

CITY OF BINGHAMTON

The First Ward Redevelopment Plan

Part of the New York State Brownfield Opportunity Area Program



Step 1 – Draft Nomination Study

Submitted By:

City of Binghamton, New York
Department of Community Development

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SECTION 1.0 – PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND BOUNDARY

1.1 Introduction to the Brownfield Opportunity Area Program

The Brownfield Opportunity Area program (BOA) is a program administered by the Department of State (DOS) in cooperation with the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). The program provides community based organizations (CBO) and municipalities with the tools necessary to develop and implement revitalization strategies for areas impacted by the presence of brownfields.

What is a Brownfield?

As defined by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), a brownfield is “any property whose expansion, redevelopment, or reuse may be complicated by the presence or potential presence of a hazardous substance, pollution, or contaminant.”¹ Brownfields are typically properties that were historically used for industrial or commercial operations, which may have resulted in environmental impairment. The presence of brownfields may discourage investment in surrounding properties and as a result can facilitate neighborhood blight.

Purpose of the BOA Program

The BOA program is intended to assist communities with the development and implementation of area-wide revitalization plans for areas impacted by multiple brownfield properties. The program is structured to be a community-led process thereby resulting in a revitalization strategy that reflects the vision and goals of community members. The BOA program is a three-step process that includes a pre-nomination study, a nomination study, and an implementation strategy.

The core components of each phase of the process, as required by the DOS, are described below:

Phase 1: Pre-nomination study

- Preliminary analysis of the community and potential brownfield sites
- Identification of a manageable study area
- Establishment of partnerships with key stakeholders and initiation of public participation process
- Initial identification and summarization of opportunities for renewal

Phase 2: Nomination study

- Comprehensive analysis of the study area and individual brownfield sites
- Analysis of economic and market trends to assist in strategy development
- Development of recommendations for the revitalization of strategic sites

Phase 3: Implementation strategy

- Individual site assessments, as required, to determine remediation strategies and needs
- Creation of a detailed reuse and redevelopment strategy for strategic sites
- Development of a marketing strategy for individual redevelopment sites

1.2 Community Overview

The Community Overview is intended to provide a broad understanding and context for the First Ward BOA as it relates to its location within the City of Binghamton and Broome County. The community overview includes a summary of demographic, social, and economic characteristics, as well as a discussion of key community features and historical trends relevant to the BOA planning process. An understanding of existing conditions and trends in the study area will inform the planning process and can assist community leaders in making decisions regarding the future of their neighborhood.

Data and information used to prepare the Community Overview was obtained from several sources including: the United States Census Bureau, American Community Survey, the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the Department of Housing and Urban Development, Broome County and the City of Binghamton. Recent data was analyzed to the greatest extent possible, based on the availability of data. Due to the limited geographic scope of the *American Community Survey*, some data was obtained from the 2000 Decennial Census and as a result may not present a fully accurate picture of existing demographic and economic conditions. The City should review and update the analysis in subsequent BOA project phases once the 2010 Decennial Census is published.

Additionally, the study area boundary does not align perfectly with the U.S. Census Tract boundaries. The study area includes all or portions of block groups 1, 2 and 3 of census tract 2, and all or portions of block groups 2, 3 and 4 of census tract 3. Whenever possible, data was pulled at the block group level to ensure accuracy. However, some data was available only at the census tract level due to the sensitivity of information (i.e. income). In such cases, data was evaluated at the census tract level and therefore includes portions of census tracts 2 and 3 that lie outside of the BOA boundary.

Historical Overview

The City of Binghamton is nestled between the confluence of the Susquehanna and Chenango Rivers and as a result was originally known as Chenango Point. The City is located in the south-central region of New York State, commonly referred to as the Leatherstocking Region, near the Pennsylvania border. Binghamton is located within a one-hour drive of the City of Elmira, NY; the Village of Owego, NY; the City of Corning, NY; and the City of Syracuse, NY (see Figure 1).

The City was named for William Bingham, a wealthy Philadelphia banker who commissioned local merchant John Whitney to carry out his vision for creating a village between the two rivers. John Whitney was responsible for Binghamton's first street plan, and was dedicated to attracting new visitors

and residents to the area. In 1806 the area separated from Tioga County to form Broome County, named after Revolutionary War Veteran Lieutenant-Governor John Broome.

During the 19th century, the City attempted to capitalize on the opening of the Erie Canal by constructing the Chenango Canal, which provided a direct connection. The 97-mile canal, which was completed in 1837, connected Binghamton to both Utica and the Erie Canal. The opening of the Chenango Canal helped to direct new development to the City. Mills were constructed at the southern end of the canal, spurring additional commercial development and hotels.

The construction of the Erie Railroad in 1848 helped further development. By the mid 1800s, Binghamton had transformed into a transportation hub, with the canal and extensive railroad networks. The mid-1800's were noted for the flurry of railroad construction throughout the nation, which, due to its efficiency, rapidly became the preferred method of transporting goods. In 1874 the Chenango Canal closed, a victim of the efficiencies associated with rail transport.

