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**Regional  
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# Redevelopment, Mobility & Waterfronts

The Northeast Mayors' Institute on Community Design

National Endowment for the Arts, The United States Conference of Mayors, and The American Architectural Foundation

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## Program Description

The Mayors' Institute on City Design is a program that conducts a series of small, closed-door three-day symposia intended to offer a small group of invited mayors a better understanding of the design of American cities. Participation is limited to eighteen to twenty people: half are mayors and half are urban design professionals and other resource experts. The format encourages a high degree of participation and interchange. Each mayor presents a design problem from his or her city, which is analyzed by the mayors and the design professionals who, working together, discuss how an appropriate design process can help solve the problem. The interchange between mayors and the resource team sparks lively debate, opens new perspectives, and leads to creative solutions.

The resource team also makes presentations on pertinent aspects of urban design. These provide the mayors with important background on planning, urban design, landscape design, and the role of developers. The mayors and designers discuss common and specific problems facing cities today and explore how the public and private sectors can work together to improve the conditions of our cities. Particular emphasis is placed on how the design process works, and on the importance of the mayor as city designer.

The mayors represent a wide range of cities, towns and villages and bring a wide variety of design issues to the table. The resource team includes architects, planners, public policy specialists, developers, preservationists, sociologists, lawyers, and historians. They are all practicing professionals and distinguished academics.

The Mayors' Institute on City Design is a program sponsored jointly by the National Endowment for the Arts, the United States Conference of Mayors, and the American Architectural Foundation.

This document is the meeting summary of the Northeast Mayors' Institute on City Design, which was hosted by the New Jersey School of Architecture at the New Jersey Institute of Technology and Regional Plan Association on November 7-9, 2007. This summary draws on the background materials prepared for the Institute's Briefing Book as well as on the actual presentations made during the Institute.



## Program Organizers

### The New Jersey School of Architecture

Since its founding in 1973, the New Jersey School of Architecture has grown to become one of the largest accredited schools of architecture in the nation. It is a national leader in the application of computer aided design and in working closely with communities to resolve specific urban issues within its region. The NJSOA is one of five colleges at the New Jersey Institute of Technology (NJIT), the state's public technological university. Known for the quality of its academic programs, NJIT has become a leader in interdisciplinary applied research, expenditure for which now exceeds \$50 million annually with funding from leading corporations, foundations and government agencies. Efforts are focused especially on protecting the natural environment, finding new forms for the built environment, devising a more efficient urban infrastructure, and increasing productivity through advanced manufacturing methods and the skillful management of technology.

The NJSOA offers several unique planning degrees and has considerable experience in planning projects. For instance, in the last five years, the Masters in Infrastructure Program (MIP) has raised over \$1 million in research funds and, recently, was part of a \$266 million grant from HUD to help in post-Katrina New Orleans. The MIP program uses this funding to mobilize elements of the university to help communities achieve their goals through redevelopment plans, master plans, transportation and open space planning. The MIP has been developing a long range plan for Paterson, NJ, a city with a storied history and a population of 150,000. The NJSOA also administered a

national design competition -- for the New Jersey State Council on the Arts and the Department of Environmental Protection -- which will lead to \$20 million in capital construction in Paterson and Trenton.

### Regional Plan Association

Regional Plan Association is an independent, not-for-profit regional planning organization that works to improve the quality of life and the economic competitiveness of the 31-county New York-New Jersey-Connecticut region through research, planning, and advocacy. For over 80 years RPA has been shaping transportation systems, protecting open spaces, and promoting better community design for the region's continued growth. We anticipate the challenges the region will face in the years to come, and we mobilize the region's civic, business, and government sectors to take action.

The nation's most influential independent regional planning organization since its founding in 1922, RPA has a storied history but is more relevant than ever in the 21st century. RPA's First Plan in 1929 provided the blueprint for the transportation and open space networks that we take for granted today. The Second Plan, completed in 1968, was instrumental in restoring our deteriorated mass transit system, preserving threatened natural resources and revitalizing our urban centers. Released in 1996, RPA's Third Regional Plan, *A Region at Risk*, warned that new global trends had fundamentally altered New York's national and global position. The plan called for building a seamless 21st century mass transit system, creating a three-million acre Greensward network of protected natural resource systems, maintaining half the region's employment in urban centers, and assisting minority and immigrant communities to fully participate in the economic mainstream. RPA's current work is aimed largely at implementing the ideas put forth in the Third Regional Plan, with efforts focused in five project areas: community design, open space, transportation, workforce and the economy, and housing.

### National Endowment for the Arts

The National Endowment for the Arts is a public agency dedicated to supporting excellence in the arts, both new and established; bringing the arts to all Americans; and providing leadership in arts education. Established by Congress in 1965 as an independent agency of the federal government, the Endowment is the nation's largest annual funder of the arts, bringing great art to all 50 states, including rural areas, inner cities, and military bases.

The Arts Endowment has made America a better place to live. Before the establishment of the National Endowment for the Arts, the arts were limited mostly to a few big cities. The Arts Endowment has helped create regional theater, opera, ballet, symphony orchestras, museums and other art organizations that Americans now enjoy. In its 40-year history, the National Endowment for the Arts has awarded more than 120,000 grants that have brought art to Americans in communities large and small.



The National Endowment for the Arts believes a great nation deserves great art. The Arts Endowment has helped the arts become accessible to more Americans, which in turn has increased public participation in the arts. For instance, in fewer than three decades, nonprofit professional theaters have grown from 50 to a network of 600 today. The agency also supports cultural activities that strengthen our economy. Nationally, the nonprofit arts contribute an estimated \$37 billion to the economy every year.

### Project Staff

This Institute was organized by **Darius Sollohub**, Associate Professor and Director of Infrastructure Planning at the New Jersey School of Architecture – New Jersey Institute of Technology, and **Carlos Rodrigues**, AICP/PP, Vice President and NJ Director, RPA. They were assisted by **Rob Holmes**, NJIT, and **Katie Nosker**, Research Associate, RPA. Other key RPA staff include **Thomas K. Wright**, Executive Director; **Jeff Ferzoco**, Senior Designer; **Rob Lane**, Director of Regional Design; **David Kooris**, CT Director; **Petra Todorovich**, Director, America 2050; and **Jeff Zupan**, Senior Fellow for Transportation.

## Acknowledgments

The **2007 Northeast Mayors' Institute on City Design** was made possible by the participation and support of numerous people. We thank the mayors and their staffs for their time, attention and enthusiasm; Dana Gioia, Chairman, National Endowment for the Arts; Tom Cochran, Executive Director, United States Council of Mayors; Ronald Bogle, President/CEO, American Architectural Foundation; Tom McClimon, Managing Director, United States Council of Mayors; Martin Robins, Senior Fellow, Alan M. Voorhees Transportation Center; Jess Wendover, Director, Mayors Institute on City Design; and Nicholas Foster, Program Manager, Mayors Institute on City Design.

Special thanks go to the people who addressed this Institute: Robert Altenkirch, President, New Jersey Institute of Technology; Lawrence Goldman, President and CEO, New Jersey Performing Arts Center; the Hon. Cory Booker, Mayor, City of Newark; Stefan Pryor, Deputy Mayor for Economic Development, City of Newark; Toni Griffin, Director of Community Development, City of Newark; and Martin E. Robins, Director of the Voorhees Transportation Policy Institute, Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy, Rutgers, The State University. Thanks as well to keynote speaker and resource team member John Fregonese, President, Fregonese Associates, and to the entire resource team of the November 2007 Northeast Mayors' Institute on City Design.



## November 2007 Mayoral Participants

**Hon. Michael Bronko**, Mayor, Borough of Naugatuck, Connecticut  
**Hon. Mary S. Hooper**, Mayor, City of Montpelier, Vermont  
**Hon. Ron Rordam**, Mayor, Town of Blacksburg, Virginia  
**Hon. Matthew T. Ryan**, Mayor, City of Binghamton, New York  
**Hon. John Shields**, Mayor, Village of Nyack, New York  
**Hon. Wayne Smith**, Mayor, Township of Irvington, New Jersey

## November 2007 Mayors' Institute Resource Team

**Ignacio Bunster-Ossa** - Principal, Wallace Roberts & Todd, Philadelphia, PA.

**Maurice Cox** - Design Director, National Endowment for the Arts,



Washington, DC.

**John Fregonese** - President, Fregonese Associates, Portland, OR.

**Rob Lane** - Director of Regional Design, RPA, New York, NY.

**Carlos Rodrigues** - Vice President and New Jersey Director, RPA, Princeton, NJ.

**Darius Sollohub** - Associate Director of Infrastructure Planning and Associate Professor of Architecture, NJIT, Newark, NJ.

**Pratap Talwar** - Principal, Thompson Design Group, Boston, MA.

**Georgene Theodore** - Assistant Professor, NJIT, Newark, NJ.

**Susan Zielinski** - Managing Director, SMART (Sustainable Mobility and Accessibility Research and Transformation), University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI.

**Jeff Zupan** - Senior Fellow, Transportation, RPA, New York, NY.

## Resource Team Presentations

Each Institute includes presentations by members of the resource team. These presentations introduce the mayors to the concepts of community design, educate them in the tools employed by professional planners, and frame the subsequent discussion.

## What is Community Design?

**Carlos Rodrigues**, AICP/PP, VP and NJ Director, Regional Plan Association

Community design is the art and science of creating places that function well, inspire and energize people and provide a suitable setting for us to relate to one another as human beings. For community design to be successful, it requires that many elements be combined



in appropriate ways; these “building blocks” are physical (streets, buildings), natural (streams, woods, lakes) and human (traditions, values, taste). Community design matters considerably because it has profound implications for the economy, the environment, quality of life and public health.

The critical challenge for 21st century planners and municipal governments is to assist communities to grow in healthy ways, while at the same time reclaiming and restoring the natural resources within our cities and towns. Smarter approaches towards the natural environment - a common thread among many of this Institute’s case studies - are needed. Can we create places that work for both humans and nature? Major tasks going forward involve the greening of built landscapes, transportation facilities and buildings without stifling growth and economic development.

### **Recasting Cities as Sustainable Environments: Landscape Urbanism**

**Ignacio Bunster-Ossa**, Principal, Wallace Roberts & Todd, Philadelphia, PA

Water is one of our most important resources, so it is critical that we design our cities, towns and suburbs with water and general environmental cleanliness in mind. It is useful to think of both the natural and the built environments as “sponges” that can be used to soak up water and allow it to seep through. Some design elements that best accomplish this goal are wetlands, rain barrels, rain gardens, recharge basins, green roofs, retention ponds, gray water recycling facilities and bio-swales, to name a few. By using these tools skillfully urban design can also become a water cleansing mechanism.

Many of these design features can be applied at both large and small scales. Whole communities can pursue green building or river reclamation strategies; on the other hand, single buildings or neighborhoods can incorporate these strategies. One valuable example of innovative green design on a very local level is the Sidwell School in Washington, DC. The school is LEED certified and uses many green design techniques such as naturally treated sewage on campus and solar panels to heat water. In addition to showcasing good design, the school also serves as a working laboratory for its students.

### **America 2050**

**Petra Todorovich**, America 2050 Director, RPA

North America is currently experiencing many key changes including rapid population growth, climate change, aging infrastructure, increasing goods movement, overcrowded airports, and a rise in extreme commuting. RPA - in partnership with a number of universities and civic groups - has created the America 2050 initiative to develop a framework for America’s



future growth. America 2050 identifies 10 or more emerging megaregions as the proper scale at which to make the investments that will maximize America’s competitiveness and broaden opportunities for all members of our society. This framework will promote integrated investments in mobility, the environment and economic development needed to guide the nation’s growth in the 21st century. It will provide capacity for growth by creating a world-class multi-modal transportation system of new smart highways, high-speed rail, airports and seaports, all linked to concentrated development at central hubs. It will preserve large environmental (or “green infrastructure”) systems, strengthen metropolitan regions and urban centers and alleviate concentrated poverty by expanding economic opportunities to bypassed areas.

At stake is a fundamental opportunity to organize and direct the trillions of dollars of investments that will be made over the next generation in infrastructure, housing and urban development, environmental protection and new energy systems. Properly implemented, these efforts will improve the competitiveness and livability of every part of the country.

