

CHAPTER V



THE BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON MINI-PLAN ON
LAND USE & ZONING

A PLAN FOR THE LAND

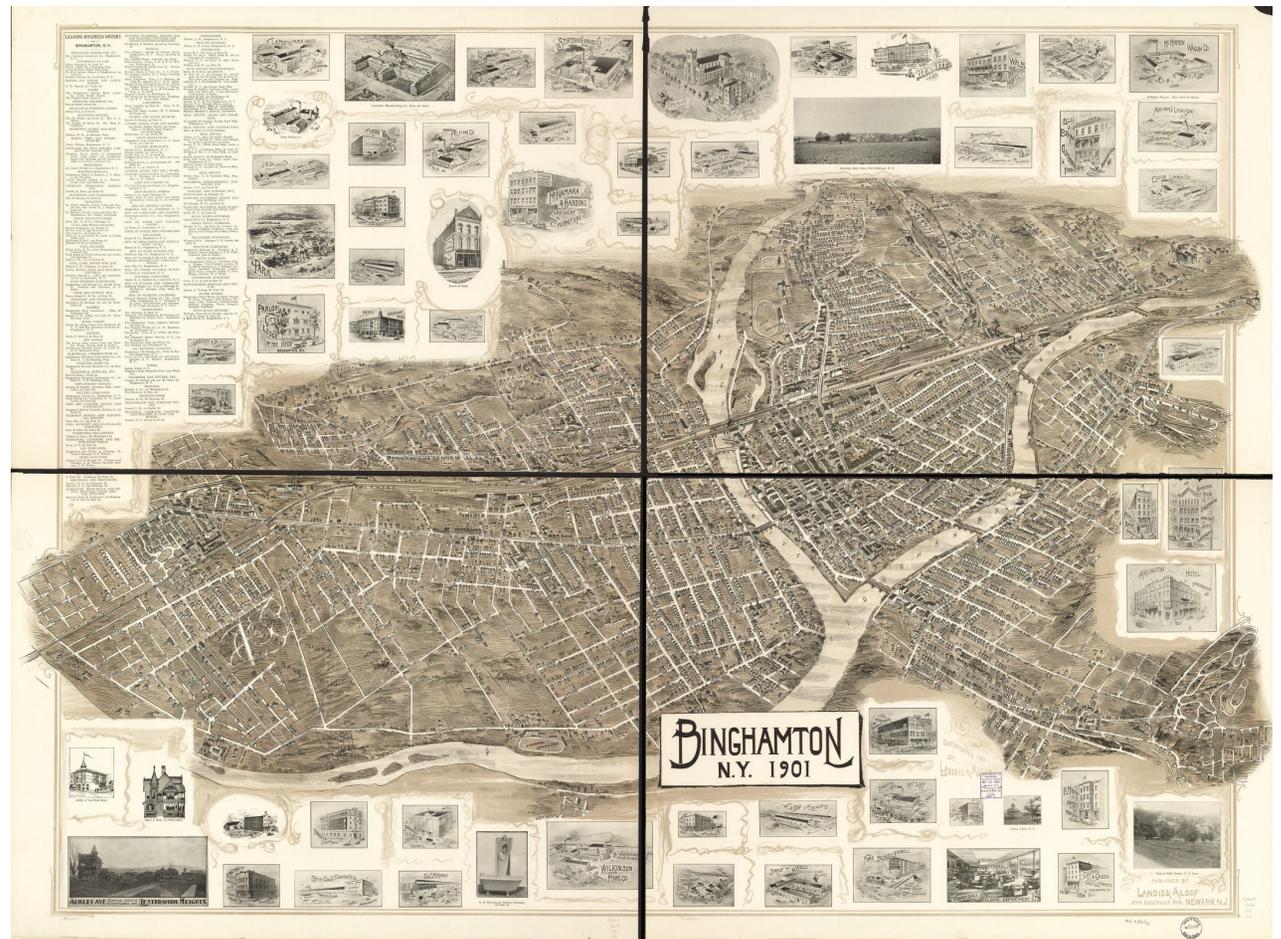
BLUEPRINT
BINGHAMTON

LAND USE & ZONING A PLAN FOR THE LAND

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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

