



# THE FIRST WARD REDEVELOPMENT PLAN

For the City of Binghamton, NY

Part of the NYS Brownfield Opportunity Area Program  
Step 1: Pre-Nomination Study

November 2010

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## **SECTION 1.0 – PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND BOUNDARY**

### **1.1 Introduction to the Brownfield Opportunity Area Program**

The Brownfield Opportunity Area (BOA) program is administered by the New York State Department of State (NYS DOS) in cooperation with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYS 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, pollutant, or contaminant.”<sup>1</sup> Similarly, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYS DEC) defines a brownfield as “any real property where development or reuse may be complicated by the presence or potential presence of a hazardous waste, petroleum, pollutant, or contaminant.” 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 defined by the NYSDOS, 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

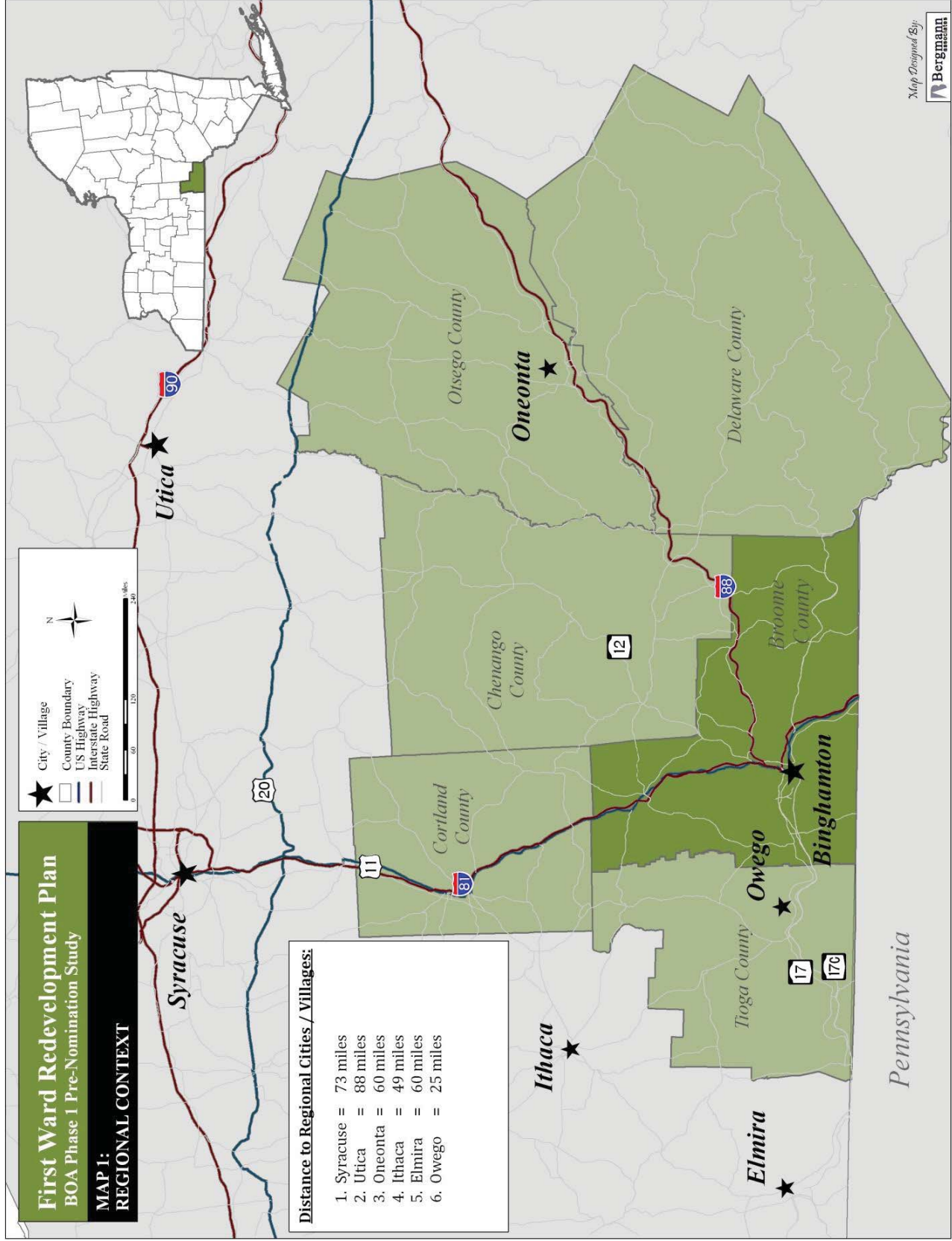
**1.2 Community Overview**

**Introduction**

The Community Overview provides 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.