The onset of the Civil War gave the area the opportunity to capitalize on the need for weapons and war-related products, resulting in the introduction of assembly-line factory work within the City. By the late 19th century, the City was again welcoming new industries as a result of the Industrial Revolution. Additionally, the lumber industry progressed to specialize in large furniture and wagon making. The cigar making industry, however, had the most profound impact on the area, employing 5,000 people and attracting immigrants from Eastern Europe. During the early part of the 20th century, the City attracted major corporations, including IBM, General Electric Universal, and Link, which encouraged rapid population growth until the 1950's. Following the cold war, many major industries that had grown to rely on the defense business witnessed the dissolution of their markets and, as a result, the City began to experience economic decline and the loss of its population base.

The growing popularity of the automobile and availability of affordable land on the outskirts of Binghamton encouraged the relocation of businesses and residents outside the center City, as it occurred throughout the United States. During the 1960's, demand for the automobile led to growth in transportation networks nationwide. In Binghamton, this resulted in the construction of New York State Route 17 and Interstate 81 through the City's core, which dissected neighborhoods rich in history. Urban Renewal efforts in the 1960s led to the demolition of buildings that were determined to be in poor condition. The lack of public money and private investment resulted in vacant lots and storefronts throughout the center City. The decision of the University of Binghamton to locate outside the City in nearby Vestal further slowed redevelopment and revitalization efforts by focusing commercial development in the suburbs.

Since the 1960's the City has experienced some economic growth due to its diversity of businesses that it hopes will ultimately translate into population growth.ⁱⁱ The City has actively pursued revitalization efforts over the past two decades and small successes have been realized. Historic district designations have resulted in the preservation of important community resources, urban parks and riverwalks have improved the pedestrian downtown experience, the arts and cultural scene has thrived resulting in special events such as the very successful First Fridays, and streetscape improvements have improved the

aesthetic character of downtown. New businesses have been choosing to locate in the City and students have also been integrating themselves into the City resulting in a more active downtown with an expanding restaurant and specialty store inventory.

Social Characteristics of the Region

Demographic information including population change, age distribution, housing characteristics, and educational attainment, are important factors that can guide policies, land use decisions, and revitalization strategies. Trends and existing conditions of these social indicators for Broome County, the City of Binghamton, and the First Ward BOA study area are presented below.

Population Trends

Population trends help to identify and understand the make-up of a community and what impacts the population may have on future development scenarios.

Broome County

From 2000 to 2007, the population of Broome County decreased from 200,299 to 195,477 people, resulting in a 2.5 percent loss. During this period, the number of current and future school aged children and the number of people in their prime earning years (35 to 54) experienced the most significant losses. Population increases were seen in the 20 to 34 year old age group and the over 55 age group.

Table 1 summarizes the population change by age group from 2000 to 2007 in Broome County.

TABLE 1: BROOME COUNTY POPULATION BY AGE: 2000 to 2007

Age Group	2000	2007 (estimate)	Percent Change
Under 5 years	11,271	9,947	-11.7%
5-19 years	42,463	37,859	-10.8%
20-34 years	37,256	40,912	9.8%
35-54 years	57,971	52,516	-9.4%
55-74 years	34,817	36,992	6.2%
75 years and over	16,758	17,251	2.9%
Total	200,536	195,477	-2.5%

Data Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Highlights associated with the key population shifts in Broome County are included below:

- The number of school aged children (children under 19 years) decreased by approximately 22 percent. The change in population for this age group could impact existing academic institutions within the region and indicates the number of families in the region is declining.

- The number of individuals in their prime earning and child raising years (35 to 54 years) decreased by approximately 9.4 percent. The loss of this population segment impacts the regions available skilled workforce and attributes to the decrease in the number of school age children.
- The number of young, working professionals increased by approximately 9.8 percent. This age group represents a crucial portion of the consumer population, at the point of major consumer milestones (i.e. purchasing a home).
- The number of people who are aging in place is growing, as evidenced by the increase in residents 55 years and older. These residents will eventually require support services that may include health, social and transportation assistance.

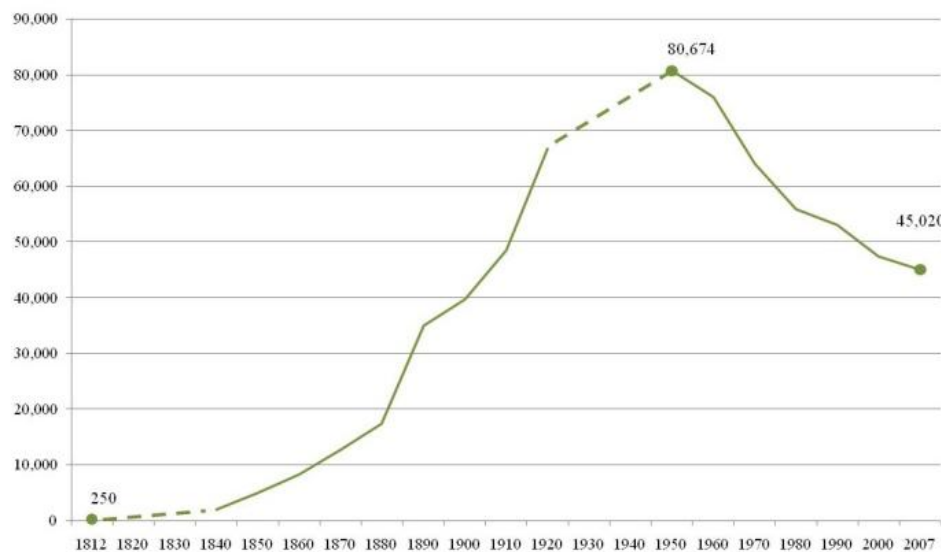
City of Binghamton

In the late 1800s, the City of Binghamton's location on the Susquehanna and Chenango Rivers enabled the City to connect to key trade hubs, such as Utica, and also connected the City via the Chenango Canal to the newly opened Erie Canal. When the Chenango Canal opened in 1848, it brought new settlers and merchandise into Binghamton, and the City began a period of rapid growth, nearly doubling its population every ten to fifteen years.

