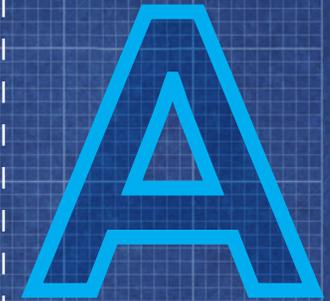


CHAPTER V



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

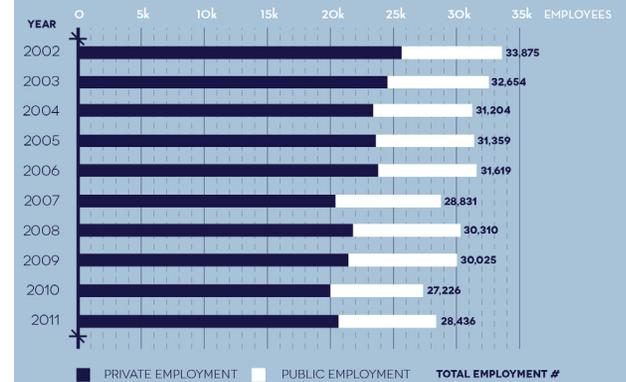
Binghamton has a long tradition as a center of transportation and industry dating back to the 1830s and the completion of the Chenango Canal. More recently, however, reductions in jobs in the City as well as in Broome County and the broader region have been major concerns. As shown in the table, total 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.

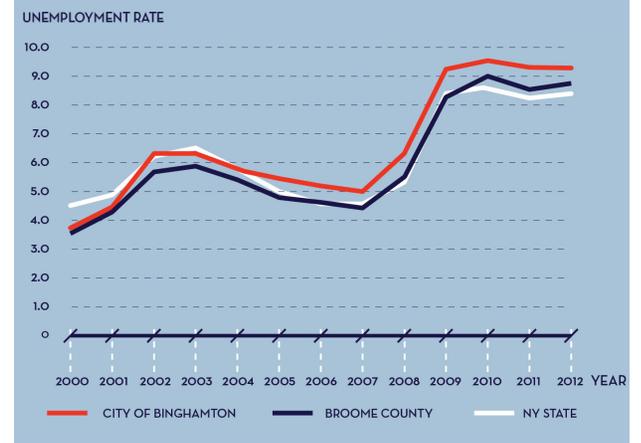
Employment has increased in a few sectors in the City's economy. The largest growth from 2002 to 2011 has been in Health Care and Social Assistance sector, which has added 446 jobs. There have been smaller increases in other sectors: Other Services (excluding Public Administration (311 jobs); Real Estate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