### **The Next Generation of Urban Transportation: Connecting the Dots and Making It Sexy**

**Susan Zielinski**, Managing Director, SMART (Sustainable Mobility and Accessibility Research and Transformation), University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI

There are many cultural assumptions associated with public transportation in the US. For instance, that people who use public transportation are “captive,” that only disadvantaged people use it, and that it is an “alternative” mode of transportation (i.e. not mainstream). We talk about public transportation “costs” rather than “investments”. However, if we shift these assumptions, we can reach other conclusions. For



instance, car sharing programs, pedi-cabs, light rail, and other fuel choices are tools we can use as a society to create more comprehensive transportation solutions.

A smart public transportation solution for the future is the “mobility hub network,” which provides multiple modes of transportation at convenient locations, with seamless interfaces between modes resulting in door-to-door trips. These hubs offer real time scheduling information, robust backup systems, easy and convenient pricing and ticketing, comfortable surroundings, convenient ancillary activities (food, banking, shopping) and clean fuels. Smart and “sexy” public transportation systems can become the mode of choice in the 21st century.

#### **Life after the “Vision”: Recurring Lessons of Big Plans and Small Wins**

**Pratap Talwar**, Principal, Thompson Design Group, Boston, MA  
Creating a planning vision for a community is very important, but real planning only begins after the visioning process is over. In fact, a vision is just the tip of the iceberg; while it can get many people interested and many parties involved, at the end of the visioning process it can be difficult for the City to identify the appropriate next steps. Talwar suggests prioritizing (“putting out the hottest fires first”), organizing the vision as a series of realistic phases, conducting a thorough search for potential funding sources and focusing on the end users.

#### **Keynote Address: City Design, Global Warming, and the Future**

**John Fregonese**, President, Fregonese Associates, Portland, OR  
The U.S. is undergoing many demographic changes and will look very different by 2050. We will add 100 million residents, yet the proportion of households with children will decline, there will be more jobs than workers to fill them and our population will continue to age. It is up to us now to decide where those people will live and work and in what sorts of environments.

Portland, OR, is a success story of how smart planning can produce tangible, positive results over time. One of the goals of Portland’s regional plan is to accommodate 1/3 of new growth through infill development in existing centers. To accomplish this goal the region made appropriate zoning adjustments to increase densities in suitable locations, streamlined the planning approval process, vastly improved its transit options, designed streets and public spaces for pedestrians and bicycles and instituted a cap on parking in the downtown. As a result of these and other planning initiatives, Portland has been transformed from a car-dominated to a pedestrian city; harmful emissions have already been reduced back to 1990 levels; housing is more affordable; and demographic diversity has increased.

#### **Case Studies – Summary of Findings**

The six communities studied at this Institute all share the potential for improving the quality of life for their residents, businesses and visitors through strategic land use and infrastructure decisions. The presence of rivers in all six communities and the significant potential they offer - as recreational amenities, economic development assets and in some cases transportation options - created one common thread running through the six case studies: the renewed appreciation for urban waterfronts and all they have to offer

A fundamental lesson for each mayor was to think beyond the confines of his or her immediate challenge – beyond the boundaries of the specific (re)development site or case study area – and explore connections to the larger neighborhood or community planning framework. The Institute’s recommendations seek to implement a vision of a comprehensive approach to revitalizing communities and creating higher quality of life.

**Blacksburg** explored ways to improve the connections between its downtown and university campus through planning, urban design and place-making applied to catalytic redevelopment projects.

**Nyack** discussed options for improving its waterfront as a destination and for enhancing the linkages from the downtown to the river.

**Binghamton** examined ways to leverage its arts community and university in downtown revitalization and appropriate redevelopment principles for a waterfront area of marginal industrial uses and a shopping center.

**Irvington** discussed appropriate strategies for enhancing its major commercial thoroughfare.

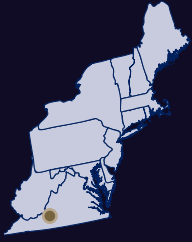
**Montpelier** investigated alternative redevelopment scenarios for a number of large surface parking lots that face the river and impede public access.

**Naugatuck** explored appropriate strategies for Rubber Avenue, an important thoroughfare linking a large waterfront redevelopment site, the downtown and an educational campus at the edge of town.

# Case Studies

discussion,  
conclusions and  
recommendations





# Town of Blacksburg

Mayor Ron Rordam  
Virginia

Square Miles  
Population

19.0  
40,066

## KEY ISSUES

- Improve the interface between the University campus and the downtown community by seeking greater coordination between the town's master plan and the University's campus plan.
- Develop a context-sensitive, mixed-use solution for the Blacksburg Middle School property.
- Explore ways to leverage Virginia Tech's arts initiative to enhance downtown activities and the town's cultural life.
- Discuss ways to diversify Blacksburg's downtown with more upscale retail and services.
- Consider a roundabout at the intersection of Main Street and Prices Fork Road.

**PROBLEM STATEMENT** Devise appropriate strategies for catalytic redevelopment projects that will benefit both the downtown community and the University and lead to a tradition of working more closely together to best leverage their assets.

**BACKGROUND** Blacksburg is nestled on a plateau between the Blue Ridge and Allegheny mountains at an elevation of 2,000 feet. The Town is predominantly influenced both economically and demographically by the presence of Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, better known as Virginia Tech, the State's largest university. The student population of 28,000 comprises approximately 70% of Blacksburg's total population and approximately 70% of students live off-campus. Major University-related technological entities center on Virginia Tech's Corporate Research Center which hosts more than 100 technology-based companies.

Located in an area of great natural beauty, the town is surrounded by mountains and rolling farmland. *Outside Magazine* ranked Blacksburg one of the top ten places to live for outdoors enthusiasts. Its scenic qualities are complemented by lively shopping, arts, entertainment.

Blacksburg is also one of the most "wired" communities in the country, offering mobile connection to the Internet from anywhere in town. As technologically advanced as it is, Blacksburg prides itself on its origins in the eighteenth century and its small town scale and character, which is preserved in the historic buildings of downtown (several are on the National Register of Historic Places) and in the surrounding farming communities. Blacksburg is connected by the Route 460 Bypass to Interstate 81, which connects it to Roanoke.

The award-winning Blacksburg Transit (BT), operated by the town but paid for largely through student use fees, provides Town-wide public transportation open to residents at a reasonable cost. The Town and University host an extensive greenway bicycle network anchored by the Huckleberry Trail, a rail-trail conversion. Extensive alleys downtown offer an extension to this network. Hundreds of bicycles crowd the space before each dorm on campus. Blacksburg is the site for major transportation infrastructure testing at the Virginia Tech Transportation Institute and its intelligent transportation laboratory, the Virginia Smart Road.

Life in Blacksburg is profoundly intertwined with the University, perhaps best revealed on game day when all are drawn to Lane Stadium to cheer the Hokies. But as with any college town, relations can be a challenge where the student population and the local population come in contact, due primarily to differing lifestyles. In many of Blacksburg's residential neighborhoods, traditional single-family houses are mixed with housing that contains multiple, unrelated residents, and residents may find they have differing daytime/nocturnal patterns. It can also be manifest in retail settings where differing uses and needs come into contact. The latter is significantly the case along Main Street in Blacksburg, the location of this case study in a corridor extending from the old Blacksburg Middle School property to the South to the intersection with Prices Fork Road to the North. A significant component of this revitalization is to strike the right mix of uses, to optimize town/gown relations.

At the very south end of Main Street, near Route 460 lay a significant number of suburban stripstyle retail developments. Although well outside the bounds of this study, these have a significant if indirect impact on the downtown. Businesses in this area constitute various stages of occupancy and success; from new construction, thriving and full, to partly vacant, to under redevelopment. One current proposal that is sparking controversy is a two-phase development that starts with a significant mixed-use lifestyle center; shops, eateries, and family entertainment venues. The second (and most controversial) phase is a proposal by Wal-Mart to construct a 170,000 sq ft store on an adjacent property. There is vocal opposition in the community, with placards and petitions against it appearing near campus, and the town is presently in a law suit to prevent it.

Regardless of the outcome of the Wal-Mart litigation, the presence of the strip draws business from downtown, and negatively impacts the downtown's vibrancy. As a result, the retail environment along South Main Street and Draper Avenue is primarily student oriented; including restaurants, pizza shops, bars, a bike shop, and a laundromat.

At the southern limit of the downtown is the 20 acre site of the former Blacksburg Middle School. The Middle School is County owned and managed, and the County has relocated the school to the west of Route 460, thus leaving the old school vacant. Previous proposals for its redevelopment





included a shopping mall, which was roundly rejected. The Town would like to develop this as a mixed use facility, possibly with components connecting to the arts initiative mentioned below, and potentially including affordable housing as part of its residence components. The value of this property is a function of its zoning, and in 1997, in advance of the relocation of the school, the Town rezoned the property as R-4: low density residential. In its discussions with the County, the Town has indicated it's willingness to consider rezoning it as R 5: transitional residential or mixed-use. The Town's Comprehensive Plan presently supports the application of the mixed use ordinance. The Virginia Tech School of Architecture is presently considering a design competition to develop alternate proposals for its re-use.

Nearer to the center of our site, the town recently constructed a mixed use parking structure called Kent Square. It combines ground level retail and residential units above, and successfully preserves the streetscape of Main Street by masking the structure from Main Street.

Virginia Tech is presently pursuing an arts initiative, that includes a regionally significant Performing Arts Center, and an experimental, black box, theater. The Performing Arts Center is slated for the existing surface lot adjacent to Schultz Hall at the ceremonial front entrance to the University on Main Street, and is presently in its fund-raising stage. The black box theater is proposed for the open land at the northeast corner of the University property, adjacent to the corner of College Avenue and Draper Avenue.

The Town would like to capitalize on the opportunity created by this initiative to link the university and town populations more effectively. Several properties in downtown lend themselves to establishing this linkage. Near the intersection of College and Draper the old Armory is now a fine arts gallery, and The Lyric is an historical movie theater on College Avenue just off Main Street.

The Town and University will facilitate this melding by removing the spike metal fence along College Avenue that forms a literal and figurative wall between the University and the downtown.

At the northern limit of the case study corridor is a major vehicular intersection of Main Street and Prices Fork Road (which forms the northern boundary of the University campus and is the major east-west commercial thoroughfare linking the Route 460 bypass and downtown.) The mayor would like to investigate the prospect of creating a gateway at this location, and it is also the site of a possible roundabout.

A revitalized Main Street will greatly enhance the relationship between the Town and the University. The design of both a mixed use community on the Middle School site and the development of a major arts facility at the ceremonial entry to campus have potential to become major anchors of revitalization.

Making the entire corridor more pedestrian and bicycle-friendly through better connectivity and the potential development of a roundabout at Prices Fork Road will help convey both students and Town residents to a re-energized downtown Blacksburg.

## RESOURCE TEAM RECOMMENDATIONS

The primary challenge for Blacksburg is to further enliven its downtown, beyond the student population. The resource team believes the key to achieving that objective is to coordinate town actions with University initiatives because the two are so inescapably intertwined. Given the importance of the University's physical presence in the downtown the two entities need to create a planning partnership with common goals. If uncoordinated, their individual actions can undermine each other and the area's overall viability. The University's campus plan and the City's master plan should be jointly examined and closely coordinated with particular emphasis on potential catalytic projects such as the Performing Arts Center and the former Middle School site.

Charlottesville, VA; Ann Arbor, MI; and Boulder, CO offer examples of what can be accomplished in a shared downtown by an enlightened town-gown partnership. While accommodating the student population, these downtowns attract a much broader clientele with art galleries, movie theaters and other cultural events, upscale restaurants and other anchors. It is critical that the community both feel comfortable in the downtown environment (not feel it is encroaching on student space) and find the types of activities that appeal to an older, more affluent crowd. The programming of downtown businesses - the types of retail, services and other uses - is critical in attracting a more diverse demographics. Attracting a greater residential population to the downtown is also a priority.

