The former industrial buildings that populate this neighborhood are ideal for flex tech/manufacturing spaces. Other locations include the corner of Park Avenue and Corbett Street, as well as various locations west of Downtown, like Clinton Street.

GOAL:

05

PROTECT BINGHAMTON'S HISTORIC CHARACTER AND ENCOURAGE DESIGN EXCELLENCE

Binghamton has a wealth of architecturally significant buildings, ranging from institutional gems like the Broome County Courthouse, to the beautiful residences along Riverside Drive. Each tell the narrative of Binghamton's past and help to give the City a unique identity. It is immensely important to honor and preserve the past, while also fostering a renewed identity for future generations with quality new construction. The following land use and zoning recommendations support Goal 5:

Broome County Courthouse

5.1

ESTABLISH A THRESHOLD FOR DESIGN REVIEW FOR LARGE PROJECTS TO PROVIDE A STREAMLINED REVIEW PROCESS AND ENSURE GOOD DESIGN

Large scale projects of a certain size (number of units for residential developments or total square feet for developments of other uses) that will have a significant presence in the City of Binghamton merit, and should require, a more intensive vetting process. The Commission on Architecture and Urban Design (CAUD) currently reviews projects that alter the exteriors of Local Landmark properties and buildings in locally designated historic districts, but no comparable design review exists for large new construction projects. The City should establish a threshold for design review by CAUD for large new construction projects and write the design review process into the Zoning Code, beginning with the already successful pre-development meetings hosted by the Planning Department and ending with CAUD review for design approval. The purpose of design review would be to streamline the process for developers and ultimately result in high quality buildings that complement Binghamton's existing architectural fabric.

The Design Review would broaden the discussion from site planning to include building design. The creation of design guidelines would simplify and expedite the process, for developers, CAUD, and the Planning Commission, alike, by setting good expectations that inform developer proposals as well as Planning Commission decisions.

5.2

EVALUATE CURRENT LANDSCAPE REQUIREMENTS AND DEVELOP CLEAR STANDARDS FOR ALL PROJECT TYPES

Chapter 9 of the 2011 Historic Design Guidelines offer general guidelines for Site Features including Trees and Plantings within historic districts. The 2012 update of the Zoning Code's Erosion Control and Stormwater Management Ordinance added provisions for Urban Runoff Reduction Plans (URRP) that specify green stormwater infrastructure measures required to provide on-site retention of a ten-year storm event for projects of a certain scale. The new proposed zoning for the Court Street - Main Street Corridor will include specific design criteria intended to foster a greener, cleaner, healthier, and more beautiful public realm. As Binghamton's tree lined streets contribute to the City's overall character, clear landscape standards should be developed for all zoning classifications and outlined in one place such that developers can easily understand and incorporate required landscape elements into their site plans. A manual, such as the Baltimore City Landscape Manual, would foster clarity and predictability in design review, while also ensuring a public-private partnership effort to ensure that Binghamton can manage its stormwater, filter air pollutants, provide shade, and retain its tree canopy and historic beauty over time.

WANT TO KEEP READING?

BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON HAS 7 MAIN CHAPTERS

- **A** ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
- **B** HOUSING
- **C** TRANSPORTATION
- **D** INFRASTRUCTURE
- **E** ENVIRONMENT & OPEN SPACE
- **F** LAND USE & ZONING
- **G** COMMUNITY BUILDING

CHAPTER V

THE BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON MINI-PLAN ON

COMMUNITY BUILDING

A PLAN FOR NEIGHBORS AND NEIGHBORHOODS

BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON

G

The community building chapter or **BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON MINI-PLAN ON COMMUNITY BUILDING** stems from the energy and momentum built during the planning process with strategies that seek to harness the community's interests and ideas with tools that foster actions for change - at the block level, the community level, the neighborhood level. With ideas that pertain to your backyard, your streetscape, your children, and your health, these quality of life recommendations establish a common ground that will bring each part of the Binghamton community to the implementation table to help make **BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON: FORWARD TOGETHER** a reality.

Residents share their ideas at the Blueprint Binghamton Pop-Up Gallery

EXISTING CONDITIONS

NEIGHBORHOODS AND CIVIC INFRASTRUCTURE

Binghamton's neighborhoods vary widely. While some neighborhoods are strong and thriving, others are affected by vacancy, physical deterioration, transiency and other issues that negatively impact residents' quality of life.

The City's neighborhoods are home to daily life as well as civic life, and Binghamton's civic infrastructure is in flux, evolving along with the citizen-driven **BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON** planning process. As the planning process has underscored, interested residents, when actively involved, can make a powerful collective impact. As the resident experts who know a neighborhood best, Binghamton's citizens are uniquely poised to share ideas for neighborhood improvement and equally poised to help effect positive change. The neighborhoods and civic organizations described below are among Binghamton's most unique assets. Local leadership - existing and emerging - must be empowered as key partners in making **BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON'S** vision a reality at the neighborhood level and throughout the City. The Neighborhood Assemblies, convened across the City in 2006 and granted allotments of CDBG monies to implement resident-supported community development projects, are still active in some neighborhoods, while new groups have emerged and taken up new issues in other parts of the City.

DOWNTOWN is a mixed use district with retail, hotels, restaurants, offices, commercial and service establishments, institutional and entertainment uses, parking, parks, and - increasingly - housing. In the dense, urban core of Downtown, the residential community is largely comprised of student renters and households in subsidized affordable units. But along its eastern edge, Downtown hosts a less-dense residential fabric that shows signs of distress and deferred maintenance. Downtown residents share a desire to improve mobility and livability in their neighborhood, and as Downtown becomes more of a destination with new bars, restaurants, and cultural locales, support for continued investment in physical and social infrastructure is expected to be widespread.

In Downtown, the **GORGEOUS WASHINGTON STREET ASSOCIATION** and its First Fridays Arts Walk have made huge strides in organizing and showcasing Binghamton's arts scene, activating the evening hours with new energy and foot-traffic for all to enjoy. The collection of restaurants and small businesses behind Downtown's growing **RESTAURANT WEEK** have created an event that showcases the City's quickly evolving food and drink scene. The **DOWNTOWN BUSINESS ASSOCIATION** advocates for businesses within the urban core, and tenant groups within the Binghamton Housing Authority's Downtown developments weigh in on some residential issues. As **BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON** seeks to encourage additional households to locate in Downtown and stabilize Downtown's eastern residential fabric, there is perhaps a need to cultivate a broader civic voice among neighbors who call Downtown, "Home."

The **NORTH SIDE** extends north from Downtown and is bisected by the Interstate 81/86, which travels east/west across the neighborhood. South of the Interstate, the neighborhood's residential pockets are a mix of large-scale multi-family mixed-income rental properties in generally good condition, newer townhouses, as well as older homes, some of which are among the most distressed in the City. North of the Interstate, the neighborhood fabric is predominantly single-family residential. Among all neighborhoods in the City, the North Side community faces the gravest issues related to poverty and inequity, but its civic infrastructure is expanding to meet the challenge.

In the North Side, the **NORTH SIDE NEIGHBORHOOD ASSEMBLY** has been recently re-energized and now meets monthly at the Centenary Chenango Street United Methodist Church. The **LEE BARTA COMMUNITY CENTER** on Liberty Street has also been reactivated, with new programming made possible by the Healthy Lifestyles Coalition that includes nutrition and cooking classes and bicycle repair. The Cheri A. Lindsey **BARK PARK,**

NEIGHBORHOODS

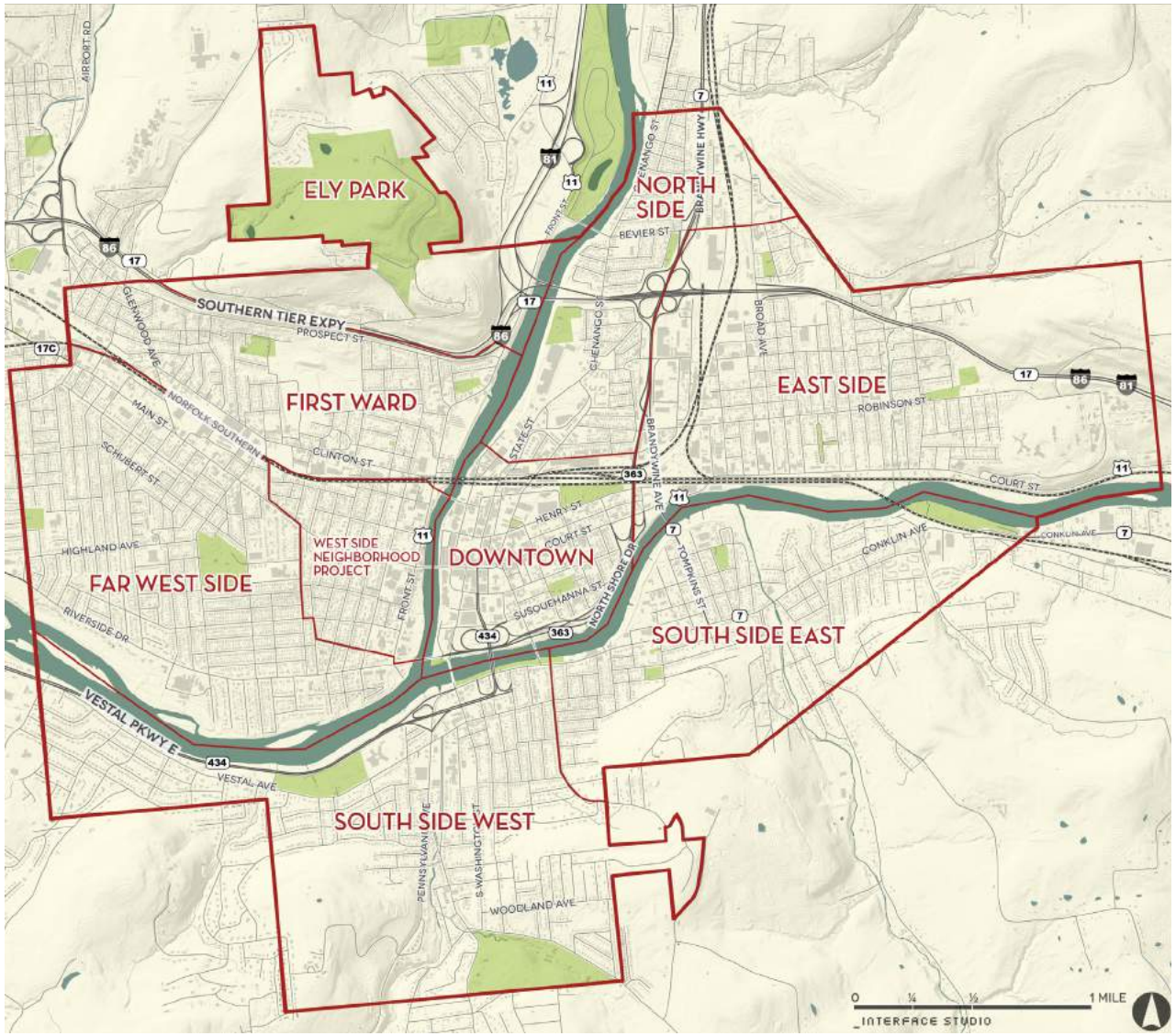


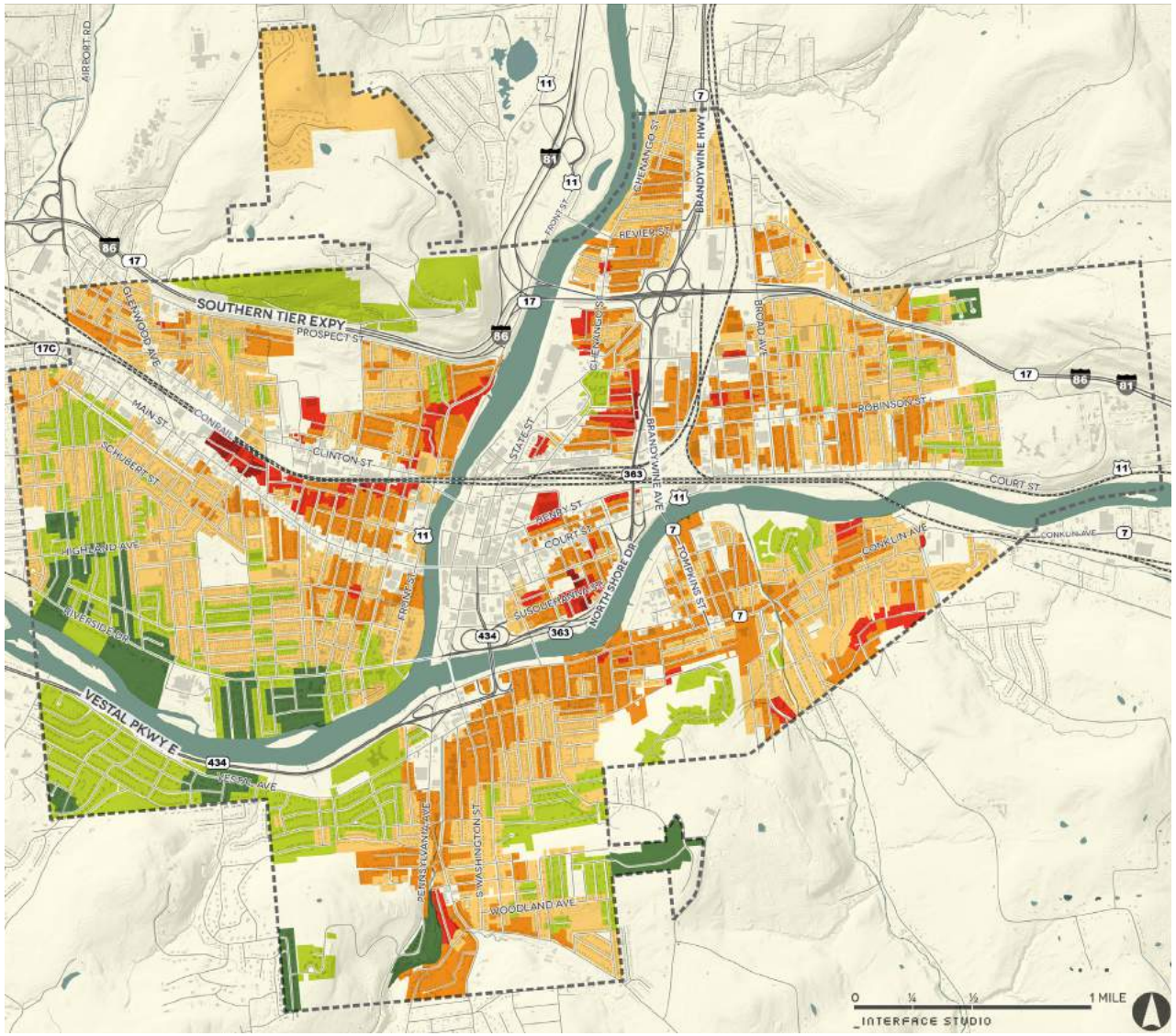
FIGURE 71: Neighborhoods - MAP

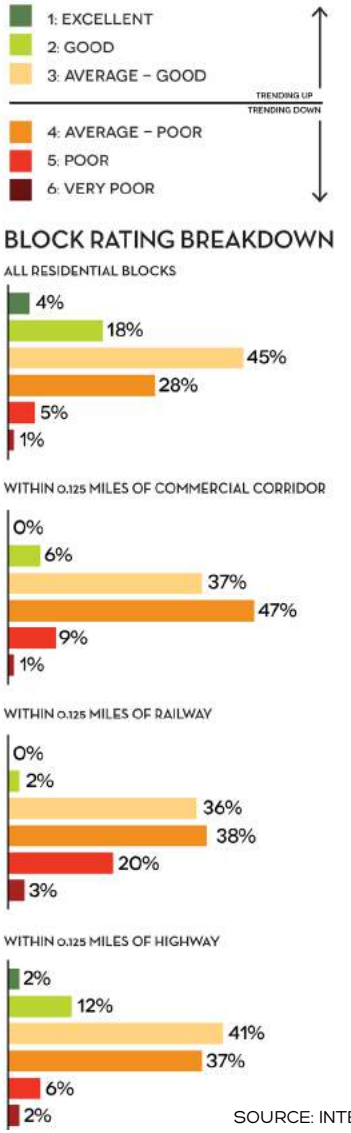
built through the Design Your Own Park program and located behind Binghamton Plaza along the Riverwalk, has become a community hub on the North Side, as well.

The **EAST SIDE** borders Downtown to the east, encompassing the area north of the Susquehanna River and east of the New York Susquehanna and Western (NYSW) rail line. The East Side is largely residential, combined with commercial uses located on Robinson Street and Court Street. With a Weis grocery store and a CVS Pharmacy, the East Side neighborhood is fairly self-sufficient, and many blocks are quite stable, though flooding during Tropical Storm Lee has resulted in some deterioration along the neighborhood's southern edge. The area is home to two senior living developments, and thus the median age is the highest of all Binghamton neighborhoods at 42.5 years.

The South Side is divided into two halves, east and west, and both areas have been home to stable communities over time. **SOUTH SIDE EAST** encompasses the eastern portion of the City's South Side. Conklin Avenue is the major roadway and commercial corridor through the neighborhood. The blocks north and south of Conklin accommodate a varied residential fabric with a mix of single-family homes, smaller multi-family structures, and a large multi-family complex at Binghamton Housing Authority's Saratoga Apartments at the eastern edge of the City.

RESIDENTIAL BLOCK RATING





SOURCE: INTERFACE STUDIO FIELD SURVEY

FIGURE 72: Residential block ratings - MAP

SOUTH SIDE WEST is home to the South Side's main commercial districts along Pennsylvania Avenue and South Washington Street, both of which border UHS Binghamton General Hospital. The area near the hospital features a concentration of small two-story multi-family rental units, but the larger part of the neighborhood is comprised of single-family residential blocks. From Pennsylvania Avenue westward to the City limit at the Town of Vestal, the lots and the homes are larger and more suburban in style.

West Side

First Ward

On Binghamton's South Side, the **SOUTH SIDE NEIGHBORHOOD ASSEMBLY**, formerly the South Side West Neighborhood Assembly, is still active. They tackle issues from flooding and the rebuilding of MacArthur School to traffic and circulation at the intersection of the Vestal Parkway and South Washington Street, from housing renovation to support for the South Side's business district.

Binghamton's **WEST SIDE** is the most varied area of the City, with sub-communities emerging in response to different issues. **SAFE STREETS**, established in 1995, targets the area north of Main Street between Front and Jarvis, which is home to a deteriorated housing stock, quality of life issues including crime and drug dealing, as well as associated public perception challenges. Safe Streets has initiated block parties, public art, and a Design Your Own Park on Walnut Street, all with a mission of engaging youth, beautifying the public realm, keeping the neighborhood clean, and preventing crime.

The **WEST SIDE NEIGHBORHOOD PROJECT (WSNP)** focuses on the "Tree Streets" west of Front extending over to Chestnut with a goal of integrating homeowners and the large student renter population to make the neighborhood safer and more welcoming for all residents and businesses. The group has initiated service projects and events, as well as public safety efforts. The **WEST SIDE NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION (WSNA)** takes a broad view of the West Side, encompassing the area from rivers to rail, all the way to the City's western limit, but the historic Abel Bennett Tract is at its heart. WSNA's efforts have focused on code enforcement and zoning to stabilize the neighborhood and protect homeowners and homeownership on the West Side from Riverside Drive north to Main Street and beyond.

The **FIRST WARD** derives its name from the original City Council District boundaries which divided the City in separate Wards. Sandwiched between the Conrail lines and the Southern Tier Expressway, the First Ward's commercial districts are along Clinton Street and Glenwood Avenue. Otherwise, the residential blocks are interrupted by the Charles Street Business Park and Spring Forest Cemetery. Part of the area was flooded during Tropical Storm Lee in 2011, though the majority of blocks are in stable condition.

The First Ward Neighborhood Assembly has redirected its efforts, with leadership shifting in more recent years to spearhead **SUNFLOWER PARK** on Murray Street, which received public art

and facilities improvements through the Design Your Own Park program. The First Ward also hosts the **FIRST WARD SENIOR CENTER**, a City-operated community center on Clinton Street with activities, health and wellness classes, and gathering space for older residents. The **FIRST WARD ACTION COUNCIL** is a community-based non-profit organization that also supports the neighborhood's civic infrastructure through its housing and housing-related services for families, seniors, and the disabled.

ELY PARK is a small and somewhat isolated neighborhood, set apart from the rest of the City by Ely Park itself. Beyond the golf course, the Ely Park neighborhood is home to a large and stable market-rate rental complex as well as larger "estate" homes just north of Prospect Street and overlooking the City in the valley below.

In different neighborhoods throughout the City, Binghamton's **RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS** remain centers of community, both religious and otherwise, with St. Michael's Greek Catholic Church in the First Ward home to the famous Pirohi during Lent, and the Seton Catholic Central High home to the Saint Patrick's Day Parade After Party, to name a few. **SECULAR INSTITUTIONS** too, among them VINES (Volunteers Improving Neighborhood Environments) and the Department of Public Art (DPA) are active throughout the City, embracing key roles in transforming the City while cultivating community.