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; the Village of Owego; the City of Corning; and the City of Syracuse (see Map 1). In addition, Binghamton is only a three to four hour drive from major northeast cities including Buffalo, NY (3.5 hours); New York, NY (3 hours.); and Philadelphia, PA (3 hours). Binghamton is conveniently located in proximity to three major highways including NYS Route 17 (future I-86), I-88, and I-81 making the City accessible by automobile.







## **Methodology**

Data and information used to prepare the Community Overview were 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 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 Chenango & Susquehanna 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 19<sup>th</sup> century, the City attempted to capitalize on the opening of the Erie Canal by constructing the Chenango Canal. 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 in the region. 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. By the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the City was again welcoming new industries as a result of the Industrial Revolution. The lucrative Endicott Johnson Shoe Company located one of its factories in Binghamton, leaving its mark on the city through its progressive approach to worker welfare. Many of the parks, theaters, and carousels that were provided by Endicott Johnson to benefit the workers and community remain intact today. 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 20<sup>th</sup> 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. 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 inner city 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.<sup>ii</sup> 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, and urban parks and the River Trail have improved the pedestrian downtown experience. In addition, the arts and cultural scene has thrived resulting in special events, such as the very successful First Fridays. The First Friday event is presented by the Gorgeous Washington Street Association. Held from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. on the first Friday of every month, the event features over forty sites in the downtown. Area galleries, restaurants, museums, theatres, bars, and small businesses extend their hours and Broome County Transit offers free trolley rides and guided tours of the downtown. 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.

Over the past century, the First Ward neighborhood has transitioned similarly to the City of Binghamton. Anitec Corporation's location within the neighborhood, created a "walk-to-work" neighborhood similar to that located to the west created by the Endicott-Johnson Shoe Company. The presence of the corporation within the neighborhood attracted bars and pubs along Clinton Street, which later become known as the "bar-mile." Clinton Street long became the social corridor for residents living within the First Ward, until economic decline contributed to business closing during the later part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The First Ward neighborhood is located less than two miles from NYS Route 17, I-88 and I-81. The neighborhood's accessibility to major transportation routes makes it an attractive location for business development. Today, the Charles Street Business Park is in the early stages of redevelopment. Emerson Network Power currently serves as the anchor business for the business park, following remediation of the former Anitec site, and is already positioned to attract additional people and businesses to the First Ward. Furthering development within the Charles Street Business Park will provide the opportunity to re-identify the First Ward as Binghamton's "downtown west."

### **Summary: Community Overview**

In recent years, the First Ward has seen a notable level of increased interest and investment in the neighborhood. Buildings have been rehabilitated for commercial, residential, and mixed-uses. Prominent community organizations, such as the Boys and Girls Club, have chosen to locate new facilities in the neighborhood. As of 2008, the First Ward became home to an international business with Emerson Network Power constructing its 40,000 square foot headquarters on five acres in the Charles Street Business Park.

While many positive activities and investment efforts have been recently made, and there are still many opportunities to capitalize on, the First Ward still faces challenges. Data identifies a number of trends that are important to future planning for the neighborhood, including an increasing population of school-aged children and residents aging in place, low owner occupied housing levels, relatively low income levels, and limited employment opportunities locally available for area residents. However, the neighborhood also boasts low commercial rental rates for storefronts, low rental rates for residential units, low housing costs, and proximity to major regional transportation routes. Understanding both the opportunities and constraints associated with investment and revitalization is critical to identifying a path forward for the First Ward.

Over the past decade, the population of school-aged children within the First Ward has grown to be the largest population group within the neighborhood. In addition, there is a growing population of elderly residents, indicating that provisions for aging in place may be an important community consideration in the near future. Both age groups comprise almost half of the study area population, and are typically characterized by lower mobility, not having access to motor vehicle. Planning efforts will need to ensure that both population groups have ready access to goods and services in the neighborhood needed for their welfare, without reliance on an automobile.