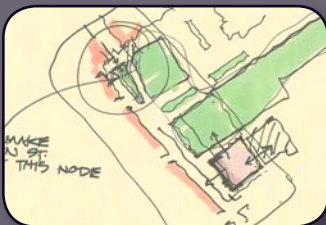
The seam between town and gown - along Main Street and College Avenue - deserves a great deal of attention. The resource team suggested a comprehensive traffic calming program for this area - textured pavement treatments, speed tables and neckdowns at cross-walks. It should be made absolutely clear to motorists that this area has a high pedestrian content and that while vehicles are welcome they are subservient to pedestrians. There may also be some opportunities along this corridor for modest urban design interventions which might create small public spaces at strategic locations, taking advantage of superfluous street pavement and large building setbacks. This would further strengthen the corridor's personality and signify that it is a special place.

The resource team sought to maximize the positive potential inherent in the University's plan to build a Performing Arts Center in what is currently a surface parking lot downtown. One suggestion is for the University to locate student housing by the PAC. This would bring more students into the downtown to patronize downtown businesses, similar to what the University



## SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS - Town of Blacksburg

### Options for Middle School Site



Comprehensive traffic calming along Main Street across from campus

Extend retail and residential along College Ave.



of Pennsylvania has done in Philadelphia and Rutgers in downtown New Brunswick. Since Virginia Tech's campus plan does not currently contemplate student housing downtown there is a need to ask the University to reconsider this policy.

The former County-owned Middle School site offers another exciting opportunity for the town and University to coordinate development. The Town had been discussing an open design competition for the site, aided by faculty from Virginia Tech's Architecture Department and run by a committee with input and funding from different governmental and community sources. The resource team recommended that the town maintain a proactive role in its design and development. Blacksburg should define exactly what it wants to achieve with this project as well as the urban design framework and the design guidelines that will guarantee the Town's objectives are met. It was suggested the site and location would be well suited for a mixed-use project. The Town's grid pattern, and the greenway can both be extended into the site, to continue the residential fabric. The site might also be appropriate for a hotel/conference center and/or more

student housing. In general, the resource team supports the mixing and merging of town-gown uses, moving the University away from "their" side of the street over to the "Town's" side.

Other opportunities for town-gown partnerships include taking advantage of the University's and town's "game day" capacity to support other cultural events. The University's stated goal of attracting more graduate students could potentially help the town if these new residents can be located closer to the downtown. To further invigorate the downtown, the resource team also suggests exploring the possibility of creating multi-modal hubs with bike rentals, shared parking and convenience uses at bus stops. Finally, the town should re-examine its zoning and explore opportunities to locate bed-and-breakfast establishments and other hospitality uses catering to visiting alums and parents of students throughout the downtown. This will further breathe life into the area and encourage people to stay and walk around.





# Village of Nyack

Mayor John Shields  
New York

Square Miles  
Population

1.0  
6,737

## KEY ISSUES

- Devise strategies to improve the connections between the downtown and the waterfront and to make the waterfront a more intuitive destination.
- Discuss an appropriate mix of public and private uses for the waterfront lands and an appropriate program for Memorial Park.
- Improve vehicular and pedestrian circulation and parking both within and around Memorial Park.

**PROBLEM STATEMENT** Develop a conceptual design framework for the study area that balances potentially competing public objectives. These are enhanced public parkland, existing and new recreational activities, water quality, potential commercial uses of the waterfront (S.S. Columbia, commuter ferry terminal), parking, improved pedestrian and vehicular circulation, improved access and environmental remediation.

**BACKGROUND** In spite of its small size and relatively small population - 6,500 residents - Nyack functions as a center (a downtown) for a number of adjacent towns. The dimension of its thriving downtown, which includes retail, restaurants, personal and professional services and cultural activities is justified not by its resident population but by the much larger population of the surrounding communities which lack a center.

Nyack has about 5,000 feet of Hudson River waterfront. Nyack's waterfront and near waterfront lands were historically occupied by a variety of uses, including industrial activities, but also other water-dependent or water-related uses. An 1884 map of Nyack identifies a ship yard, a gas works, a shoe factory, the Smithsonian Hotel, a church, the N.H. Steamboat Co., the Magee dock and the Nyack Rowing Club, all in the general vicinity of the study area.

There is a privately-owned vacant site immediately north of the study area. The site was previously a gas works (see above) owned by Orange & Rockland (O&R), the local utility company and has undergone environmental remediation. A future use for this site is yet to be determined. The Village has been looking at possible ways of acquiring it through grants, but this is still in the very early discussion stage. Some think the site should be developed as a small hotel or boatel and be a tax ratable, since about 30% of Nyack is off the tax rolls.

While the Hudson River waterfront is one block (600 feet) from South Broadway - the downtown's retail and civic spine - pedestrian and vehicular connections to the waterfront are limited and difficult. This is one of the legacies of the former industrial waterfront. The regular street grid stops at Piermont Avenue, which roughly parallels the waterfront. There are limited connections from Piermont Avenue east to the waterfront and, as a result, access to the riverfront is not intuitive or easy. In fact, only Depew Avenue

offers direct access to the river from the downtown. A short-sighted decision by the local Planning Commission in the 1980's allowed construction of the Clermont condominiums, a mixed-use residential and office redevelopment project that further limited access to the riverfront at the foot of Burd Street - both visually and physically - and virtually privatized an important stretch of riverfront.

In spite of the limited waterfront access, there is a substantial amount of publicly-owned prime riverfront land, namely Memorial Park - an 11.6 acre parcel a portion of which is riparian, and Nyack Marina, a 1.65-acre parcel containing a marina and several surface parking lots. There is an uplands portion of Memorial Park, with frontage on Piermont and Depew Avenues. This portion is gently sloping and has the feel and character of a village green, with a number of single-family houses fronting on the park. The lower portion of Memorial Park was created through fill from the building of the Tappan Zee Bridge. It is accessed from Depew Avenue and contains some active recreation uses - two basketball courts and a baseball diamond - badly in need of maintenance. There is a gazebo/bandstand, a playground for younger children and a dignified masonry building housing restrooms. A small but lovely community-tended butterfly garden occupies a tiny corner of the park. There is also a grand masonry double staircase providing a pedestrian connection between the upper and lower portions of the park, but this facility is poorly placed relative to the park's various activity areas and walking paths and, as such, does not appear at present to be fulfilling its original role. The grade change between upper and lower portions of the park is significant at times. It is not clear how much, if any portion of the park might be in the 100-year floodplain.

Memorial Park is separated from the marina to the north by an unnamed inlet, which further complicates pedestrian circulation throughout the area. The Village has discussed building a pedestrian bridge over the inlet, linking the park and the marina, but an exact location for this bridge will depend on future plans for the public lands on both sides of the inlet.

The area to the North of the inlet contains the Village-owned River Club restaurant, as well as a 30-slip marina, along with waterfront surface parking lots managed by the Village Parking Authority.



The slips are rented mostly to out-of-towners for storage of motorized boats. (A dry-dock is located a ¼ mile further north, outside the study area). There is a floating pier next to the marina, and a boat launch. A local rowing program targeting at-risk adolescents stores sculls in a corner of the site, without the benefit of a permanent boat house.

One idea under discussion is to eliminate the existing publicly-owned boat slips and dedicate that area to an expanded rowing program, while maintaining the public boat launch for small craft. A local philanthropist who supports the rowing program has offered to help the Village find funding to underwrite the costs of building a boat house - perhaps one large enough to offer storage for sculls belonging to other age groups - thereby creating a permanent home for the program. If this option is to be pursued, the question of finding the most appropriate location for this facility remains.

The southern edge of the park is separated from privately owned, undeveloped waterfront land by an unnamed stream which flows through a vault of significant dimensions under Piermont Avenue at the foot of Hudson Avenue, next to the American Legion Post 310. This stream runs through the Village, under buildings along certain portions of Main Street. The Village has plans (but no funding yet) to build an additional conduit in this area because it is subject to flooding in extreme storm events. The northern bank of this stream, which is the southern edge of Memorial Park, is structurally defined by a concrete bulkhead.

There are several partially submerged barges in the marina area, left over from the construction of the Tappan Zee Bridge. These barges, if connected and improved may provide the regulatory opportunity to create a larger sheltered launching area for small watercraft, in essence defining an “inner harbor” with protected waters. With the appropriate investments, they could also provide the basis for other public amenities, such as a floating swimming pool or a skating rink in winter.

A proposal by New York Waterways some years ago to establish ferry service from the Nyack pier to New York City was rejected by the community. The proposal would have entailed building a large parking deck adjacent to the municipal marina. There was concern in the community about the prospect of being overrun by commuter traffic directed at the ferry. And parking decks are perceived by some as out-of-place in a village environment. While the prospect of direct commuter ferry service to New York City is likely to garner local support – since it would significantly enhance currently available commuting options – there is nevertheless considerable concern about the community impacts that this service would imply.

An interesting proposal involving the Nyack waterfront with possible relevance to this case study is the prospect of finding a home for the SS Columbia, a National Historic Landmark and the oldest surviving passenger steam vessel in the US. The SS Columbia Project - a non-profit organization dedicated to restoring this ship and turning it into an educational vehicle – is interested in establishing a terminal in

Nyack for Hudson River eco-tourism excursions. The proposal would require either dredging or an extended dock, floating or otherwise because the water is too shallow there to accommodate the Columbia.

For Nyack to accept this proposal, it must determine that the positive impacts – increased exposure and prestige, additional tourism, additional overnight stays and restaurant meals, enhanced property values - would outweigh the negative impacts, mostly in the form of heavier traffic. Again, as in the commuter ferry proposal, the prospect of additional outsider traffic will play a critical role in the community’s decision-making.

On the whole, the publicly-owned waterfront area - Memorial Park, the adjacent marina, the parking lots, the un-named stream and inlet, the riparian area defined by the submerged barges – provides a tantalizing opportunity for the Village to create a place providing a high quality waterfront experience and capable of housing a variety of new activities of interest to the public, in addition to those already there. The whole area has a somewhat scruffy feel which is not surprising, given its history, but which is likely to fade over time, with new improvements. For example, the considerable amount of pavement dedicated to parking and vehicular circulation can probably be reduced and rationalized. Utility boxes, chain link fences and other utilitarian elements can be redesigned and perhaps moved to less prominent locations. Activities – both current and prospective – can be rethought. Perhaps a portion of the park can play a role in enhancing storm water quality.

## RESOURCE TEAM RECOMMENDATIONS

The resource team considered the connections between downtown and the park. People walk in Nyack, but Main Street and Broadway are the main hubs of foot traffic. While older kids and adults may walk to the park, younger kids with caregivers and senior citizens tend to drive. There are also a few people who drive to the park to read the newspaper. Ample, free parking at the park has encouraged auto-use. Something needs to be done to change public perception and to lead people to value and embrace a park with less parking. Also, the overall impression of the area as it currently presents itself is underwhelming. The area could use a little action, a little verve and a little pizzazz to bring it to life.