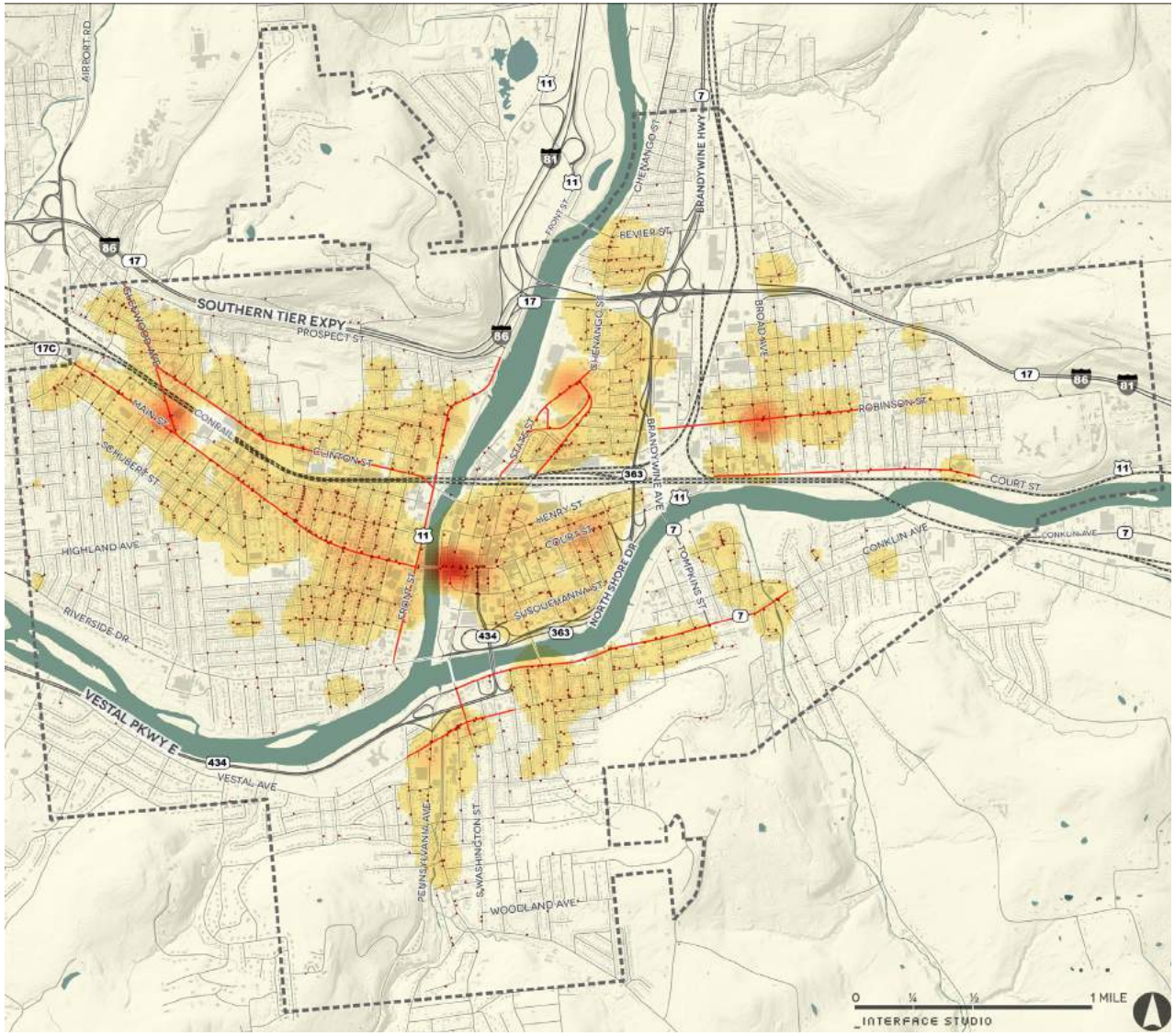
SOCIAL SERVICES & SPECIAL NEEDS POPULATIONS

Local and regional social service providers cover the spectrum of care from health care to mental health services, but availability and barriers to services are challenges to access. National trends in public health have shifted the focus from infectious disease to chronic disease prevention and greater emphasis on the broader environment and basic needs such as housing, transportation and safer neighborhoods that address these barriers. Many of the providers in the City are at capacity, and delayed service is a common concern. There is a need for a continuum of care to ensure that patients are aware of and can access services. Several mental health group homes and family care homes for the mentally ill have been closed in recent years with no replacements built, resulting in a shortage of housing for special needs populations. Equally important, however, is the need to locate these homes in areas with good access to transportation services. Members of marginal communities, who are seeking treatment, face multiple barriers, including cost of service, insurance coverage, and child care, the effects of which are compounded by time-consuming and unnecessarily complicated travel arrangements..

PUBLIC SAFETY & QUALITY OF LIFE

Crime in Binghamton has inhibited revitalization efforts and diminished the quality of life of residents who must contend with criminal behavior in their neighborhoods. An analysis of 2012 crime data shows that disputes and disturbances accounted for the greatest percentage (28%) of violent crimes. These include disturbances at bars and restaurants which can be seen at the hotspot around State Street Downtown. The second most common form of violent crime consisted of abuse and harassment cases (19%), mainly domestic abuse and harassment. Alarms (24%) and larceny (22%) make up the largest proportion of property crimes. Areas with high incidents of property crimes tend to be commercial areas such as Downtown and shopping centers, or areas along or adjacent to commercial corridors.

PROPERTY CRIME: 2012

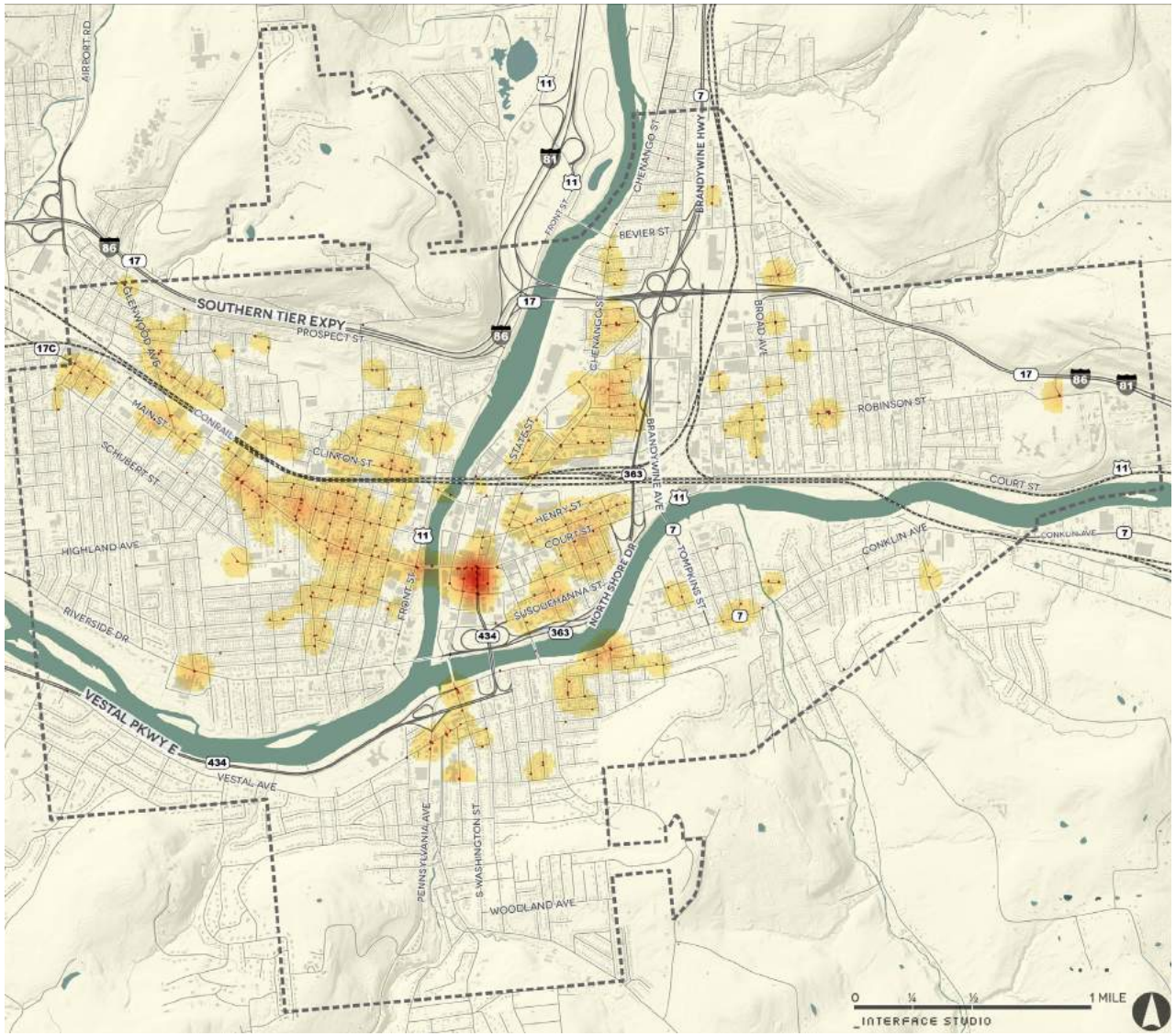


COMMERCIAL CORRIDORS
INCIDENT
DENSITY
LOW
HIGH

SOURCE: BINGHAMTON POLICE DEPARTMENT

FIGURE 73: Property Crime: 2012 - MAP

VIOLENT CRIME: 2012



INCIDENT

DENSITY

LOW

HIGH

SOURCE: BINGHAMTON POLICE DEPARTMENT

FIGURE 74: Violent Crime: 2012 - MAP

SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES

Community building is vital for the success of Binghamton's future. A strong healthy community and network of active civic groups that are self-motivated and engaged can serve as important partners with the City to bring about the changes needed to improve each neighborhood and Binghamton as a whole.

All of **BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON'S** community building recommendations address one or more of the objectives listed below:

- Ensure that **POSITIVE CHANGE** is **DISTRIBUTED** throughout the entire City
- **EMPOWER RESIDENTS** to guide the revitalization of their own neighborhoods
- Support **HEALTH** and **SAFETY** in all neighborhoods
- Promote the **EQUITABLE REVITALIZATION** of all neighborhoods for a mix of incomes and families

COMMUNITY VOICE

BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON asked YOU for your thoughts and ideas, concerns and priorities related to community building. Your ideas recognize that one of Binghamton's greatest assets is its people and more needs to be done to get everyone working together to fulfill the common vision of a clean, safe, friendly and engaged City.

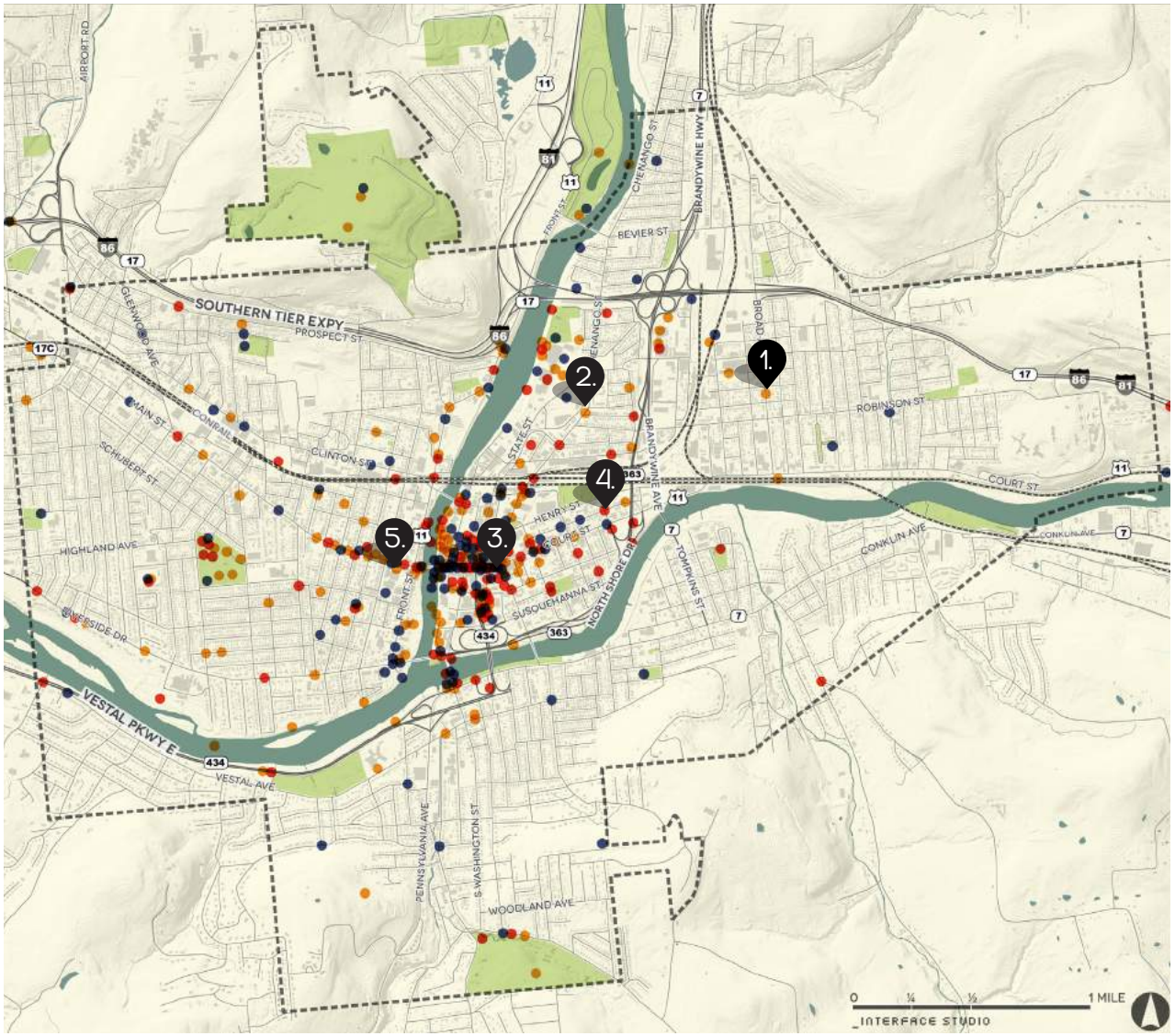
COLLABORATIVE MAP COMMENTS

Your ideas for the **COLLABORATIVE MAP** addressed the need to come together as a community to create change and improve the quality of life in the City:

> **"LET'S BE BRAVE AND DO THINGS WE HAVE NEVER DONE BEFORE AND FACE THE UNKNOWN TOGETHER!"**

COLLABORATIVE MAP

IDEAS. INSIGHTS. BARRIERS



1. "HAVING NEIGHBORHOOD CLEAN UP AND FIX UP DAYS WITH INCENTIVES (PRIZES); HAVING MEET YOUR NEIGHBOR DAY"

2. "DESIGNATION TO BRING FRESH PRODUCE TO AREAS WHERE THE ONLY MARKET IS A CONVENIENCE STORE."

3. "MORE PUBLIC MEETING SPACES GEARED TO TARGET GROUPS - YOUNG PROFESSIONALS, HIGH SCHOOL KIDS, SENIORS."

4. "DRUGS, CRIME, EYE SORES; IE. VACANT BUILDINGS, RUN DOWN STREETS, NOT ENOUGH STREET LIGHTS."

5. "FOCUS ON YOUTH - INVEST IN THEIR FUTURE/OUR FUTURE. BRING THE YOUTH IN TO VALUE THEIR INSIGHTS."

- IDEA
- INSIGHT
- BARRIER

FIGURE 75: Collaborative Map Comments Locations

POSTCARDS FROM THE FUTURE

Your **POSTCARDS FROM THE FUTURE** describe a vision for a beautiful, safe City that residents are proud to call home:

IT'S GETTING RE-ENERGIZED & IT'S LOVELY TO PARTICIPATE IN ITS REGROWTH. YOU SHOULD VISIT SOME TIME!

IT LOOKS BEAUTIFUL AND SAFE. EVERYONE THAT LIVES HERE IS PROUD OF IT.

THERE'S A SPIRIT ABOUT THIS COMMUNITY THAT IS ALIVE, FRIENDLY, AND PROSPERING! [...] THE CITIZENS ARE INVOLVED AND TAKE PRIDE IN THEIR NEIGHBORHOODS.

I FEEL SAFE! THE STREETS ARE CLEAN. PEOPLE SAY HI AND SMILE.

When **5TH GRADERS** in the Binghamton City School District imagined their **DREAM NEIGHBORHOOD**, they imagined a safe, welcoming and fun place to live:

THE SIDEWALKS WOULD BE COLORFUL AND WOULD SAY "WELCOME TO MY NEIGHBORHOOD!" EVERYONE WOULD BE SO HAPPY.

MY DREAM NEIGHBORHOOD WOULD BE SAFE. I COULD HAVE FUN ALL DAY. IT WOULD MUCH MORE FUN TO LIVE THERE.

BIG IDEAS

Your **BIG IDEAS** inform the recommendations for improving community building in Binghamton:

Images from the "Photo Suggestion Booth"

CITYWIDE SURVEY

And your responses on the **CITYWIDE SURVEY** highlight areas of improvement for community building in the City:

- Things you like about Binghamton: neighbors, parks

36% Your neighbors, but there's room better opportunities to connect with neighbors

67% Parks

- Things you don't like about Binghamton:

66% Crime

66% Blight

Recreation Park

COMMUNITY BUILDING GOALS:

The recommendations that comprise **BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON'S MINI-PLAN ON COMMUNITY BUILDING** [a plan for neighbors and neighborhoods] are organized into five goal areas, each titled by a key community building goal:

01

EXPAND THE CIVIC INFRASTRUCTURE OF THE CITY

02

MAINTAIN A CONTINUUM OF CARE FOR RESIDENTS AND FAMILIES IN NEED

03

INTEGRATE RESIDENT HEALTH INTO NEIGHBORHOOD PLANNING AND REINVESTMENT

04

ACTIVELY ENGAGE YOUTH IN CITY INITIATIVES

05

ENSURE SAFE NEIGHBORHOODS FOR ALL RESIDENTS

Taken together, the Community Building Goals and their related objectives and strategies support the following themes of **BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON'S** vision for the future of our City:

- **HEALTHY** - with a continuum of care that serves residents in need and a holistic approach to public health that addresses the City's built form as well as its policies and programs to support safe and healthy neighborhoods and healthy habits among its citizens
- **PROUD** - with a strong network of engaged residents and active civic organizations ready to partner with the City to effect meaningful change and celebrate a renewed self-image
- **ALIVE** - young and old, long-term residents and newcomers, college students and homeowners, people of all races, ethnicities, and incomes - Binghamton is your City, and this is our blueprint for a future of grassroots activism and a vibrant sense of community, safe, open, and accessible to all

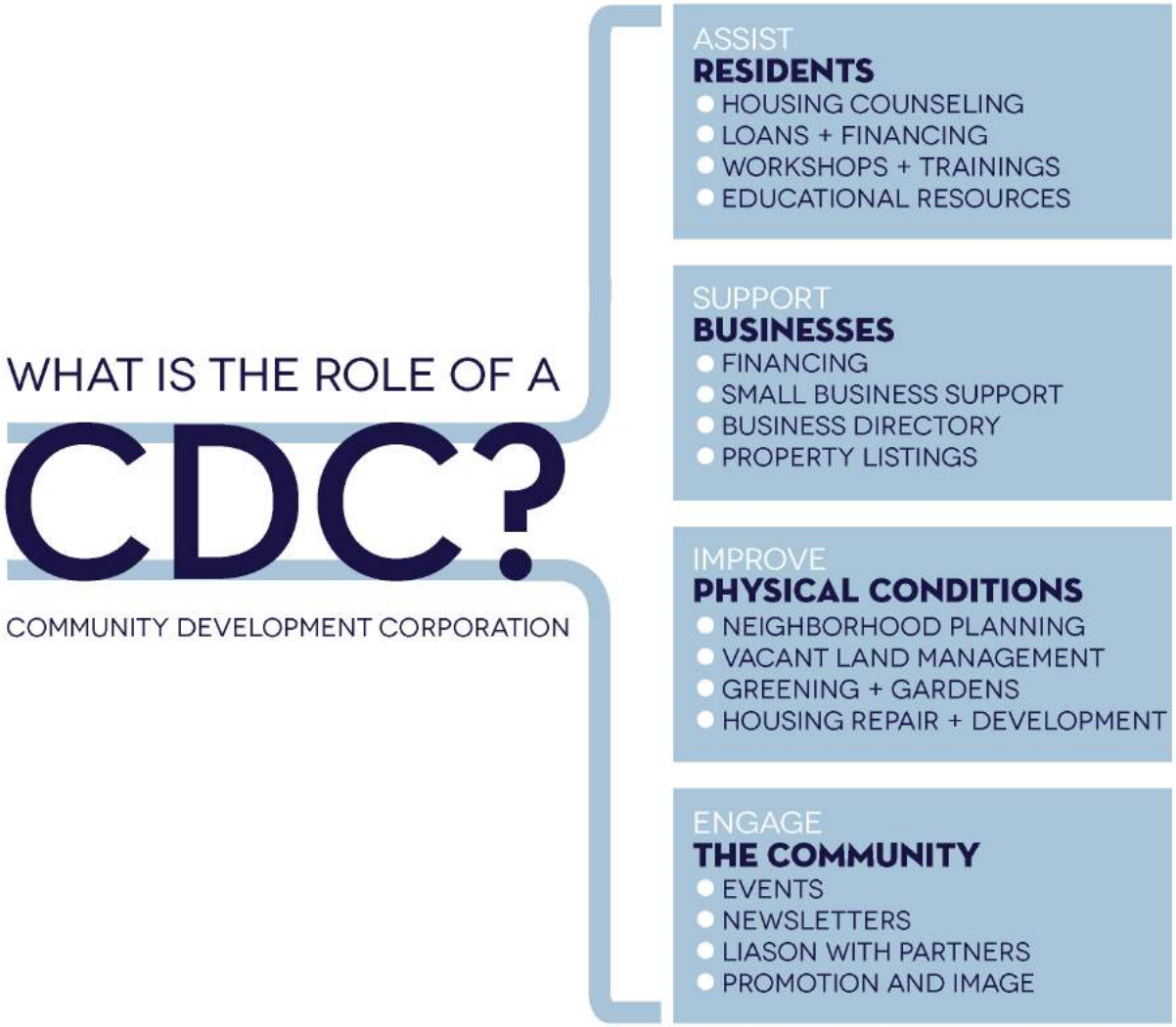
FOR FULL VISION STATEMENT, SEE PAGE 40.

GOAL:

01

EXPAND THE CIVIC INFRASTRUCTURE OF THE CITY

Tackling the issues facing Binghamton's neighborhoods will require the input and cooperation of stakeholders and decision-makers across different sectors, but also the active participation of neighbors. Social connectivity was a key component of the **BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON** planning process, providing an opportunity for these various stakeholders to meet and share their thoughts and ideas for how to improve the City. The momentum of the planning process should be built on strengthening the City's civic infrastructure and the partnership between the City and community organizations to address needs as the planning process moves forward into implementation and action. The following community building recommendations support Goal 1:



Potential programs of a community development corporation

1.1

EXPLORE THE CREATION OF A BINGHAMTON NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

A Binghamton Neighborhood Development Corporation, to function as a sizable and unified, citywide community development corporation, is needed to oversee neighborhood infill and redevelopment as well as fundraising across Binghamton's neighborhoods. By coordinating with neighborhoods and existing CHODOs to identify priority projects and by thinking strategically across the entire City, this umbrella entity can serve to connect the dots between community-level and city-level planning and can push forward catalytic investments that attract additional public/private investment to improve neighborhood housing, businesses and overall quality of life. The Youngstown Neighborhood Development Corporation (http://www.yndc.org/) is a helpful model. The YNDC revitalizes neighborhoods through programs that include housing, a Community Loan fund, vacant land reuse, Model Blocks to target physical improvements where conditions are deteriorated, home repair, community gardens, and neighborhood outreach, workshops and trainings.

1.2

FORM COMMUNITY ACTION TEAMS THAT MEET QUARTERLY TO BRING TOGETHER CITY DEPARTMENTS AND HEALTH / SERVICE PROVIDERS TO DISCUSS THE ISSUES AND SOLUTIONS REQUIRED IN EACH NEIGHBORHOOD

Complex social issues and neighborhood dynamics require a multifaceted approach of collaboration across sectors to address shifting community concerns. Basic needs such as adequate housing, safe streets, transportation, jobs, and food access are all intertwined to affect the health and quality of life of City residents. Each neighborhood has its own assets and challenges, and therefore, a place-based approach to forming solutions is recommended. A Community Action Team that assembles representatives from relevant City departments including law enforcement, health and service providers, and key community leaders for each of the neighborhoods should meet quarterly to track needs, identify possibilities for collaborative action and evaluate progress. Rochester, New York can serve as a precedent example, with its Quadrant teams organized to field complaints, take immediate actions, support small-scale community improvement projects driven by residents, and undertake strategic planning for sustained and longer-term change at the neighborhood (or quadrant) scale.

"YOU WILL BE AMAZED OVER A DECADE AT HOW THE HARD WORK, PERSEVERANCE OF THE CITY ADMINISTRATION, THE COUNTY, ACADEMIA, AND SO MANY INDIVIDUALS & ADVOCATES BELIEVE IN THIS CITY SO MUCH IT HAS COME BACK!...WISH I HAD MORE TIME, SO MUCH TO DO HERE."