By the mid-1950's, the City population peaked at 80,674 but has been declining since the middle of the century. From 2000 to 2007 the City's population decreased by 4.7 percent which is comparable to population loss in other cities located in the Southern Tier region. In 2007, the City of Binghamton was home to approximately 45,020 residents, accounting for 23 percent of Broome County's total population. The historic changes in population in the City of Binghamton are illustrated on Figure 1.

FIGURE 1: HISTORIC POPULATION CHANGES

City of Binghamton, Broome County



Note: Line is dashed where data is inferred.
Data Sources: Broome County Historical Society, U.S. Census Bureau.

First Ward BOA Study Area

According to the 2000 Census, the First Ward neighborhood comprises 13.4 percent of the City of Binghamton’s total population. Between 1990 and 2000, the number of school aged children increased by approximately three percent, becoming the largest population group within the First Ward study area (28.4 percent). This cohort exceeds the proportion of school-aged individuals within the City of Binghamton. Families with young children benefit from access to resources including parks and recreation, educational support services (i.e. libraries), medical facilities, and nutritional foods.

Together, individuals under 19 years of age and over 65 years of age comprise almost half (49.2 percent) of the First Ward population. These two age groups are important because they are typically characterized by lower mobility and may not have access or the ability to use an automobile. According to the 2000 Census, approximately one out of every four residents within the First Ward does not have access to a vehicle. As a result, public transportation options, proximity to daily goods and services, and safe walking routes become important community features.

Table 2 summarizes the City and First Ward’s population by age group as a percentage of the total population of the City and the First Ward.

TABLE 2: POPULATION BY AGE, 2000

Age Group	City of Binghamton		First Ward BOA	
	Population	% City	Population	% Study Area
Under 5	2,882	6.1%	475	7.5%
5-19	8,486	17.9%	1,323	20.9%
20-34	11,248	23.7%	1,288	20.3%
35-54	12,405	26.2%	1,652	26.1%
55-74	7,647	16.1%	960	15.1%
75 and over	4,712	9.9%	640	10.1%
Total	47,380	--	6,338	--

Data Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Housing Characteristics

An analysis of housing characteristics in the region and study area, including housing stock, owner occupancy, and housing values, contributes to a better understanding of social and economic conditions in the First Ward BOA.

Housing Stock

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, 13.3 percent of all housing units within the City of Binghamton are located within the First Ward study area. The housing vacancy rate in the study area was approximately 13.4 percent in 2000, which is slightly higher than the vacancy rate for the City as a whole (12 percent). By comparison, the vacancy rates for Broome County and New York State were 9 and 8 percent,

respectively. High vacancy rates can have a number of negative implications on a neighborhood, including property maintenance issues that can result in poor aesthetics and reduced property values and increased criminal activity.

Between 1990 and 2000, the number of housing units within the First Ward decreased by approximately four percent. By comparison, the City of Binghamton's housing stock decreased by 2.7 percent during the same period. The number of housing units in Broome County, however, increased modestly (one percent) from 1990 to 2000 suggesting that limited suburban development may have occurred outside the City during that time period.

Between 2000 and 2007, only 31 new housing permits were issued in the City of Binghamton indicating that demand for new housing was slow. The number of housing permits granted in the City during this timeframe, however, constituted only six percent of all housing permits granted within Broome County. This indicates new housing development was concentrated outside of the city, likely in the more suburbanized communities.

Owner Occupancy

The First Ward study area has a higher proportion of owner occupied housing units compared to the City of Binghamton as a whole, though owner occupancy rates are significantly lower than the County rate. Within the City, approximately 57 percent of residents rent housing, which is likely attributable to the transient student population associated with the presence of Binghamton University. By comparison, 51.9 percent of First Ward residents rent. In the County, rental units account for a notably lower percentage of overall housing, at only 34.9 percent.

Higher levels of owner occupied housing can have positive impacts on a community including improved property maintenance, greater levels of community involvement and civic pride, and a reduction in crime rates. Home ownership is an important asset within a community because it encourages longer term financial and emotional investment within the community.

The City of Binghamton has a high proportion of rental units that are primarily rented to students. By comparison, the majority of renters within the First Ward neighborhood are not local students, which is supported by the fact that approximately one out of every three residents (ages 25 and older) had less than a high school education as of the 2000 Census. In addition, First Ward residents enrolled in college comprised only five percent of the area's total population. While having rental properties can be beneficial for attracting transient populations, such as university students, there is less incentive to maintain these properties. This is particularly problematic in the First Ward, where most homes were built prior to 1939 and consequently require more maintenance.