## BROWNFIELD OPPORTUNITY AREAS (BOA) PROGRAM

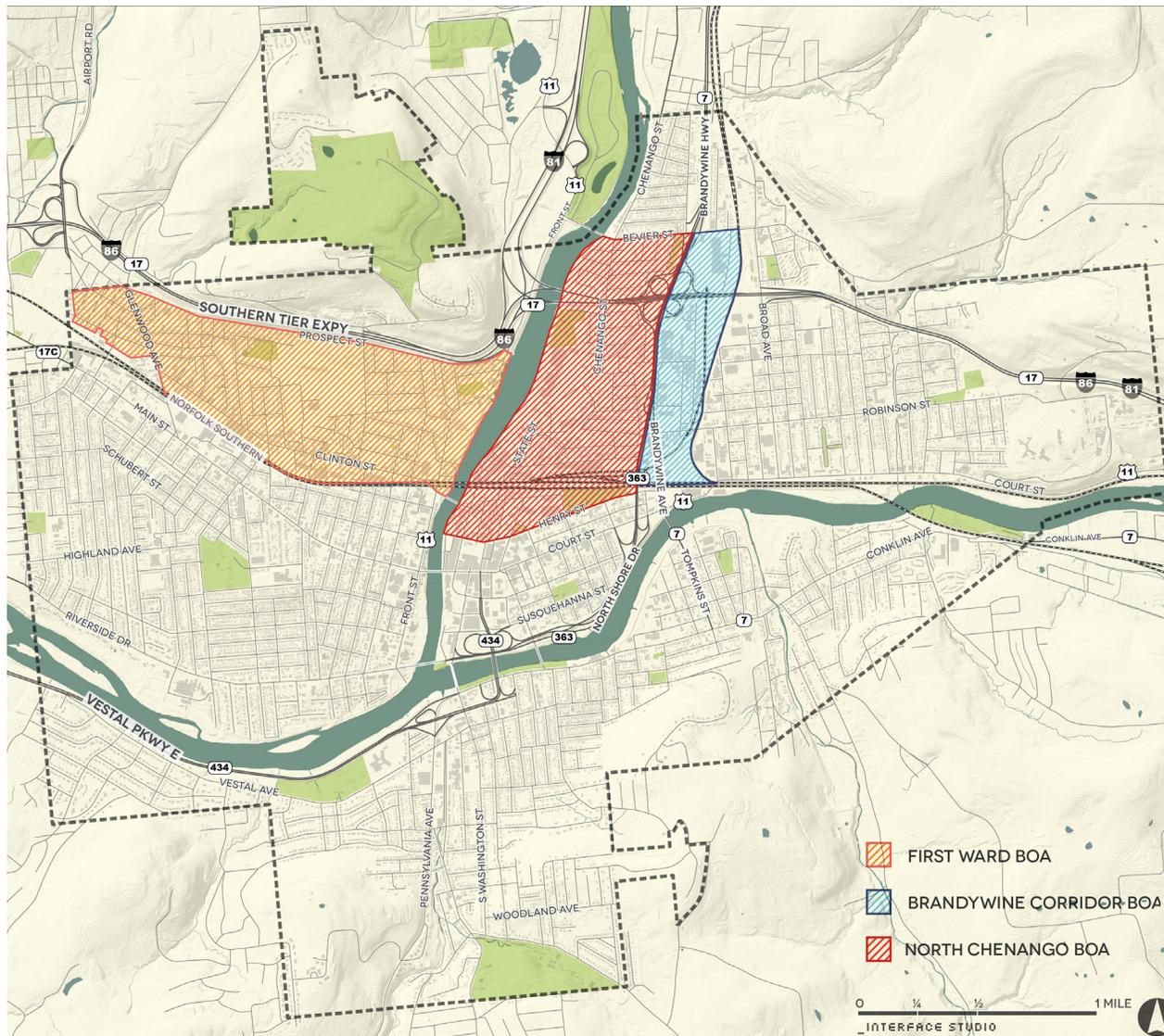


FIGURE 16: Brownfield Opportunity Areas - MAP

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:

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## **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.

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## **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.

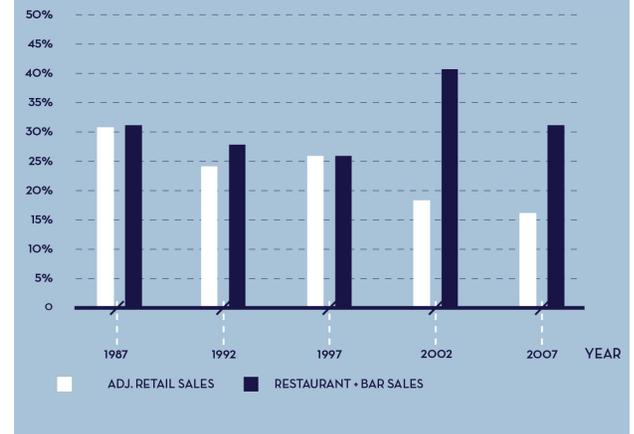
For various reasons, the City of Binghamton has been unable to attract or accommodate large-scale retail projects, so its place in the regional retail market is largely driven by local or regional merchants requiring smaller footprints. A wide array of these merchants have found space and customers in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

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

SOURCE: CLARITAS



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.

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.