Source: Postcard from the Future Comment

1.3

ENCOURAGE ISSUE-BASED GROUPS TO CONTINUE THE WORK OF THE COMMUNITY DISCUSSIONS

The success of the Community Discussions throughout the **BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON** planning process (442 attendees at seven sessions!) suggests an opportunity to continue the dialog by making the Community Discussions a regular occurrence and hub for issue-based discussion and action. The City should prompt meet-ups as follow up to the various Discussion topics. Interest groups that evolve out of the Community Discussions can take on Do-It-Yourself projects like Park(ing) Day, or organize events such as lectures or networking and social events, such as the "Green Drinks" monthly gatherings organized by the Business Alliance for Local Living Economies.

Blueprint Binghamton Community Discussion

1.4

CULTIVATE PRIDE THROUGH BRANDING AND IMPROVEMENTS AT THE NEIGHBORHOOD AND BLOCK LEVEL

Each neighborhood has its own distinctive history, characteristics and appeal, including pedestrian-scale blocks, attractive housing stock (though some may be in need of rehab and renovation), strong institutions, parks, and local businesses. Neighborhoods should rally around these attributes to make improvements that amplify the good and instill a sense of positive change and pride. These assets are the building blocks to start branding neighborhoods and broadcasting a positive image throughout the City and region.

"THE COMMUNITY IS GREAT, THERE'S INTERESTING HISTORY; PEOPLE ARE PROUD OF THEIR CITY; IT'S SOOOO PRETTY; COME VISIT!! YOU'LL LOVE IT!!"

Source: Postcard from the Future Comment

1.5

DEVELOP MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION PLAN TO KEEP THE COMMUNITY ENGAGED AND UPDATED

Transparency and communication are essential to building and maintaining a relationship between the City of Binghamton and the public. Traditional forms of media are being supplemented with a wealth of new media that offer instant and wide-ranging communication options. A media and communication plan should be developed to serve two goals: 1) disseminate information and 2) create a platform for dialog. The plan should include traditional media such as TV, radio and newspaper, but also fold in web and social media technology that offers enhanced opportunities for real-time information and dialog. The City's recently updated website is an important stop for information about City services, such as snow removal and street paving, but social media should also be incorporated into the media and communication plan to engage the community in dialog. Facebook can serve as an extension of the City's website by offering a way for the community to comment on and share information, while Textizen has been used by cities for crowdsourcing ideas. Many cities have found Twitter a valuable tool for disseminating real-time information regarding weather alerts, transit updates, or police incidents. **BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON** has already built a social network presence and following on both facebook and twitter, and those feeds should remain current as planning efforts shift to focus on implementation.

Blueprint Binghamton Facebook page

1.6

INCORPORATE BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE 2015-2020 CONSOLIDATED PLAN

The City of Binghamton submits a Consolidated Plan to the US Department of Housing and Urban Development every 5 years. The next plan will cover the years 2015 to 2020. The Consolidated Plan serves as a framework for community-wide dialogue to identify housing and community development priorities, which combined with an assessment of market conditions helps the City make decisions on place-based investments. The extensive and diverse community outreach conducted for Blueprint Binghamton reached thousands of people and included a citywide survey administered by the Binghamton Neighborhood Project, interviews and focus groups with resident experts, portable community "Meetings in a Box", youth engagement both in and out of the classroom, and interactive open houses in the Project Design Studio. Additionally, social media and a project website were developed as online bases for information and discussion. (See Chapter 3: Planning Process and Public Engagement for more details.) Through this process, community needs and priorities were identified that forms the basis for the recommendations of this Comprehensive Plan. Therefore, this Blueprint Binghamton Mini-Plan on Community Building should be used to frame the programmatic goals and budgetary planning in the City's upcoming development of the 2015-2020 Consolidated Plan.

GOAL:

02

MAINTAIN A CONTINUUM OF CARE FOR RESIDENTS AND FAMILIES IN NEED

Basic needs such as housing and transportation are critical aspects to ensuring residents in need are able to access the services they require. Service gaps coupled with lack of information and awareness of prevention also contribute to an overburdened health care system. The following community building recommendations support Goal 2:

2.1

STRENGTHEN AND SUPPORT DEVELOPMENT OF SUPPORTIVE HOUSING FOR DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES, MENTAL HEALTH AND SUBSTANCE ADDICTION RECOVERY WITH ACCESS TO TRANSPORTATION AND SERVICE PROVIDERS

Binghamton has a need for supportive housing, as several group homes have been closed due to flood damage and regulatory changes. The 2011 flood exposed the shortage of quality affordable housing as hundreds of elderly and low-income residents of the three major housing complexes in Downtown Binghamton (Woodburn Court I and II and the Binghamton Housing Authority North Shore Towers and Village) were displaced without safe, secure housing. Furthermore, New York State has been closing developmental disability centers. As a result, there is an increase of people in need, and hospitals and psychiatric services are being burdened by cases that are not psychiatric in nature. Land should be assembled for supportive housing developments in areas that have good access to services and public transportation.

Lourdes Hospital

2.2

SUPPORT COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES TO IMPROVE ACCESS TO PREVENTIVE CARE AND CHRONIC DISEASE MANAGEMENT FOR HIGH-UTILIZING PATIENTS

Residents and families in need who encounter barriers to health care often end up at the hospital for treatment of issues that could be better managed through preventive care, education and chronic disease management. Community initiatives that target these cases will improve community health and decrease the load on hospitals. These initiatives should include strengthened prevention, family health and wellness education; better marketing of services to communities in need; and mobile health teams to offset challenges such as transportation or child care that prevent patients from seeking health care. The Youth Success Initiative will work with health service agencies in the region to improve the delivery of youth service, particularly mental health care.

The Camden Coalition of Healthcare Providers Care Management Program is a national model for providing care to "super-utilizers" of health care services; "super-utilizers" are those patients who are frequently admitted to the hospital for avoidable complications of chronic diseases. The Care Management Program targets patients who often suffer from chronic illness, mental illness, and substance abuse and lack consistent primary care. The program uses an outreach team that includes a social worker, a health outreach worker/medical assistant, and a nurse practitioner to help patients coordinate care and find a primary care provider. The Camden Coalition of Healthcare Providers offers technical assistance and resources for communities seeking to develop similar programs (http://www.camdenhealth.org/cross-site-learning/).

2.3

ENSURE SENIORS HAVE ACCESS TO SERVICES AND INFORMATION

Growth is projected for the population 65 and older, particularly for low-income households. This is a diverse population with a broad spectrum of needs; housing, transportation, mental health, wellness, and health services. A Senior Citizen Advisory Committee should be established to provide guidance on this recommendation. Existing services such as those provided by the First Ward Senior Center and Broome County Office of Aging should be advertised so that seniors know how to access them. One of the biggest challenges facing the senior population is the transition from living independently to developing higher needs. Housing will require retrofitting so residents can age in place and for cases where aging in place is not an option, new senior housing should be built in close proximity to transportation, services and amenities (see Housing Recommendations 1.4, 1.5, 2.1 and 4.3). For people accustomed to driving, utilizing alternative transportation options, such as BC Transit, BC Lift, or Medi-van, is intimidating and frustrating. The Broome Mobility Project can help improve the transit experience through one-on-one travel training.

GOAL:

03

INTEGRATE RESIDENT HEALTH INTO NEIGHBORHOOD PLANNING AND REINVESTMENT

According to the New York State Department of Health, chronic diseases are the cause of 73% of deaths in New York State annually and affect the quality of life of six million of the State's residents. Many chronic diseases are preventable and linked to lifestyle choices and the built environment. The New England Healthcare Institute estimates that access to care accounts for only 10% of the determinants of health outcomes while environmental factors account for 20%, and healthy behavior and habits account for a significant 50%. Improving these areas by encouraging healthy changes in our daily lives and the way our neighborhoods are built can impact public health through prevention. The following community building recommendations support Goal 3:

> **CREATE ENVIRONMENTS TO MAKE THE HEALTHY CHOICE THE EASY CHOICE TO MAKE.**

Source: Postcard from the Future Comment

3.1

ENCOURAGE PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND HEALTH SECTORS TO FOSTER HEALTHIER NEIGHBORHOODS

The community development sector and health sector work in the same neighborhoods, serving at-risk populations and often tackling the same issues, but they do not always coordinate or communicate. The relation between poor health outcomes and community development target issues such as inadequate housing, lack of access to healthy food, and lack of safe places for physical activity, has become a primary focus for public health, spurring increased cooperation between public health leaders and other agencies. Community development organizations, such as the proposed Binghamton Neighborhood Development Corporation, should work with public health leaders and health care providers to determine how community development interventions, both physical and programmatic, can drive positive health outcomes. Binghamton is home to several major health institutions such as Binghamton General Hospital, Lourdes Hospital, and the Greater Binghamton Health Center, all of which have large impacts on the City's economy as well as strong physical presences in their surrounding communities. Partnering with the community development sector will afford these institutions the chance to strengthen their ties with host communities through better engagement to identify areas of cooperation for healthier, safer neighborhoods.

3.2

ENSURE EACH NEIGHBORHOOD HAS ACCESS TO HEALTHY, FRESH FOOD

> Community gardens growing in demand - great use for unused space.

Source: Collaborative Map Comment

Healthy eating is one of the most important elements of maintaining a healthy lifestyle but a complicated one with significant barriers, especially for low-income households. Time, money, and habit are all factors that determine food choices. Improving access to healthy, fresh food is one important step toward improving eating habits and resident health outcomes in communities across the country. In Binghamton, a grocery store along Chenango Street has been identified as a critical need in the North Side neighborhood and should be supported. Additionally, accessibility can be increased through healthy corner store initiatives that incentivize fresh food distribution in smaller markets and corner stores, allowing mobile farmer's markets and farm share programs that deliver produce to underserved neighborhoods, and encouraging vendors to accept food stamps and vouchers. But as access is just one piece of the puzzle, it must be paired with holistic education about nutrition as described in Recommendation 3.5.

3.3

ENCOURAGE COMMUNITY GARDENING AND URBAN AGRICULTURE IN EACH NEIGHBORHOOD

Community gardens and urban agriculture serve multiple community building goals. They function as community hubs where neighbors meet and work together, building stronger relationships and stronger muscles. They also provide access to healthy and affordable fresh food, and offer residents the opportunity to grow culturally appropriate foods that may not be available otherwise. Furthermore, urban agriculture businesses can provide educational and economic development benefits to a community.

New York City prohibits smoking in outdoor public places.

Los Angeles prohibits smoking near outdoor dining areas.

3.4

PROMOTE TOBACCO AND SMOKE FREE LIVING THROUGH BETTER PROTECTIONS FOR NON-SMOKERS AND YOUTH

Tobacco use causes about 480,000 deaths a year in the US, according to the Food and Drug Administration, and complicates other chronic conditions. The impacts of active and passive smoking exact a terrible toll not only on health but on health care costs. The public health impacts of smoking have led to sweeping changes in both the public and private sectors. State and local laws across the country restrict smoking and the sale and marketing of tobacco products, particularly to children. In a precedent-setting move, CVS, the second largest drugstore chain in the country, will cease selling tobacco products beginning October 2014, an action that may have a ripple effect on other retailers. The City should create an environment that promotes tobacco and smoke free living through a multifaceted approach. The City should consider creating additional tobacco/smoke free outdoor areas to reduce exposure to passive smoke, restrict marketing and sales of tobacco products near schools and youth centers, and ramp up an education campaign to prevent smoking and promote smoking cessation. Binghamton can look to other places across the country, such as Rochester and Cayuga County in New York, Peoria, IL and Benbrook, TX that have implemented policies to restrict the location of tobacco retailers.

3.5

PROMOTE HEALTHY AND ACTIVE LIVING THROUGH EDUCATION PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES TO MAKE THE HEALTHY CHOICE THE EASY CHOICE

Since healthy behavior is the most significant determinant of public health outcomes, a prevention-based public health initiative should be developed to help residents make healthy changes in their daily lives. These changes should address the physical, social and mental aspects of health with initiatives that complement the other recommendations in this plan, such as improving bike and pedestrian infrastructure, creating safe recreational spaces, and ensuring access to healthy food. A healthy and active living campaign should tie all these things together and show residents how to make healthy choices whether it be through physical activity, social connections, or eating habits. Programs may include an educational campaign outlining simple (and fun) things to do such as dancing more, taking the stairs, saying hello to neighbors, reaching out to friends, or planting a garden, that can jumpstart residents' journey to physical and mental wellness. Other activities may include organized walking, running or biking clubs, community gatherings to strengthen social networks, pushing for healthy food in stores and restaurants, and workshops on nutrition and healthy eating tips, mental health and wellness. A good example of such a community "health makeover" is the Blue Zones Vitality Project, a 10-month pilot project in Albert Lea, MN that was sponsored by the AARP and United Health to improve the personal, social and community health of the entire town.

GOAL:

04

ACTIVELY ENGAGE YOUTH IN CITY INITIATIVES

Implementing the recommendations in this plan will depend upon the combined efforts of the City, its residents and businesses, and importantly its youth who represent the future of our City and who have been active planning partners, making their voices heard through **BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON**. Cultivating healthy habits, community stewardship and an entrepreneurial spirit at a young age will form the base for these qualities to flourish as adults. The following community building recommendations support Goal 4:

4.1

SUPPORT YOUTH SUCCESS INITIATIVE AS KEY YOUTH SERVICES LIAISON AND PROVIDER

The initiative is a direct educational cooperative partnership between the Binghamton City School District and the Office of the Mayor. Aiming to create safer schools, the Initiative has provided two new school Security Resource Officers at both east and west middle schools and will work closely with law enforcement and Binghamton Housing Authority's Gang Prevention Unit to steer youth away from gangs. The Initiative will also expand existing athletic, recreational, and extracurricular opportunities offered by City Parks; expand mentoring and college-career readiness, promote civic instruction, and work to improve youth health services.

Youth weigh in on Blueprint Binghamton

"THERE ARE A NUMBER OF EXCITING OPPORTUNITIES HERE, MOST ENTICING IS THE WAY THEY EMBRACE THE YOUTH & SUPPORT THE "MORE MATURE" (OK - OLDER!!) ADULTS. THERE ARE ACTIVITIES FOR ALL AGES - CULTURAL, EDUCATIONAL, & ATHLETIC."

Source: Postcard from the Future Comment

4.2

COORDINATE WITH NON-PROFIT YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS TO MAINTAIN AN INVENTORY OF PROGRAMMING AND ADDRESS GAPS

The Youth Bureau and its Board of volunteers have made important progress over the past year in convening and coordinating among the City's loose network of youth-serving non-profits to better understand the existing network of youth programs and identify duplication among services, service gaps, and opportunities for partnership and collaboration in grant applications and program provision. The service gap analysis identified needs for youth services from the cradle, through a program like parent college that works to develop parenting skills among young parents, through the teenage and early adult years, through mentoring and exposure to job opportunities and higher education.

The Youth Bureau Board and BCSD fostered a mentoring program called Mentoring Now which Youth Success has expanded by recruiting more than 50 new adult volunteers to improve school completion rates and promote increased youth involvement. The City should pilot a public-sector internship program and tap connections within the business community to identify private-sector opportunities as well. Such a program should explore the ways in which area youth can help the city and local businesses achieve shared goals, for example greater vibrancy along commercial corridors through storefront window re-design that brings a youthful eye to refresh the presence of long-term businesses. Other ideas for a more robust palette of after-school and summer youth programs include culturally relevant arts and technology programs that foster skills, dedication, and creative entrepreneurship among urban youth. As a precedent example, Philadelphia has three nationally recognized programs hosted through and outside of schools that offer opportunities for teens with a range of interests: West Philly Auto Club, Students Run Philly Style, CRED Philly magazine.

"GREATER COLLABORATION BETWEEN INDUSTRY/ BUSINESSES & PUBLIC EDUCATION – MENTORING/ SHADOWING"

Source: Collaborative Map Comment

4.3

FORMALIZE PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN THE SCHOOL DISTRICT, THE CITY, AND AREA INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

The Binghamton University Center for Civic Engagement has brought a Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) Youth Community Action Signature Program to Binghamton; CITIZEN University (CITIZEN U) invites teens ages 14 through 18 to shape and participate in civic engagement and workforce preparation projects in the city. CITIZEN U applicants explore topics from business and entrepreneurship to environmental studies, technology and media performing arts, food and nutrition to community development, all the while building leadership skills and interacting with college professors and other role models. This program highlights the potential to tap Binghamton University and Broome Community College, exploring partnership opportunities for mentoring, service learning, and other programs that help strengthen the bridge between high school and college for Binghamton's teens and young adults. The Youth Success Initiative will promote civic instruction in social studies classes to provide students with an understanding of City Government and is establishing a Career Guest Speaker Bureau of area professionals in response to school district request for greater college and career readiness assistance.

Youth Outreach at the Juneteenth Celebration

4.4

INVITE THE YOUTH VOICE TO BE HEARD BY THE CITY

Throughout the **BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON** planning process, the City has actively sought input from local youth and teens, and the cities young people responded with creative ideas and thoughtful assessments of local issues in their communities. To cultivate community stewardship and a sense of empowerment tied to the future of Binghamton, the City should take steps to continue the dialog with the next generation of leaders. Opportunities to invite the youth voice to be heard include establishing non-voting positions on City Council and soliciting youth candidates to serve on municipal advisory board/commissions for City youth to weigh in on topics and offer a younger perspective in the City's decision making process, quarterly opportunities for CITIZEN U teens to present to the Mayor, City Council, or City agencies on CITIZEN University projects, and rotating exhibits of civic-minded arts and writing projects in City Hall, as occurred during **BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON.**

Graphic from a Youth Themed Event

Photo from the Pop Up Gallery

4.5

WORK WITH BCSD TO TRANSFORM SCHOOLS INTO HUBS OF NEIGHBORHOOD ACTIVITY AND PRIDE

> Each neighborhood has a neighbor center that helps each neighborhood focus on its own issues and everyone takes care of each other in the neighborhood.

Source: Postcard from the Future Comment

The Binghamton schools are centrally located and integral to their neighborhoods, but they could become an even more active part of their communities by functioning as neighborhood hubs that embrace not just students but everyone in the community. The City and neighborhoods should work with the Binghamton City School District (BCSD) and the City's private schools to develop on-site activities that get residents to reconnect with area schools and help strengthen neighborhoods, such as neighborhood health clinic services, pick-up spots for farm shares, neighborhood watch meetings, financial literacy training, and tenant rights workshops. By advertising such programs as well as School District concerts, sports events, and other happenings on the City website, the City can remind its citizens of all ages that the public and private schools are a community resource and important asset in which to take pride and support.

4.6

IMPROVE AWARENESS OF AND ACCESS TO CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS SUCH AS THE ROBERSON MUSEUM, DISCOVERY CENTER, ZOO AT ROSS PARK, TECHWORKS! AND THE BUNDY MUSEUM

Binghamton's cultural institutions are great regional assets that should play an important role in the educational and cultural life (also see Economic Development Recommendation 7.6) of the City's youth. While school trips are one way of discovering these places, students should have the opportunity to take advantage of these places on their own. To this end, the City's cultural institutions should step up their marketing to students and parents. Free or discounted days or passes for students could be introduced to increase access, particularly for low-income youth for whom entrance fees are a barrier. In Philadelphia, STAMP (Students at Museums in Philly) offer high school students a one-year free pass to a selection of 12 of the City's museums and attractions through a partnership between the Greater Philadelphia Cultural Alliance, museums and attractions, sponsors and community organizations (http://phillystamppass.org/). The program is guided by a Teen Council that connects their peers with the latest updates from STAMP museums and provides a voice for how to get teens interested in culture and arts.

4.7

FORMALIZE PARTNERSHIP WITH BOCES VOCATIONAL PROGRAMS TO COMPLETE SMALL NEIGHBORHOOD IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS

The Broome-Tioga Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) vocational programs can be tapped to provide the knowledge and skill set needed to accomplish projects identified through neighborhood quality of life plans (Recommendation 5.1) and crowdsourcing (Recommendation 4.8). A formal partnership should be established to allow students to gain hands-on experience while providing communities an extra boost to successfully complete projects and build confidence and momentum in neighborhood improvement.

4.8

CROWDSOURCE YOUTH PILOT PROJECTS (ONE PER NEIGHBORHOOD) AND OFFER SEED GRANTS TO IMPLEMENT

Neighborhood-specific ideas can be generated and crowdsourced from our cadre of creative young citizens, tapped to dream up and select one transformative, cost effective, and achievable project for each neighborhood. These early action pilot projects should be highly visible and actionable to signal that positive change is afoot and rally the community - and youth in particular - around a common cause. The City should explore the use of Textizen to make it easy and fun for youth to submit and weigh in on ideas. Groups such as Citizen U and BU are working on similar initiatives to engage local youth, and should be engaged as partners in ongoing efforts to cultivate youth as future leaders and activists in Binghamton.

Textizen campaign for Chicago Public Schools

GOAL:

05

ENSURE SAFE NEIGHBORHOODS FOR ALL RESIDENTS

Safety is a primary concern for all residents. Two-thirds of residents surveyed cited crime and blight as the worst things about the City. The impact on residents' quality of life is substantial and also reinforces a negative image of the City in the region. The following community building recommendations support Goal 5:

> **PEOPLE NEED A COMMUNITY FEEL, A NICE PLACE TO RAISE CHILDREN.**

Source: Collaborative Map Comment

> **THERE ARE MANY PUBLIC MEETING SPACES WHERE PEOPLE MIX AND MINGLE. WE FEEL SAFE WALKING DOWN THE STREET AT ANY TIME OF DAY BECAUSE THERE IS BUSTLING ACTIVITY AND PLENTY TO DO.**

Source: Postcard from the Future Comment

5.1

INITIATE QUALITY OF LIFE ACTION PLANS FOR EACH COMMUNITY

Safe Streets Binghamton's Edwards Street mural

Each community should work with the Planning Department, law enforcement, and Community Action Teams (Recommendation 1.2) to develop quality of life plans that identify and address the most pressing needs. These plans should yield detailed action steps that can be taken by both residents and the City to identify and address nuisance properties, clean up illegal dumping, upgrade lighting, and target spaces that attract crime. Quality of life plans should also point to areas of potential collaboration between residents, community organizations, law enforcement, and the City; the Curb and Sidewalk Assistance Program which offers a price per square foot rebate for property owners to reconstruct their sidewalks is a good example. To give merit to the plans and incentivize community involvement, seed grants should be offered for the implementation of one early action pilot project in each neighborhood, as envisioned by the community and vetted by the Community Action Team.

> **THERE IS NOT ANY USELESS SPACE AND THE COMMUNITY IS WORKING TOGETHER TO IMPROVE IT TO THE VERY FULLEST IT CAN BE IMPROVED.**

Source: Postcard from the Future Comment

5.2

EDUCATE RESIDENTS ON CODE ENFORCEMENT

Code enforcement ranked very high among the concerns that surfaced through the planning process, but there is not enough clarity within the community about how the City conducts enforcement and what a property owners' role is in the process. The City can illuminate this process by developing an easy to use brochure explaining how code enforcement works and what residents can do if they encounter code enforcement problems in their neighborhood. These brochures should be distributed widely through community groups and at events as well as online to ensure everyone understands the City's code enforcement tools and processes.