Housing Values

The median housing value in the First Ward neighborhood (approximately \$70,400) is approximately 83 percent of the median housing value in the City of Binghamton (\$85,117), and 78 percent of the median housing value within Broome County (\$90,162). This indicates the First Ward neighborhood is an affordable location within the City and the County.ⁱⁱⁱ

Economic Setting

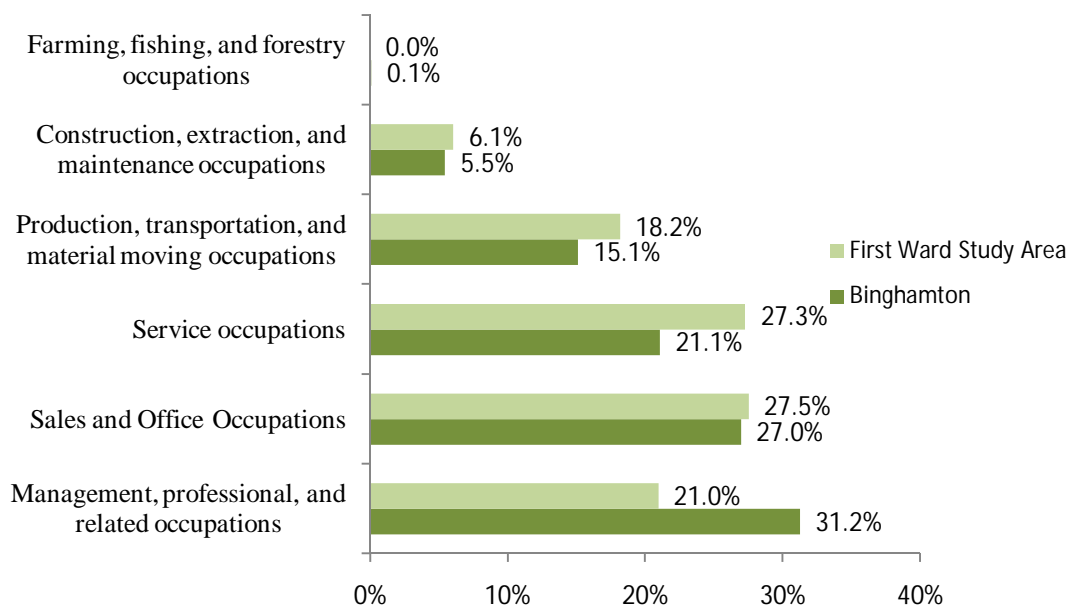
The national economy is transitioning from one based heavily on manufacturing and industry to one based on human knowledge and capabilities. Over the past several decades, the number of jobs available for college graduates has been rapidly increasing though current economic conditions have slowed, and in some instances, eliminated employment opportunities. Evaluating the income characteristics and the employment base for the City of Binghamton lends insights into the area’s economic well-being and ability to compete in emerging markets.

Employment

Between 2000 and 2008, employment within the City of Binghamton grew 4.3 percent to include 112,300 employees. In addition to increasing the employment base, several core industry sectors have begun to emerge in the City. The largest growth in employment was in the area of Architecture and Engineering (82.1 percent), followed by Community and Social Services (37.3 percent), and Business and Financial Operations (35.6 percent). Growth in the area of Architecture and Engineering is significant in that it signifies the regions role in the *New Knowledge Economy*, which is based on the premise that concentrations of highly specialized skills and knowledge will encourage long-term economic growth. Region’s that are able to gain a foothold in this economy are characterized by their ability to adapt to an unpredictable, dynamic market. The core driver of the *New Knowledge Economy* is not capital, but rather human knowledge and capabilities, which support innovation.

FIGURE 2: PERCENT OF TOTAL EMPLOYMENT BY OCCUPATION, 2000

City of Binghamton & First Ward Study Area



Data Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Not surprisingly, the City's greatest employment losses were in the areas of Farming (30 percent), Production Occupations (17.7 percent) and Transportation and Material Moving Occupations (12.6 percent). These losses illustrate the area's transition from a manufacturing based economy to a service based economy, which mirrors the trend in other cities throughout the northeast.

Although positive employment growth has been occurring in the City over the past several years, occupations held by residents of the First Ward study area do not represent those same patterns. As of the 2000 U.S. Census, the largest sectors of employment within the First Ward were in sales and office occupations and service occupations. The majority of employees in sales and office occupations work in administrative roles, and one-third of all service industry employees work in food preparation or serving occupations which typically are lower paying jobs. Furthermore, the study area has a lower percentage of residents holding jobs in management or professional occupations than the City of Binghamton. Figure 2 illustrates employment in occupations as a percent of total employment for both the City of Binghamton and the First Ward neighborhood.