Over the past several years, there has been little demand for new housing within the City of Binghamton. Few housing permits have been issued over the past decade, and the housing market consists primarily of houses constructed prior to 1939. Likewise, the First Ward neighborhood consists mainly of houses constructed prior to 1939. The housing values within the First Ward are lower than those throughout the City of Binghamton and Broome County. While the presence of historic homes and affordable housing costs are an asset within the neighborhood, older homes can also be more costly to maintain, which may be one of the factors currently discouraging home ownership within the neighborhood.

The City of Binghamton continues to transition from a manufacturing based economy to a service based economy. Binghamton is striving to become an information center and capitalize on its wealth of human capital, its affordable cost of living, its proximity to other major cities in Upstate New York, and its access to a strong transportation network. By capitalizing on and marketing its many strengths, the City hopes to attract new businesses and foster entrepreneurialism. The First Ward is known for its contributions to Binghamton's manufacturing economy. The worker houses throughout the neighborhood remain as a testament to its blue-collar legacy. Today, residents indicate a desire to see the return of light industry and manufacturing in the Charles Street Business Park, reestablishing the First Ward as a "walk-to-work" neighborhood that provides a full range of services.

### **Demographic Characteristics**

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 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**

<b>Age Group</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2007 (estimate)</b>	<b>Percent Change</b>
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%
<b>Total</b>	<b>200,536</b>	<b>195,477</b>	<b>-2.5%</b>

*Data Source: U.S. Census Bureau*

Key observations associated with population shifts in Broome County are summarized below:

- The number of school-aged children (children under 19 years) decreased by approximately 22 percent between 2000 and 2007. 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-aged 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 increase in young, working professionals is most likely attributed to the neighborhoods proximity to Binghamton University.

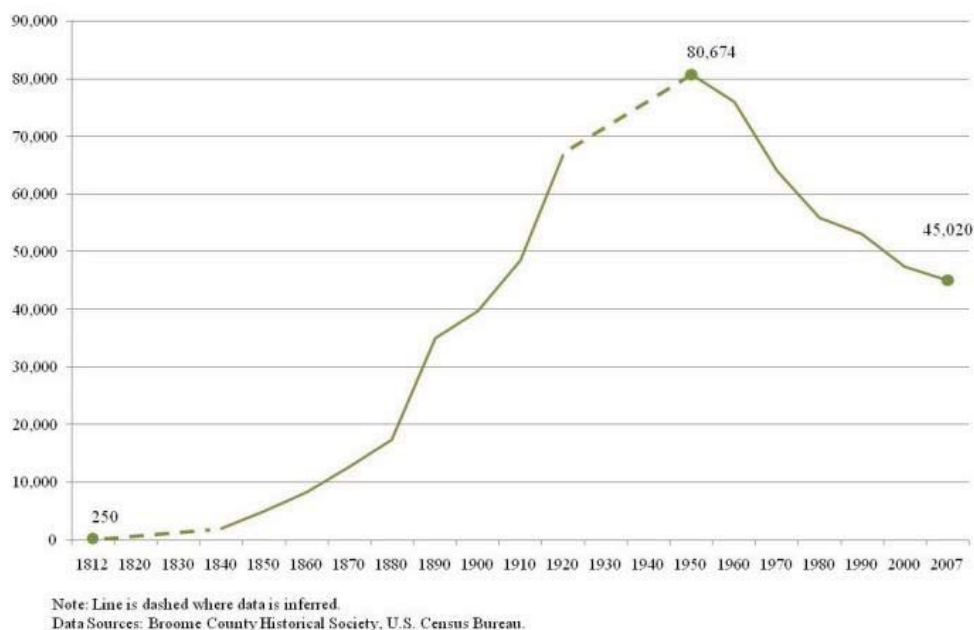
- The number of people who are aging in place is growing, as evidenced by the increase in residents 55 years and older. These residents may require support services that may include health, social and transportation assistance.