5.3

INITIATE A "DUMPSTER DAY" PROGRAM FOR LARGE, BULKY ITEMS; ELECTRONICS RECYCLING; CLOTHING DRIVE

Large items and electronics that cannot be disposed of easily are often the types of items that are dumped illegally in vacant lots or left in front yards. The City can help residents dispose of these items safely and easily by initiating a "Dumpster Day" program where a dumpster is delivered to a block for one day. An electronics recycling van or clothing drive can be paired with this initiative as part of a spring cleaning effort.

Examples of anti-litter campaigns

5.4

LAUNCH CITY-WIDE CLEAN STREETS CAMPAIGN

Trash and litter is a major concern for residents throughout the City. The accumulation of trash on the streets not only presents the City in an unattractive light, it contributes to the impression by some in the region that the city is not safe. During storm events, this debris is also washed into the rivers and streams diminishing the water quality. A citywide Clean Streets campaign should have two main components: an anti-litter graphic marketing campaign and an educational one that explains why the movement is important to neighborhoods, the city and the environment. An attention-getting graphic campaign should be developed that can be deployed throughout the City: on billboards, buses and bus shelters, on trash cans, in business windows, and even on storm drains. The educational component should include outreach to community groups, schools and youth programs.

Image from the Photo Suggestion Booth

5.5

STRENGTHEN COMMUNITY RESILIENCY TO CRIME AND DRUGS WITH COMMUNITY POLICING

Addressing crime in the City requires residents and police working together; mutual trust and communication is essential. The Police and Neighborhood Partnership for a Safer Binghamton Initiative builds relationships between the Police Department and residents, particularly underrepresented communities in neighborhoods that confront criminal activity and may be more vulnerable and isolated. It helps these communities strengthen resiliency to crime and encourage crime reporting by breaking down communication barriers and increasing positive interactions with the police. In addition grassroots neighborhood organizations such as Safe Streets, which is dedicated to improving safety and the quality of life for residents in the neighborhood north of Main Street, and neighborhood watch groups should be key community policing partners. Social media can also be incorporated as a way to share information. Many community groups use Facebook as a forum for residents to update each other on all that is going on in their neighborhoods and feel more connected. Twitter has also been effectively used by police departments in other cities to send real-time alerts to residents.

"GIVE INCENTIVES TO CRIME WATCH GROUPS BESIDES SAFETY; MAYBE CREATE JOB TRAINING FOR ADULTS AND TEENAGERS, VOCATION SCHOOLS."

Source: Collaborative Map Comment

Walnut Street Park is an example of grassroots efforts led by Safe Streets Binghamton

Youth/Police Field Day at Recreation Park

5.6

CREATE ROTATING SCHEDULE FOR YOUTH/POLICE FIELD DAY IN EACH NEIGHBORHOOD

Building a sense of trust with the police should start at a young age. The more opportunities to interact with the police in a friendly, social way the better to enhance relationships and promote lasting resiliency to crime. The City's first Youth/Police Field Day was held in 2012 at Recreation Park and introduced children to aspects of police work through the K-9 unit and a glimpse inside a police car. The Police Department should continue these outreach events, creating a rotating schedule to ensure each neighborhood is covered, and bringing programming to parks that enhance public perception of safety and community.

5.7

TRAIN COMMUNITY LEADERS IN CRIME PREVENTION THROUGH ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) encourages the (re)design of the physical environment to help prevent crime by making it more difficult to engage in criminal behavior without being detected. This means eliminating the physical conditions and places that attract crime by signaling that spaces are defensible and watched over. The goal is to create a sense of ownership and natural surveillance of the space, so that it is not perceived as neglected and therefore unmonitored, and by designating different levels of access to the space from public to private. CPTED measures include making sure vacant lots are clean and have clear lines of sight into them, sealing vacant buildings, providing good lighting, trimming foliage, and removing obstacles that obscure sight lines and provide places to hide. These basic principles and measures should be spread throughout the community by holding workshops to educate residents, businesses, and institutions and helping to implement such strategies. The Local Initiatives Support Corporation's Community Safety Initiative offers technical assistance, trainings and resources in CPTED principles (http://www.lisc.org/csi/strategies_&_solutions/crime_prevention_through_environmental_design/index.php).

5.8

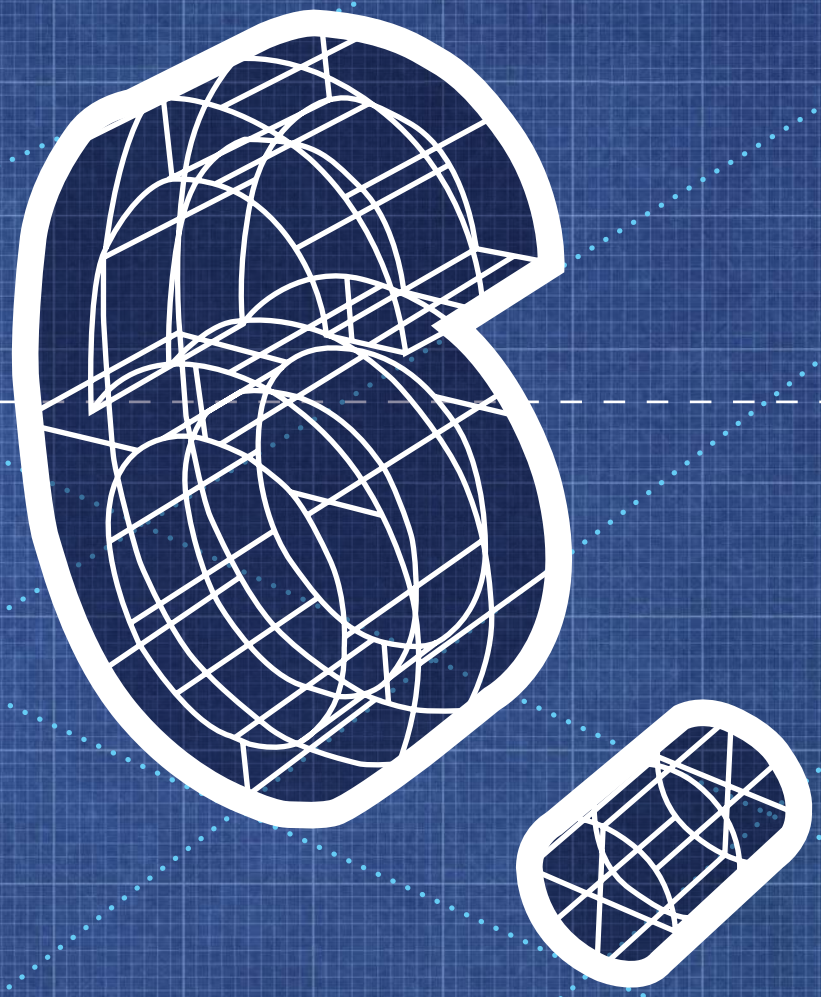
IMPROVE NEIGHBORHOOD LIGHTING FOR VISIBILITY AND SAFETY

Improving visibility is at the crux of CPTED. The City should improve lighting in areas where there is a deficiency and work with neighborhoods for fast response time to repair street lights or prune overgrown trees that obstruct lighting and sight lines. In addition, residents and businesses should be encouraged to provide good lighting on their properties. Those that already have porch or exterior lighting should be encouraged to keep them on at night or install photo sensors that automatically turn on and off at dusk and dawn. A program can be developed to provide free or low cost photo sensor porch lights for residents who do not have lights or cannot afford them. Similarly, a commercial program can help businesses and institutions install exterior commercial lighting. These combined tactics will improve the security of individual homes and businesses as well as improve public safety by adding more light to Binghamton's blocks.

BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON HAS 7 MAIN CHAPTERS

- **A** ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
- **B** HOUSING
- **C** TRANSPORTATION
- **D** INFRASTRUCTURE
- **E** ENVIRONMENT & OPEN SPACE
- **F** LAND USE & ZONING
- **G** COMMUNITY BUILDING

6



ACTION PLAN

BLUEPRINT
BINGHAMTON

06

WHAT DOES IMPLEMENTATION ENTAIL?

Blueprint Binghamton: Forward Together is a citizen-driven plan for the future of the City of Binghamton that will guide decision-making in the City over the next 10 years. The planning process invited everyone with a stake in the future of the City and thousands of people contributed their time and their ideas to the Plan. Now that the planning process is complete, carrying the energy and commitment of these stakeholders into the action phase is crucial to the successful implementation of the strategies described in this Plan.

While the City will take the lead in championing this Plan, committed residents and community partners who rallied around the ideas they care most about will provide the strongest push to implementation. The strategies in this Plan run the gamut from large-scale opportunities requiring significant funding and regional coordination to neighborhood-level improvements that may be accomplished mainly with the time, energy and coordination of neighbors.

This Plan is only the start of an ongoing partnership between the City and its citizens to move forward in realizing the vision of Blueprint Binghamton. Each of the seven recommendation areas will require partnerships between the City and different community partners to move the strategies forward. While some partnerships already exist and may be strengthened and expanded, others may need to be developed. Community partners include regional organizations, community groups, nonprofits, hospitals, educational institutions (such as the school district, university, colleges and vocational schools), the business community, arts groups, developers, realtors, the media, and residents.

Finally, each and every citizen can help support the Plan's implementation and the City by getting involved in the issues they care most about, by taking pride in their City and spreading that pride to everyone they know, by supporting their neighbors and local businesses, and by staying up-to-date with the Plan's implementation.

ACTION PLANS

The following Action Plans are designed to help the City keep track of the goals and strategies in each of the seven recommendation areas and the components of their implementation. The Action Plans are set up as matrices and identify for each strategy the area within the City that the strategy applies to, the involved parties that will partner to implement it, the time frame of implementation, and potential funding sources.

RECOMMENDATION	IMPLEMENTATION AREA	INVOLVED PARTIES	TIME FRAME	FUNDING SOURCES
GOAL 1: IMPROVE THE IMAGE OF THE CITY AS AN EXCELLENT PLACE TO DO BUSINESS				
1.1 Position Binghamton as a leader in the region	Citywide	Mayor's Office; Binghamton Economic Development Office (BEDO); Southern Tier Regional Economic Development Council (STREDC); Broome County Industrial Development Authority (BCIDA); Greater Binghamton Chamber of Commerce	Within 1 Year	New York State Consolidated Funding Application (NYS CFA); BEDO /BLDC Marketing Budgets;
1.2 Develop professional branding strategy	Citywide	Mayor's Office; BEDO; Binghamton Student Design Agency	Within 1 Year	BEDO Marketing Budget
1.3 Restructure economic development office to help businesses navigate the system	Citywide	Mayor's Office; BEDO	Within 1 Year	Not Applicable
1.4 Seek "shovel ready" designation for Charles Street Business Park	Charles Street Business Park	Planning, Housing & Community Development (PHCD); BEDO; BCIDA	Within 1 Year	First Ward Brownfield Opportunity Area (FW BOA) funds; NYS CFA; Southern Tier Infrastructure Fund for Shovel Ready Sites
GOAL 2: LEVERAGE RAIL AND BRANDYWINE BOA FOR JOB GROWTH				
2.1 Create an industrial preservation area within the Brandywine industrial corridor	Brandywine BOA	PHCD, BEDO	TBD*	Not Applicable
2.2 Focus site acquisition efforts on the Brandywine BOA	Brandywine BOA	Broome County Land Bank; BC IDA; Binghamton Local Development Corporation (BLDC);	Within 1 year	Broome County Land Bank, Office of Attorney General Community Revitalization Initiative Funds, EPA Assessment and Cleanup Grants, BC IDA, REDC, BLDC
2.3 Obtain "shovel ready" certification for sites in Brandywine industrial corridor	Brandywine BOA	BC Planning; BCIDA	Within 1 year	Existing BOA funds; Southern Tier Infrastructure Fund for Shovel Ready Sites
2.4 Leverage freight rail to attract businesses in the distribution cluster and intermodal businesses	Citywide	BC Planning; PHCD; BEDO; BCIDA	Continued effort	No or limited cost; existing BOA funds for marketing
2.5 Use tools such as BOAs and I/I credits for redevelopment	Citywide; BOAs	PHCD; BEDO; BC Planning; BC IDA	Within 1 year	EPA Assessment and Cleanup Funds; existing BOA funds; BC Brownfield Cleanup Fund
2.6 Support the development of targeted workforce development training programs to prepare Binghamton residents for jobs created	Citywide	Broome-Tioga Workforce NY; NYS DOL; Southern Tier Economic Partnership (STEP); BEDO	Within 1 year	Not Applicable

** Adoption of the Comprehensive Plan and Land Use Map initiates process of Zoning Code rewrite and creation of new zoning map. Start time of Zoning Code rewrite and creation of new zoning map to be determined by Administration.*

RECOMMENDATION	IMPLEMENTATION AREA	INVOLVED PARTIES	TIME FRAME	FUNDING SOURCES
GOAL 3: LEVERAGE THE VALUE OF LOCAL ANCHOR INSTITUTIONS FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT				
3.1 Support the implementation of the Binghamton University Technology Incubator and position the City to offer space for incubator "grown-ups" and ancillary businesses supporting the incubator	Citywide	Binghamton University; BEDO; Mayor's Office; PHCD; BC Land Bank	Within 3 years	Not Applicable
3.2 Develop an Innovation District to promote Binghamton as a cultural and creative hub	Downtown Binghamton	Binghamton University; SUNY Broome; BEDO; Mayor's Office; Arts Council; Broome County; Villages of Endicott and Johnson City	Within 3 years	Not Applicable
3.3 Promote entrepreneurship through the development of JumpStart Binghamton and the Entrepreneurial Ecosystem	Citywide	Binghamton University; SUNY Broome; BEDO; Mayor's Office; Small Business Administration	Within 3 years	Venture capitalists and investors; SBIR/STTR grants
3.4 Challenge anchor institutions to purchase 20% of procured goods and services from local businesses	Citywide with an emphasis on Binghamton University, SUNY Broome, UHS, City of Binghamton, Broome County	BEDO	Within 1 year	Not Applicable
3.5 Work with area health care providers to develop senior housing in Binghamton that offers a continuum of care	Citywide	BEDO; PHCD; area health care providers and private investors	Within 3 years	BLDC loans
GOAL 4: CREATE A MIXED-USE DOWNTOWN THAT IS A REGIONAL DESTINATION				
4.1 Improve coordination amongst Downtown stakeholders to build on the successes and momentum in Downtown Binghamton	Downtown Binghamton	BEDO; BLDC; Local Businesses; Binghamton City Council; Mayors Office; Existing business associations (GWSA and DBBA)	Within 3 years	Business Community; property tax increment fund; BLDC loan
4.2 Set up business district cleaning efforts and pair with anti-litter campaign	Central City Business District	BEDO; Binghamton University Enactus; Business Owners	Within 3 years	Not Applicable
4.3 Enhance retail options downtown	Downtown Binghamton	BLDC; BEDO; business community	Within 3 years	Economic Development Administration Grant; CFA- Main Street Grant in 2015; BLDC Loans ; BEDO Marketing Budget for Retail Recruitment

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RECOMMENDATION	IMPLEMENTATION AREA	INVOLVED PARTIES	TIME FRAME	FUNDING SOURCES
4.4 Promote more activities downtown to encourage commuters to stay after work	Downtown Binghamton	Mayor's Office; BEDO; DBBA; GWSA	Within 1 year/ continued effort	BEDO; BLDC; Mayors Community Arts Budget
4.5 Create an aesthetically appealing and cohesive visual identity for downtown	Downtown Binghamton	BEDO; Private Sector; PHCD;	Continued effort	Existing efforts through new proposed zoning
4.6 Improve the gateways to downtown and the city	Gateways	Mayor's Office; Engineering; Public Works; BEDO; PHCD; NYSDOT regional representative	Continued effort	EDA Grant; NYS CFA for lighting, signage and other improvements; public/private fundraiser to improve Court St Bridge Gateway
GOAL 5: ENCOURAGE LOCAL ENTREPRENEURIAL ACTIVITY AND HELP SMALL BUSINESSES THRIVE				
5.1 Embrace the idea of pop up shops and retail incubators to encourage entrepreneurial activity	Citywide with an emphasis on commercial corridors	BEDO; Local retailers, entrepreneurs, students (BU, SUNY Broome), property owners; TechWorks	Within 1 year	Not Applicable
5.2 Support and grow the Buy Local Campaign	Citywide	BEDO; Binghamton Regional Sustainability Coalition (BRSC)	Expand current effort	BEDO Marketing Budget
5.3 Streamline the regulatory process for small, independent retailers	Citywide	Mayor's Office; BEDO; PHCD	Continued effort	Not Applicable
GOAL 6: CREATE STRONG NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL HUBS				
6.1 Allow the preservation of neighborhood commercial development to give residents the option to shop and eat in their neighborhoods	Citywide	PHCD; BEDO; City Council	Continued effort	Not Applicable
6.2 Proactively guide the redevelopment of key areas such as Binghamton Plaza and Chenango Street	Binghamton Plaza and other key sites to be indentified	BEDO; Mayors Office	Continued effort	NYS CFA; Direct Assistance to Businesses Southern Tier Community Revitalization Program (loans); existing BOA funds

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RECOMMENDATION	IMPLEMENTATION AREA	INVOLVED PARTIES	TIME FRAME	FUNDING SOURCES
6.3 Consider broader application of new zoning to encourage mixed-use development	Main & Court Corridor; other key commercial corridors as identified	PHCD; BEDO; City Council	Upon adoption of new zoning for Main & Court Corridor; within 3-5 years for other commercial corridors	Existing Community Challenge Planning Grant (CCPG); existing BOA funding
6.4 Cultivate, brand, and market distinct retail corridors in different neighborhoods	Key commercial corridors to be identified	BEDO; PHCD	Within 3-5 years	BOA funds
GOAL 7: FOSTER THE LOCAL ARTS				
7.1 Create a volunteer public art commission to foster the local arts	Citywide	City Council; BEDO; PHCD	Continued effort	Not Applicable
7.2 Encourage visible and large-scale public art to promote the local arts and downtown revitalization	Citywide with a focus on urban center	Public Arts Commission; BEDO; Commission on Architecture and Urban Development (CAUD); PHCD	Within 1 year	National Endowment for the Arts - Our Town Grant Program
7.3 Create temporary galleries in local businesses	Citywide	BEDO; local artists; business owners	Within 1 year	Not Applicable
7.4 Use temporary arts and events to enliven vacant commercial spaces	Citywide	BEDO; local artists; property owners	Within 1 year	Not Applicable
7.5 Sponsor an artist storefront/artist in residency space	Citywide	BEDO; local artists; property owners	Within 1 year	Not Applicable
7.6 Participate in local and regional efforts to boost tourism and heritage tourism	Citywide	BEDO; Greater Binghamton Chamber of Commerce; Broome County; Center for Technology and Innovation (TechWorks!); Private and nonprofit tourism stakeholders;	Continued effort	Chamber of Commerce; I Love NY; Market NY

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RECOMMENDATION	IMPLEMENTATION AREA	INVOLVED PARTIES	TIME FRAME	FUNDING SOURCES
GOAL 1: PRESERVE THE EXISTING HOUSING STOCK				
1.1 Identify target areas for neighborhood stabilization and housing revitalization that builds on strengths	Citywide with focus on WSNP area, First Ward, North Side, East Side south of Robinson Street, South Side West near the hospital and commercial areas, and South Side East.	PHCD	Within 3 years	New York State Affordable Housing Corporation (AHC), Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), Housing and Community Renewal Urban Initiatives Program (HCR UI)
1.2 Encourage historic preservation to maintain neighborhood character	Citywide, especially designated historic districts	PHCD	Continued effort	Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation Grants, Historic Preservation & New Market Tax Credits
1.3 Work with the Binghamton Housing Authority, private developers/owners, and community development corporations to preserve and expand quality affordable rental housing	Citywide	PHCD; BHA; Community Housing Development Organizations (CHDOs); private developers	Continued effort	Low Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC), AHC, HCR UI
1.4 Assist residents in need (low-income, seniors) with maintenance and repairs	Citywide, with a focus on the **STABILIZE** and **RENEW** areas identified in plan	PHCD; Quaranta Housing Services; Habitat for Humanity	Continued effort	LIHTC, Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP)
1.5 Partner with local nonprofit organizations to explore mechanisms that assist elderly homeowners seeking to age in place in their homes	Citywide	PHCD; City Council; non-profit community land trust organization	5-10 years	HOME funds, HCR UI
1.6 Consider working with one or more FHA-approved lending institutions to define the parameters of a Binghamton housing acquisition and rehabilitation program using FHA 203(k) mortgage insurance for loans	Citywide	PHCD; Binghamton Homeownership Academy (BHOA); Local lenders	Within 3 years	Not Applicable
1.7 Develop "Fix to Own" program for City-owned properties to transition to owner-occupied properties	Citywide	PHCD; BHOA	Continued effort	NSP, Restore NY

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RECOMMENDATION	IMPLEMENTATION AREA	INVOLVED PARTIES	TIME FRAME	FUNDING SOURCES
GOAL 2: EXPAND HOUSING CHOICE IN BINGHAMTON				
2.1 Identify potential sites for new housing development (for-sale, for-rent, senior)	Citywide	PHCD; BEDO; BC Land Bank	Continued effort	Not Applicable
2.2 Work with Broome County Land Bank to assemble redevelopment sites for new for sale housing units	Citywide, with a focus on the **STABILIZE** and **RENEW** areas identified in plan	PHCD; BC Land Bank	Within 5 years	HCR UI
2.3 Require energy efficiency, green building practices, and universal design principles in publicly-funded projects	Citywide	PHCD; Housing; Engineering	Within 3-5 years	Not Applicable
2.4 Develop new market-rate rental housing for general occupancy	Citywide, especially North Chenango and First Ward BOAs	PHCD; CHDOs; other private developers	5-10 years	AHC; NSP; LIHTC
2.5 Develop affordable housing and mixed income developments adjacent to services and transportation	Citywide (near public transportation)	PHCD; BHA; CHDOs	Continued effort	LIHTC; Restore NY; HOME

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RECOMMENDATION	IMPLEMENTATION AREA	INVOLVED PARTIES	TIME FRAME	FUNDING SOURCES
GOAL 3: MANAGE THE QUALITY OF RENTAL AND STUDENT HOUSING				
3.1 Devise a new Urban Village/Mixed Use zoning classification to legalize and better regulate rental housing while also managing externalities	See proposed land use map	PHCD	TBD*	Not Applicable
3.2 Identify opportunity sites and incentives for new student housing development	Urban Village and commercial zoning districts	PHCD; BEDO	Within 1 year	New York Main Street Program; New Market Tax Credits
3.3 Strengthen code enforcement and follow up to improve rental properties	Citywide	Building, Construction, Zoning & Code Enforcement	Continued effort	Not Applicable
3.4 Work with the Binghamton Housing Authority to ensure that properties leased to families with Housing Choice vouchers have been inspected and are in compliance	Citywide	PHCD; Building, Construction, Zoning & Code Enforcement; BHA	Continued effort	Not Applicable
3.5 Encourage landlords to improve the quality of their properties	Citywide	PHCD; Building, Construction, Zoning & Code Enforcement; Broome County Landlords Association	Continued effort	NYSERDA; CDBG
3.6 Develop incentives for conversion of obsolete rental housing to owner-occupied (multi-family/single-family) housing	Citywide	PHCD; BHOA; CHDOs; Other private developers	Continued effort	Restore New York; AHC; NSP