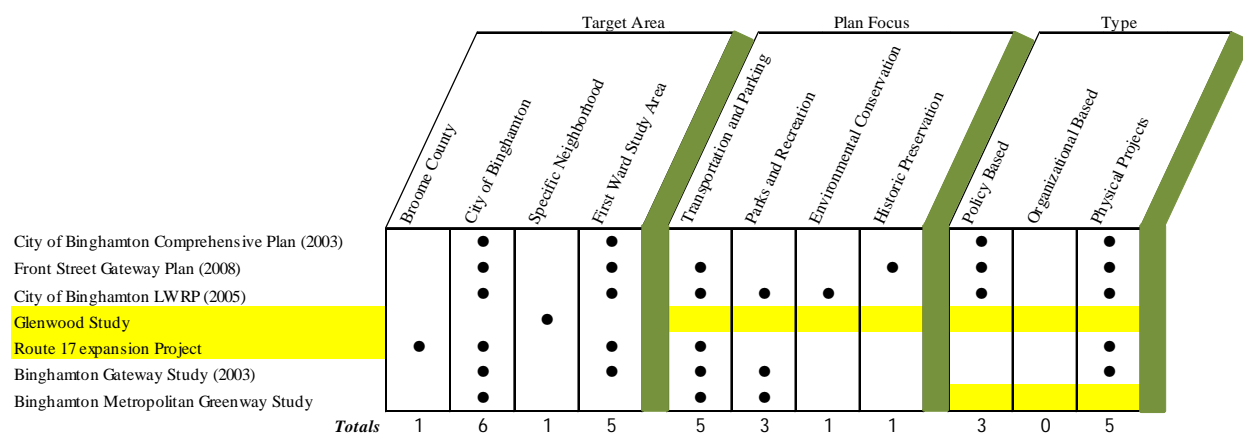
Income

As of the 2000 Census, the mean household income in the First Ward (\$36,352.56) was 74 percent of the average household income in the City of Binghamton (\$49,155.28). More than half (53.5 percent) of First Ward residents earned less than \$31,998.80 at that time.^{iv} Approximately 24 percent of residents in the First Ward were living below the poverty line in 2000, which is comparable to the rest of the City which had 23.4 percent of residents living below poverty. The portion of residents living below poverty in the City and the study area, however, is nearly twice the national level (12.4 percent), and significantly higher the state level (14.6 percent).

Planning Efforts Related to the First Ward Redevelopment Plan

The BOA pre-nomination study, as well as subsequent BOA phases, will consider and incorporate recent, current, and future planning efforts completed throughout the region. Many of these plans directly or indirectly affect the First Ward Study Area and its revitalization efforts. Examining existing plans and understanding on-going efforts provides a framework to guide the recommendations for the First Ward BOA. These ongoing efforts are summarized in Figure 3 and in greater detail below.

FIGURE 3: PLAN INVENTORY



Completed Planning Efforts

The following planning studies have been completed and reviewed to determine their applicability to the First Ward BOA.

Front Street Gateway Plan (2008)

The Binghamton Metropolitan Transportation Study (BMTS) Long Range Plan lists the Front Street Gateway Plan as high priority. Front Street serves as the eastern boundary of the First Ward study area, and directly links the neighborhood to the Central Business District. The plan focuses on transforming Front Street into a premier gateway to the center city. The vision of the plan is to establish high density residential housing along Front Street that is attractive to students affiliated with Broome Community College or Binghamton University. Additionally, the plan envisions enhancing public access to the waterfront, and creating a corridor with the capacity to sustain neighborhood businesses, providing access to goods and services for First Ward residents. Short term improvements listed in the study include routine maintenance, such as sidewalk repairs, and rigorously enforcing code violations along Front Street, which is currently mostly renter occupied. Improving the aesthetics along Front Street is the first step towards attracting visitors, residents and new businesses to the area.

City of Binghamton LWRP (2005)

The City of Binghamton's Local Waterfront Revitalization Program is a plan that intends to help Binghamton foster sustainable development along its waterfront. Using the catchphrase "Two Rivers, One Future," the plan focuses on policies that will help Binghamton to embrace its waterfront while preserving the environmental integrity of its natural resources. Additionally, the plan suggests the City preserve its water dependent uses and encourages proper siting of future water dependent uses. Design is also addressed, including automobile and pedestrian circulation, and specific design principles proposed for the City's gateways, plazas, and parks. Twenty-one projects are proposed within the plan including streetscape enhancements, railway development, transportation issues, way-finding and branding, and the redevelopment of underutilized properties. Binghamton's waterfront adjoins the First Ward study area along Front Street, indicating that the proposed improvements would spillover to have a positive impact on the eastern portion of the neighborhood.

City of Binghamton Comprehensive Plan (2003)

The comprehensive plan was prepared to provide a framework for guiding Binghamton as the City adapts to a changing global economy. The goal of the plan is for Binghamton to secure a place in the information economy by encouraging entrepreneurial spirit and providing a high quality of life to its residents. The plan suggests that this be accomplished through incrementally revitalizing its seven neighborhood centers, which include: First Ward Neighborhood Center District, Westside Riverfront District, North Riverfront District, Downtown/In-Town District, South Bridge District, Robinson Street District, and the Conklin/Tompkins Street Neighborhood Center District. Focus was placed on these neighborhoods because of their potential to serve as catalysts for city-wide revitalization.

The portion of the plan that specifically addresses the First Ward Neighborhood Center District emphasizes consideration of its multicultural composition and aging population. The plan focuses attention on the central portion of the study area surrounding the former Anitec site. Specific action items include developing a gateway to Clinton Street, which is re-identifying itself as Antiques Row, a concentration of antique businesses that have historically seen great success as a catalyst for visitation to the City. The vision for the gateway includes a neighborhood square that can accommodate festivals to celebrate the neighborhood's rich Eastern European roots.

A second goal outlined in the Plan is to redevelop the former Anitec site into a commercial park that will accommodate information technology businesses, back door office operations, and green space amenities for future employees. The BOA process is the next step in achieving the long-term vision for the site. In concert with site redevelopment is the goal to increase its marketability and visibility through enhanced access and streetscape improvements along Charles Street, which is currently the only access point to the site. In addition, the comprehensive plan recognizes the importance of the study area's natural assets, such as the First Ward Park, with plans for its expansion and reprogramming.

Binghamton Gateway Study (2003)

To be completed once copy of report is obtained.