The connections between the downtown and the waterfront are not as obvious as they might be, but nevertheless they exist. One way to address this is to find ways to bring attention to the existing connections. On a parallel track, finding ways to give priority to pedestrians and bikes on streets leading to the park will encourage more walking and biking and reduce parking demand there. The streets connecting downtown to the waterfront should be marked as “special” and leading to a “special place” by prioritizing bicycle/pedestrian access and by installing a unique landscaping treatment along them -- rain gardens, sculpture walks (drawing on the Village’s arts community), the mayor’s suggestion for an “azalea way”/promenade or





## SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS - Village of Nyack

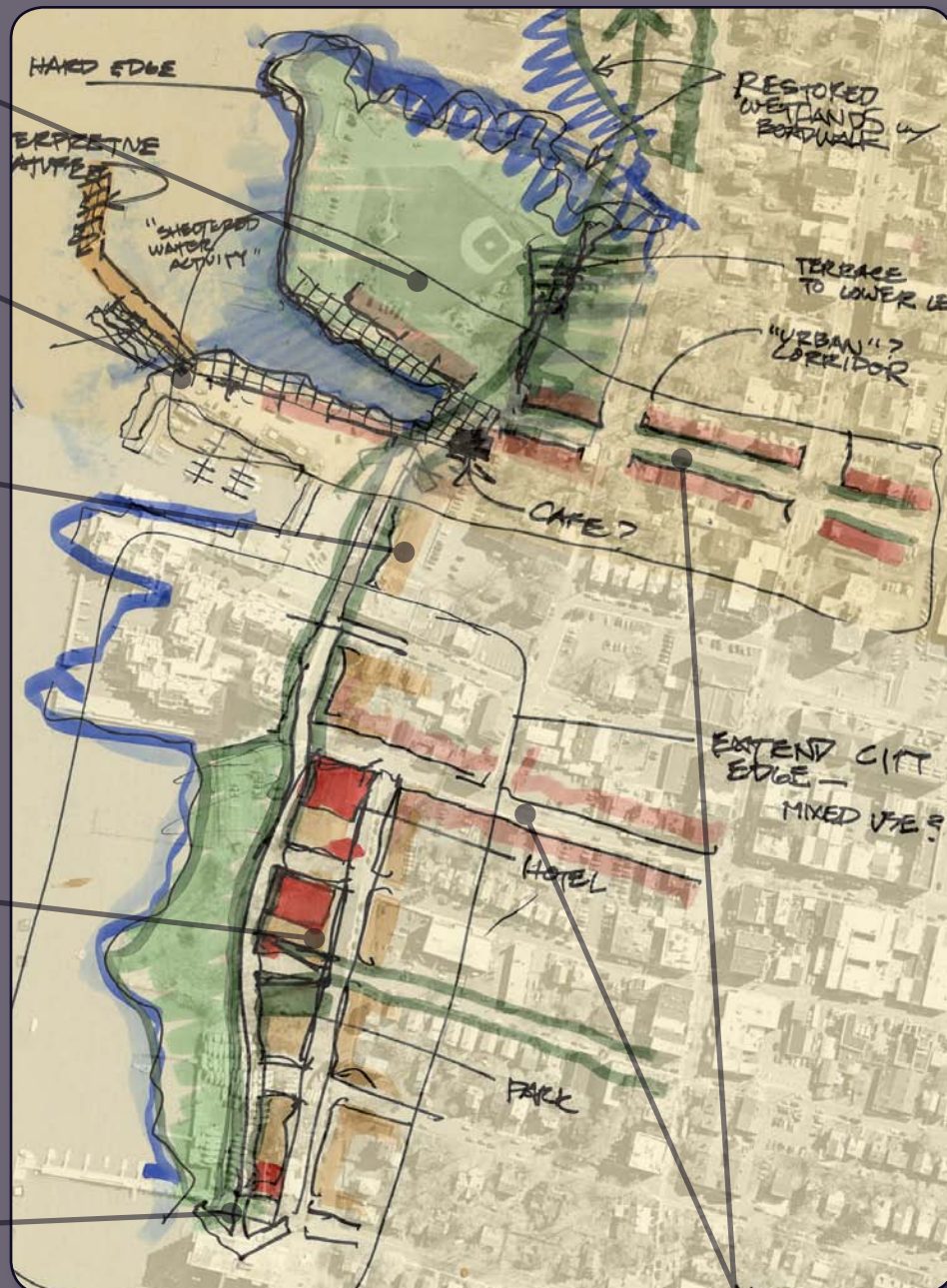
Redesign park with a combination of hard surfaces and reconstructed wetland

Animate park with additional water related features

Relocate parking away from waterfront and closer to downtown

Animate riverfront area with additional uses such as housing, hotel and restaurants, while preserving a public waterfront walkway and water views

Plan for future extension of waterfront walkway



Streets leading to waterfront receive special treatment





even butterfly gardens like the one that is in the park already, if enough space can be found. This will draw people to the park.

The resource team was not supportive of locating structured parking directly on the waterfront, which is prime real estate and should be reserved either for public enjoyment or for private uses making a large fiscal contribution that maintain waterfront access. A potential parking deck would be better located one block away so it can function as shared facility providing parking for both downtown businesses and the waterfront. This in-between location would also encourage parking deck patrons to walk around downtown. There are very good models for parking decks, such as the Spring Street garage in Princeton, NJ, where the parking is mostly hidden from public view by “liner” retail and housing. On a waterfront location, any potential parking garage should also have a green roof, for water quality purposes.

Nyack should think beyond the park site itself and seek to create a true greenway and riverfront walkway along the river. While portions of the riverfront are currently owned by different private interests, a fair amount is already publicly owned and additional opportunities exist. With patience and persistence, over time, a river walk could be established. The New Jersey experience of building a river walk along the Hudson River waterfront in Hudson and Bergen counties is instructive in that regard. Nyack should initiate a dialogue with neighboring communities, New York State and interested non-profits to jointly plan for a larger waterfront.

The resource team was supportive of the Village’s idea of building a dock out to the submerged barge. The dock could shelter the inlet and it would be a destination, particularly for divers. The river/stream connection should be highlighted and there might be opportunities to restore wetlands, perhaps with boardwalk access.

The surface parking at the base of Spear Street should be relocated and the parcel redeveloped with housing, while preserving the area adjacent to the water as public space. Perhaps the (re)developer could be convinced to pay for the creation and maintenance of this park. The street grid should be maintained on this parcel. This would help maintain the view from downtown to the water. A small hotel is another possible use that would benefit from proximity to the water. Perhaps there could be an urban experience at this location, with restaurants, hotel, housing and public space facing the water.

The Village should also think about possible long-term uses for the study area. For example, over time there may be a market for water taxis linking thriving Hudson River communities and this could be the place in Nyack for them to dock, combining public transportation and tourism at a single destination.

Finally, in advocating for change at this location,

it is very important to educate residents on how the waterfront has changed dramatically over time. People get used to the way places look and often resist change if they do not feel in control. It is critical to show them how places have changed over time, (often repeatedly), and that it hasn’t “always been like this.”



# City of Binghamton

Mayor Matthew T. Ryan  
New York

Square Miles  
Population

10.0  
46,310

## KEY ISSUES

- Further re-orient the city to the water.
- Create a larger Confluence Park to highlight the city's green infrastructure.
- Cater to the arts community and growing student populations to inject life into the downtown.
- Develop infill strategies for State Street and North Shore Boulevard.
- Create a mixed use redevelopment framework for Binghamton Plaza that takes advantage of its adjacent riverfront amenities.

**PROBLEM STATEMENT** Develop a strategy to further revitalize downtown Binghamton by leveraging its considerable assets, which include a thriving arts community, an increasing university population and a growing parks system.

**BACKGROUND** Binghamton is located in southern New York State, nestled in a valley at the confluence of the Susquehanna and Chenango Rivers. It is the county seat of Broome County and serves as the center of a metropolitan area of 252,000 residents in surrounding Broome and Tioga counties. Once a major intersection of two lines of the Erie Railroad, today the City lies at the crossroads of Interstates 81 and 88, as well as New York State Highway 17. Although active passenger rail service has been defunct since the 1960's, the bus network provided by B.C. Transit is well used. The City is building a new inter modal terminal adjacent to the 1930's-era Greyhound terminal and is seeking to name it after Rod Serling, of Twilight Zone fame, who hails from Binghamton.

Connectivity to the railroad spurred growth in the lumber industry and cigar manufacturing beginning after the Civil War and lasting until 1950. The Endicott-Johnson Shoe Corporation was a major employer and local philanthropy. The modern flight simulator was invented in Binghamton and built by Link Aviation. A local business, The Bundy Manufacturing Company, later changed its name to International Business Machines, or IBM. The combination of Link Aviation, IBM and General Electric allowed Binghamton to remain a major nexus of defense contract work through the Cold War, delaying the decline that befell other industrial cities in the Northeast.

Today, Binghamton is converting from an industrial base to one focused on other assets. Its extensive waterfront on both rivers is a magnet for cultural development, although major floods occurred there in 1936, 1972 and 2006. Binghamton University, just outside the City limits, is a highly ranked component of the State University of New York (SUNY) system which brings vitality to the City and potentially can attract research-based activities. Buses provided by OCCT (Off-Campus College Transport) bring students into the City. Binghamton's downtown is densely developed with many excellent architectural examples from earlier periods that are being adapted for re-use.

The population in or near downtown is growing, including many students. Vitality is reflected in a number of hotels, a department store called Boscov's, a performing arts center that is a venue for small-scale opera and an arts district. The downtown has numerous parking garages that are mostly empty in the evening. The Binghamton Mets, a minor league baseball affiliate of the New York Mets, the Binghamton Senators, a minor league hockey affiliate of the Ottawa Senators, and Division I College Sports at Binghamton University are a regional draw.

In an effort to transform itself, Binghamton has already executed significant pedestrian and bike-friendly infrastructure improvement projects (Binghamton was named in 2007 as the 9th greenest city in the U.S. by Country Home magazine). These include the Chenango Promenade, Confluence Park, the Washington Street Pedestrian Bridge rehabilitation, and the Cheri A. Lindsey BMX and Skateboard Park. The Chenango Promenade is a 1.8 mile pedestrian/bicycle path on the east bank of the Chenango River that links Confluence Park and its southern terminus to the skateboard park at its northern terminus. It provides uninterrupted passage past three automobile or railroad bridges, and runs past newly redeveloped retail spaces. It also runs past several under-developed areas that could be the target of new development or re-development. These include the site of the Binghamton Plaza at its north end and the potential site for an "urban village" at its south end. The promenade deals with the circa 1930's flood retention walls by generally running along the top of the walls (levees), and by occasionally splitting off down a separate path near the water's edge to provide waterfront access and pass under bridges.

The City has a host of plans related to its existing pedestrian/bike network and its expansion to Binghamton University and to Otsiningo Park. These include the re-development of Binghamton Plaza and adjacent areas on North State Street, the development of an "Urban Village" west of Washington St. below the Arena, the redevelopment of North Shore Drive and a new recreational amenity at the Rockbottom Dam. Organizing these as a comprehensive enhancement to the City is the subject of this case study.

Binghamton Plaza is a largely vacant strip-style shopping center, anchored by a K-Mart store. It is understood that the out-of-state landlord has paid off the mortgage and has little financial incentive to reinvest in re-development; the low occupancy does





not significantly impact him. The Plaza's front facade and parking are oriented toward State Street, and its rear - loading docks, dumpsters and crumbling pavement - unpleasantly faces the Chenango Promenade. This degraded condition is visible to 60,000 motorists a day passing the northwestern gateway to the City on Route 17. The City seeks to encourage appropriate mixed use development oriented towards the Promenade, the River, and the gateway and will consider using eminent domain, if necessary, to do so.

North State Street, south from Binghamton Plaza to the northern edge of downtown (marked by a railroad trestle), is in need of appropriate in-fill. Immediately south of the trestle, the City has already established a significant amenity, an art walk known as the "A State of the Art," that extends to the City center (Court House and government complex). New in-fill on North State Street would complete the link between the art walk and the re-developed Binghamton Plaza, thus more effectively linking this community to the City center.

The "urban village" is an opportunity to re-develop under-utilized properties at the north end of the Washington Street pedestrian bridge into a mixed-use community that could strengthen the ties between Binghamton University and the City. The completion of the pedestrian/bike link between the University and the bridge (scheduled for spring 2010) can spur the development of student housing and student oriented retail.

North Shore Drive is a 1960's era divided multi-lane road directly adjacent to the flood walls on the north bank of the Susquehanna River immediately east of Confluence Park. Building the road claimed some 200 houses, and effectively denied the community's access to the river. The City proposes to replace the highway with an appropriately designed roadway (potentially a boulevard) that re-engages the community and re-establishes waterfront connectivity.

The City plans to extend its pedestrian/bike paths from the present northern terminus near the BMX and Skateboard Park, across the Chenango River and up the west bank, terminating at Otsiningo Park. The previously identified completion of the bike link from the University to the south end of the Washington Street Bridge will link the Promenade with 30 miles of existing interconnected rail-trails in Vestal, and west to the County line. This northern extension of approximately 1/4 mile to the Bevier St. Bridge will add several more miles to the existing network at Otsiningo Park.

Rockbottom Dam is an eight foot high dam on the Susquehanna River, 1/2 mile east of Confluence Park and just east of the Exchange Street Bridge. A hydrologist's report indicates enough altitude change and enough water flow volume, to remove a portion of the drop off. This would return the river to a natural state of mild rapids where the City plans to construct a regionally significant whitewater park that could host revenue generating competitions as well as providing a recreational amenity for residents.