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## IMAGE / MARKETING

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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

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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 19<sup>th</sup> 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

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## COMMUNITY VOICE

**B**LUEPRINT 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

**Y**our 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

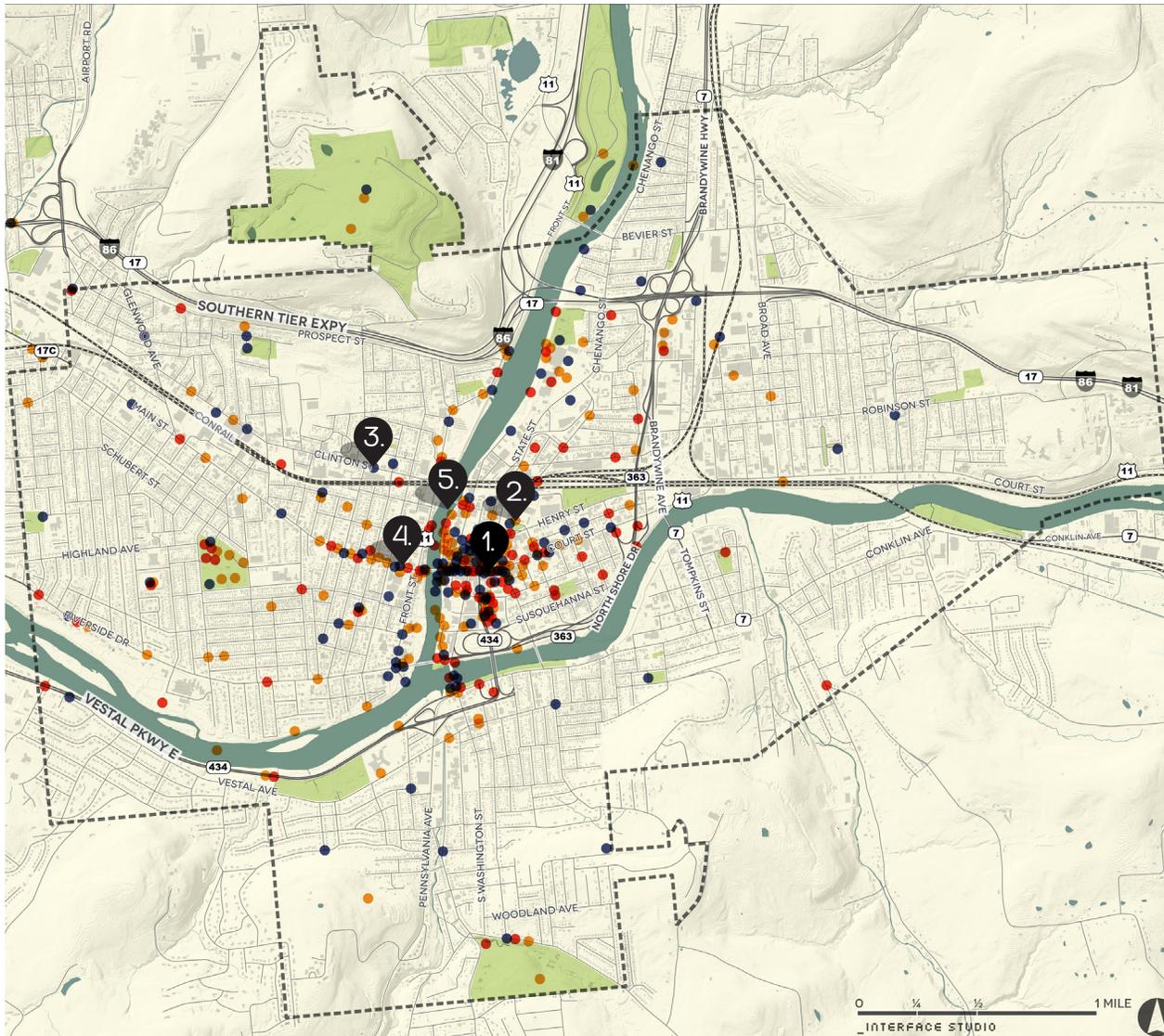


FIGURE 18: Collaborative Map Comments Locations

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

**Y**our **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 ”

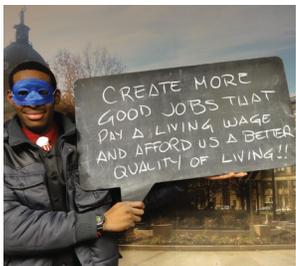
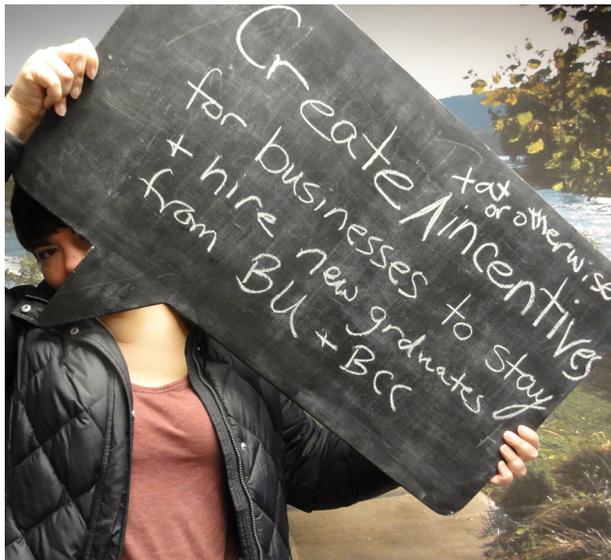
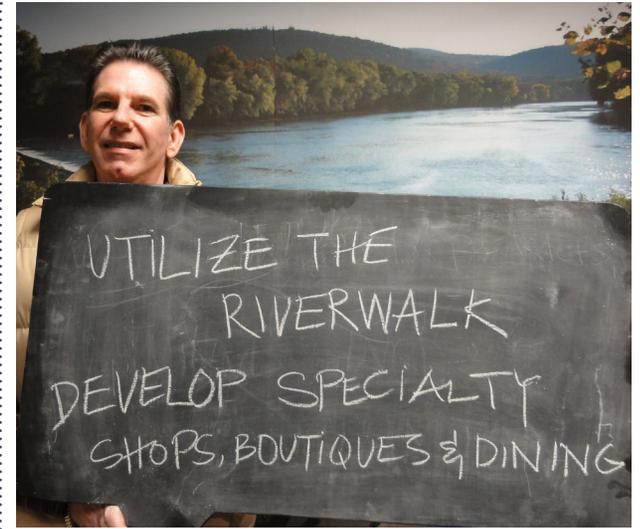
“ [WE] PLAYED UP PARTNERSHIPS FOR GREEN TECH! LOCAL BUSINESSES, EXPANDED EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENERGY EFFICIENCY HOUSING RETROFITTERS, ARTS & RECREATIONAL VENUES, LOCALLY SUSTAINABLE BUSINESSES ”

“ 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"

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## CITYWIDE SURVEY

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**A**nd 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:

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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

**B**inghamton'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:

#### POSITION BINGHAMTON AS A LEADER IN THE

#### 1.1 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



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**RESTRUCTURE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OFFICE  
TO HELP BUSINESSES NAVIGATE THE SYSTEM**

**1.3**

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.

- **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.



Charles Street Business Park

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**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