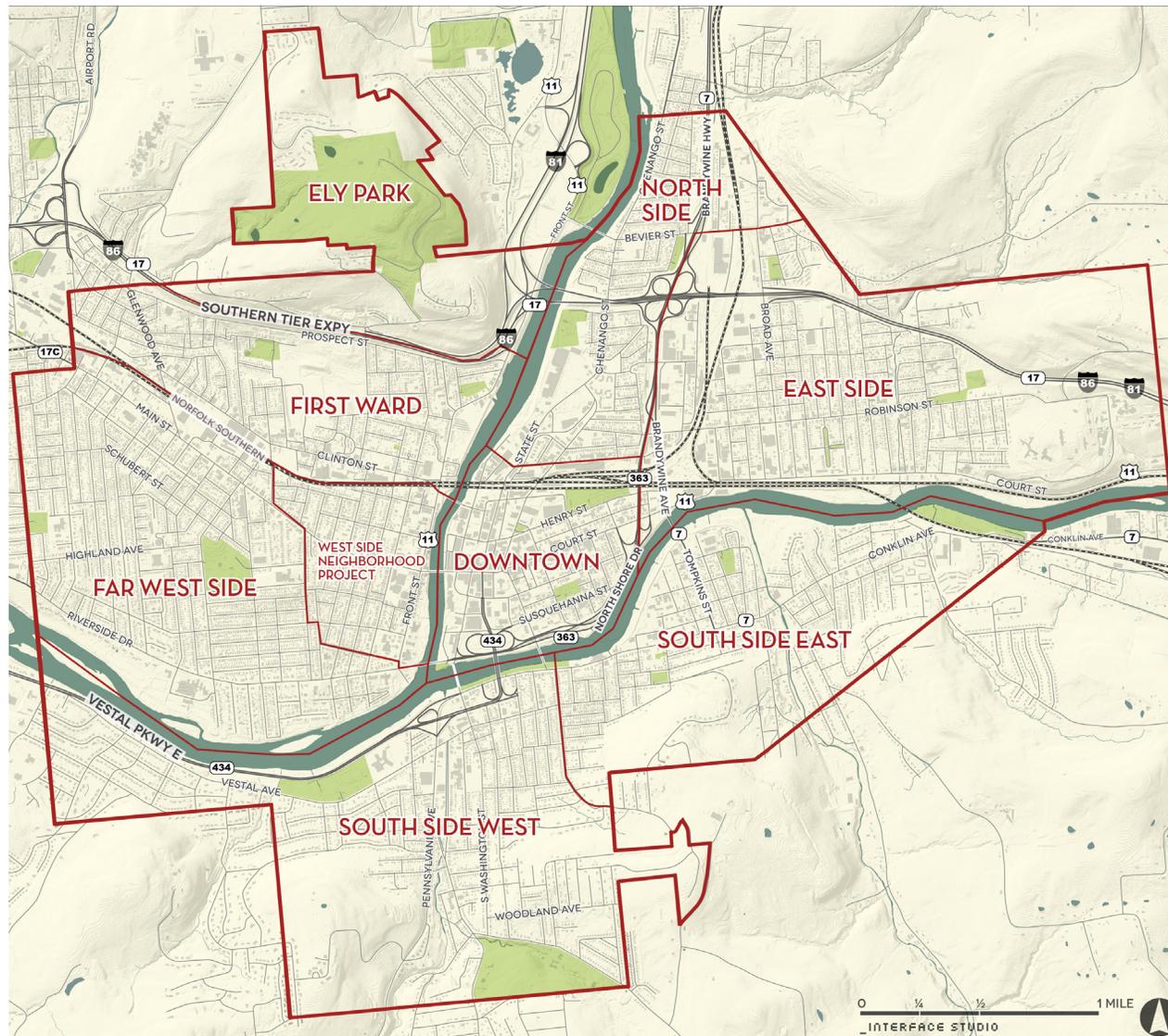