Binghamton's commitment to developing a comprehensive pedestrian/bike network that connects its neighborhoods to the

region can become a powerful framework for appropriate and sustainable development. The transformation of Binghamton Plaza and North State Street as a mixed use neighborhood can become a highly visible gateway to the city. The development of an "Urban Village" and North Shore Drive can anchor the southern portion of downtown and become the point of arrival for those bicycling from the University. And development of the Rockbottom Dam as a whitewater park can become a regional draw. Together, these can fulfill the City's current aspiration of "Restoring the Pride."

## RESOURCE TEAM RECOMMENDATIONS

The resource team addressed the downtown in general, and two distinct areas in particular: the southern area next to Confluence Park and the northern redevelopment area between North State Street and the river, including Binghamton Plaza.

It was felt that downtown Binghamton is on the verge of a successful come-back, even though the City's wealthiest neighborhoods are not adjacent to it and have not played a major role in its revival. But Binghamton has other assets to leverage - the local university, the recently built high quality recreational facilities, a thriving arts community and associated arts corridor. The City has the potential to re-brand its identity around any or all of these unique characteristics.

The resource team suggested that Binghamton continue to direct its focus to the waterfront. Buildings still turn their backs to the water. The City should ensure future waterfront development is oriented to face the two rivers that frame the city.

A larger Confluence Park is an important step given its key location at the particularly scenic place where the two rivers join. More aggressive and creative programming of public activities at this space would help draw public attention and raise awareness about the cultural assets Binghamton has to offer. For instance, the space could be programmed for bike rides or long distance runs from Confluence Park to the Skateboard Park. Perhaps the two parks can be linked over time by a linear park, thereby expanding the greenway system.

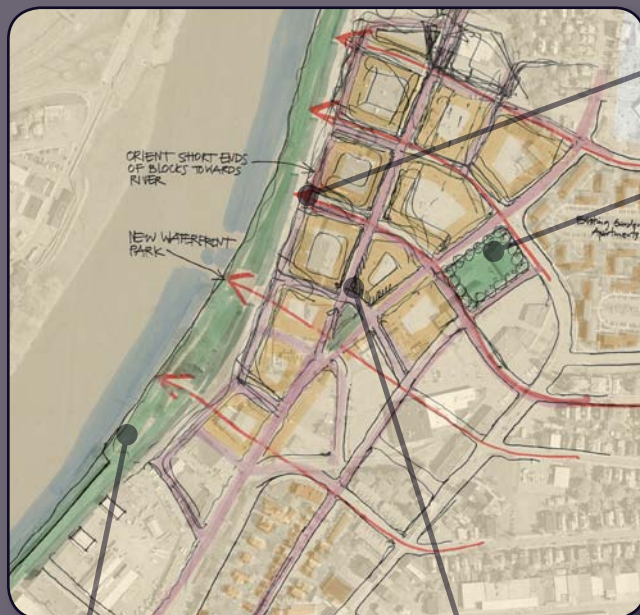
The resource team strongly suggested exploring how the highway access ramps on the North Shore Drive waterfront (and the vacant land they enclose) can be reclaimed into the city's grid system, to enhance public access the waterfront. This would create either new development sites or new public spaces and would have a beneficial effect in terms of slowing down traffic and generally civilizing the area. Crosswalks are required to allow pedestrians to more easily and safely reach the waterfront. Other traffic calming features may be warranted.

With respect to the industrial uses between North State Street and the river and including the failing strip mall site, the City should prepare a comprehensive redevelopment plan for the entire area and re-plot the larger parcels with a modified grid system that connects with and extends the surrounding fabric to the waterfront. This will





## SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS - City of Binghamton



Create new  
riverfront park

Create new street  
and block framework



Orient short ends  
of blocks towards  
river to maximize  
water views

Create new public  
spaces in appropri-  
ate locations



Expansion of Confluence Park and  
relocation of highway access ramps

Redesign North Shore  
Drive to eliminate  
access ramps,  
create new develop-  
ment parcels, and  
improve pedestrian  
access to the river



provide waterfront access to a lower income neighborhood that has been historically cut off from the river. The redevelopment plan can incorporate as many of the existing streets and buildings as are deemed worth preserving. But with respect to the larger parcel, the re-platting should create smaller, more developable blocks in a traditional scale capable of accommodating a variety of uses. In general, higher density residential development closer to the water will realize the potential for higher land values at those locations. Existing buildings to remain should be reoriented towards the waterfront with second entrances where possible. A rezoning is probably required in order to allow the most appropriate mix of uses - residential over retail, restaurants and personal services - without ruling out other location-appropriate uses. To inject extra life into this area, the City may consider redevelopment on the other side of the river.

The City has a number of options to further attract people downtown. To fully leverage the arts community, it should more

closely examine their needs -- affordable housing and studio space as well as performance and display space are likely needs -- and develop strategies to assist with these in practical ways. An on-going partnership with the arts community can benefit the city in many ways, including access to this valuable source of local talent and creativity and the ability to direct it towards a City-wide beautification and identity-building program. The City should also appeal to the burgeoning university population -- another source of talent and creativity, and perhaps of future employment growth in cutting edge industries -- by attracting more restaurants, bars, coffee shops, live music clubs and other similar amenities.

For marketing purposes, the city would benefit from a unique, recognizable, branding image for the downtown which can take the "restoring the pride" slogan and translate it into a distinct logo and graphic look.



# Township of Irvington

Mayor Wayne Smith  
New Jersey

Square Miles  
Population

3.0  
60,695

## KEY ISSUES

- Discuss strategies for upgrading retail along Springfield Avenue.
- Explore how Irvington's access to transportation can become a catalyst for development.
- Consider whether Bus Rapid Transit can sustain Transit Oriented Development and whether this should lead to a reevaluation of the Center City project
- Discuss the impacts of reducing parking ratios in new development along the corridor.

**PROBLEM STATEMENT** Develop a strategy to revitalize and redevelop Springfield and 18th Avenues by capitalizing on the city's access to transportation (including the likely addition of Bus Rapid Transit), lively retail market and stable middle class population. Discuss the urban design strategies that can best take advantage of these assets and promote higher quality infill development.

**BACKGROUND** Irvington Township is a first-ring suburb, part of a continuous ring of communities of similar density in the New York Metropolitan Area that surround Manhattan beginning at a distance of approximately 10 miles (Irvington is 13 miles from New York City). Like many of these older suburbs, Irvington was predominantly built-out in the first half of the twentieth century as neighborhoods of mostly multifamily dwellings interspersed with both single family homes and apartment buildings. Irvington evolved as a solidly working and middle class community organized around places of worship and industrial employment. Today, industrial employment has abated and Irvington residents work primarily elsewhere in service sector jobs.

Irvington's development was influenced by a transportation system of streetcars complemented by limited automobile use. Originally, Irvington trolley lines tethered it to Newark, a City which it adjoins. Today, buses and personal automobiles have become the primary mode of transportation and Irvington residents travel for work throughout the region - to Newark, New York and other locations. Those that drive primarily use the Garden State Parkway (GSP), a major north-south connector which physically bisects the Township.

Irvington neighborhoods are organized around commercial corridors that are classic "main streets" – broad streets faced with shops surmounted by professional offices or apartments. These arteries are the lifeblood of the community and bustle with activity. Two corridors, Springfield and 18th Avenues are the subject of redevelopment plans and are the focus of this case study.

Springfield Avenue is the main commercial spine of the community, running from the Newark City line between 20th and 21st Streets in the northeast to the Maplewood city line just beyond Becker Terrace and 43rd Street in the southwest, a distance of approximately 2 miles. The Central Business District centers on Springfield Avenue and is bounded

by Stuyvesant Avenue in the southwest and Sharon Avenue in the northeast. Springfield Avenue today carries considerable bus ridership and NJ TRANSIT is using it for the Rapid Bus pilot program (a limited form of Bus Rapid Transit), which is scheduled to begin in early 2008. The pilot includes two stops, one at Maple Avenue in the northeast, and one at its termination at the Irvington Bus Terminal.

The Irvington Bus Terminal sits directly atop the Garden State Parkway at Springfield Avenue, near the eastern limit of the CBD, with its adjacent parking platform spanning the distance between the bridges for Springfield Avenue and Clinton Avenue. The platform is, in fact, the roof for a 1/8 mile long tunnel that the GSP passes through under this part of the Township.

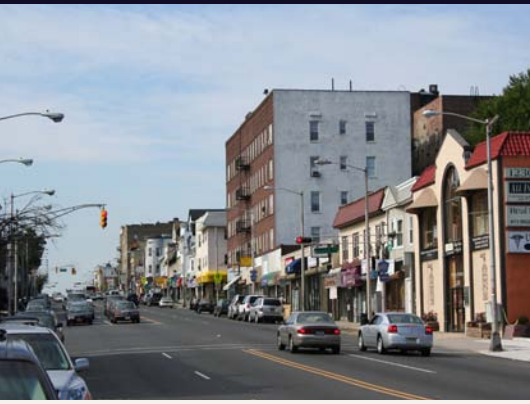
Immediately adjacent to the east of the bus terminal parking platform, in the last block of the CBD, is the site for a potential development project called the City Center project. The Marriot Corporation is investigating sites for hotel development in adjacent cities in the vicinity of Newark Airport (within a 5 -10 minute ride) where real estate values are more favorable, and this is one of those sites.

The Central Business District is anchored as well by an existing municipal parking structure one block away at Union and Nye, and a PSE&G electric substation at the corner of Springfield and Clinton. Additional opportunities for consideration include the present site of the postal facility at the corner of Civic Square and Springfield Avenue, and the adjacent corner on the southeast, presently the site of the Crown Fried Chicken and Pizza restaurant.

Topographically, the intersection with Civic Square (municipal complex) is the lowest point of Springfield Avenue, with the Avenue climbing a hill in each direction to near the respective city limits. The vistas near each city line (at the Bus terminal in the northeast and 40th Street in the southwest) provide an opportunity for the creation of a gateway at each, which the Mayor is interested in exploring.

One additional feature impacting the Springfield Avenue Corridor is the Elizabeth River which runs in a concrete channel for much of its course through Irvington, from the township line at Orange Avenue in the north down to the GSP near Mount Vernon Avenue, where it passes underground. The River intersects Springfield Avenue at the potential BRT stop at Civic Square. Opportunities should be discussed to restore the





banks of this watercourse and consider it as a potential greenway.

18th Avenue runs from the Newark city line between 20th and 21st Street in the northeast, across the north end of the Township to the Newark city line between Melrose Avenue and Vermont Avenue in the northwest. It has a different character and presents different opportunities than Springfield Avenue, being primarily residential and mixed retail. It can be viewed most easily as three different neighborhoods.

The easternmost three blocks, from 21st Street to Grove Street form a mixed retail and residential neighborhood. The area has several vacant buildings and empty lots, and at least one brownfield. The triangular intersection with 21st Street, immediately in front of a Baptist church and the abandoned but recently sold brownfield (a gas station) is being considered for reconfiguration by the Township. It could either be returned to a 90 degree configuration with the insertion of a pocket park, or potentially be the site for a roundabout. The neighborhood will benefit from a new convenience store that is beginning construction at the corner of 22nd Street and 18th Avenue.

Immediately west, from Grove Street down the hill to the Eastern Parkway (the northbound service road to the GSP) is the corridor's most stable neighborhood, with few vacancies. It is primarily residential, with some retail at the corners, of which some are already the subject of redevelopment proposals.

Immediately west of Western Parkway (the southbound service road to the GSP), to the township line before Melrose Avenue, is a five and a half block stretch of mixed-use development and neighborhood retail, with some vacancies, some empty lots, and at least one brownfield. It is also the location of a new doctor's office, plus a mixed use development (condo over retail) complex proposed at Western Parkway, and a mixed use (condo over retail) development proposed between Columbia Avenue and Isabella Avenue. There are four high-rise, 1920's - 1930's era apartment complexes on the westernmost three blocks, but also some new Bayonne-box style multi-family houses.