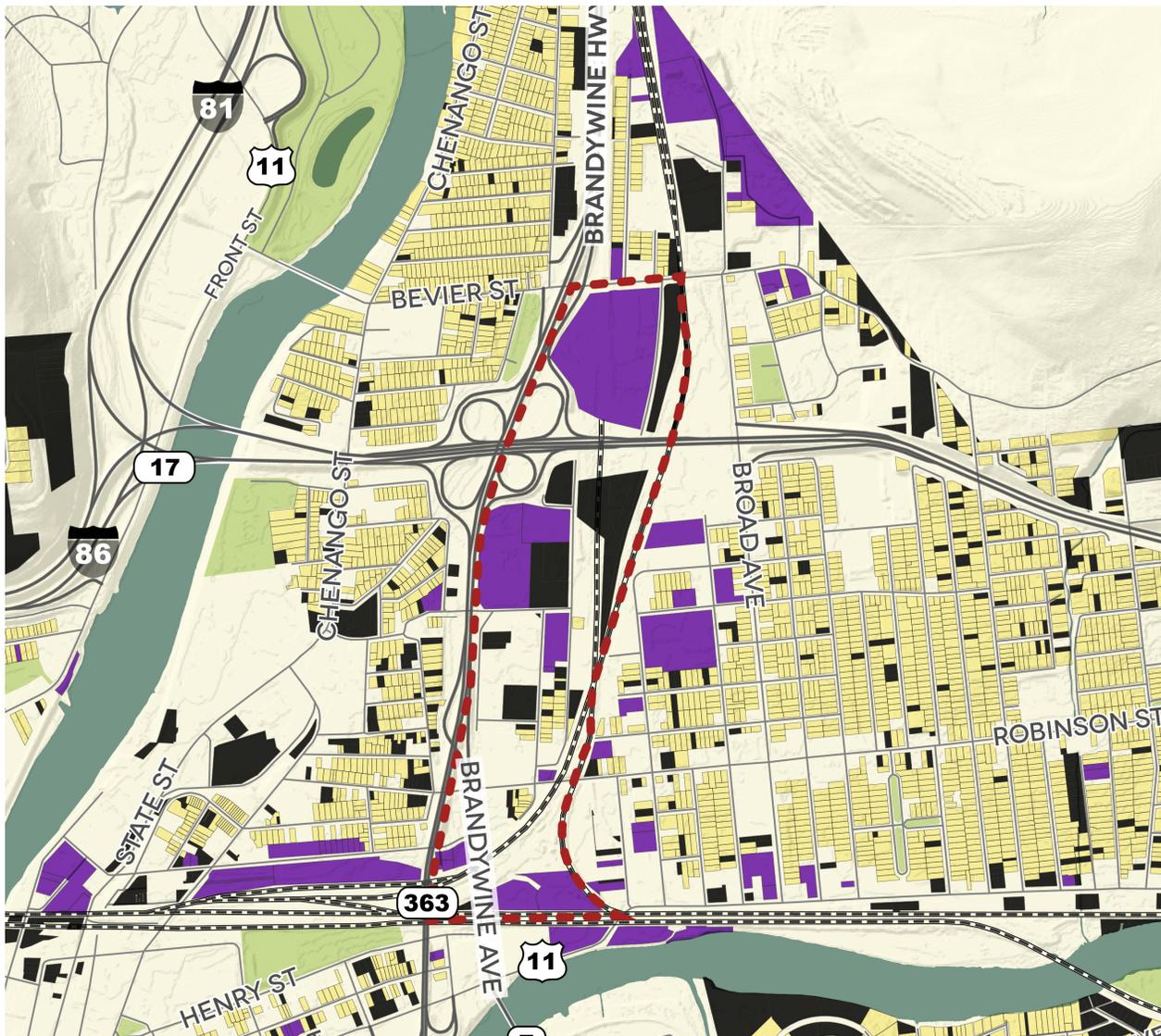


FIGURE 19: Industrial Preservation Area - MAP

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



## **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.

*Land in the Brandywine Corridor*

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**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*



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**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:

#### **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**

##### **3.1**

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.

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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.

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**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.

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**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.

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### 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"

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• **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.

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**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

**INDOOR WINTER MARKET**  
 FRANKLIN FLEA WINTER MARKET  
 PHILADELPHIA, PA

**FARMERS' MARKET**  
 CLARK PARK FARMERS' MARKET  
 PHILADELPHIA, PA

**OUTDOOR ICE RINK**  
 PENN'S LANDING ICE RINK  
 PHILADELPHIA, PA

**OUTDOOR MOVIE NIGHT**  
 SCHUYLKILL BANKS OUTDOOR MOVIE  
 PHILADELPHIA, PA

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**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.