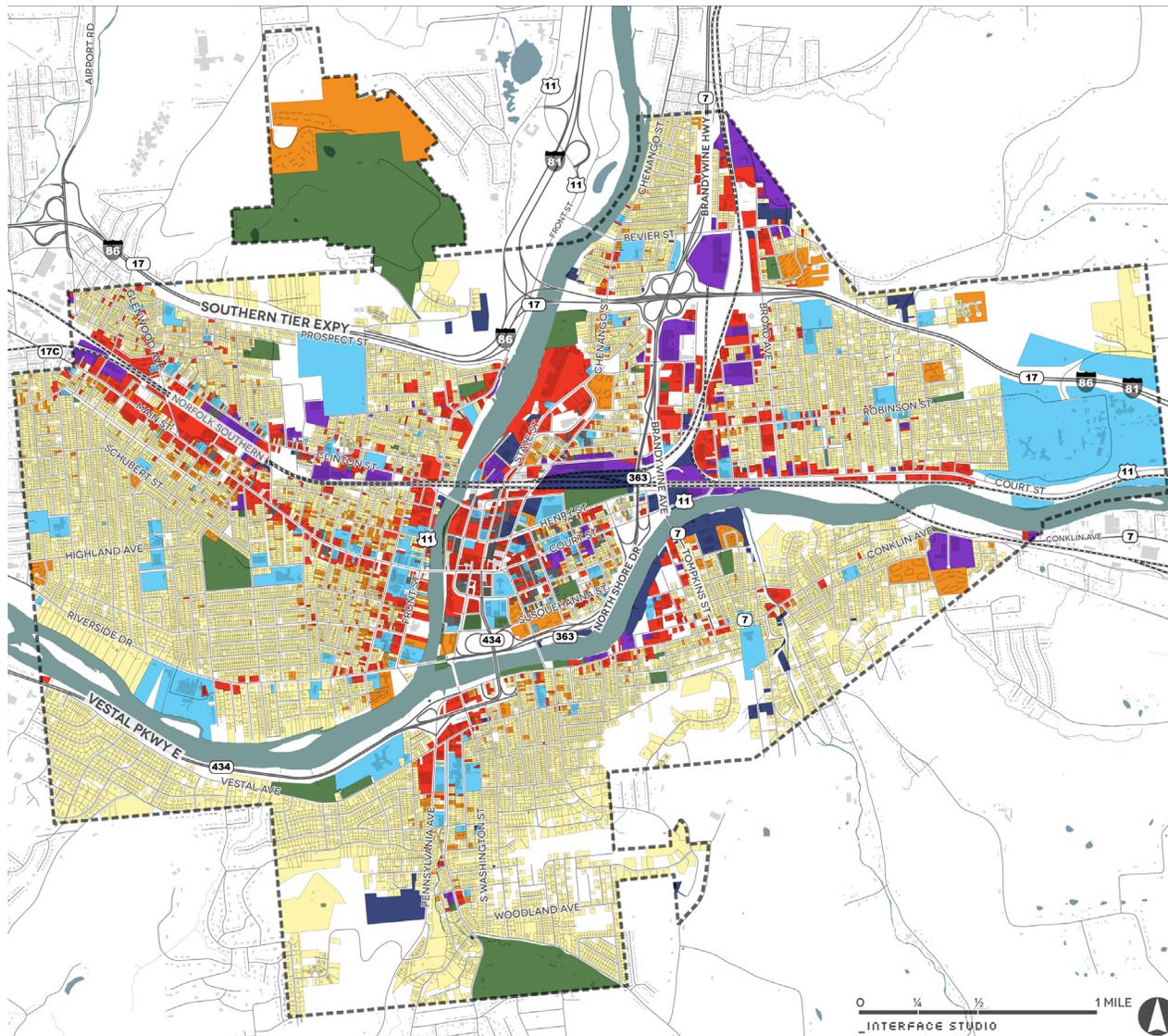