Binghamton Metropolitan Greenway Study (2000)

The Binghamton Metropolitan Greenway Study was commissioned by the BMTS to determine the feasibility for developing trails based on access, existing land uses, cost, and engineering considerations. The Greenway Study proposes phased implementation of a regional trail system, composed of a network of bicycle paths and pedestrian trails. The trail system would provide recreational access to regional natural assets that include the Chenango and Susquehanna rivers. If implemented, the plan would increase the accessibility of First Ward residents to recreational opportunities.

Current and Ongoing Efforts

The following planning studies are currently underway and should be coordinated with the First Ward BOA planning process to the extent feasible.

Glenwood Study

To be completed pending additional information and discussion with Broome County.

Interstate 86 Reconfiguration Project

The New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) has provided the City with preliminary designs that may be implemented in association with the Interstate 86 reconfiguration project. One of the design proposals includes the construction of ingress/egress access points from Prospect Street within the study area. This proposed project would support recommendations made in the City's Comprehensive Plan to improve accessibility to the former Anitec site.

To be completed pending additional information and discussion with DOT.

First Ward Neighborhood Assembly

The City of Binghamton benefits from a strong resident and community-based approach to government decision making in the form of Neighborhood Assemblies. Launched in 2007, the Assemblies provide forums for city residents and business owners to share their ideas about issues, opportunities, and what they need from the City in order to improve their quality-of-life. The Neighborhood Assemblies work with city government and other partners to identify strategies for implementing projects and programs that have a positive impact on the City. The Neighborhood Assemblies were established in each of Binghamton's eight neighborhoods, including the First Ward neighborhood. The goal for developing the Neighborhood Assemblies was to not only improve communication between residents and city officials but to also encourage greater and more active community involvement at the neighborhood level.

The First Ward Neighborhood Assembly is actively involved in efforts to restore pride in the neighborhood through the implementation of special programs, such as annual festivals, and outreach and assistance to business owners and residents. Coordination and on-going collaboration with the First Ward Neighborhood Assembly is an important part of the BOA planning process.

First Ward Action Council, Inc.

The First Ward Action Council, Inc. is a local organization that is actively buying and renovating historic buildings throughout the neighborhood. **Additional information to be added as available.**

1.3 Project Overview and Description

The project overview is intended to provide context of the BOA study area (see Figure 2) by evaluating existing land use patterns and abandoned, vacant, or underutilized properties within the study area. In addition, consideration is given to the area's potential for new development, expanding business opportunities, improving housing, creating new employment opportunities, generating revenues, constructing public amenities and/or recreational opportunities, and improving environmental quality.

The First Ward neighborhood is noted for its legacy of grassroots civic involvement. The residents have historically taken pride in their neighborhood and actively participate in its revitalization. The neighborhood contains several significant transportation corridors including Clinton Street, Front Street, Prospect Street, and Glenwood Avenue. Following city-wide deindustrialization during the mid 20th century, the First Ward neighborhood began to experience deterioration along its edges, with the hardest hit in 1998 from the loss of Anitec, a leading employer centrally located within the neighborhood.

Description of the First Ward Study Area

The First Ward BOA encompasses approximately 472 acres on the west side of the Chenango River, west of the City's central business district. The area is bound by Prospect Street to the north, the Conrail Rail to the south, Glenwood Avenue to the west, and the Chenango River to the east. Based on available data from 2008, there are approximately 1,654 parcels located within the study area, 109 of which are considered vacant properties (6.6 percent). Vacant properties occupy 55 acres of land within the study area (15 percent of total land area) and are scattered throughout the neighborhood, with the largest vacant property being the former Anitec site. This site consists of 32.9 acres of industrial land located along Charles Street and is currently being redeveloped. One site on the parcel has been improved with a 38,000 square foot industrial use owned by Emerson Network Power. The remainder of the site remains vacant and has the potential to accommodate at least five similar light industrial or warehouse uses.

While 15 percent of the study area is considered vacant, by comparison, vacant parcels occupy only approximately three percent of total land area within the City. Almost half of all vacant parcels within the City are located within the First Ward study area. Vacant parcels of land have historically been the byproduct of suburbanization or deindustrialization. Regardless of how they are manifested, their presence can be problematic to communities, lowering tax revenues and often having significant environmental and health consequences. The presence of large amounts of vacant land within the First Ward, however, provides the area with an opportunity for significant redevelopment that could bolster the local economy, provide future employment opportunities for residents, provide opportunities for new housing, and offer additional locations for green space, parks, and walking trails.

The First Ward has **X** potential brownfield sites that comprise **X percent** of the study area. Approximately **X** sites have been identified by City officials as key properties to be assessed within the First Ward study area. Key properties were determined based on historical use of the sites, concerns about possible environmental degradation within the area, or the site's strategic location within the community. **This section to be completed after environmental inventory scheduled to begin on July 14th.**

Opportunities within the First Ward

While the First Ward BOA has faced challenges in recent years as the City of Binghamton has seen its population drop and many key industries and employers leave the region, there are a significant number of opportunities that the neighborhood can build upon as it looks into the future and defines a path for its revitalization. The First Ward neighborhood must embrace its unique assets in order to capitalize on its strengths, such as available land, existing structures, existing infrastructure, and the on-going planning efforts being undertaken throughout the region. The key opportunities associated with the First Ward BOA are summarized below:

This section to be revised/expanded upon following additional site visits and discussions with steering committee and other local stakeholders.