Irvington's commercial corridors are its lifeblood and will be critical to its continued revitalization. Springfield Avenue is the Town's most important and its bustle today can be dramatically enhanced by transit oriented development in both the area surrounding the Bus Terminal and at Civic Square. Given the natural topography along the Avenue, gateways can be created at the crest of ridges that allow views into the valley that is Irvington Center. The Elizabeth River, at the valley's low point, can become a critical pedestrian greenway bringing residents to the commercial and civic center of the community. 18th Avenue has many of the attributes of Springfield Avenue but at the scale of a neighborhood. A strategy to develop it can serve as a template for other neighborhood corridors in Irvington and in other inner ring suburbs.

## RESOURCE TEAM RECOMMENDATIONS

Irvington's already active downtown and stable middle class population constitute great assets that the city should seek to

leverage in revitalizing Springfield Avenue. With this in mind, the resource team suggested that Irvington's revitalization efforts would benefit from a clearer vision of the desired type of development the city wants to attract for both corridors and the municipality as a whole. It is helpful to provide developers and their designers with guidance with respect to possible redevelopment scenarios so they have advance notice of what the community is looking for. This takes much of the guess work out of the process and indicates to the developer that the community has done its home work and is serious about moving suitable projects forward.

Irvington needs to provide residents and visitors to the area with additional reasons to linger and shop in the Springfield Ave corridor. This can be accomplished by improving the quantity and quality of the public spaces and of the activities that take place in and around them. Toward this end, it would be helpful to have better linkages between the civic buildings already located on Civic Square to create a more dynamic public space. The addition of retail activities on the Square would help activate this space at the end of the work day, after municipal employees go home. The resource team also suggested that Irvington should seek to create a signature building or park or other public use like an ice rink which could be located in or around the triangular intersections of Springfield and Nye. The short middle street could be closed to traffic – either permanently or periodically – and rebuilt as a pedestrian walkway, with a much higher level of pedestrian amenities.

Since Irvington is going to host a pilot for the Bus Rapid Transit program, promoting transit oriented development around the very busy bus station is highly appropriate. An 18-story mixed-use project with housing and a hotel has been proposed above the bus station, but the city can help make this development more successful by building a plaza around the bus station and creating a nicely landscaped pedestrian walkway linking it to Springfield Ave. This will further encourage walking around the neighborhood and enhance its status as a destination. The resource team also suggested that the bus station is well positioned as a multi-modal transportation hub if additional transportation options - such as car or bike sharing programs and taxi service - can be added. Pedestrian activity should be encouraged at all times.

The resource team believes that retail activity should be focused at strategic locations. Specifically, the city should concentrate on creating distinct, compact places at key intersections or other important locations. As a start, the City should allocate resources to the area around the bus station and work to attract new retail anchors to fill in the gaps. Existing buildings in good condition should be renovated and updated. The City needs to provide property owners with greater incentives to utilize the upper floors of their buildings. A shared parking ordinance will help address the parking issues. A unified sign ordinance to control and eliminate billboards is also needed.

To accommodate parking for both the bus station and the anticipated new demand from the City Center project, the city should change the zoning codes to reduce or eliminate parking requirements,



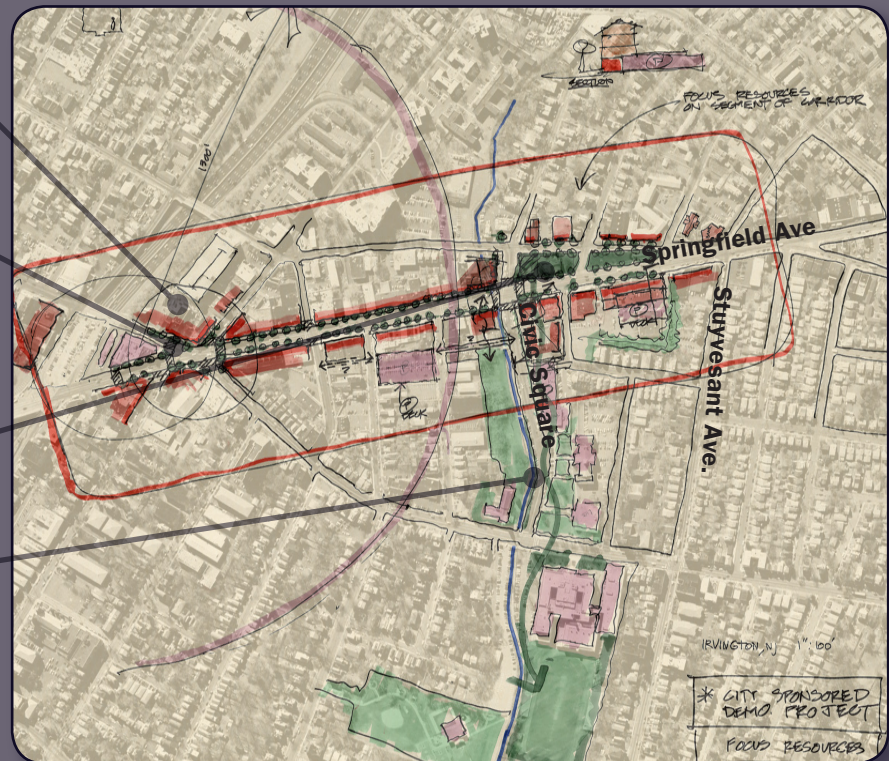
## SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS - Township of Irvington

Transit oriented development at key locations with relaxed parking requirements

Comprehensive traffic calming

Create quality public spaces at gateway locations through temporary or permanent street closures

Daylight stream where possible and link existing and new parks



recognizing the combined effects of mixed-use, shared parking and transit availability. The underutilized public parking deck can be used more fully through shared parking. The City should create a parking authority to assess current and future parking needs and to take the lead on planning and funding necessary improvements.

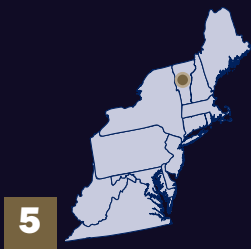
To further enhance the corridor in select locations, the Town could create new through streets to break up some of the larger blocks. This would facilitate pedestrian activity and provide both pedestrians and cars with additional ways to go from origin to destination, thereby alleviating traffic concerns. On the other hand, there may also be opportunities for selective street closures in locations where the angled street grid creates narrow triangular blocks. Both situations offer unique opportunities for place-making.

The river corridor can be turned into an environmentally friendly asset for the community - it should be uncovered where possible and highlighted as an important cultural and natural resource. To do this, Irvington will need to make room for the river to expand and allow the earth to function as a sponge.

The resource team suggested that the key to a successful revitalization of 18th Ave. is to concentrate commercial development in strategic locations, such as at important intersections. Residential development should become the dominant use in between the retail nodes. By focusing retail development at certain intersections, businesses will feed off each other's success. A neighborhood organization will help generate further ideas and support for this type of development.

Irvington needs a corridor redevelopment demonstration project built to a higher standard. This project should use incentives to see how the market responds and show developers what Irvington wants to become. Also, the many gas stations along the corridor could be diversified and turned into multi-modal hubs including retail with battery charging stations for hybrids and electric cars as well as bicycle rentals or bike sharing facilities.





# City of Montpelier

Mayor Mary S. Hooper  
Vermont

5

Square Miles  
Population

10.0  
8,035

## KEY ISSUES

- Investigate a phased approach to redevelopment of the parking lots between State Street and the river.
- Discuss unique gateway treatments that signal arrival at a small, human-scale mixed use town center.
- Develop possible redevelopment concepts for the two southern quadrants of the Barre / Main Street intersection.
- Discuss strategies the city can use to enhance access to the waterfront and the quality of the public realm.

**PROBLEM STATEMENT** Develop a conceptual planning and design framework for the study area that balances the potentially competing objectives posed by state government requirements. These are private and public parking needs, the alignment of the existing railroad right-of-way, a desire for an enhanced public realm (sidewalks and pedestrian public spaces), opportunities for new commercial and residential uses, and the need for improvements to vehicular, pedestrian and bicycle circulation, public access to the waterfront and storm water quality.

**BACKGROUND** Montpelier was chartered by the Vermont Legislature in 1781. It is a ten square mile City in Northern Vermont, 40 miles southeast of Burlington. In spite of its small size and of a relatively small population - 8,000 residents in 2006 - Montpelier (like Nyack, NY, another MICD case study) functions as a downtown for a region of 60,000. In addition, Montpelier hosts three large insurance companies, three in-town colleges and two nearby, and is the Vermont State capital, the seat of the State Legislature and home to most State offices. As such, its daytime population (20,000) is considerably larger than its nighttime population, and its healthy downtown - which includes retail, restaurants, personal and professional services and cultural activities, with a lively restaurant and live music scene - is sustained by this much larger population.

Montpelier is located at the confluence of the Winooski River and several of its tributaries (North Branch, Steven's Branch, Dog River), at an elevation of 600 feet. All of the downtown with its larger footprint buildings was built on the lowlands adjacent to the rivers and consequently is subject to heavy flooding in extreme weather events. In fact, 7% of the city and nearly all of the downtown are in the 100-year floodplain. Major floods occurred in 1927 and 1992 and the City was on flood alert for 3 months in 2007. The surrounding residential neighborhoods on the other hand were built on higher ground, on slopes which in some cases take on a considerable gradient.

While the City has over 10 miles of waterfront, both visual and physical access to the water is limited in the downtown area, in particular to the more densely occupied northern section. Montpelier's downtown waterfront and near waterfront lands were historically occupied with a variety of uses, including industrial and railroad-related activities. While many of the industrial uses have been replaced with

state office buildings and associated parking lots, the railroad (freight service only) is still marginally active.

Both state government buildings and commercial buildings fronting on the south side of State Street - the corridor that links the state capitol complex to the downtown - are serviced by large surface parking lots located in the back, stretching to the banks of the Winooski. There is no formal street along the north side of the river in this area, and circulation is provided by a myriad drive-ways. As a result, the human experience of the waterfront is quite poor and circulation is circuitous and cumbersome. There is essentially one very long block (1,500 feet) of State Street, between Taylor Street and Bailey Avenue. There is another super block (950 feet) from Taylor Street to Main Street. In addition to discouraging access to the waterfront, this layout creates a very sparse circulation system. On the other hand, the street grid on the other side of State Street is considerably less sparse.

Montpelier's downtown exhibits a predominantly three-story scale, with some larger buildings reaching five stories. There are a variety of architectural expressions, with handsome civic buildings, functional mixed-use buildings and many former and current industrial buildings. Brick and wood are the predominant building materials. While ground floor retail space is occupied and thriving, there are upper floor vacancies that, if occupied, could bring added life and tax revenues to the downtown area.

Primarily as a result of the state's presence, parking in the downtown area is a concern. Every available parcel of land has seemingly been converted to parking. The state has not invested in parking structures, preferring to provide all parking at grade. As a result, valuable land - both from a real estate and a civic perspective - is tied up in unsightly, unproductive and environmentally unfriendly ways. Parking is particularly tight during the winter, when the State Legislature is in session (4-5 months per year). The City has had difficulty engaging the State in a productive dialogue over a long term solution to the State's parking needs, as well as a strategy for better integration between state office buildings and the downtown core. For example, the state buildings continue to provide cafeterias, depriving downtown cafes from the potential lunch business brought by state employees on break. The State has no clear long term plan for the capitol district. The current thinking is that it may build satellite facilities further away from the downtown, further contributing to a deteriorating local traffic situation.

The study area is a gateway location located on either side of Main Street (Route 12), near the "T" intersection



with Barre Street, and adjacent to the Main Street Bridge over the Winooski River. It encompasses lands on either side of Main Street along the river. On the south side of the river, Main Street intersects with Memorial Drive/Route 2, a state highway running East/West along the river. The City has been exploring the possibility of replacing the existing signalized intersection with a traffic circle. Preliminary studies indicate that this change would improve traffic flow. The Vermont DOT has insisted on a two-lane traffic circle, and preliminary designs show that this can be accommodated, although the circle as currently envisioned (145 feet diameter) would require some blasting.

On the west side, a parcel overlooking both the Winooski and the North Branch Rivers is currently occupied by a single-story, squat building currently housing a medium format Shaw's grocery store, and associated surface parking. While a grocery store is a vital use in Montpelier, its current location at the gateway to the town and the shabby condition of the building and parking lot, indicate that redevelopment of this site may be appropriate. However, the small size of the parcel, combined with the difficulties of assembling additional land next to the river, raise questions of whether an alternative is feasible.