FIGURE 62: Neighborhoods - MAP

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

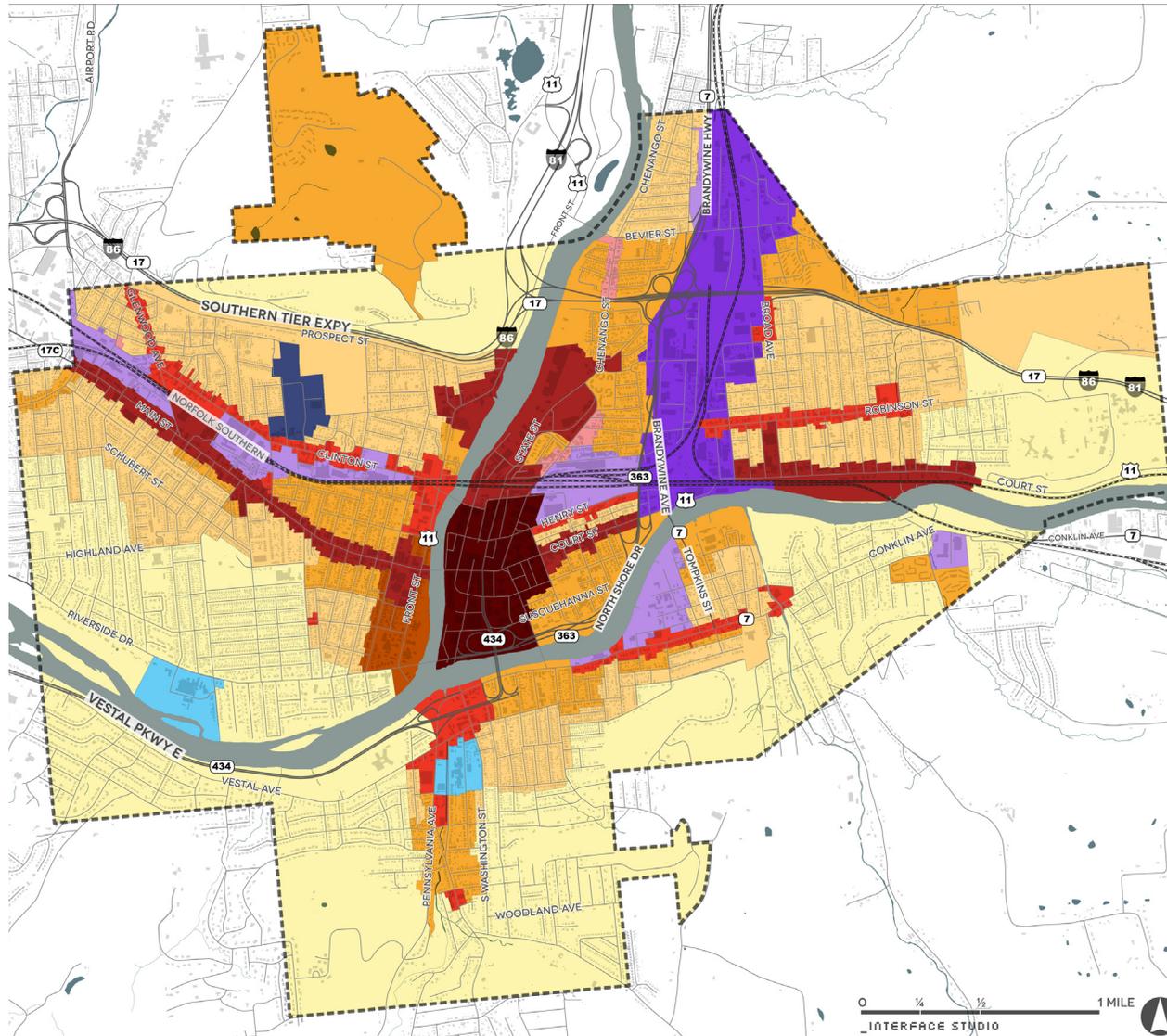


Housing in the First Ward



Ely Park houses

ZONING



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

FIGURE 64: Zoning - MAP

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 family² 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

OVERLAY DISTRICT

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.