Location, Location, Location

The First Ward neighborhood is strategically located as one of the “gateway” neighborhoods into the City, with a significant portion of traffic from State Route 17 and I-86 entering the City along Front Street within the BOA boundaries. Easy access to these major transportation routes, direct access to the Chenango River and a western boundary linking the neighborhood to adjacent communities are important characteristics to consider when developing a plan for revitalization of the First Ward.

Availability of Land

The First Ward contains a significant portion of the vacant, developable land within the City of Binghamton. According to 2008 parcel data obtained from Broome County, approximately half of all of the vacant land within the City is located in this historic neighborhood, making the area a prime location for City-wide revitalization strategies. The availability of developable land is a major asset within the First Ward neighborhood. The neighborhood has untapped potential that could serve as a catalyst for City-wide revitalization strategies. The ability of the neighborhood to attract new businesses could serve to provide employment opportunities for residents. New development will also increase the tax base within the neighborhood, and link the core of the neighborhood to redevelopment initiatives on Front Street and Clinton Street.

Clinton Street and Small Business Development

Clinton Street has struggled in recent years to find its own identity. Land uses range from industrial to commercial to residential to churches, making it difficult to define what Clinton Street is, or should be. Long known as Antiques Row, Clinton Street has historically been identified as a prime location within the region for antique and collectible shopping and once boasted a large concentration of these specialty businesses. While a number of businesses still exist, the concentration of these businesses has slowly dwindled but there is a great opportunity to reinvigorate Clinton Street as a vibrant concentration of small scale businesses, retail establishments, and restaurants, including antique stores and collectibles. While further market analysis is required and can be completed in later phases of the BOA process, reinvigorating Clinton Street as a corridor of complementary retail uses and specialty eateries and bars

would provide the neighborhood with an economic boost as well as provide needed goods and services within walking distance.

The First Ward is also located within an Empire Zone and should market this designation. Potential investors in small businesses may benefit from associated financial packages and incentives.

Light Industrial Development

The former Anitec site, once a brownfield that is now shovel ready for development, is a shining opportunity for the neighborhood. The site is already home to one new development project for the Emerson Network Power company. Further light industrial and manufacturing development, when done within its neighborhood context, has the opportunity to:

- provide a needed economic impetus into the local economy by creating spin-off business opportunities (stores and restaurants for workers, supporting industrial businesses);
- provide a steady level of higher income jobs for local workers;
- increase the number of owner occupied units in the neighborhood as employees of new industrial businesses choose to live where they work; and
- improve the aesthetic character of the neighborhood through the incorporation of planned industrial park improvements that include green space and linkages.

As identified above, the First Ward is located within an Empire Zone and should market this designation. New businesses may benefit from associated financial packages and incentives.

Sustainable Development and Smart Growth

Sustainable development came onto the radar following several decades of environmental movements occurring at the international level. The Earth Summit in Brazil (1992) specifically brought focus to the issue by urging countries to establish national sustainability goals. The idea of sustainable development refers to the ability of communities to meet the needs of current residents without jeopardizing the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The concept intersects the notions of environmental, economic, and social progress towards equity. In the First Ward, the implementation of sustainable development and smart growth design principles can achieve the revitalization of underutilized urban lands and limit further sprawl in outlying areas. Sustainable development and smart growth opportunities in the First Ward have the opportunity to have many positive impacts on the local community, including:

- increasing residents' accessibility to goods and services;
- increasing employment opportunities by encouraging the development of new businesses on available land;
- re-using existing structures; and
- encouraging development that utilizes existing infrastructure.

Opportunities for green building and the incorporation of LEED standards into new building and site design also pose opportunities for sustainable development in the First Ward.

Green Infrastructure

As aging infrastructure in the First Ward neighborhood becomes in need of repair and upgrades, there may be opportunities for furthering local goals of sustainable development by incorporating green infrastructure elements, such as porous pavement, street trees, raingardens, green roofs, swales, and native landscaping.

Open Space and Greenways

Protecting, encouraging, and expanding open space, greenways, and linkages within the First Ward is an opportunity that can be further explored as part of the BOA program. A comprehensive greenway network is directly linked to the concepts of sustainable development and smart growth and will help improve the character of the First Ward, increase accessibility for local residents, and improve the health and general well-being of users from throughout the City. Existing planning efforts in and around the First Ward BOA study area have emphasized creating recreational corridors along the waterfront in concert with the redevelopment of Front Street as a gateway to the City. The First Ward is well-positioned to connect to, and tie into, other trail and greenway initiatives proposed throughout the City.

Housing Rehabilitation

With an aging housing stock, low housing costs, and high renter occupancy, there are a number of opportunities for residents, investors, and not-for-profit organizations to invest in the rehabilitation of the First Ward housing stock. The types of residential units vary in the neighborhood from modest mid-20th century worker homes to more elaborate and architecturally defined 19th century residences. In some instances, such as along Front Street or Clinton Street, there are opportunities for the adaptive reuse of former residential buildings to be converted to commercial uses, office space or mixed use structures. A number of local groups and individual developers have begun to undertake initiatives to clean up and improve the existing housing stock and these efforts should be applauded and continued as additional initiatives are put into place.

Historic Preservation

The architectural character and legacy of the First Ward neighborhood is an important part of its identity. Maintaining the historic character and details of existing residences and commercial structures is an opportunity to preserve and protect the legacy of the neighborhood and create a unique and appealing location within the City and region.