One opportunity to create new linkages is provided by an abandoned railroad right-of-way that crosses this tract, the Winooski River, Taylor Street and continues roughly parallel to State Street, behind the state buildings, eventually crossing the North Branch and running parallel to Memorial Drive. The 2000 Capital District Master Plan suggested creating a new street – the Barre Street extension, from Main Street to Taylor Street. This would begin to address the lack of connectivity along the river, and possibly create new building frontage. The 2000 Master Plan shows a number of new buildings along this new street, including a mid-block parking deck facing the North Branch. The City has also discussed incorporating a bike path along this new public right-of-way. The City would like to locate a multi-modal (bus, bicycle) facility in a triangular brownfield site bounded by the right-of-way, Taylor Street, and the river.

On the east side, also facing the bridge, is another single story building – Sarducci's restaurant, by all accounts an excellent establishment. Behind it is Barre Street, along with the abandoned railroad right-of-way. This area has a scruffy, back-of-the-house feel, with a number of single story railroad buildings and service uses. Piles of lumber spill out on the pavement, there is outdoor storage of various products, a feed store fronts towards a handsome old church, there are abandoned railroad cars, weeds and a general sense of neglect. While some of the railroad era artifacts – such as the rugged metal trestle bridges and some of the larger industrial structures -- have great character and deserve every effort of rehabilitation – other minor buildings and later additions are unlikely to merit preservation. While the southern quadrants of the Main/Barre intersection are poorly defined, with ugly single-story buildings and parking, the

northeast quadrant is firmly anchored by a substantial three story 19th century brick building – the “Montpelier Apartments”.

The downtown streets (State, Main) are eminently walkable, but the northern approach to the Main Street Bridge, with its four lanes and absence of curbside parking provides clear indication to motorists that higher speeds are acceptable. As a result, crossing Main Street in the study area, across from the grocery store, is somewhat problematic. This inherent conflict could be exacerbated if a plan to create a bike path along Barre Street, and crossing Main Street at this location, is implemented. Traffic calming measures on the approach to the Main Street Bridge may be needed. Alternatively, if a traffic circle replaces the light at the intersection of Main Street and Memorial Drive on the other side of the river, a signalized intersection at Main and Barre may be justifiable, thereby facilitating pedestrian and bicycle crossings at this location.

Overall, and in part due to its sparse circulation network, this area is characterized by a multiplicity of curb cuts, driveways and off-street parking areas, often directly adjacent to buildings, creating a very confusing circulation pattern and a very poor pedestrian environment. A comprehensively planned and stricter management of off-street parking and vehicular circulation could significantly improve the pedestrian experience without compromising parking supply.

## RESOURCE TEAM RECOMMENDATIONS

Growth is happening in Montpelier and the town is not afraid to grow, provided it does not compromise its character. Growth would help the tax base. While the rest of Vermont is aging, Montpelier is full of young professionals. Live music is available seven nights a week. It is an intact community that serves many of its residents needs with museums, restaurants and a thriving art scene. The population is entrepreneurial, young, hip and cultured and the town should reflect this.

Parking is an issue because people want to park in front of their final destination and because there is no shared parking, other than curb-side. Given Montpelier's small town character the resource team suggested that a number of shared parking opportunities distributed throughout the downtown is preferable to a large, central parking solution. This will encourage people (particularly state workers) to walk more and spend more time (and money) downtown. The town should establish a 'park once' policy to encourage walking and transit use.

This notwithstanding, there is over-riding planning and public policy objective in removing as much of the surface parking from the waterfront as possible and reclaiming the waterfront for public space and other more productive uses. To this end, the town could consider building a mixed purpose parking deck to service State needs (the State appears unwilling to do it) as well as local needs. However, under no circumstances should the parking deck face the river. Instead, it should face a side street and preferably have a liner use (retail/residential) concealing it.

To address the issue of the two over-sized blocks facing the river





## SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS - City of Montpelier

### Redevelopment of State Parking Lots

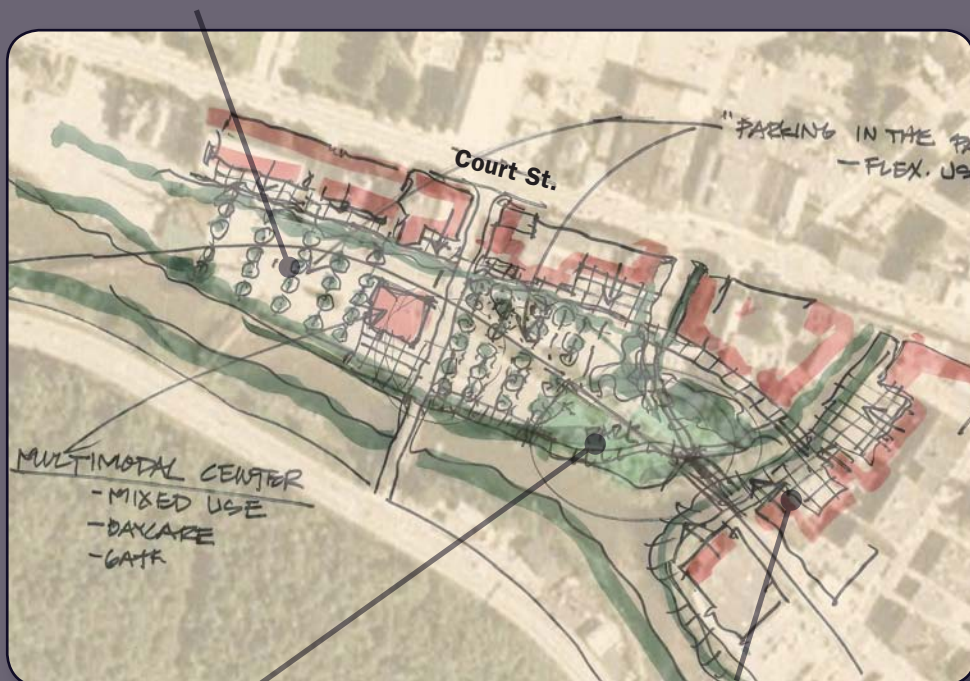
#### Step 1



#### Step 2

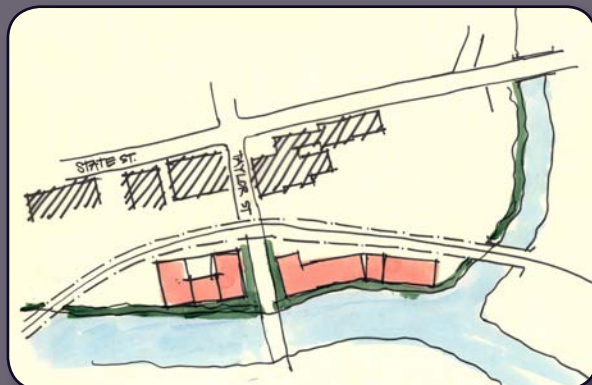


Tree grid and pervious paving turns parking lots into multi use space

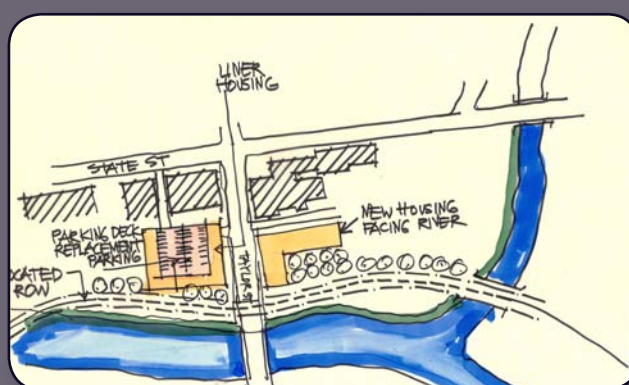


New confluence park created

Mixed-use redevelopment



Maintaining existing railroad alignment



Relocating railroad right-of-way



on both sides of Taylor Street, which have no front facing the river, therefore leaving the backs of the State Street buildings exposed, two possible solutions were explored. They depend upon whether the approximately 1,000 linear feet of railroad tracks that run through the interior of these blocks can be relocated without a major expense and/or regulatory struggle:

If relocation of the tracks is feasible, they can be moved closer to the top of the river bank. Given the low level of activity on this freight line, the tracks would generally not interfere with any public activities that might take place there, and a future bike/pedestrian path along the top of bank would simply cross the tracks where needed. Moving the tracks closer to the river would create enough room in the middle of the block to essentially allow a second front of buildings facing the river and concealing the interior of the block and the backs of the buildings facing State Street from public view. These buildings would have spectacular river views and would be most appropriate for high-end residential. They would be accessed from Taylor Street or by way of a mid-block alley. This would also create an opportunity to locate a mid-block parking deck servicing both State Street offices and the new housing lining it.

If relocation of the tracks is not feasible, it appears that there is still enough room to locate some buildings between the rail line and the top of bank, while leaving a generous public esplanade (20 to 30 feet in width) directly along the river. Again, these buildings would be most appropriate for high-end residential and would still complete the block. They would have access, through the rear, from Taylor Street and would front on a pedestrian plaza. Parking would also be to the rear. The residential buildings could be single loaded, with utility/service areas facing the rear, or double-loaded with central corridor and less expensive dwelling units facing the rear.

The resource team also recommended the town carefully consider the economics of a potential parking deck and negotiate payment of long term parking fees from the State, to underwrite construction and operations. A municipal parking authority would likely be required to build and manage the parking deck and other paid parking around town.

As an interim step - if it appears the structured parking solution will take many years to come to fruition - the Town could consider making the existing surface parking lots facing the river more "park-like", with more pervious surfaces, shade trees, landscaping, pedestrian amenities (benches, lighting) and solar powered parking meters. These upgraded parking lots on the waterfront could be programmed with a variety of seasonal activities - such as concerts, farmers market, antique fairs, art fairs, etc -- in the evenings during the Summer and on weekends. This would animate these spaces and get people to think of them as "open space".

It would also be good public policy to encourage more daytime workers - including State workers - to live in Montpelier. This would help with the parking issues. To that effect, the City should do a vacant building inventory focusing on upper level vacancies and publicize its intent to attract more upper level residential. This may require zoning changes and streamlining the building permit process, but if there is an overall vision for growth, along with market demand, it is more likely there will be developer interest even though in-town apartments are to date a relatively un-tested housing product in Vermont. The Town needs to market this vision in a coordinated way to attract new residents and businesses. The foundation for such a vision is a dialogue between State

government and the Town. Since State government is part of the problem, it should also be part of the solution.

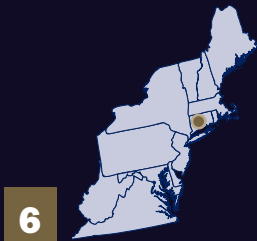
Montpelier also needs a comprehensive transit strategy, especially for town residents who can walk into town but currently drive. The Town should consider establishing an in-town jitney service. The State runs a shuttle system, but only when the Legislature is in session, which is also when parking demand peaks. Perhaps the town can partner with the State and supplement the existing jitney service, taking it to new neighborhoods to accommodate residents living farther from the downtown, extending the hours of operation to evenings and weekends and keep it running throughout the year. The experience with jitney programs for college students suggests that the service should be free and provide headways of less than 10 minutes. The resource team estimated that type of service might cost around \$100,000/year to operate.

The experience with local area transit in North America suggests that it will be more successful the more it projects a hip, modern, hi-tech image. Transit vehicles should be clean and brightly colored with attractive graphics. Convenience is critical and there are now ways of linking jitney service to cell phones that allow people to plan their trips and pay for things. It is important to develop strategies to attract both younger patrons and older residents. Finally, linking transit to other uses and destinations is a must, for example linking an inter-modal hub with a café/visitor center/restaurant, a canoe and bike rental service, a "green" car rental outlet or an existing (or new) public plaza, which might have a band shell for concerts. Transit service to the Amtrak station should also be re-established.