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

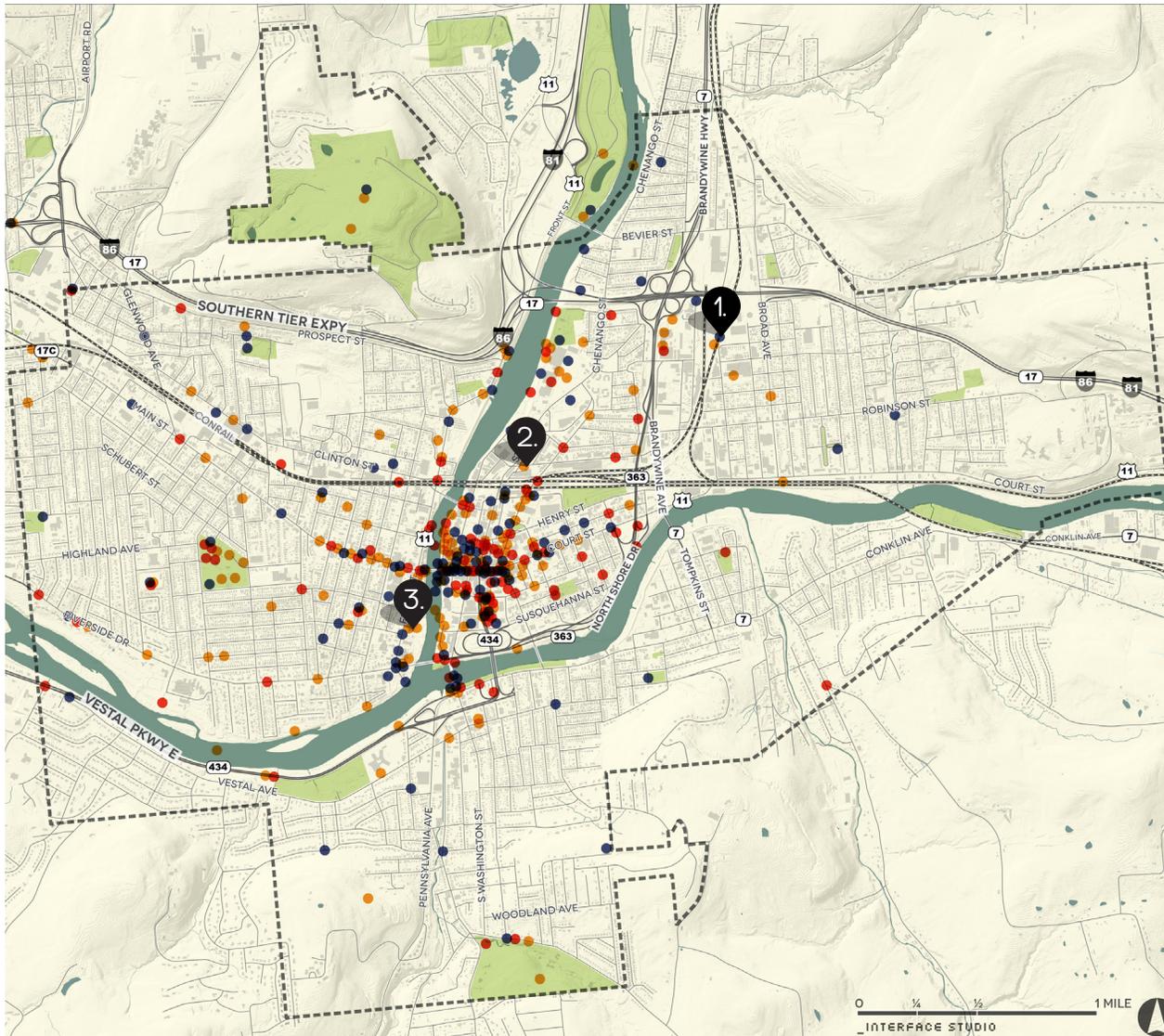


FIGURE 65: Collaborative Map Comments Locations

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.”