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RECOMMENDATION	IMPLEMENTATION AREA	INVOLVED PARTIES	TIME FRAME	FUNDING SOURCES
GOAL 4: REVITALIZE DOWNTOWN WITH A MIX OF HOUSING OPTIONS				
4.1 Encourage historic preservation and reuse to provide unique, attractive housing options	Downtown	PHCD; BEDO; BC Land Bank	Continued effort	Office of Parks; Recreation & Historic Preservation Grants; Historic Preservation & New Market Tax Credits
4.2 Encourage market rate housing with a variety of unit plans for residents seeking downtown amenities	Downtown	BEDO	Continued effort	New York Main Street Program, New Market Tax Credits
4.3 Develop moderate-income senior housing near amenities	Downtown	BC Land Bank; BEDO	5-10 years	BC Land Bank; CDBG
4.4 Consider parking maximums or lower parking minimums for new housing construction Downtown	Downtown	PHCD	TBD	Not Applicable
4.5 Apply for a Choice Neighborhood Initiative Planning Grant for Woodburn Court II	Downtown	PHCD; BHA; Woodburn Court II	5-10 years	Choice Neighborhood Grant
GOAL 5: MARKET BINGHAMTON HOUSING TO ATTRACT DIVERSE RESIDENTS				
5.1 Develop branding strategy for different target populations and neighborhoods	Citywide	PHCD; BEDO; BHOA	Within 1 year	BEDO marketing funds
5.2 Work with institutions to offer employee incentives to live in Binghamton	Citywide	PHCD; BHOA; Binghamton City School District; major City employers	Within 3 years	AHC
5.3 Expand Binghamton Homeownership Academy (BHOA) services and partnerships	Citywide	PHCD; BHOA	Continued effort	CDBG; Private funding

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RECOMMENDATION	IMPLEMENTATION AREA	INVOLVED PARTIES	TIME FRAME	FUNDING SOURCES
GOAL 1: UPGRADE AND MAINTAIN TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE				
1.1 Expand and regularly update a citywide roadway infrastructure plan	Citywide	Engineering Department; Department of Public Works (DPW); PHCD; BMTS	Within 3 years	Economic Development Assistance Program (EDAP), Transportation Alternative Program (TAP)
1.2 Work with private rail companies to improve rail infrastructure	Citywide	PHCD, Engineering, BMTS, Rail companies, NYSDOT	5-10 years	Railroad Rehabilitation & Improvement Financing (RRIF) Program; Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER); Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP)
1.3 Develop guidelines and standards to integrate green infrastructure in street rehabilitation projects	Focus on projects in FEMA special hazard areas and LWRP areas	PHCD; Engineering; DPW	Within 3 years	EPF; LWRP
1.4 Reduce City costs by removing excessive infrastructure where possible	Citywide	Engineering; DPW; PHCD, BMTS	Within 5 years	EPF LWRP; federal transportation grant funds, including TIGER grants
1.5 Convert most one-way streets to two-ways	Citywide (with emphasis on Downtown)	Engineering; DPW	Within 5 years	Not Applicable
1.6 Continue to pursue outside funding sources	Citywide	PHCD	Continued effort	Federal transportation grant funds; Regional Economic Development Council (REDC) funds through CFA
GOAL 2: ADDRESS PARKING & MAINTENANCE ISSUES				
2.1 Undertake a comprehensive Downtown parking study	Downtown	BMTS; Mayor's Office; PHCD	Within 1 year	BMTS, City
2.2 Develop a Parking Improvement District in Downtown, and utilize a portion of revenue from parking for Downtown improvements for pedestrians and bicyclists	C-2 Downtown Business District	PHCD & BEDO create district boundaries. City creates a PID commission to develop programs and policy to administer funds. Commission would submit annual budget and plan to Council/Mayor.	Within 3 years	Self-funded - Private sector dollars for bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure via donations

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2.3 Introduce shared parking arrangements or residential permit parking in neighborhoods with student housing zones	Commercial districts and Urban Village Overlay zone	Police Department	Within 3 years	Not Applicable
2.4 Create a parking credit system to encourage development	Citywide	PHCD	Within 3 years	Not Applicable
2.5 Incentivize green infrastructure within surface parking lots	Citywide	PHCD; Engineering	Continued effort	Foundations; NYS CFA Green Innovation Grant; Federal Wildlife Fund; EPA Clean Water Act Nonpoint Source Grant Program; EPA Clean Water State Revolving Fund; City of Binghamton Green Infrastructure 50/50 Fund
GOAL 3: PROMOTE ALTERNATIVE MODES OF TRANSPORTATION				
3.1 Improve transportation connections between Binghamton University and Downtown	Downtown	PHCD; Engineering; NYSDOT; Binghamton University (OCCT); BC Transit; BMTS; Town of Vestal	5-10 years	TAP & Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) funds
3.2 Improve the public transportation experience	Citywide	BC Transit; BMTS; PHCD; OCCT	Continued effort	Statewide Mass Transportation Operating Assistance; Clean Fuels Grant Program (new buses) STREDC funds through CFA
3.3 Promote and encourage car share, car pooling, and transportation demand management	Citywide	PHCD; OCCT; BMTS (Greenride)	Continued effort	Not Applicable
3.4 Incentivize EV Charger Stations with new development, and install at key locations in each neighborhood	Citywide	PHCD; Building Code; DPW	Within 5 years	Foundations; NYSERDA; Department of Energy (DOE); federal and state tax incentives
3.5 Develop complete streets hierarchy for street design	Citywide	PHCD; Engineering; BMTS; NYSDOT	Within 3 years	Not Applicable
3.6 Develop crosswalk policy	Citywide	Engineering; DPW	Within 1 year	Not Applicable
3.7 Amend the City Code to require consideration of complete streets infrastructure for all City ROW projects including mill and pave projects	Citywide	PHCD; City Council	TBD*	Not Applicable
3.8 Mark all New York State bike routes in the City with either dedicated lanes or sharrows by 2016	Citywide	PHCD; BMTS; NYSDOT	Within 3 years	TAP; Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP)
3.9 Develop a citywide bike network	Citywide	PHCD; BMTS; Engineering; DPW; NYSDOT	Within 5 years	TAP; BMTS

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3.10 Consider a small bike share program	Citywide	PHCD; BMTS	Within 5 years	Community foundations; private sector donations (NYC program is sponsored by Citi Bank)
3.11 Add more bike parking	Commercial zoning districts	PHCD; DPW	Within 3 years	TAP
3.12 Build a bicycling community	Citywide	Fresh Cycles; Southern Tier Bike Club; other non-profits	Continued effort	Not Applicable
3.13 Hold regular Bike the Drive events	Northshore Drive possibly Rt. 434 Eastbound direction	Parks & Recreation; BMTS; NYSDOT	Continued effort	Public/private donations. Marketing cost offset by registration fees.
GOAL 4: IMPROVE THE PEDESTRIAN EXPERIENCE ON CITY STREETS				
4.1 Reclaim underutilized asphalt space on wide streets and intersections	Pilot to be implemented in C-2 District	PHCD; Parks & Recreation, DPW; BMTS; NYSDOT	Within 3-5 years	Not Applicable
4.2 Develop a list of streets in need of a "Road Diet"	Citywide	PHCD; Engineering; BMTS; DPW; NYSDOT	Within 1 year	Not Applicable
4.3 Make the bridges distinctive through lighting and highlighting architectural detail	Citywide	CAUD; PHCD; DPW; NYSDOT	Within 3 years	I LOVE NY Fund; NYSDOT; EPF LWRP; CDBG; NYSERDA
4.4 Encourage more pedestrian activity	Citywide	PHCD; BC PED; BMTS; DPW (installation of signage); NYSDOT	Within 3 years	TAP; HSIP
4.5 Address the needs of Binghamton City School District students who walk or take the bus to school	Citywide	Binghamton School District; Broome County Health Department; BMTS; NYSDOT	Continued effort	TAP; HSIP
4.6 Limit truck traffic downtown	Downtown	Engineering; DPW; NYSDOT; BMTS	Within 3 years	Not Applicable
4.7 Enforce sidewalk shoveling	Citywide	Code Enforcement	Continued effort	Not Applicable

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RECOMMENDATION	IMPLEMENTATION AREA	INVOLVED PARTIES	TIME FRAME	FUNDING SOURCES
GOAL 1: REDUCE THE IMPACT OF FLOODING AND PROTECT BINGHAMTON NEIGHBORHOODS AND BUSINESSES				
1.1 Implement the City's established priority projects in the County's 2013 Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan	City-wide, specific focus on flood prone areas	Engineering; DPW; PHCD; Code Enforcement	Within 5 years	FEMA and SEMA flood mitigation grant programs; CDBG-DR
1.2 Complete CRS application to make property owners eligible for reduced insurance rates	City-wide	PHCD; DPW; Building Construction	Within 1-3 years	NYS CFA (EPF program); FW BOA funds
1.3 Partner with Broome County in the New York Rising Community Reconstruction Program planning efforts to ensure consistency across plans	City-wide	Engineering; Broome County, Flood Task Force	Within 1 year	New York Rising Community Reconstruction Program
1.4 Help residents reduce the impact of flooding on their homes and comply with new floodplain standards to reduce flood insurance costs	Flood prone areas	Building Construction; Engineering	Continued Effort	FEMA and SEMA flood mitigation grant programs
1.5 Proactively manage land in the floodplain to reduce blight and implement flood mitigation measures	New A Flood Zones (100 year flood plain)	City Council; PHCD; Building Construction; Broome County, Flood Task Force	Within 1-3 years	FEMA and SEMA flood mitigation grant programs; NYS CFA Green Innovation Grant
1.6 Participate in regional cooperation efforts for riverine flooding	City-wide	Engineering; Building Construction; Broome County, Flood Task Force	Continued Effort	FEMA and SEMA flood mitigation grant programs; NYS CFA Green Innovation Grant
GOAL 2: IMPROVE STORMWATER MANAGEMENT AND RIVER WATER QUALITY				
2.1 Enforce and enhance Urban Runoff Reduction Plan (URRP) requirements	City-wide	Engineering; Building Construction	Continued Effort	Foundations; FEMA; SEMA; NYS CFA Green Innovation Grant; NYS Water Quality Improvement Project funds; General Funds
2.2 Create a landscape/stormwater offset banking system	City-wide	PHCD	Within 1-3 years	Not Applicable

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RECOMMENDATION	IMPLEMENTATION AREA	INVOLVED PARTIES	TIME FRAME	FUNDING SOURCES
2.3 Implement stormwater management practices for green mitigation and runoff/flash flood control	City-wide	Engineering; Building Construction	Within 1-3 years	Foundations; FEMA; SEMA; NYS CFA Green Innovation Grant; NYS Water Quality Improvement Project funds;
2.4 Integrate stormwater management into parks, especially riverfront parks and trails	City-wide	Engineering; Parks	Begin within 1 year; complete within 10 years	NYS CFA Green Innovation Grant; NYS Water Quality Improvement Project funds
2.5 Continue to make sewer system improvements	City-wide	Engineering	Continued Effort	NYS Water Quality Improvement Project funds (CFA)
2.6 Evaluate the use of trenchless rehab alternatives to rehabilitate sewers	City-wide	Engineering	Within 3 years	NYS Water Quality Improvement Project funds (CFA); Local Initiatives Support Corporation; FEMA
2.7 Develop public education and awareness campaign for stormwater and sewer overflows to encourage individual action and responsibility	City-wide	Engineering; PHCD with Broome Tioga Stormwater Coalition	Continued effort	NYS Water Quality Improvement Project funds
GOAL 3: CONSERVE WATER/ENERGY RESOURCES AND REDUCE OPERATING COSTS				
3.1 Make the City a model of resource conservation and efficiency, and use public projects to raise public awareness	City Hall facilities, vehicles	Mayor's Office; DPW; Parks; Engineering	Within 1-5 years	NYSERDA; NY Green Bank; Foundations; NYS CFA
3.2 Establish Energy and Climate Action Task Force to mobilize the community to help meet ECAP goals	City-wide	PHCD	Within 1 year	Not Applicable
3.3 Incentivize low impact development practices	City-wide	PHCD; Engineering	Within 1 year	Foundations; NYS CFA Green Innovation Grant
3.4 Invest in wireless meter system for all water uses, allowing the City to monitor where water is being used, and correct areas of water loss	City-wide	Engineering	Within 5 years	NYS CFA Green Innovation Grant; NYSERDA; NY Green Bank

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3.5 Update water model to assist in detecting areas of concern within the system to target funding	City-wide	Engineering	Within 1-3 years	NYS CFA Green Innovation Grant
3.6 Continue to upgrade and replace pipe	City-wide	Engineering	Continued Effort	NYS Water Quality Improvement Project funds (CFA)
3.7 Upgrade water treatment plant to increase energy efficiency	Water Treatment Plant	Engineering; DPW	Submit application within 1 year	New York State Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS); NYS Water Quality Improvement Project funds; NYSERDA; NY Green Bank
3.8 Replace all streetlights with energy efficient bulbs and fixtures by 2020	City-wide	DPW	Within 5 years	NYS CFA Green Innovation Grant; General Funds; NYSERDA Energy Efficiency Program for Municipalities; NY Green Bank
3.9 Enforce City standards for public right of way	City-wide	Engineering	Continued Effort	Foundations; Sidewalk Assistance program
3.10 Openly coordinate/communicate between departments and utilities on any major projects to reduce redundancies	City-wide	Engineering; Public Works; NYSEG	First meeting within 1 year	Not Applicable
3.11 Continue to build a database that tracks assets, investments, and schedules maintenance	City-wide	All City Departments	Within 1-2 years	Not Applicable

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RECOMMENDATION	IMPLEMENTATION AREA	INVOLVED PARTIES	TIME FRAME	FUNDING SOURCES
GOAL 1: REDUCE WASTE				
1.1 Increase household recycling through incentive programs	Citywide	DPW; PHCD	Within 3-5 years	Foundation grants; recycling purchaser
1.2 Add recycling containers to public trash receptacles in business districts, at public facilities, and at public events	Citywide with emphasis on Downtown	DPW; Parks & Recreation	Continued effort	Public Works; NY DEC Municipal Waste Reduction and Recycling Program (MWR&R)
1.3 Launch a city compost program	Citywide	DPW; PHCD	Within 3-5 years	Foundation grants; NYS DEC Municipal Waste Reduction and Recycling Program (MWR&R)
1.4 Adopt a construction and demolition recycling ordinance	Citywide	PHCD; DPW; City Council	Within 3-5 years	Not Applicable
GOAL 2: INCREASE TREE COVER TO IMPROVE AIR QUALITY AND THE PUBLIC REALM				
2.1 Expand the tree inventory database, and add to the tree inventory with size-appropriate species in under-planted areas	Citywide with emphasis on under-planted neighborhoods	Parks & Recreation; PHCD; Shade Tree Commission	Continued effort	NYS DEC Community Forestry Program; Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds; NYS CFA - Green Innovation Grant Program
2.2 Continue to support efforts by Shade Tree Commission as a key partner for parks and recreation	Citywide	Parks & Recreation; PHCD; Shade Tree Commission	Continued effort	Not Applicable
2.3 Enlist the community in tree planting efforts through education	Citywide	Parks & Recreation; PHCD; Shade Tree Commission, Citizen Pruners	Continued effort	Little or no cost; existing NYS DEC Community Forestry grants

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RECOMMENDATION	IMPLEMENTATION AREA	INVOLVED PARTIES	TIME FRAME	FUNDING SOURCES
GOAL 3: IMPROVE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN THE CITY AND ITS NATURAL ASSETS				
3.1 Improve existing Riverwalk	Riverwalk	Engineering; Parks & Recreation; DPW; PHCD	Continued effort	NYS CFA - Recreational Trails Program; CDBG funds; TAP; LWRP
3.2 Extend the Riverwalk trail north to Otsiningo Park and east/west along both banks of the Susquehanna River	Riverwalk/ Susquehanna River	Engineering; Parks & Recreation	Continued effort	NYS CFA - Recreational Trails Program; TAP; LWRP
3.3 Reactivate the rivers with water-based recreation	Citywide	Engineering; DPW; Parks & Recreation; PHCD	Within 5 years	LWRP
3.4 Acquire easements along entire waterfront and require easements as a condition for future waterfront redevelopment	Waterfront	PHCD, Building, Corporation Counsel	Within 3-5 years	LWRP; FEMA Hazard Mitigation Assistance
GOAL 4: MAINTAIN PARKS AND PLAY SPACE IN EVERY NEIGHBORHOOD TO BRING RESIDENTS TOGETHER				
4.1 Improve access, visibility, active recreation at targeted parks	Citywide - priority parks to be identified	Parks & Recreation	Continued effort	CDBG funds; NYS CFA - EPF Municipal Grant Program; NC BOA
4.2 Formalize and provide technical assistance to "Friends of Parks" groups to maintain and program neighborhood parks	Citywide	Parks & Recreation; PHCD neighborhood assemblies	Within 1 year	No cost - enhance DYOP project
4.3 Expand community service maintenance program to supplement parks and landscape maintenance	Citywide	Parks & Recreation	Within 1 year	Not Applicable
4.4 Continue to expand business partnerships for landscape maintenance in business districts	Citywide with emphasis on business districts	BEDO; Parks & Recreation; PHCD	Within 1 year	Not Applicable

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RECOMMENDATION	IMPLEMENTATION AREA	INVOLVED PARTIES	TIME FRAME	FUNDING SOURCES
GOAL 1: UPDATE MAPS, CODES AND PROCEDURES				
1.1 Update the Land Use Map	Citywide	City Council; PHCD	Adoption with Comprehensive Plan	Existing Community Challenge Planning Grant (CCPG) funds
1.2 Rewrite the zoning code to ensure that appropriate zoning supports the future Land Use Map	Citywide	City Council; PHCD	TBD*	Not Applicable
1.3 Incorporate a Special Purpose classification for key sites	Charles St. Business Park, Binghamton Plaza, Greater Binghamton Health Center, Brandywine, Susquehanna Riverfront Downtown, flood prone portions of Court Street	City Council; PHCD	TBD*	Not Applicable
1.4 Study current land uses allowed by the Zoning Code and examine ways to simplify the Code	Citywide	City Council; PHCD	TBD*	Not Applicable
1.5 Update subdivision regulations	Citywide	City Council; PHCD	TBD*	Not Applicable
1.6 Consider new zoning for Court Street - Main Street Corridor	Court Street - Main Street Corridor	City Council; PHCD	TBD*	Existing CCPG funds
1.7 Facilitate transparency in the development review and permitting process	Citywide	Building Construction PHCD; Finance; City Council	Within 1 year	Included in 2014 General Fund Budget
1.8 Actively encourage that development projects meet comprehensive plan goals and strategies	Citywide	Planning Commission; Zoning Board of Appeals; CAUD	Upon adoption of Comp Plan	Not Applicable

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RECOMMENDATION	IMPLEMENTATION AREA	INVOLVED PARTIES	TIME FRAME	FUNDING SOURCES
GOAL 2: ALLOW GREATER HOUSING CHOICE AND PROTECT THE LIVABILITY OF BINGHAMTON'S NEIGHBORHOODS				
2.1 Convert the Urban Village District Overlay into a zoning category, and expand its application	See proposed UVD on land use map	City Council; PHCD; in partnership with WSNP and WSNA	TBD*	Not Applicable
2.2 Encourage floor plans in multi-family developments that are suitable for a variety of end users	Citywide	Planning Commission	Upon adoption of Comp Plan	Not Applicable
2.3 Create a new, low density zoning classification for environmentally sensitive areas	See proposed Estate Residential District on proposed land use map	City Council; PHCD	TBD*	Little to no cost to enact Code changes
2.4 Permit home-based businesses as a conditional use in R1 and R2 zones	Residential Zones	City Council; PHCD	TBD*	Not Applicable
2.5 Allow the development of parking facilities in the Urban Village District	See proposed UVD on land use map	City Council; PHCD	TBD*	Not Applicable
2.6 Allow new senior living facilities in R2 and R3 zones and along commercial corridors	R2 and R3 zones and along commercial corridors	City Council; PHCD	TBD*	Not Applicable
2.7 Enable higher density housing along Main Street west of Downtown	along Main Street west of Downtown	City Council; PHCD	TBD*	Not Applicable
2.8 Allow for and manage urban agriculture as an interim use prior to redevelopment	Citywide	City Council; PHCD; in partnership with Cornell Cooperative Extension, Broome County Planning and Economic Development and Broome County Land Bank	TBD*	Not Applicable

** Adoption of the Comprehensive Plan and Land Use Map initiates process of Zoning Code rewrite and creation of new zoning map. Start time of Zoning Code rewrite and creation of new zoning map to be determined by Administration.*

RECOMMENDATION	IMPLEMENTATION AREA	INVOLVED PARTIES	TIME FRAME	FUNDING SOURCES
GOAL 3: ENCOURAGE NEW COMMERCIAL USES DOWNTOWN AND ALONG TRADITIONAL COMMERCIAL CORRIDORS				
3.1 Change mix of uses permitted within the Urban Business Park (UBP) zoning classification	UBP Zone; Charles Street Business Park	City Council; PHCD; in partnership with the IDA	TBD*	Not Applicable
3.2 Consider rezoning underutilized portions of commercial corridors	Portions of commercial corridors, such as along Robinson Street, Conklin Avenue, portions of the south side of Upper Court Street	City Council; PHCD	TBD*	Not Applicable
3.3 Explore parking maximums or lower parking minimums for Downtown development	Downtown	City Council and PHCD in partnership with Downtown businesses and property owners and BMTS.	Pending outcome of Downtown Parking Study	Not Applicable
3.4 Update the sign ordinance	Citywide	City Council and PHCD in partnership with representatives for Sign	Mar-14	Not Applicable

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RECOMMENDATION	IMPLEMENTATION AREA	INVOLVED PARTIES	TIME FRAME	FUNDING SOURCES
GOAL 4: EXPAND OPPORTUNITIES FOR NEW INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT				
4.1 Identify and code an Industrial Preservation Area within the Brandywine industrial Corridor	Brandywine Industrial Corridor	City Council, PHCD in partnership with Broome County	TBD*	Not Applicable
4.2 Buffer industrial areas from residential communities	Industrial Zoning Districts	City Council; PHCD	TBD*	Not Applicable
4.3 Re-zone to allow small-scale production and a mix of uses in targeted areas	See Land Use map	City Council; PHCD	TBD*	Not Applicable
GOAL 5: PROTECT BINGHAMTON'S HISTORIC CHARACTER AND ENCOURAGE DESIGN EXCELLENCE				
5.1 Establish a threshold for design review for large projects to provide a streamlined review process and ensure good design	Citywide	City Council; CAUD; Planning Commission; PHCD	TBD*	Not Applicable
5.2 Evaluate current landscape requirements and develop clear standards for all project types	Citywide	City Council; PHCD	TBD*	Not Applicable