1.4 Brownfield Opportunity Area Boundary Description and Justification

Boundary Summary

The proposed study area boundary encapsulates the entire First Ward neighborhood, which is important from the perspective of unifying the neighborhood through the planning process. The boundaries capitalize on the natural features of the study area and take into consideration the physical barriers that exist around the neighborhood. The study area boundaries also connect the neighborhood to regional planning initiatives, serving to make transitions between planning efforts as seamless as possible. This comprehensive approach gives the area potential to serve as a foundation for city-wide revitalization strategies.

Boundary Description and Justification

The First Ward BOA is located to the west of the Chenango River and Binghamton's central business district. The study area is bound to the north by Prospect Street, and to the south by the Conrail Rail line. Glenwood Avenue serves as the area's western boundary and the Chenango River forms a natural boundary on the eastern edge of the study area. Figure 3 depicts the study area's boundaries as described above. Rationale for each selected boundary is discussed further below.

Northern Boundary

Route 17 creates a natural boundary along the northern edge of the First Ward neighborhood. The roadway is a primary transportation route and gateway into the center City, and connects to Interstate I-81 in the east. This transportation corridor separates the First Ward neighborhood from areas to the north.

Southern Boundary

The Conrail Railway was historically used for industrial operations and creates the study area's southernmost edge. The presence of the railway creates a clear delineation between the First Ward and areas to the south including existing parks and recreational facilities. The rail line, which connects Binghamton to Vestal, was abandoned in 1995. The closing of the line impacted adjacent development, essentially halting further industrial growth on the lands north of the line after the mid-1990's.^v

Eastern Boundary

The Chenango River creates a natural boundary along the study area's eastern edge. Inclusion of areas up to the river provides the opportunity for waterfront redevelopment and an opportunity to link the First Ward neighborhood to Front Street and the central business district, located further to the east across the Chenango River.

Western Boundary

Glenwood Avenue stretches north to south, connecting Main Street (Route 17C) with Route 17 to the north. The western edge of the study area abutting Glenwood Avenue is currently being studied as part of the [study name to be incorporated]. Consequently, incorporating areas from Glenwood Avenue east

provides for a seamless transition of planning efforts and eliminates the threat of neglecting areas from being part of any revitalization efforts.

1.5 Community Visions, Goals, and Objectives

Draft BOA Vision Statement

To be completed pending Neighborhood Association/Public Meetings feedback.

Community Objectives

To be completed pending Neighborhood Association/Public Meetings feedback.

1.6 Community Participation

Introduction

The Community Participation Plan (CPP) for the City of Binghamton's First Ward Redevelopment Plan describes the manner in which the planning process sought to engage and involve local community members, project partners, and stakeholders. The full CPP, included in the Appendices, details three types of community outreach efforts that were utilized during the development of the Pre-Nomination Study including steering committee meetings, neighborhood assembly and public meetings, and outreach to under-represented groups, including school children and seniors.

Meeting Summaries

Outcomes of the community involvement efforts associated with the planning process are summarized below.

Steering Committee Meetings

Meeting #1- May 8, 2009

The first Steering Committee meeting focused on project start-up efforts including an overview of the project scope and information gathering about the First Ward study area. The consultant team presented the Pre-Nomination Work Plan and discussed the development of vision and goals for the study area, SEQR requirements, and the project timeline. The boundary of the BOA site and the community participation plan were also discussed, the results of which are included in the meeting minutes located in **Appendix X**. Additionally, the Steering Committee was led in a visioning exercise, which sought to identify a framework for the development of preliminary vision and goals for the neighborhood. The results from the visioning exercise are also described in the meeting minutes.

Meeting #2- July 13, 2009

To be completed.

Meeting #3- TBD

To be completed.

Meeting #4- TBD

To be completed.

Meeting #5- TBD

To be completed.

Neighborhood Assembly/Public Meetings

Meeting #1- July 14, 2009

Initial public outreach efforts for the project were held in conjunction with the First Ward Neighborhood Assembly in an effort to recognize and capitalize on the strong relationship between the local community and the Neighborhood Assembly. The first public meeting associated with the project was held on July 14th, 2009 at the First Ward Senior Center during a regularly scheduled Assembly meeting. The purpose of the meeting was to kick-off the project; familiarize residents with the BOA process, purpose, and positive outcome that can result from the planning effort; and to solicit feedback and input from local stakeholder about the opportunities and constraints facing the First Ward neighborhood.

To be completed.

Meeting #2- July 13, 2009

To be completed.

Meeting #3- TBD

To be completed.

Other Outreach Efforts

To be completed.

ENDNOTES

ⁱ Environmental Protection Agency (2009). Brownfields Mission. In Brownfields and Land Revitalization. Retrieved June 2009 from <http://www.epa.gov/brownfields/mission.htm>.

ⁱⁱ City of Binghamton (2006). Binghamton, New York – A Brief History. In Binghamton, New York. Retrieved June 2009 from www.cityofbinghamton.com/history.asp.

ⁱⁱⁱ Housing values are based on data from the 2000 Census. Values indicated are adjusted for inflation and represent 2009 dollar values.

^{iv} Dollar values are adjusted for inflation and represent 2009 dollar values.

^v Western New York Railroad Archive (2008). Delaware, Lackawanna, and Western Railroad. In Western New York Railroad Archive. Retrieved June 2009 from http://wnyrails.org/railroads/dlw/dlw_stns_mainline.htm.