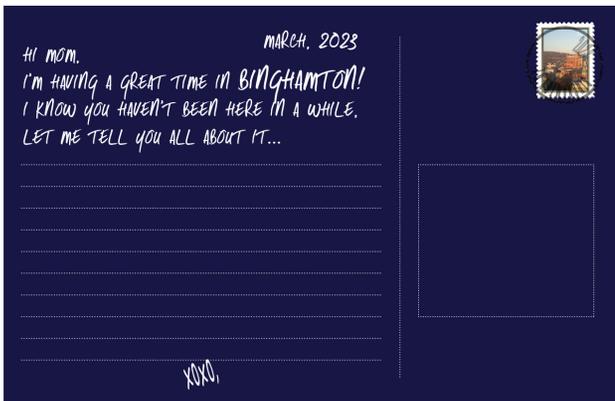
3.

“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.

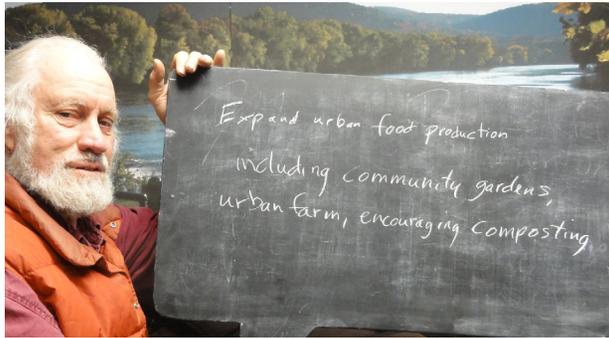
When **5TH GRADERS** in the Binghamton City School District imagined their **DREAM NEIGHBORHOOD**, they too had thoughts about how land should be used in the future... and very wisely, one student acknowledged that sometimes what is best, is to keep things the same:

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.



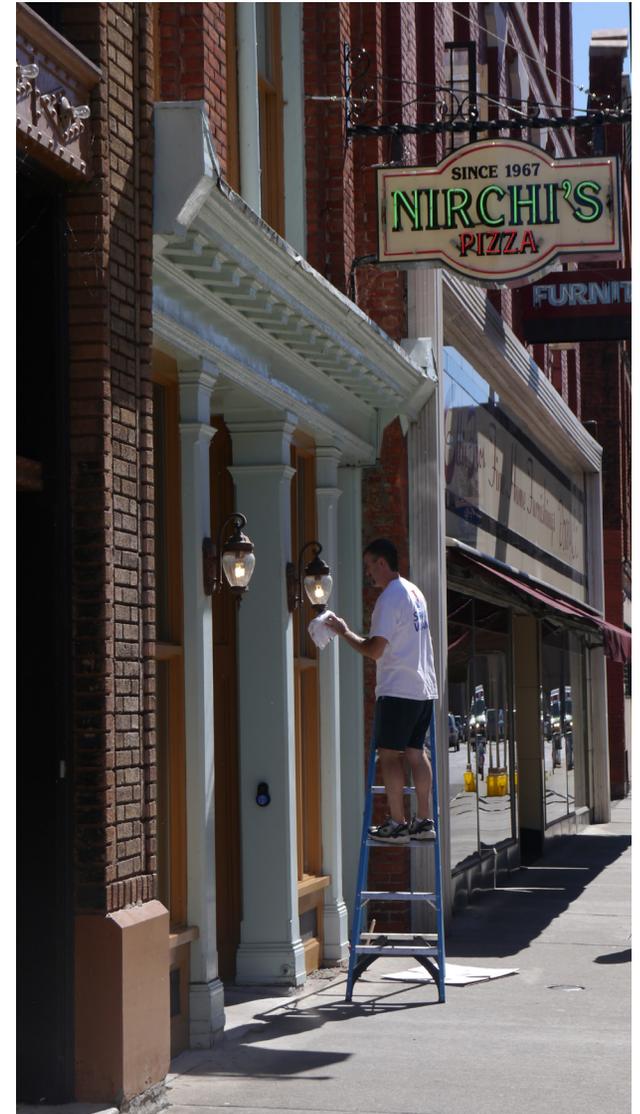
Images from the "Photo Suggestion Booth"