The grocery store and its surface parking lot occupy a strategic site. While having an in-town grocery store is a great asset, it would be preferable to relocate it to a less prominent site, away from its current riverfront location. If a new grocery store is built elsewhere, as part of a mixed-use project, its present site could be redeveloped with one or more new, mixed-use buildings (small scale retail, residential) with less intensive parking needs. Perhaps the parking could be accommodated in the buildings, which would face onto a new park celebrating the confluence of the two rivers - Confluence Park. Over time, this new public space might occupy both sides of the river and become the premier public space for outdoor events.

The resource team also endorsed the general idea of using traffic circles at key locations, building on the success of the existing traffic circle in Town. Better signage (way finding) to direct people to downtown and the state offices will help with traffic.





# Borough of Naugatuck

Mayor Michael Bronko  
Connecticut

6

Square Miles  
Population

16.0  
31,700

## KEY ISSUES

- Assess how a larger, consolidated educational campus containing both middle and high school facilities should interact with the surrounding land uses and the downtown
- Discuss how the presence and environmental functions of the tributary to the Naugatuck River can be highlighted.
- Investigate how the Borough can better link the corridor with neighborhoods to the north.
- Explore the likely implications for the area of future service enhancements to the Metro-North branch line including doubling the tracks and electrification.

**PROBLEM STATEMENT** Develop a conceptual design framework for the Rubber Avenue corridor linking the low-density neighborhoods of the borough's western end to the downtown, waterfront redevelopment area, train station and river in a way that elevates the corridor's natural setting, rationalizes its distribution of land uses, and explores the possibility of creating a larger educational campus.

**BACKGROUND** The Borough of Naugatuck is located on the Naugatuck River in northern New Haven County, Connecticut. It is the fifth largest municipality in the state and the second largest of the Naugatuck Valley communities, surpassed only by the city of Waterbury directly to its north. The Borough has an historic urban core located in close proximity to the river and the train station, serving as the downtown for several surrounding Towns.

Naugatuck is on the Waterbury branch of Metro-North Railroad, which connects Waterbury with Bridgeport, the state's largest city, to the south. State Route 8 parallels the Naugatuck River and the Waterbury Branch line for its length, continuing north to the city of Torrington in the Connecticut Highlands and eventually to the Massachusetts Turnpike in the Berkshires.

The mill towns have lost their manufacturing jobs and the majority of their economic base and jobs in the state have distributed along highways in suburban office parks and in a handful of successful cities along the coast. Naugatuck's location has provided good access to these growing job markets. Job growth along Route 25, Route 8 and Merritt Parkway are in close proximity. Most importantly, as highway congestion continues to increase, Naugatuck's rail station provides direct access beyond Bridgeport to the job centers in Stamford and Manhattan. As the branch lines hold the key to the state's economic development opportunities, so too will Naugatuck's train station play a critical role in determining the Borough's competitiveness in the decades to come.

While access to the regional centers and to the core of the New York Metropolitan Region are key to Naugatuck's development, its primary assets are its historic character and pristine natural setting. The Naugatuck River winds through a valley ranging from narrow to broad carved over centuries into the post-glacial landscape. The river runs directly through the heart of the

Borough for over five miles providing spectacular waterfront sites on both the east and west banks.

Picking up on its historic character and natural setting and on the future growth potential of the branch lines, the Borough was approached in 2004 with a proposal to redevelop a large portion of the downtown. Renaissance Place LLC entered into a pre-development agreement with the Borough and the Naugatuck Economic Development Corporation in June of that year. With a signed agreement, the developer is going through site acquisition and anticipates breaking ground in 2008. The development is planned to include both condominium and rental units, a hotel, technology office space, retail, entertainment uses, cultural venues and a parking deck.

Essential to a successful redevelopment project of this magnitude will be the Borough's ability to integrate it within the context of Naugatuck's existing neighborhoods. Originating in the heart of the redevelopment area, Rubber Avenue runs west from the downtown along a tributary to the Naugatuck River. The corridor contains a wide range of mostly low intensity land uses, ranging from large commercial strips to scattered residential to the Borough's high school. Broadly, the redevelopment of this corridor offers an opportunity to link the downtown and its new residents to the majestic hinterland within just a few miles along this route. Similarly, there is an opportunity to elevate the presence of the Naugatuck River's tributary along Rubber Avenue which could form the natural framework for this part of the community. The Mayor has expressed a grand vision for a consolidated educational campus in this area. By acquiring a large, ailing strip mall at the western end of the corridor, the middle school could be moved adjacent to the high school, bringing the two facilities together and within walking distance of the downtown and its amenities.

## RESOURCE TEAM RECOMMENDATIONS

Naugatuck's past role as an important center of the rubber-making industry reveals an interesting history with national significance. But the continued decline of the region's manufacturing base requires Naugatuck to re-imagine its future. The character of the 19th century industrial activities offers powerful imagery that can be creatively reworked and recast for future uses. Naugatuck should develop and promote new community slogans and icons, such as "Naugatuck:

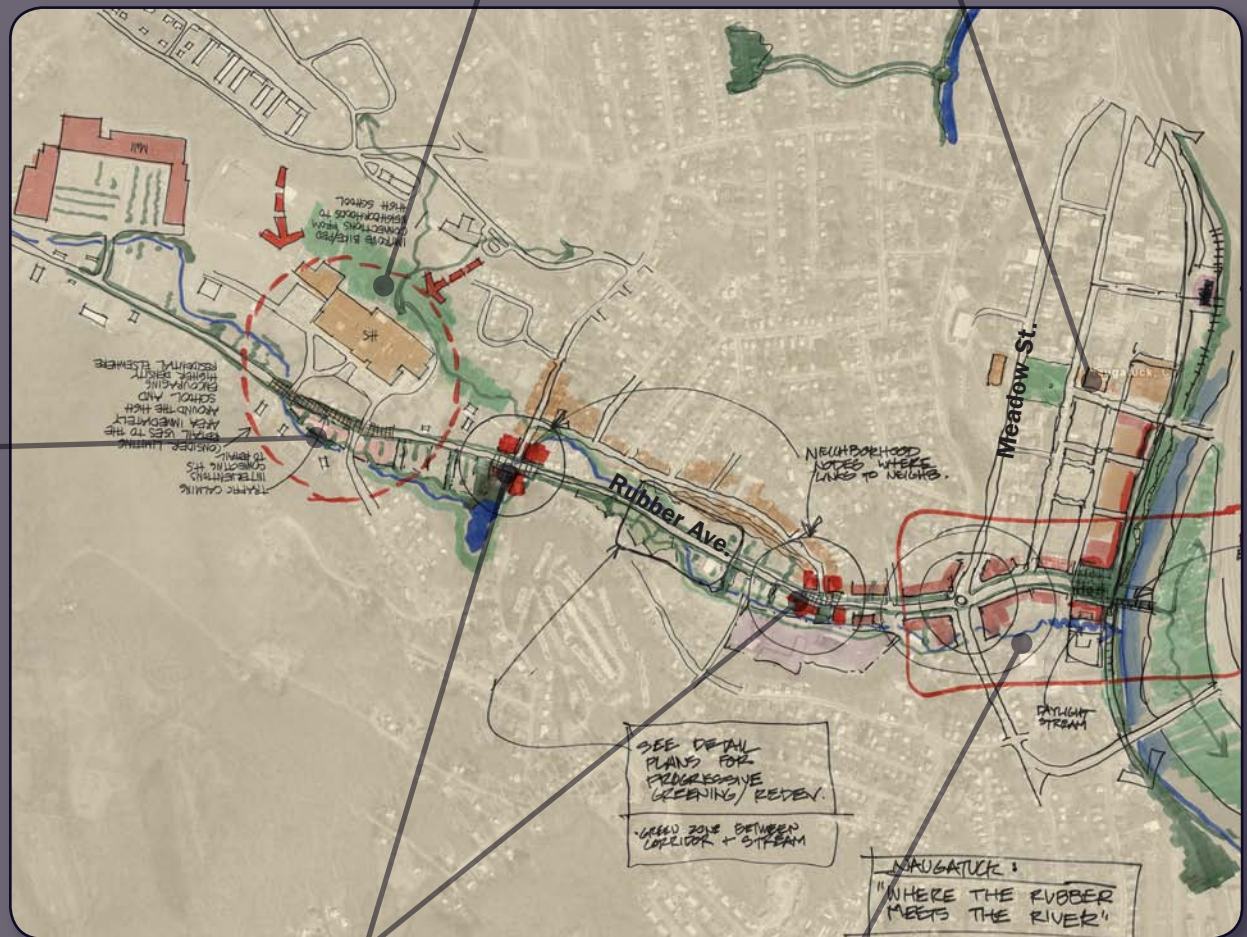


## SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS - Borough of Naugatuck

Improve bike/ped connections from neighborhoods to school campuses

Redevelop waterfront area with smaller blocks and access to the river

Comprehensive traffic calming along school frontage



Focus retail and services in smaller nodes at key intersections. Infill the rest of the corridor with higher density housing

Daylight stream





Where the Rubber Meets the River,” to help build identity and a further instill a sense of pride.

But conventional zoning is not appropriate to safeguard this essential character or unlock its place-making potential, and more sophisticated tools are needed. In large scale redevelopment, it is also important for the whole community to have opportunities to participate. This will build community consensus and bring valuable insights to the planning process and can be achieved through community forums where the discussions are informed by visualizations depicting alternative futures, such as under current zoning and under alternative zoning scenarios. An inexpensive way to develop a wide range of planning and design ideas is to recruit and host a graduate urban design studio. The resource team identified two relatively local resources Naugatuck can try to access: the design studios run by Plattus at Yale’s Architecture School and the studios at the University of Massachusetts.

The proposed redevelopment project that Naugatuck has been negotiating is very exciting in that it demonstrates market interest in mixed-use redevelopment of the area. However, it also raises concerns in that if it is not executed with the community’s long term interests in mind, it could become a missed opportunity that never fully realizes its potential as a community asset.

In general, the resource team recommends extending a modified street grid to the river to facilitate public access to the waterfront. Smaller, more traditional size blocks will help reduce the scale of development and orienting the short side of the blocks towards the river will maximize water views. This re-platting should also reserve public spaces along the riverfront, whether formal or informal, hardscape or green.

The intersection of Rubber Ave. and Meadow St. – a gateway into Naugatuck’s downtown – is a location where community identity can be enhanced through place-making. This intersection would be functionally and physically enhanced with a roundabout containing a defining piece of public artwork, announcing to visitors that they are entering a unique place.

The resource team also believes the tributary to the Naugatuck River which runs largely in a culvert should be uncovered and promoted as a cultural resource. This creek could be the focus of environmentally friendly development that connects to the green trail already planned for a river walk along the Naugatuck River. Perhaps there could even be an alternate green path parallel to the creek to allow pedestrians and bikers a way to get around town. This green emphasis could also be applied to parking lots in the area, which could be retrofitted with pervious pavers to allow groundwater to seep through.

Naugatuck should carefully evaluate whether Rubber Avenue has a viable future as a commercial corridor, given the limited volume of traffic on this road and the planned future expansion of

downtown retail and entertainment, which should be protected. It is unlikely the corridor will ever achieve continuous retail street frontage; given the variety of other existing uses and the adjacent lower density residential neighborhoods will not sustain large amounts of retail. A better strategy may be, through re-zoning and other appropriate actions, to focus retail and commercial uses in pockets around key intersections, as well as across from the high school. These will then become walkable destinations from the neighborhoods and should be subject to appropriate traffic calming interventions. This small-node strategy will create healthier retail establishments and generate less vehicular traffic than the continuous strip-style commercial development the corridor is experiencing now. The areas of Rubber Avenue between these nodes should be rezoned for higher density residential uses, which are more compatible with the corridor environment and will in turn provide additional patrons to reinforce the retail nodes, while protecting the lower density neighborhoods behind.

There are also important opportunities to guide redevelopment of the area around the high school. This area could anchor some new commercial development, particularly if developed in a pedestrian-friendly way to cater to students. To facilitate access to retail by the students, faculty and staff the stretch of Rubber Avenue along the high school frontage should be traffic-calmed with textured pavement, pedestrian crosswalks and speed tables. Over the long term, the town should promote a network of sidewalks and trails connecting the surrounding lower-density neighborhoods to the school to encourage students to walk and bike, thereby reducing peak hour student-and parent-generated vehicular trips.



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