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RECOMMENDATION	IMPLEMENTATION AREA	INVOLVED PARTIES	TIME FRAME	FUNDING SOURCES
GOAL 1: EXPAND THE CIVIL INFRASTRUCTURE OF THE CITY				
1.1 Explore the creation of a Binghamton Neighborhood Development Corporation	Citywide	PHCD; BEDO; Building Construction	Within 5 years	CDBG; HOME; public and private investors
1.2 Form Community Action Teams that meet quarterly to bring together City departments and health / service providers to discuss the issues and solutions required in each neighborhood	Citywide	Mayor's Office; BPD; Planning; Code Enforcement; Corp. Counsel; BC Health Department; neighborhood assemblies	Within 3 years	Little to no cost to form/organize action teams; HUD Choice Neighborhoods grant for project implementation
1.3 Encourage issue-based groups to continue the work of the Community Discussions	Citywide	PHCD; BEDO; LCA; BC Planning; BC Health Department; local private sector professionals	Within 1 year	Not Applicable
1.4 Cultivate pride through branding and improvements at the neighborhood and block level	Citywide	Mayor's Office; PHCD; BEDO; Building Construction	Within 3 years	HUD Choice Neighborhoods grant; CDBG
1.5 Develop media and communication plan to keep the community engaged and updated	Citywide	Mayor's Office; BEDO	Within 1 year	New York State Civic Engagement Table; Public Policy and Education Fund of New York; BEDO marketing funds
1.6 Incorporate Blueprint Binghamton in the development of the 2015-2020 Consolidated Plan	Citywide	PHCD	Within 1 year	Not Applicable

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RECOMMENDATION	IMPLEMENTATION AREA	INVOLVED PARTIES	TIME FRAME	FUNDING SOURCES
GOAL 2: MAINTAIN A CONTINUUM OF CARE FOR RESIDENTS AND FAMILIES IN NEED				
2.1 Strengthen and support development of supportive housing for developmental disabilities, mental health and substance addiction recovery with access to transportation and service providers	Citywide	PHCD; local CHDOs; Binghamton Housing Authority; BC Mental Health Department; area health care providers	Within 3 years	U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration on Aging; HOME; CDBG; General Funds; AHC
2.2 Support community development initiatives to improve access to preventive care and chronic disease management for high-utilizing patients	Citywide	PHCD; BC Department of Health; area health care providers	Within 3 years	CDBG; NY Preventive Health and Health Services Block Grant
2.3 Ensure seniors have access to services and information	Citywide	PHCD; First Ward Senior Center; Broome County Office of Aging; Broome Mobility Project; Sen. Gillibrand; National Council on Aging (NCOA)	Within 1-3 years	U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration on Aging
GOAL 3: INTEGRATE RESIDENT HEALTH INTO NEIGHBORHOOD PLANNING AND REINVESTMENT				
3.1 Encourage partnerships between the community development and health sectors to foster healthier neighborhoods	Citywide	PHCD; Healthy Lifestyles Coalition; BC Department of Health; local medical providers	Within 1-3 years	Not Applicable
3.2 Ensure each neighborhood has access to healthy, fresh food	Citywide	PHCD; BEDO; Healthy Lifestyles Coalition; BRSC	Within 5-7 years	NY Healthy Food/Healthy Communities Fund; USDA Value Added Producer Grant; Healthy Neighborhoods Preventive Health Cornerstones grant; Local Initiatives Support Corporation
3.3 Encourage community gardening and urban agriculture in each neighborhood	Citywide	PHCD; BEDO; VINES; Healthy Lifestyles Coalition; BC Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE)	Within 1-3 years	Not Applicable
3.4 Promote tobacco and smoke free living through better protections for nonsmokers and youth	Citywide	City Council; PHCD; Broome County Department of Health; BC CCE; American Cancer Society	Within 1-3 years	Health Systems for a Tobacco-Free New York
3.5 Promote healthy and active living through education programs and activities to make the healthy choice the easy choice	Citywide	PHCD; Broome County Department of Health; Healthy Lifestyles Coalition	Within 1-3 years	CDBG; NY Preventive Health and Health Services Block Grant; Local Initiatives Support Corporation

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RECOMMENDATION	IMPLEMENTATION AREA	INVOLVED PARTIES	TIME FRAME	FUNDING SOURCES
GOAL 4: ACTIVELY ENGAGE YOUTH IN CITY INITIATIVES				
4.1 Support Youth Success Initiative as key youth services liaison and provider	Citywide	Mayor's Office; youth service providers; Binghamton School District	Within 1 year	Pew Charitable Trusts; H.M. Jackson Foundation; James Irvine Foundation; Carnegie Corporation of New York; Posse Civic Engagement Program
4.2 Coordinate with non-profit youth organizations to maintain an inventory of programming and address gaps	Citywide	Mayor's Office; youth service providers; PHCD	Within 1-3 years	Pew Charitable Trusts; H.M. Jackson Foundation; James Irvine Foundation; Carnegie Corporation of New York; CDBG
4.3 Formalize partnerships between the School District, the City, and area institutions of higher education	Citywide	Mayor's Office; BU; SUNY Broome; Binghamton School District	Within 1 year	Not Applicable
4.4 Invite the youth voice to be heard by the City	Citywide	Mayor's Office; City Council	Within 1-3 years	Not Applicable
4.5 Work with BCSD to transform schools into hubs of neighborhood activity and pride	Citywide	Youth service providers; neighborhood assemblies; Binghamton School District; PHCD	Within 3 years	Kids In Need Foundation Teacher Grants program; the Wallace Foundation (multiple grant programs); Local Initiatives Support Corporation
4.6 Improve awareness of and access to cultural institutions such as Roberson Museum, Discovery Center and Zoo at Ross Park, TechWorks! and the Bundy Museum	Citywide	Youth service providers; Department of Parks & Recreation; PHCD; Binghamton School District; Ross Park; Roberson; Bundy Museum; TechWorks!	Within 3 years	Pew Charitable Trusts; H.M. Jackson Foundation; James Irvine Foundation; Carnegie Corporation of New York
4.7 Formalize partnership with BOCES vocational programs to complete small neighborhood improvement projects	Citywide	Youth service providers; Department of Parks & Recreation ; Engineering; BOCES	Within 3-5 years	Pew Charitable Trusts; H.M. Jackson Foundation; James Irvine Foundation; Carnegie Corporation of New York
4.8 Crowdsource youth pilot projects (one per neighborhood) and offer seed grants to implement	Citywide	Department of Parks & Recreation; youth service providers; PHCD; BEDO	Within 5 years	Pew Charitable Trusts; H.M. Jackson Foundation; James Irvine Foundation; Carnegie Corporation of New York

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RECOMMENDATION	IMPLEMENTATION AREA	INVOLVED PARTIES	TIME FRAME	FUNDING SOURCES
GOAL 5: ENSURE SAFE NEIGHBORHOODS FOR ALL RESIDENTS				
5.1 Initiate quality of life action plans for each community	Citywide	PHCD; BPD; Community Action Teams	Within 1-3 years	HUD Choice Neighborhoods grant; New York State Civic Engagement Table; Public Policy and Education Fund of New York ; Local Initiatives Support Corporation; CDBG
5.2 Educate residents on code enforcement	Citywide	Code Enforcement; PHCD; BEDO	Within 1 year	HUD Choice Neighborhoods grant; New York State Civic Engagement Table; Public Policy and Education Fund of New York
5.3 Initiate a "Dumpster Day" program for large, bulky items; electronics recycling; clothing drive	Citywide	Public Works; Waste Management; Universal Recycling Technologies; Eco International ; local charity organizations	Within 1-2 years	NYS DEC Municipal Waste Reduction and Recycling Program (MWR&R)
5.4 Launch citywide Clean Streets campaign	Citywide	Mayor's Office; Public Works; Parks	Within 1-3 years	CDBG; Doe Fund Ready, Willing, and Able program
5.5 Strengthen community resiliency to crime and drugs with community policing	Citywide	Mayor's Office; BPD; Community Action Teams	Within 3 years	U.S. Department of Justice Office of Community Oriented Policing Services
5.6 Create rotating schedule for Youth/Police Field Day in each neighborhood	Citywide	BPD; youth service providers	Within 1 year	Not Applicable
5.7 Train community leaders in Crime Prevention through Environmental Design	Citywide	BPD; PHCD; Parks; BC Planning	Within 3 years	National Crime Prevention Council; Public Grants & Training Initiatives organization; Local Initiatives Support Corporation
5.8 Improve neighborhood lighting for visibility and safety	Citywide	BPD; PHCD; Parks; Public Works	Within 5-7 years	National Crime Prevention Council; Public Grants & Training Initiatives organization; Local Initiatives Support Corporation; NYSEG; NYSERDA

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APPENDIX

BLUEPRINT
BINGHAMTON

ADDITIONAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON is very thankful for the thousands of community stakeholders who made time to help shape this Plan for our City. While a full list of everyone who dropped by the Project Design Studio or shared a comment online is impossible to produce, please know that your thoughtful comments and good ideas touch every page of the Plan. If you look closely, you may hear your own voice or see your own face on the pages of this book.

The lists below document all who gave generously of their time and expertise in an interview, focus group, or design charrette.

THANK YOU, BINGHAMTON!

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BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON
FORWARD TOGETHER

Main/Court Street Corridor

CHARRETTE REPORT

Binghamton, New York

DECEMBER 13, 2013

MAIN/COURT STREET CORRIDOR CHARRETTE

OCTOBER 18 – 24, 2013

PROJECT LEAD

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CHARRETTE TEAM

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THIRD COAST DESIGN STUDIO, NASHVILLE

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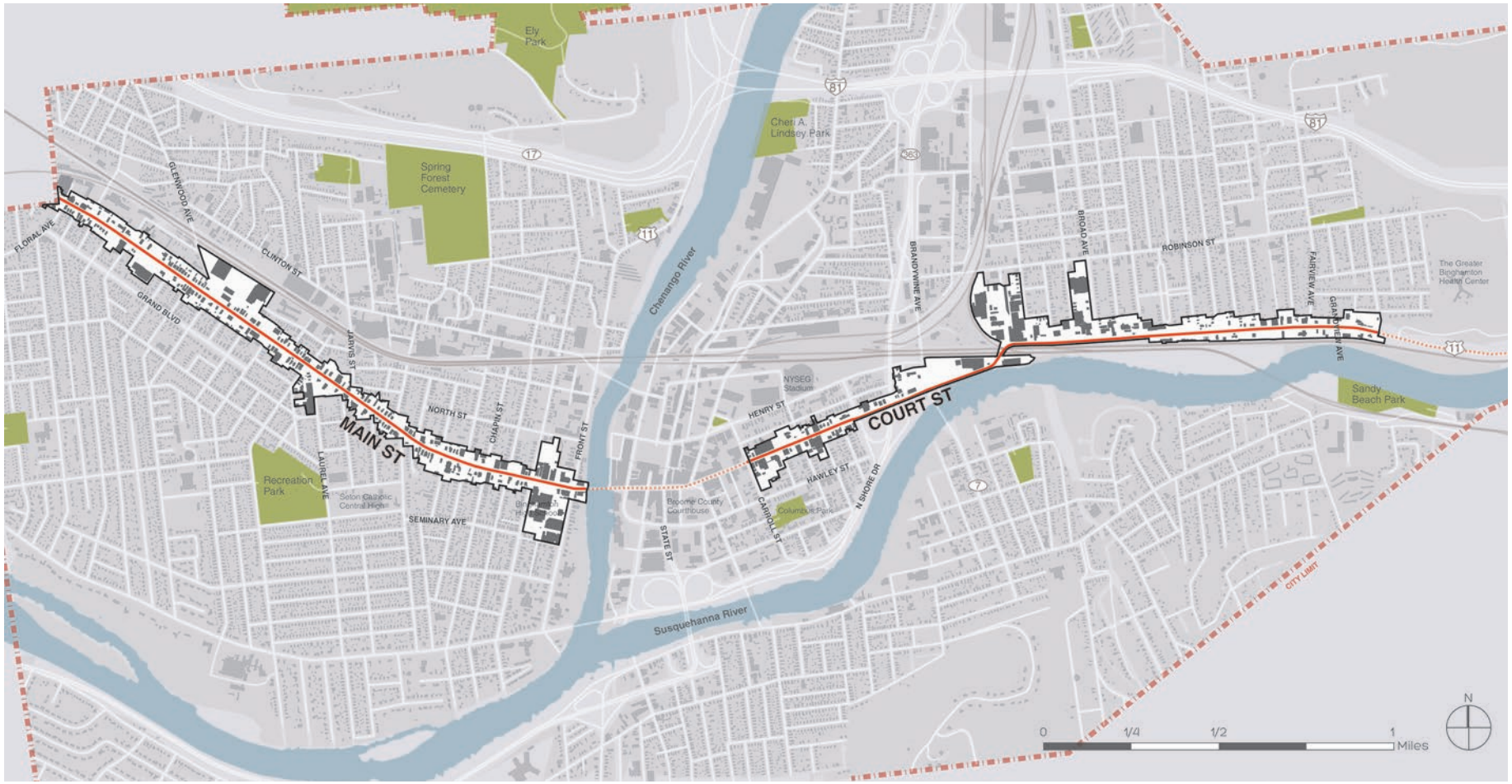


AS PART OF BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON, NEW ZONING WILL BE PREPARED FOR THE MAIN/COURT STREET CORRIDOR, NOT INCLUDING DOWNTOWN.

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

The City of Binghamton is in the process of updating its Comprehensive Plan. *Blueprint Binghamton: Forward Together,* will guide the growth and development of the City over the next 10 years.

As part of the *Blueprint Binghamton* effort, new zoning recommendations for Main Street and Court Street are being prepared. The study area runs from the city limits on the east to the city limits on the west and excludes Downtown. These new zoning recommendations will focus on enhancing Main and Court streets into more pedestrian- and bike-friendly environments, with the goal of attracting new businesses and enhancing opportunities for existing businesses.

To quickly engage the community in expressing their ideas and desired outcomes, a public participation charrette was held. A charrette is a series of public workshops held on-site over a short period of time and includes a variety of stakeholders and participants. Charrettes offer a very effective way to focus citizen participation. The hands-on nature of a charrette, the opportunity to interact with differing perspectives and the short feedback loops allow issues to be identified and resolved early on in the planning process. As participants see their ideas incorporated, they recognize their concerns are being addressed and take ownership in the plan. Participants often see their desires for their community are remarkably similar to those of other residents. In addition, a charrette provides an educational opportunity for all attendees. By spending a week in Binghamton, hearing from local residents and business owners and exploring and getting a feel for the City, the consultant team was able to generate a clearer understanding of the community over a very short period of time.

This report is intended to document the charrette and refine the vision and illustrative material prepared during the week. Following public reconfirmation of this report, new zoning recommendations, in the shape of a form-based code, will be prepared.

WHAT IS A FORM-BASED CODE?

A form-based code is a type of zoning code that places the primary emphasis on the physical form of buildings and site development with the end goal of producing a predictable built environment or specific type of place. This sets a form-based code apart from conventional zoning, which focuses on regulating land uses and density, whose physical outcomes in terms of what a development will look like are difficult to predict.

Form-based codes are being used in a variety of settings, from large scale mixed-use developments, to small scale infill redevelopment on parcels under multiple ownership, to complex downtowns. Under all scenarios, form-based coding is a particularly effective tool for promoting mixed use and pedestrian-friendly development and can also help improve the predictability of desired outcomes for the built environment. A form-based code, produced through a public process and in conjunction with a physical plan, can help ensure development that is inherently more pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly, and where appropriate can encourage mixed use and compact building design. Form-based codes are a way to translate the ideals of a plan into regulatory language to create the physical place envisioned by a community.

FORM-BASED CODE ELEMENTS:

REGULATING PLAN.
A plan or map of the zoning districts designating the locations where different standards apply.

ILLUSTRATION OF ZONING DISTRICTS.
A drawing and intent statement that defines and illustrates the main characteristics of each district.

PUBLIC SPACE STANDARDS.
Specifications of public elements such as sidewalks, travel lanes, on-street parking, street trees, street furniture, etc.

BUILDING FORM STANDARDS.
Regulations controlling the configuration, features, and functions of buildings that define and shape the public realm.

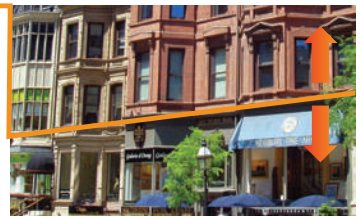
ADMINISTRATION.
A clearly defined application and project review process.

HEIGHT

FORM

SITING

USE



FORM–BASED CODES ADDRESS BUILDING MASS, BUILDING PLACEMENT ON LOTS, THE FORM AND CREATION OF STREETS AND OTHER PUBLIC SPACES, HEIGHTS, WINDOW AND DOORS—DETAILS THAT ALL DIRECTLY AFFECT THE WAY A BUILDING AND STREET FUNCTION—TO ENCOURAGE (OR DISCOURAGE) PEDESTRIAN ACTIVITY. THE STANDARDS IN A FORM–BASED CODES ARE ALSO PRESENTED IN A HIGHLY GRAPHIC FASHION.

Form-based codes address building mass, building placement on lots, the form and creation of streets and other public spaces, heights, windows and doors—details that directly affect the way a building and street function—to encourage (or discourage) pedestrian activity. They also direct the location and design of parking and the design of the public spaces. In short, form-based codes address public spaces that conventional zoning ignores. Rather than relying on use and density prescriptions, form-based codes are proactive in specifically describing the form of the desired built environment. The standards in form-based codes are also presented in a highly graphic fashion. New zoning for the Main/Court Street Corridor, in the shape of a form-based code, will have the following benefits:

>>Promote positive community involvement in the preparation and implementation of new zoning.

The genesis of the focus on the Main/Court Street Corridor was in part a desire to encourage community involvement in the implementation of new zoning within the context of the Comprehensive Plan update processes. As part of this effort, residents of Binghamton will have been directly involved in the preparation of new zoning through the generation of ideas for the future of the Corridor. Therefore, new zoning for Main Street and Court Street directly reflects the community's desire and outcomes for the future of "their" Corridor.

>>More effectively accommodate the variety in character that exists along the Corridor today.

The Main/Court Street Corridor is currently zoned almost entirely C-1 (Service Commercial). Upper Court Street and Main Street are treated exactly the same from a zoning perspective even though they are very different in character. Zoning for the Corridor should be more responsive to the differences and should strive to provide the appropriate tools to effectively accommodate future development patterns along each roadway.

>>Provide improved clarity and predictability in the outcome of future development along the Corridor.

A wide spectrum of development patterns are permitted under current C-1 rules, ranging from a single-story, large format retailer like a grocery store set back on the site to a 5-story residential building pulled right up to the street. While these development patterns are compatible in a well planned project, the district remains unpredictable

MORE PREDICTABLE AND PRESCRIPTIVE ZONING STANDARDS ARE NEEDED FOR THE CORRIDOR. UNDER C–1, EITHER ONE OF THE ABOVE WALGREENS IS ACHIEVABLE, BUT FROM A WALKABILITY PERSPECTIVE THEY ARE VERY DIFFERENT.

to neighbors and even to the City itself. Also, in many communities, a preference for location of development up to the street versus set back is a characteristic of different districts. Downtown and other pedestrian-oriented places such as Main Street would typically require buildings pulled up to the street. Narrowing the potential outcomes to a predictable range is needed both to help neighbors understand what is coming, as well as help the development community understand the City's future expectations for Corridor.

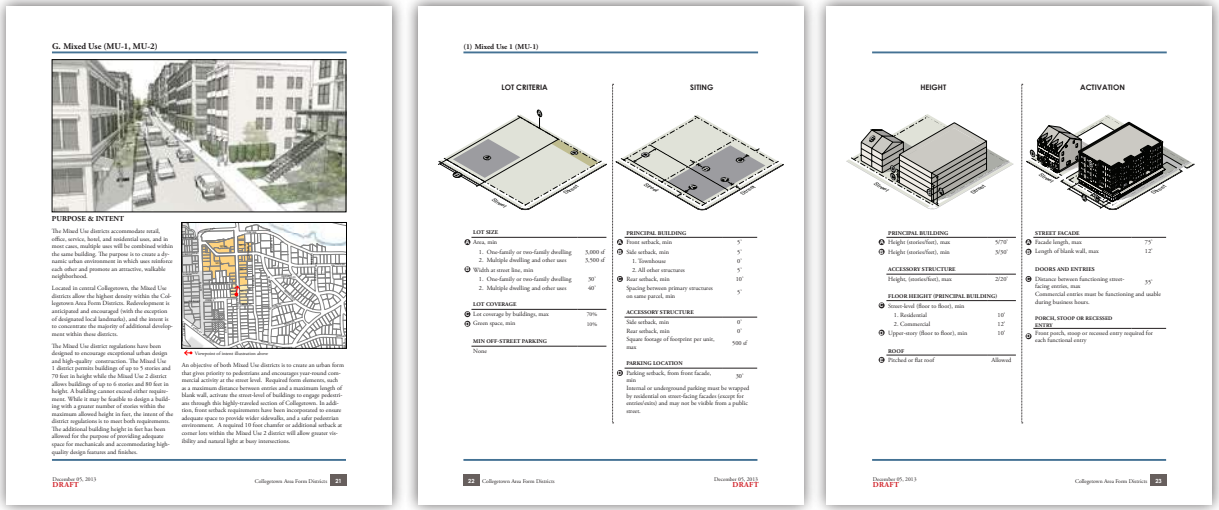
>>Provide streamlined approval using enhanced standards that promote mixed use and walkability, and reduce the burden of on-site parking.

In today's economic climate, developers are looking for clear, predictable and objective standards that do not require discretionary, subjective approvals. Discretionary approvals can be time-consuming, unpredictable and can increase the cost of development. It is not unusual for a community to include prescriptive pedestrian-oriented standards that can be approved administratively, such as build-to lines (replacing minimum front setbacks), parking location requirements and street facade activation provisions. The current zoning along the Corridor does little in terms of requiring pedestrian-oriented improvements.

Also, current on-site parking requirements are inhibiting for both new and existing development. New zoning should rethink the current parking requirements and make it easier to reuse existing buildings.

>>Provide an easy to use, more self explanatory set of zoning requirements.

Zoning regulations should be understandable and easy to use. They don't have to read like a novel, but they do need to be presented so that people can intuitively find the information they need. The trend today is to move away from zoning regulations written primarily for lawyers and toward codes that are written for the general public and design professionals. New zoning for the Corridor should be heavily illustrated to help "broadcast" the City's intent to developers and neighbors. The inclusion of color, photographs, graphics, illustrations, tables, running headers and footers, and automated paragraph numbering are standard code drafting best practices.



ZONING REGULATIONS SHOULD BE UNDERSTANDABLE AND EASY TO USE. NEW ZONING FOR THE CORRIDOR SHOULD BE HEAVILY ILLUSTRATED TO "BROADCAST" THE CITY'S INTENT TO DEVELOPERS AND NEIGHBORS.

PUBLIC OUTREACH

A variety of outreach methods were used to inform the community about the charrette events, including flyers, emails and news articles and features. In addition, social networking tools were used were used to get the word out. *Blueprint Binghamton* has a Facebook page (www.facebook.com/BlueprintBinghamton), a Twitter page (www.twitter.com/BlueprintBing) and a project website (www.blueprintbinghamton.com). In addition, the Facebook page was updated continuously throughout the charrette week with photos, ideas and initial concepts.

Approximately 6 weeks before the charrette, a preliminary site visit was held. The purpose of the visit was to meet with the *Blueprint Binghamton* Steering Committee and City staff and participate at the Project Design STudio event during First Friday Art Walk. During this trip an introductory presentation on form-based codes was given to the City Council. The visit also provided an opportunity to tour the study area and take photographs.