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

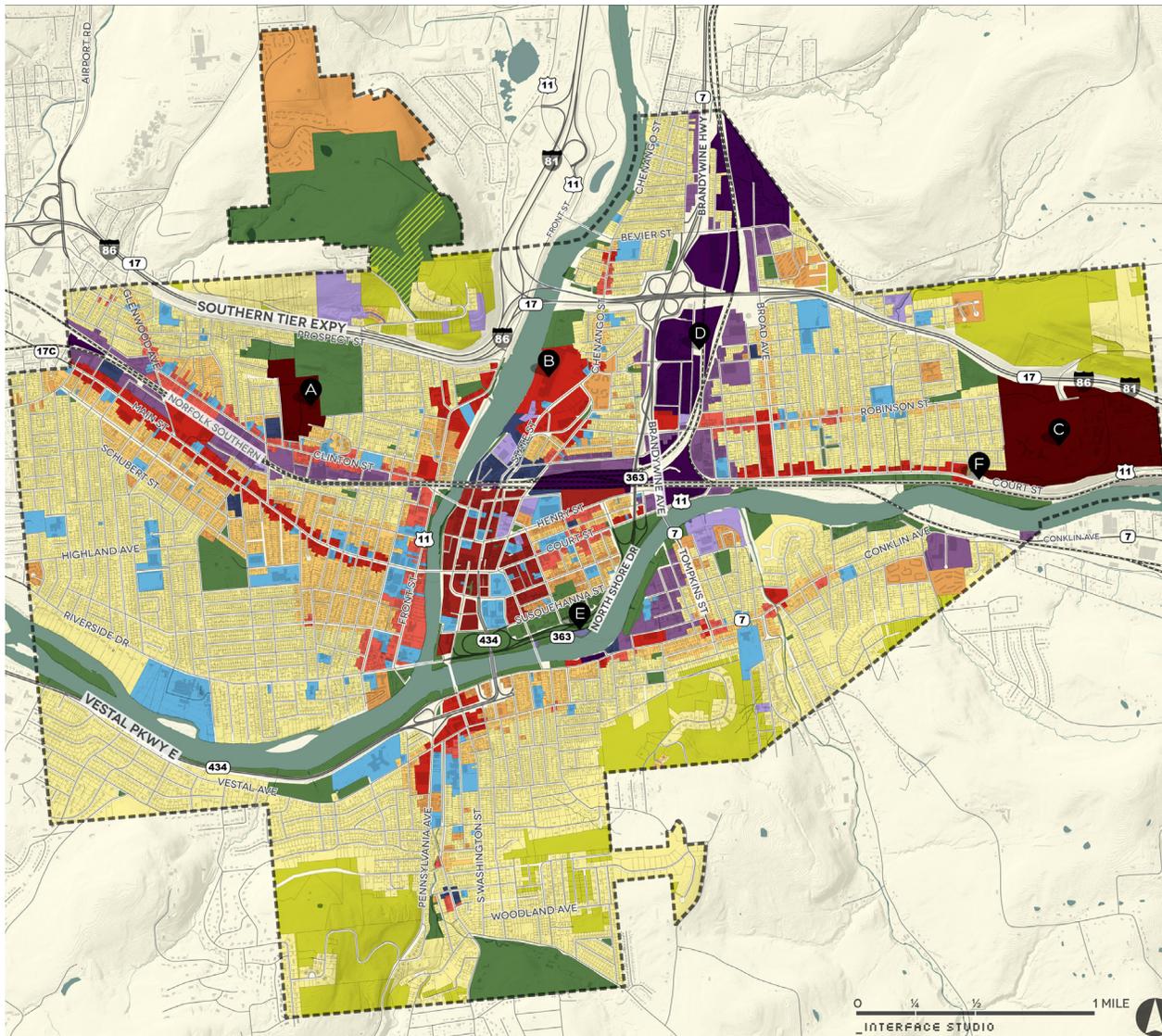
UPDATE MAPS, CODES AND PROCEDURES

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 categories³ 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.

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.

FIGURE 68: "BIG IDEA" Comments - Binghamton Plaza



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.

FACILITATE TRANSPARENCY IN THE DEVELOPMENT REVIEW AND PERMITTING PROCESS

1.7 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.