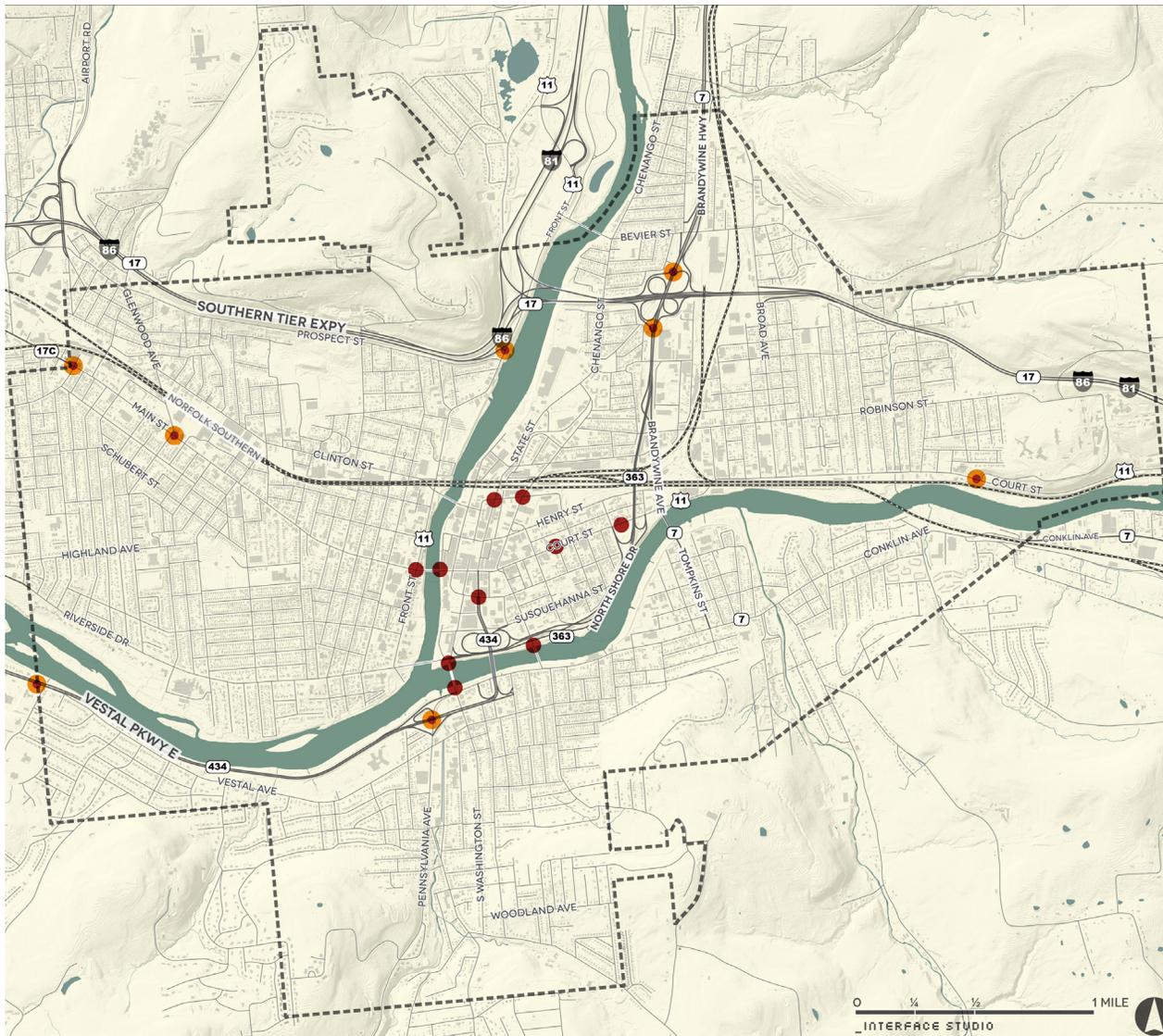
**4.6**  
**IMPROVE THE GATEWAYS TO  
DOWNTOWN AND THE CITY**

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:

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

##### **5.1**

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

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## 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.

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**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.

PUT YOUR \$  
WHERE  
YOUR ♥ IS  
BUY LOCAL

*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*

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**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 20<sup>th</sup> 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.

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**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

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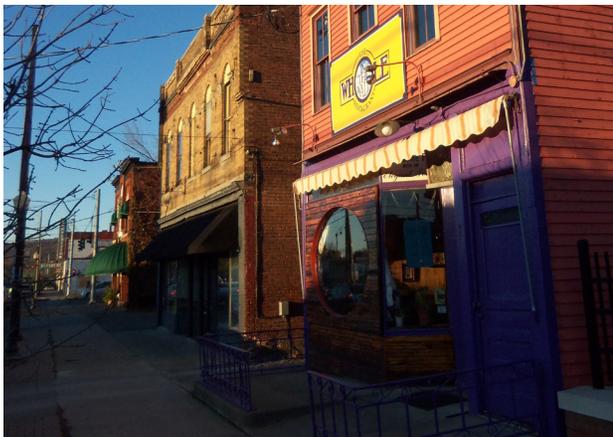
## 6.4 CULTIVATE, BRAND, AND MARKET DISTINCT RETAIL CORRIDORS IN DIFFERENT NEIGHBORHOODS

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*

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

7.1 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.

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## 1.2 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).

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### **1.3 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.

### **1.4 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.

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**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

**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

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.

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