THE CHARRETTE

Starting Friday, October 18 and running through Thursday, October 24, a temporary design studio was set up in Downtown at the former First National Bank. During the week, the following public events were held:

Hands-On Design

Saturday, October 19, 9:00am-noon @ the Metrocenter Atrium

Open Design Studio

Sunday, October 20 through Wednesday, October 23, 9:00am-8:00pm @ the former First National Bank (the Project Design Studio)

Mid-Week Open House

Tuesday, October 22, 6:00pm-8:00pm @ the former First National Bank (the Project Design Studio)

Final Presentation

Thursday, October 24, 6:00pm-8:00pm @ the Black Box Theater, Binghamton High School

The charrette was well received and community members and participants were pleased to have a forum to help plan and design the future of the Main/Court Street Corridor.

The hands-on design session was a great success. About 50 people participating in the session helped develop ideas and provide local knowledge for the charrette team to work with throughout the week. During the week, the design studio was open to the public, allowing anybody to stop by at any time to check on the work as it progressed and offer additional input. For the mid-week open house, approximately 40 people dropped in to see how ideas were developing and to chat with members of the charrette team. For the final presentation, approximately 45 people came out to see the culmination of the week's work.

A VARIETY OF OUTREACH METHODS WERE USED TO INFORM PEOPLE ABOUT THE CHARRETTE INCLUDING FLYERS, EMAILS AND NEWS ARTICLES AND FEATURES. IN ADDITION, A VARIETY OF SOCIAL NETWORKING TOOLS WERE USED TO GET THE WORD OUT.

DRIVING & WALKING TOUR

The charrette team, Code Studio from Austin and Third Coast Design Studio from Nashville, arrived a day early to tour the project area. On Friday afternoon they set out to explore the almost 5-mile Main/Court Street Corridor. They drove from end to end, taking in the look and feel of the street and identifying aspects of the Corridor that work and aspects that need improvement. To get a closer look, the charrette team got out on foot to walk and take pictures of certain portions of the Corridor. The Corridor made a lasting impression; some of the things that stood out included:

- The striking difference in character between Upper Court Street (very auto-oriented) and Main Street (more pedestrian-oriented);
- The fabulous building fabric that still exists along certain portions of the Corridor;
- The lack of street trees and greenery along the Corridor, and the number of landscaping planting strips that have been paved over;
- The high-level of pedestrian activity and the number of buses serving the Corridor was very encouraging; and
- The large number of people riding bikes along the Corridor, especially along Main Street, even without formal bike facilities such as marked or protected bike lanes.

THE CHARRETTE TEAM ARRIVED EARLY TO TOUR THE PROJECT AREA, TAKE PHOTOS AND TO GET A GENERAL FEEL FOR THE PLACE.

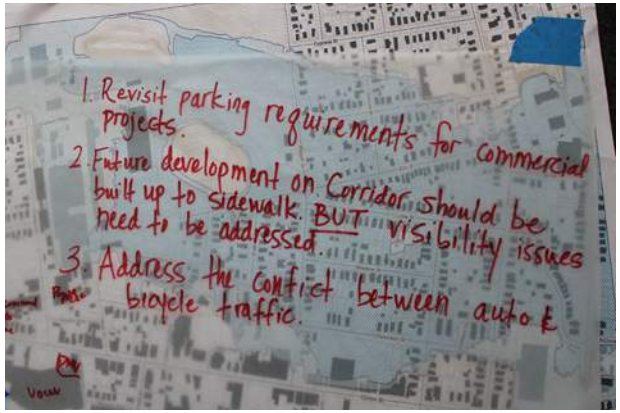
HANDS-ON DESIGN SESSION

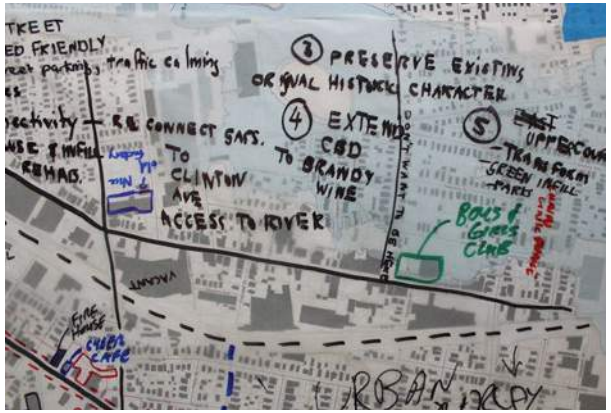
On Saturday morning, approximately 50 people gathered at the Metrocenter Atrium to roll up their sleeves and serve as "planners" for the day.

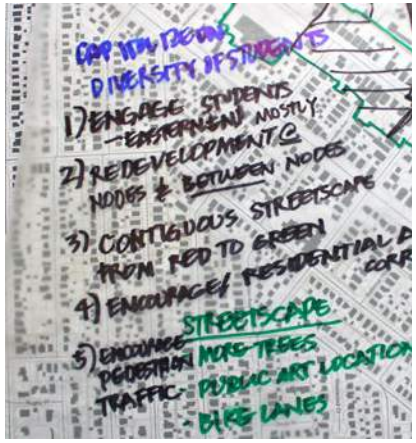
The City's Director of Planning welcomed the gathering and thanked everyone for their participation and attendance. Lee Einsweiler from Code Studio outlined the charrette process, highlighting the community's role in the effort. Lee explained the project goals and discussed the key elements of any potential new zoning for the Main/Court Street Corridor. He also stressed the importance of continuous public involvement throughout the week.

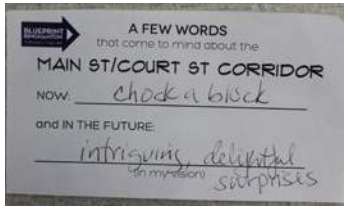
Following the introductory presentation, participants divided into 6 smaller groups, with about 8 or 9 people in each group. Each group gathered around a table with a facilitator and worked on a set of maps that included on the west, Main Street and on the east, Court Street. Each table drew diagrams and sketches to convey the character of the Corridor today and to describe what they would like to see in the future.

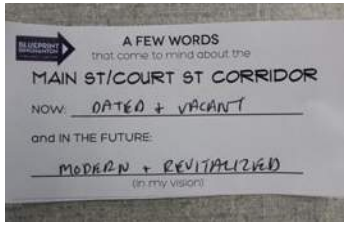
THE CHARRETTE BEGAN ON SATURDAY MORNING WHERE APPROXIMATELY 50 PEOPLE GATHERED AT THE METROCENTER ATRIUM TO ROLL UP THEIR SLEEVES AND PLAY "PLANNERS" FOR THE DAY.











TO CONCLUDE THE HANDS–ON SESSION, PARTICIPANTS PRESENTED SOME OF THEIR BIG IDEAS TO THE LARGER GROUP.

To conclude the session, each group selected a spokesperson who presented their table's "big ideas" to the larger audience. The presentations allowed participants to see common interests emerge. Some of the big ideas discussed during the session included:

- Make the Corridor more pedestrian-friendly, on-street parking, cross-walks, street trees, more bus shelters, repair sidewalks, improved lighting, reduce sign clutter, and add public art.
- Need more green space – parks, street trees, community gardens, landscaping.
- Improve bike infrastructure, buffered or protected bike lanes, slow traffic down.
- Identify different areas along the Corridor, any new zoning should address the differences.
- Preserve the existing character and historic fabric on Main, promote compatible infill, make it easier to reuse existing buildings, unified streetscape needed.
- Transform Upper Court, humanize, think about a road diet with a boulevard, connect to Robinson and the river, opportunity for "green" stormwater improvements.
- Need to rethink parking its preventing existing buildings from getting reused.

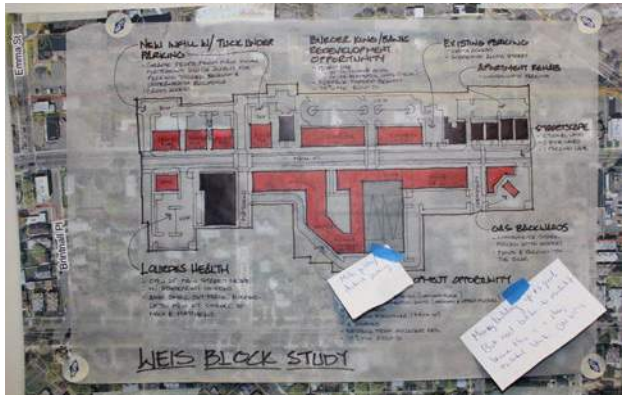
OPEN DESIGN STUDIO

A temporary design studio was set up at the former First National Bank for the duration of the charrette. The design studio served as an on-site working space where team members could analyze information, refine ideas and test conceptual zoning scenarios. Working on-site throughout the week gave the team easy access to the study area. The team was able to observe day-to-day activity, visit local businesses and generally experience everyday life in Binghamton.

The studio was open to the public each day, offering community members the flexibility to stop in when they were available to see how the work was progressing and to bring in new ideas for the team to consider.

During the week, members of the charrette team met with stakeholders to gather specific information, ask questions and test the applicability of proposed concepts. Stakeholder involvement included business owners, design professionals, NYSEG representatives, City staff and members of the Shade Tree Commission. On the Monday evening of the charrette, a brief presentation on the work completed to date and potential benefits of form-based coding was held with the City Council.

A TEMPORARY DESIGN STUDIO WAS SET UP AT THE FORMER FIRST NATIONAL BANK IN DOWNTOWN FOR THE DURATION OF THE CHARRETTE. THE STUDIO WAS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC EACH DAY.



THE TUESDAY EVENING OPEN HOUSE GAVE RESIDENTS AN OPPORTUNITY TO PROVIDE INITIAL FEEDBACK ON PRELIMINARY CONCEPTS AND DESIGNS FOR THE CORRIDOR.

MID-WEEK OPEN HOUSE

On Tuesday evening, residents were invited to an open house at the design studio. Preliminary designs and drawings were pinned up around the room. The purpose of the open house was to receive feedback on initial ideas. No formal presentation was given -- participants could stop in any time between 6 and 8 pm to tour the studio, meet with members of the charrette team, ask questions and offer additional ideas. Approximately 40 community members stopped through the open house.

Some of the specific comments received included:

- Excellent work.
- Consider impervious surface requirements for development on Upper Court.
- Require all surface parking lots over a certain size to be landscaped with impervious surfaces.
- Weis site - moving buildings up towards the street is good but need to provide an adequate buffer to the residential behind.
- Require hedges to screen surface parking lots from the street.

CLOSING PRESENTATION

On Thursday evening, about 45 community members gathered at the Black Box Theater at Binghamton High School to see what the charrette team had been working on all week. The City's Director of Planning opened the meeting by welcoming everybody and thanking them for their support and continued input throughout the week. He then introduced Lee Einsweiler, who began the formal presentation by introducing and thanking all charrette participants for their effort. Lee provided a summary of the week's events, which included proposed zoning concepts. The presentation included photographs and illustrative drawings to help people gain a better understanding of the proposed recommendations. Lee concluded the presentation by reminding attendees that the work presented was a draft and that community members must continue to offer input on the concepts and ideas. Everyone was encouraged to continue to send in comments and to fill out an exit survey. After the presentation, participants were able to review the draft concepts on display outside of the theater and offer further suggestions. Some of the specific comments received included:

- Responding to the reality of flooding is very important. Things have to change.
- Require developers to do more than the lowest common denominator.
- Why no discussion of transit-oriented development? Not so much parking is needed.
- Try to work closely with the University - using the student population as future residents.
- Loved the Alice Street study. The area is a little scary. The concept shown was great and I would love the concept to become a reality.
- I have enjoyed the opportunity to learn. I will definitely stay connected to the project and if there is a way for the community to help in some way to purse the goals I would love to assist.
- What about zoning with regards to the NYSEG utility poles?
- Encourage the use of green technologies.
- Make it easier for sidewalk cafes.
- Massing study at Weis, too much height and bulk.
- Housing stock is aging - good affordable housing needs to be prioritized.
- Form-based code is a business-friendly way to improve the aesthetics of the Corridor.
- Great stuff, great event.

ABOUT 45 PEOPLE ATTENDED THE CLOSING PRESENTATION THURSDAY EVENING.

FUTURE CHARACTER

COMPLETE STREETS

The Main/Court Street Corridor is the commercial spine for the City -- the primary connection between the east and west ends of the City. Corridor users include pedestrians, cyclists, bus riders and motorists. While the Corridor attracts this great diversity of users, the current infrastructure is limited and in many sections cannot accommodate all of the types of users in a safe and efficient manner. Accommodating such a variety of users is challenging, but some elements are essential in order to ensure safety and accessibility.

Main Street generates a significant amount of bike traffic. However, without dedicated bike lanes it is not safe or comfortable. Main Street is also well served by buses, and more sheltered bus stops with seating areas should be provided. All bus stops should be easily identifiable and provide a comfortable and safe environment for riders to wait.

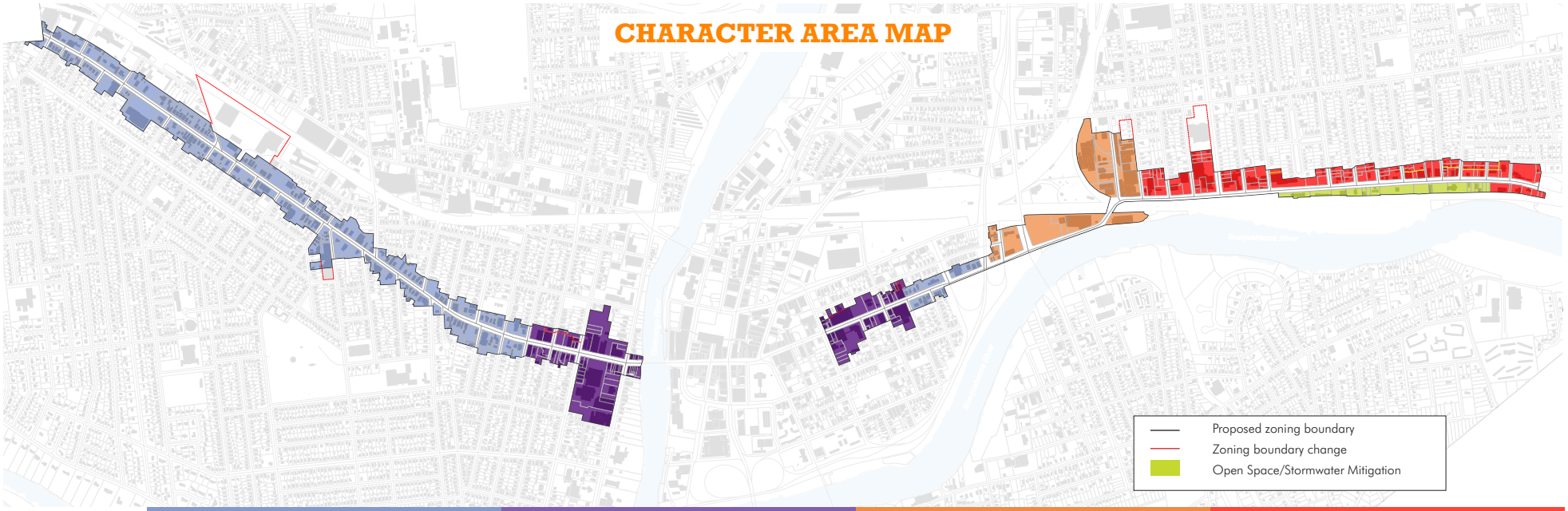
Pedestrians should have accessible sidewalks and shade from street trees, with well marked crosswalks at regular intervals. A complete and connected sidewalk system for the entire Corridor must be a priority for the City, including the planting of street trees and the restoration of planting strips that have been paved over.

CHARACTER AREAS

During the charrette week, a future character map for the Corridor was prepared. The future character map identifies proposed new zoning districts. The character area map defines areas along the Corridor where differences in current or proposed character exist, either in terms of land use, building height, building setbacks, parking or the proposed configuration of the street.

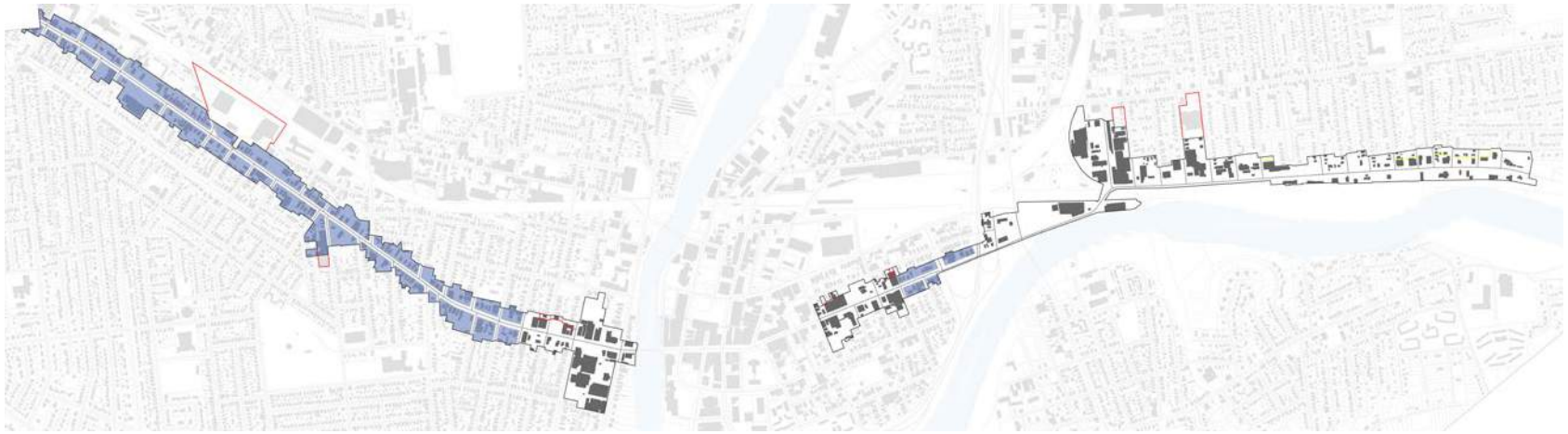
The following pages describe each character area. Incorporated within each character area are a mix of block studies, precedent images, computer visualizations, sketchup modeling and street dimensions.

The block studies test the application of each character area and show how proposed zoning recommendations might actually build out. It is important to note that the individual buildings shown are less important than implementation of the character and form recommendations associated with each block study. They present one way an area may redevelop over time, but many options are possible. In preparing each block study, assumptions about future parking demand were made. Parking ratios used vary based on the specific use mix, but about 5 spaces per 1,000 square feet of gross floor area for retail and restaurants was the ratio used. A ratio of 2 parking spaces plus visitor parking was used for each residential unit.



	Main Street	Downtown Transition	Industrial	Commercial Corridor
Building Type	Shopfront, Office, Residential, Civic	Shopfront, Civic	Industrial, Live-work, Residential	Shopfront, Office, Residential, Civic
Preferred Use	Mixed Use	Mixed Use	Manufacturing, Artisan, Residential	Single-Story Commercial
Height	1 to 4 Stories	1 to 5 Stories	1 to 4 Stories	1 to 3 Stories
Building Placement	75% Built to the Street	90% Built to the Street	75% Built to the Street	Flexible, Set Back
Parking Location	To the Side or Rear	To the Rear	To the Side or Rear	Front, Side or Rear
Parking Ratio	Existing Building: No Parking Required New Building: First 2,500 sf exempt then 50% of Required Parking	No Parking Required	Existing Building: No Parking Required New Building: First 2,500 sf exempt then 50% of Required Parking	All Uses 100% Required
Streetscape	Tree Wells (Expanded Sidewalk)	Tree Wells (Expanded Sidewalk)	Tree Lawn	Tree Lawn

MAIN STREET Character Area



Building Type	Shopfront, Office, Residential, Civic
Preferred Use	Mixed Use
Height	1 to 4 Stories
Building Placement	75% Built to the Street
Parking Location	To the Side or Rear
Parking Ratio	Existing Building: No Parking Required New Building: First 2,500 sf exempt then 50% of Required Parking
Streetscape	Tree Wells (Expanded Sidewalk)

MAIN AT MATTHEWS

EXISTING BUILDING NEW BUILDING SURFACE PARKING STRUCTURED PARKING

A Lourdes Health
- » Small single-story commercial added at corner of Main and Matthews screens surface parking lot
- » Center for Family Health building - storefront windows added along Main Street.

B New Infill with Tuck Under Parking
- » 2-story mixed use fronts Main Street.
- » Grade drops from Main down Matthews, allows for parking tucked behind and underneath buildings that front Main.

C Weis Redevelopment
- » 4-story mixed use with up to 35,000 SF of ground floor retail and 150 residential units (ground and upper floors).
- » Includes central courtyard and structured parking.
- » Landscape and height transition to neighborhood.

D Burger King/Bank Redevelopment
- » 2-story mixed use fronts Main Street with parking behind replaces Burger King and bank.
- » Up to 22,000 SF ground floor retail with 16 to 24 residential units above one of the buildings).

E Existing Parking Lot
- » Provides cross-access to adjacent development, screening provided along Main.

F Apartment Rehab
- » Existing apartments rehabbed with parking consolidated to the rear.

G Gas Backwards
- » Convenience store pulled up to street.
- » Gas pumps and parking to rear of building.

MAIN AT SCHILLER

EXISTING BUILDING NEW BUILDING SURFACE PARKING

A 2-Story Mixed Use

- 2-story mixed use fronts Main Street with parking to rear, replaces car dealer.

B Single-Story Retail

- Single-story retail fills in surface parking lot, continues existing development pattern, parking moved to rear.

C Auto-Zone Redevelopment

- 4-story mixed use fronts Main Street
- 2-story residential fronts Charlotte Street
- 4-story residential fronts Hamilton Street
- Utilizes city-owned property.
- All surface parked, with parking under buildings fronting Main Street.

D Aaron's Redevelopment

- 2-story mixed use fronts Main Street with parking to rear.
- Cross-access to rear, enhances connectivity across multiple parcels and reduces traffic on Main.

E Asian Market Site

- Grade drops from Main down Hamilton.
- Allows for parking tucked underneath, 1 to 2 stories of residential above retail fronts Main.

PRECEDENT IMAGES: MAIN AND MATHEWS

THE CURRENT WEIS SITE AS IT LOOKS TODAY.

THE PERIMETER OF SURFACE PARKING LOTS SHOULD BE SCREENED.

AN EXAMPLE OF AN INTERNAL COURTYARD.

AN EXAMPLE OF A 4–STORY MIXED USE BUILDING THAT COULD FRONT MAIN, REPLACING THE SURFACE PARKING LOT THAT EXISTS TODAY.

GAS BACKWARDS. CONVENIENCE STORE PULLED UP TO THE STREET WITH CANOPY TO THE REAR.

A VARIETY OF BUILDING FORMS AND SCALES COULD EXIST COMFORTABLY ALONG MAIN STREET.

PRECEDENT IMAGES: MAIN AT SCHILLER

ALONG MAIN STREET, BUILDINGS SHOULD BE PULLED UP TO THE STREET WITH SURFACE PARKING TO THE REAR. FROM A 4-STORY MIXED USE BUILDING TO A SINGLE-STORY COMMERCIAL BUILDING, A VARIETY OF BUILDING FORMS AND SCALES CAN BE ACCOMMODATED. THE GOAL IS TO ENLIVEN THE STREET WITH ACTIVE AND ENGAGING USES.

MASSING STUDY: MAIN AND MATTHEWS

A Parking Structure
- Structured parking hidden from the street and screened by building.

B Courtyard
- Internal courtyard provides focal point for the development.