ACTIVELY ENCOURAGE THAT DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS MEET COMPREHENSIVE PLAN GOALS AND STRATEGIES

1.8 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**



Example of on-line permitting in Oregon

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 15, 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

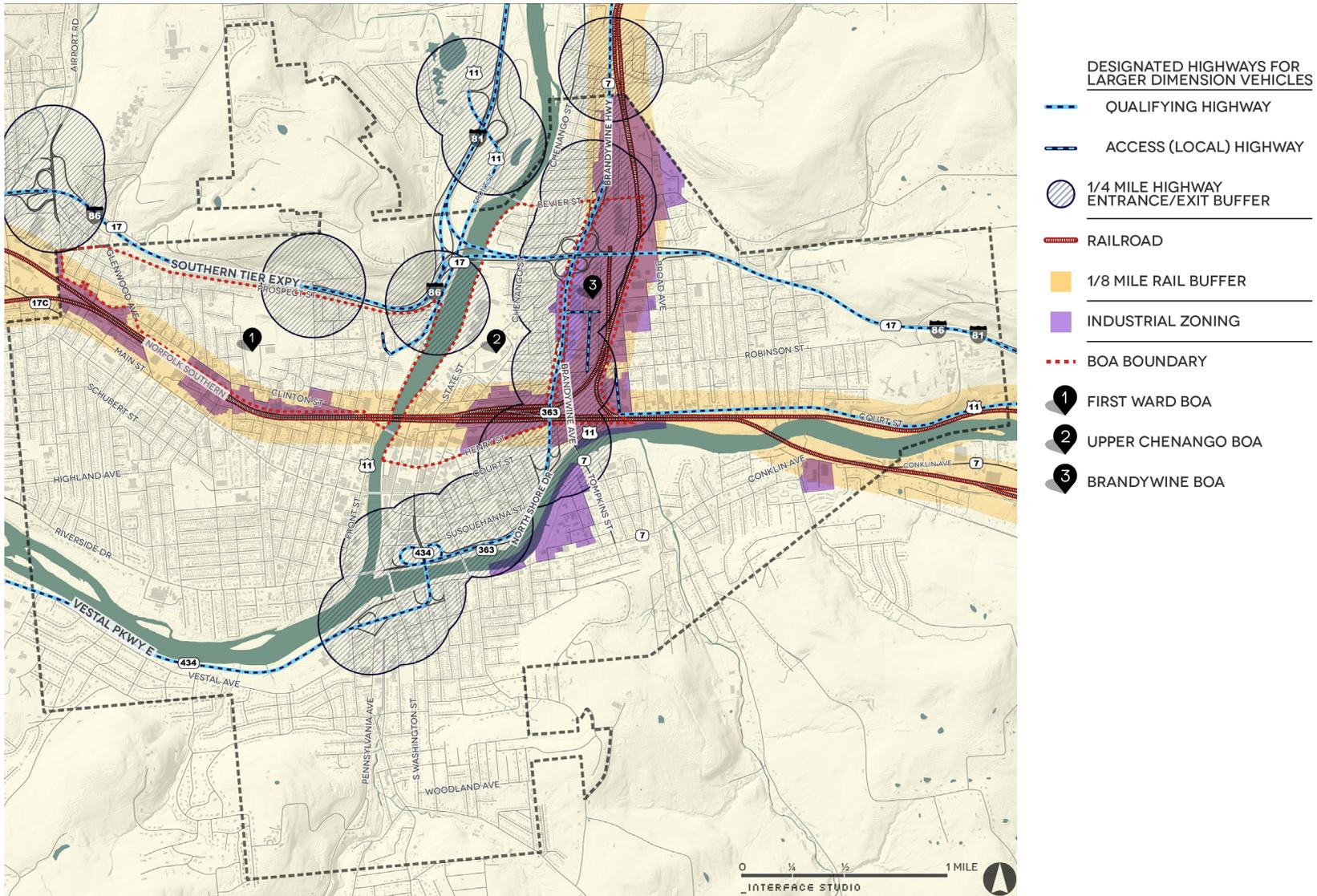


FIGURE 70: Industrial Opportunities - MAP

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.

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



Side by side residential and industrial uses

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