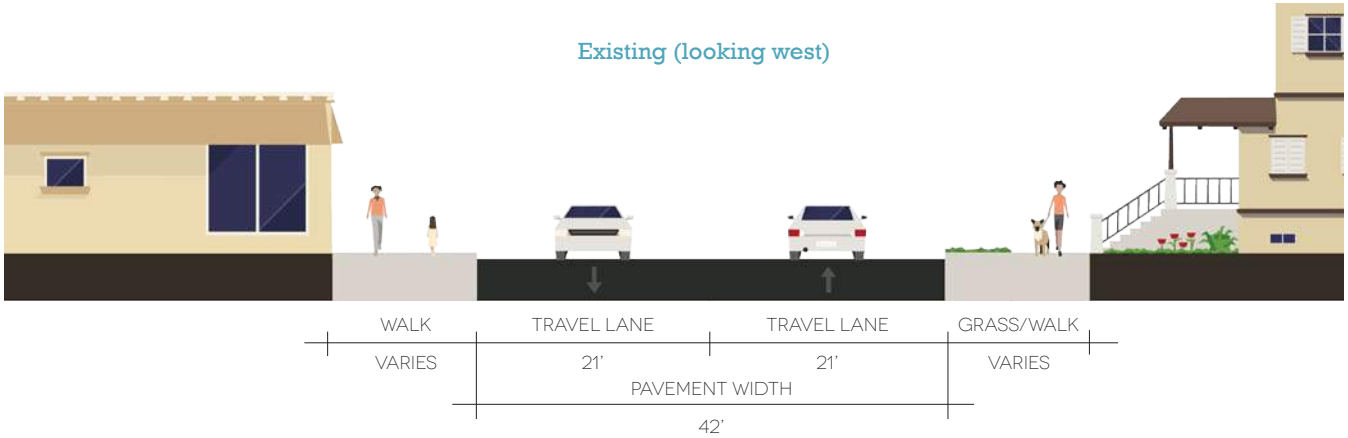
C Neighborhood Transition
- Height and landscape transition provided to the neighborhood.

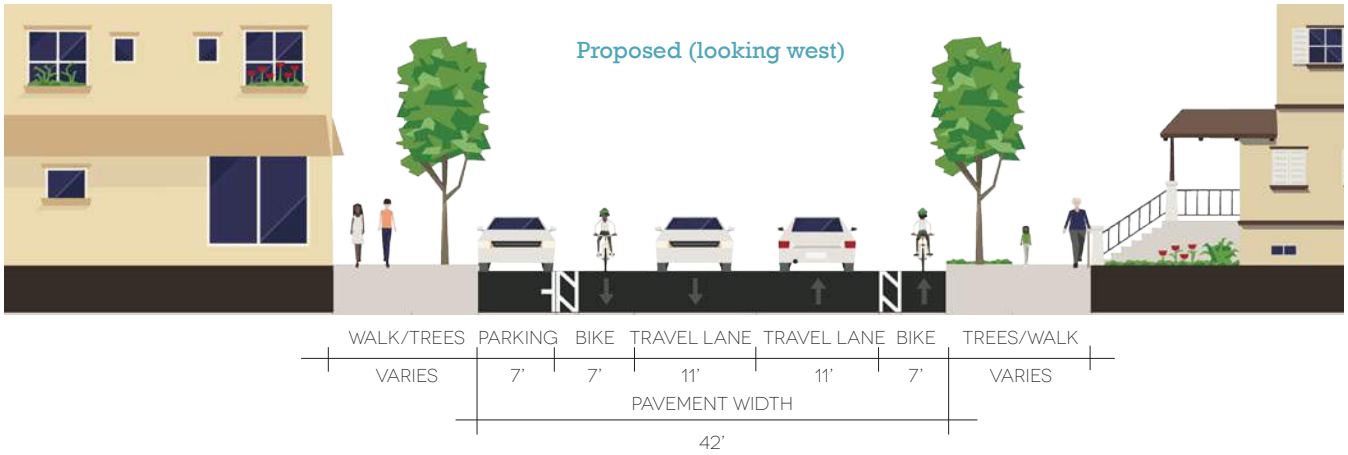
D Mixed Use Building
- 4-story mixed use fronts Main Street.

E Main Street Activation
- Storefront windows added to existing building along Main Street.

F Surface Parking Lot
- Small single-story commercial added in parking lot.

CROSS-SECTION: MAIN STREET





DOWNTOWN EXPANSION Character Area

Building Type	Shopfront, Civic
Preferred Use	Mixed Use
Height	1 to 5 Stories
Building Placement	90% Built to the Street
Parking Location	To the Rear
Parking Ratio	No Parking Required
Streetscape	Tree Wells (Expanded Sidewalk)

MAIN AT MURRAY

EXISTING BUILDING NEW BUILDING SURFACE PARKING

Based on the size of parcels and the expense of structured parking, it is unlikely that many 2+ story mixed use buildings will be built. However, zoning should not be the limiting factor. A developer may be able to consolidate parcels or sloped sites may make structured parking economically viable. Recommended maximum building heights have therefore been intentionally set higher (5 stories) than would likely be achieved based on current economic and physical constraints.

A CVS Redevelopment

- 2-story mixed use with surface parking behind.
- Up to 11,000 SF of ground floor retail with residential above.

B Gas Station Redevelopment

- Single-story retail with surface parking behind.
- Up to 11,500 SF of ground floor retail, includes mid-building pedestrian connection.

C Cross-Access

- Zoning boundary expanded to the north to create connected rear access across multiple properties.
- Adds parking and allows for taller buildings.

D Family Dollar Redevelopment

- 2-story mixed use with surface parking behind.
- Up to 12,000 SF of ground floor retail with 14 residential units above.

MAIN AND MURRAY: PHOTO-VISUALIZATION

The series of images below show how Main Street could be transformed over time.

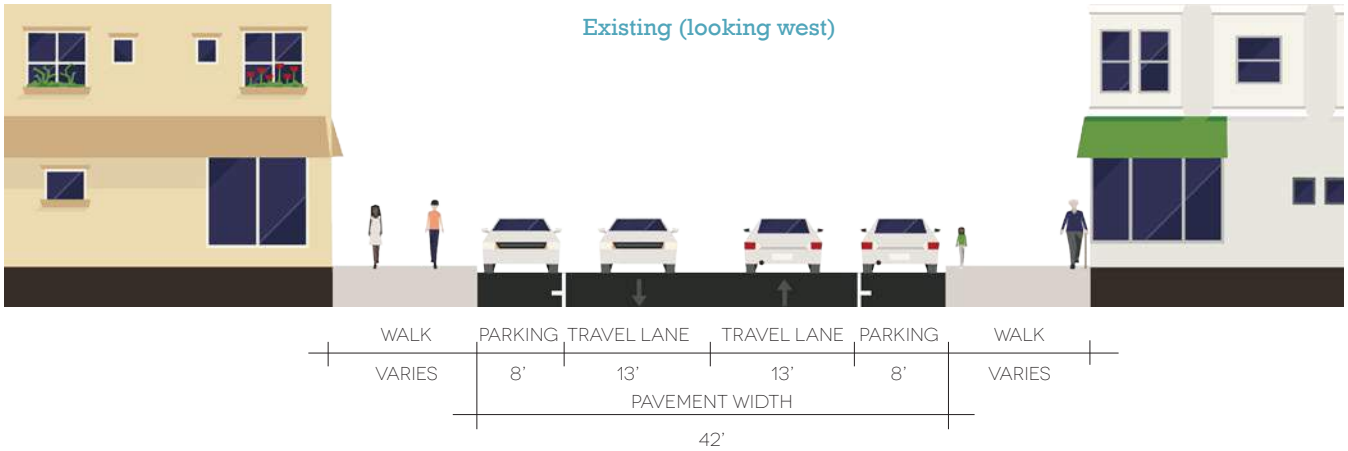
AS A RESULT OF THE PUBLIC INVESTMENT IN THE STREET, THE PRIVATE MARKET RESPONDS WITH SHOPS AND RESTAURANTS THAT ACTIVATE AND ENLIVEN THE STREET. BUILDINGS ARE PULLED UP TO THE STREET WITH SURFACE PARKING TO THE REAR.

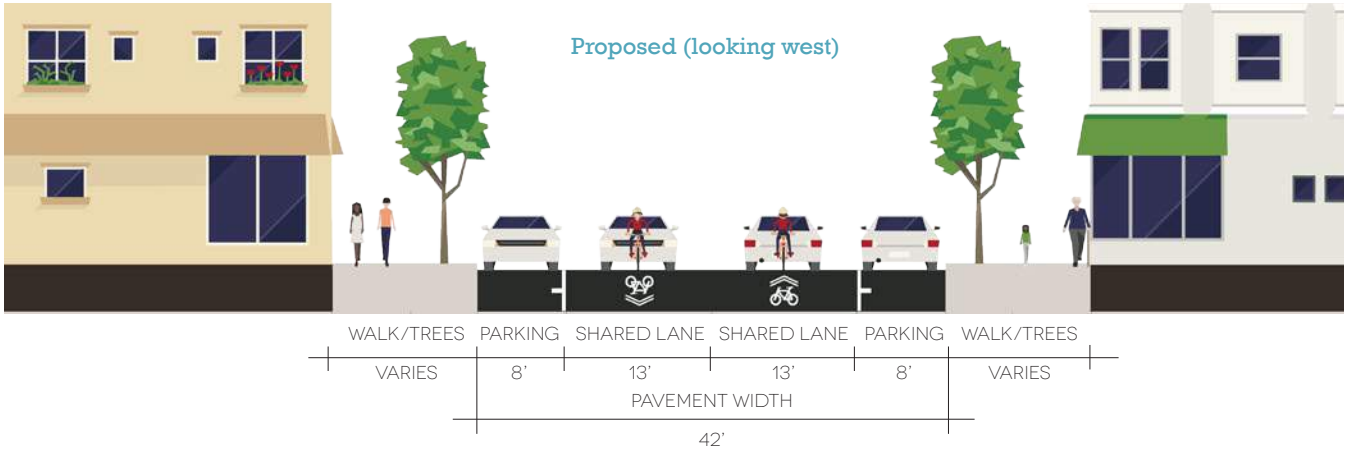
EXISTING CONDITIONS. MAIN AND MURRAY LOOKING WEST.

OPTION 1. ON-STREET PARKING, BUFFERED BIKE LANE AND STREET TREES ARE ADDED.

OPTION 2. TO HELP CAPTURE AND CLEAN STORMWATER, ON-STREET PARKING INCLUDES PERVIOUS PAVING AND TREE WELLS INCORPORATE VEGETATED BIO-SWALES.

CROSS-SECTION: MAIN STREET





INDUSTRIAL Character Area

Building Type	Industrial, Live-work, Residential
Preferred Use	Manufacturing, Artisan, Residential
Height	1 to 4 Stories
Building Placement	75% Built to the Street
Parking Location	To the Side or Rear
Parking Ratio	Existing Building: No Parking Required New Building: First 2,500 sf exempt then 50% of Required Parking
Streetscape	Tree Lawn

ALICE STREET

EXISTING BUILDING NEW BUILDING SURFACE PARKING

A Mixed Use Infill
- » 2- to 3- story mixed use with surface parking behind.
- » Up to 21,000 SF of ground level artisan or industrial space with residential or office above.

B Live/Work Units
- » Artist or light industrial live-work space.

C Stormwater Retention
- » Take advantage of space in front of and between buildings to create usable public space that could also capture and clean stormwater run-off (rain garden, bio-swale)

D Adaptive Reuse
- » Reuse existing building for artisan or industrial space.

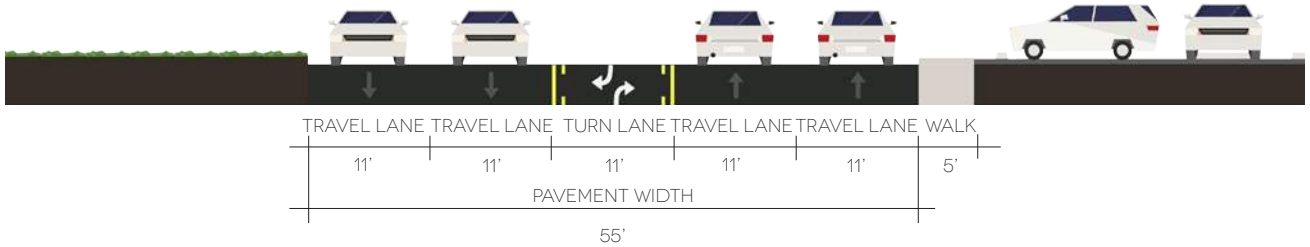
E Additions
- » Increase usable building area.
- » Improve blank facades.

PRECEDENT IMAGES: ALICE STREET

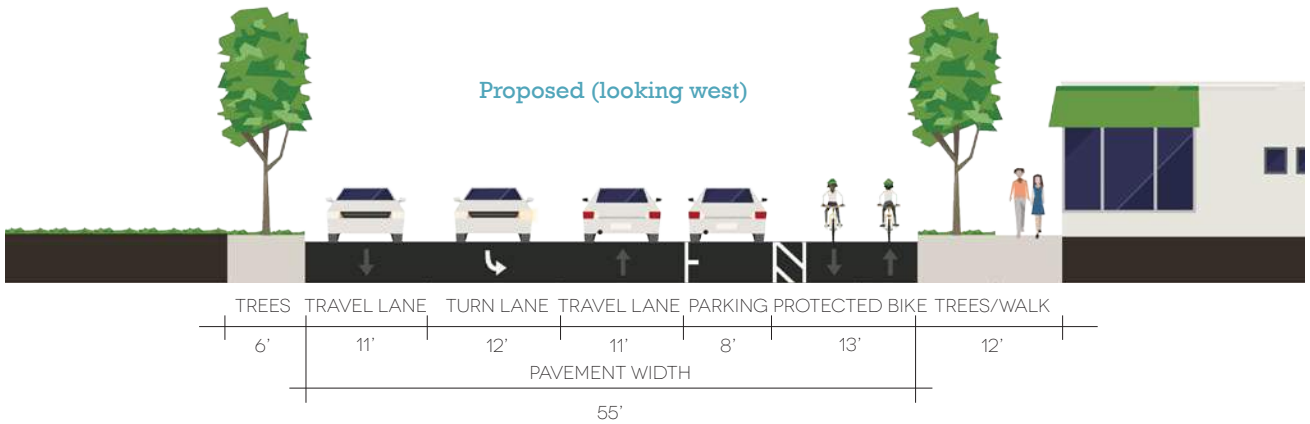
IN THE FUTURE, ALICE STREET COULD SERVE AS A KEY VEHICULAR AND PEDESTRIAN CONNECTION TO THE RIVER AND COURT STREET FROM ROBINSON. THE IMAGES ABOVE SHOW HOW ALICE COULD BE RECONFIGURED TO ACCOMMODATE CARS AND PEDESTRIANS IN THE SAME PHYSICAL SPACE. TO HELP IMPROVE STORMWATER MANAGEMENT IN THE AREA, IMPROVEMENTS TO ALICE STREET SHOULD INCORPORATE PERVIOUS PAVING, RAIN GARDENS AND VEGETATED BIO-SWALES.

CROSS-SECTION: COURT STREET

Existing (looking west)



Proposed (looking west)



COMMERCIAL CORRIDOR Character Area

Building Type	Shopfront, General, Residential, Civic
Preferred Use	Single Story Commercial
Height	3 Stories
Building Placement	Flexible, Set Back
Parking Location	Front, Side or Rear
Parking Ratio	All Uses 100% Required
Streetscape	Tree Lawn

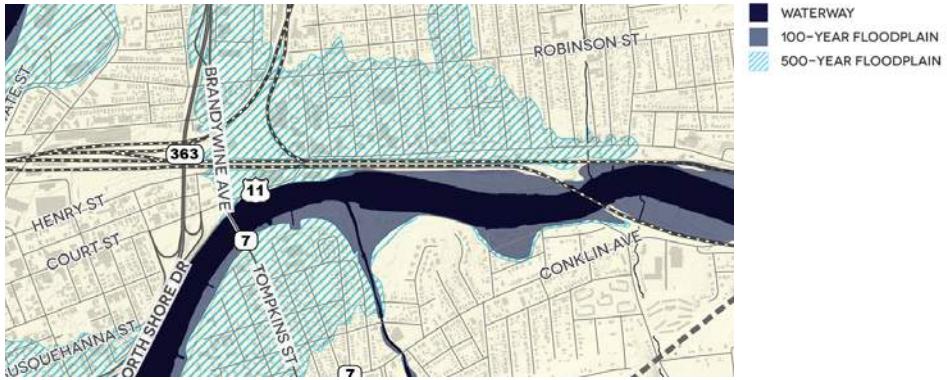
FLOOD MAP CHANGES

In September 2011, Tropical Storm Lee brought catastrophic flooding to the Court Street area. For the second time in five years, a 100-year flood event inundated the homes and businesses closest to the Susquehanna River. An updated Flood Insurance Rate Map has been proposed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency and is illustrated to the right.

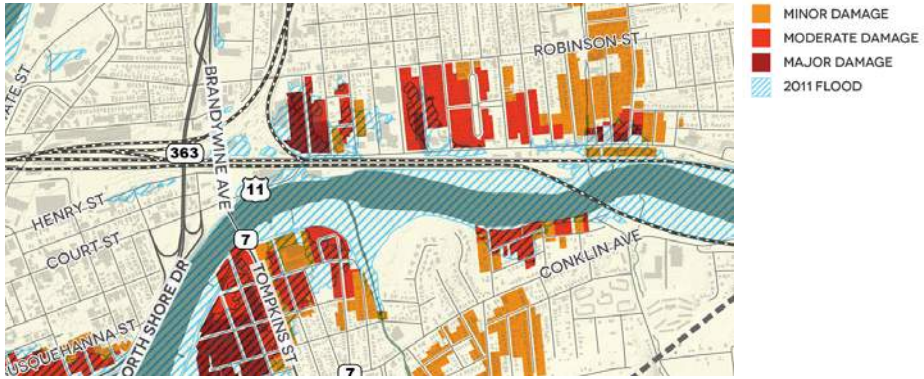
Most of Upper Court Street is 'underwater' in the 100-year flood zone. As new zoning is developed, planning for the future form of the area provides an opportunity to develop standards for elevated buildings and structures that would be more easily flood-proofed, as well as standards that help mitigate stormwater run-off.

TO HELP REDUCE DAMAGE WHEN FLOODING OCCURS, BUILDINGS CAN BE ELEVATED.

COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS CAN BE FLOOD-PROOFED.



CURRENT 100-YEAR AND 500-YEAR FLOODPLAINS.



EXTENT OF DAMAGE FROM THE 2011 FLOODING.

PROPOSED 100-YEAR AND 500-YEAR FLOODPLAINS.

UPPER COURT STREET

A Commercial Redevelopment

- Single-story commercial with limited parking between the building and the street.
- Landscaping provided along street edge to screening parking.
- Vehicular access limited along Court Street, consolidated access provided off side streets.

B Enhanced Commercial Strip

- Single-story commercial with limited parking between the building and the street.
- Drive-thru located to the side
- Additional parking and service behind buildings.

C Court Street

- 4 Lanes with stormwater median, trees and a multi-use path (bikes and pedestrians).

D Open Space

- Due to the potential for continued flood damage, over time open space replaces buildings.
- The open space provides a natural way to manage stormwater.

E Pedestrian Connection

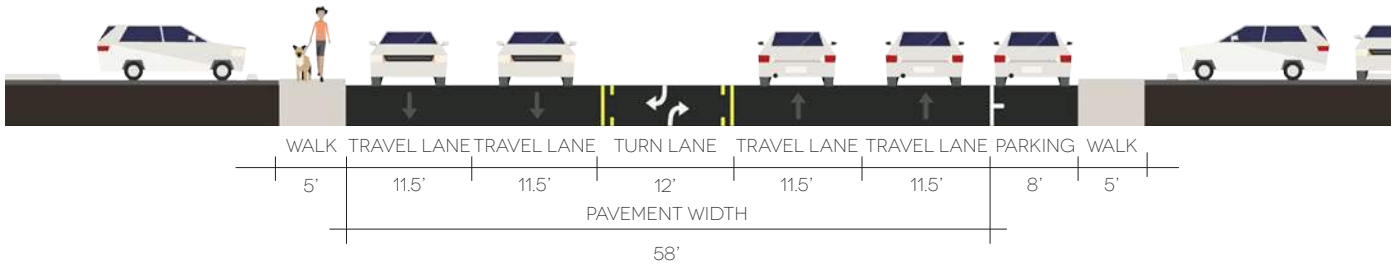
- New pedestrian connection extends over the railroad to provide access to the riverfront.
- Connection extends under the existing rail bridge crossing the river to continue access to the west.

PRECEDENT IMAGES: UPPER COURT STREET

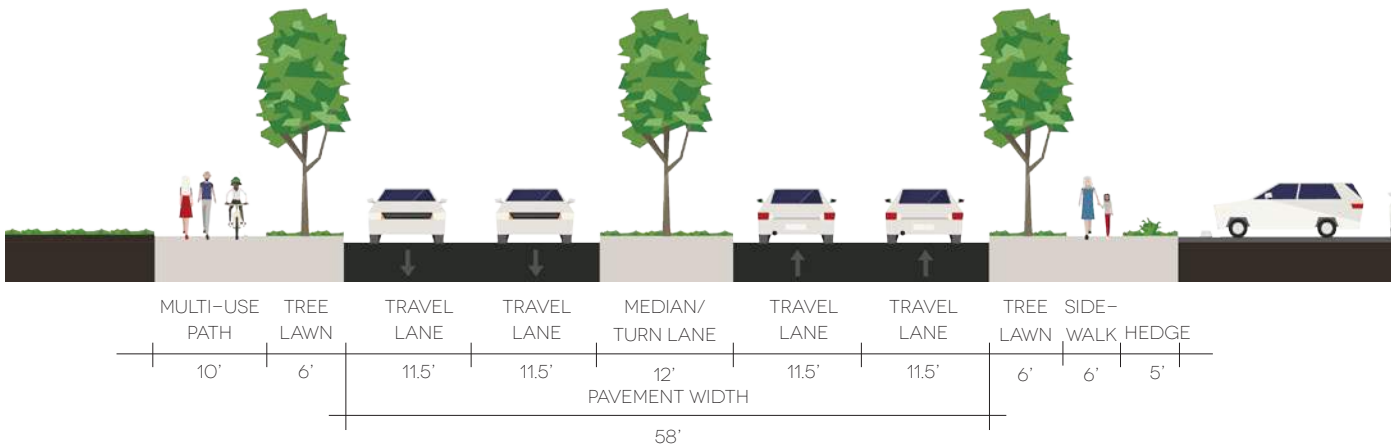
IMPROVEMENTS TO THE UPPER COURT STREET AREA SHOULD FOCUS ON PRESERVING AND RE-CREATING NATURAL LANDSCAPE FEATURES AND MINIMIZING IMPERVIOUS AREA TO CREATE FUNCTIONAL AND APPEALING SITE DRAINAGE THAT IMPROVES STORMWATER MANAGEMENT. THERE ARE MANY PRACTICES THAT COULD BE USED SUCH AS VEGETATED BIO-SWALES, RAIN GARDENS, VEGETATED ROOFTOPS, RAIN BARRELS, AND PERMEABLE PAVEMENT.

CROSS-SECTION: UPPER COURT STREET

Existing (looking west)



Proposed (looking west)



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