**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.

**FIGURE 1: HISTORIC POPULATION CHANGES, 1812-2007**

*City of Binghamton, Broome County*



By the mid-1950’s, the City population peaked at 80,674, but has since been declining. From 2000 to 2007, the City’s population decreased by 4.7 percent which is comparable to population loss in other cities in the Southern Tier region, which is made up of counties bordering Pennsylvania and located to the west of New York’s Catskill Mountains. The Southern Tier generally includes Delaware, Broome, Tioga, Chemung, Steuben, Allegany, and Cattaraugus Counties. 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 in Figure 1.

Continued population loss within the City threatens the vitality of the urban core and supporting neighborhoods. Businesses may choose to locate in areas with a greater number of available workers and consumers.

***First Ward BOA Study Area***

Population Characteristics

According to the 2000 Census, the First Ward neighborhood comprises 13.4 percent of the City of Binghamton’s total population. A summary of population shifts within the First Ward are summarized below:

- 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, 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%
<b>Total</b>	<b>47,380</b>	<b>--</b>	<b>6,338</b>	<b>--</b>

*Data Source: U.S. Census Bureau*



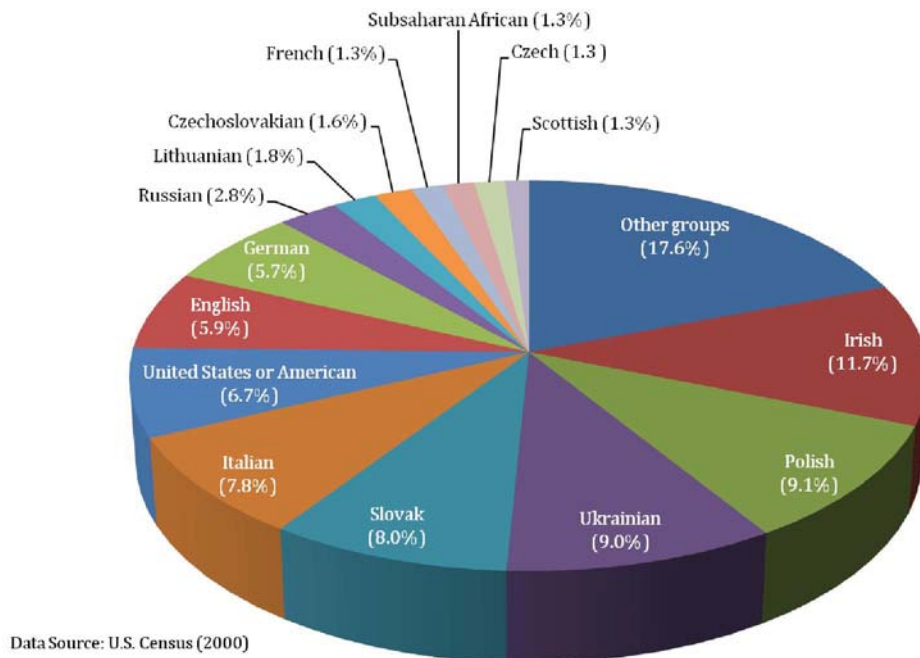
Racial and Ethnic Composition of the First Ward

The First Ward neighborhood is known regionally for its legacy of immigrants. Much of the population of the neighborhood historically came from Eastern Europe, attracted by plentiful factory work and the promise of a better quality-of-life. The First Ward offered the opportunity for immigrants to start over in a neighborhood where they could walk to work and have access to goods, services, and recreational opportunities. As of the 2000 Census, only five percent of First Ward residents indicated being born abroad. Of those who reported their ancestry, however, 69.4 percent indicated a single ancestry, compared with 30.6 percent who reported multiple ancestries. The majority of residents within the First Ward are no longer immigrants, however their reported ancestries indicate that many may be first, second, or third generation immigrants, primarily from Eastern Europe (30.5 percent). Many of the residents who reported single ancestry indicated ancestry from Eastern Europe. Dominant ethnicities include Irish, Polish, Ukrainian, and Slovaks. Figure 2 illustrates the distribution of single ancestry residents within the First Ward.<sup>iii</sup>

The large presence of Eastern European roots implies that many residents may be descendants of original immigrants. Eastern Europeans generally have strong family ties, and first or second generation immigrants may have a strong sense of their culture, to which they still relate. Undoubtedly the ancestries helped to shape the character of the neighborhood, and effort should be made to preserve strong heritage ties throughout the planning process.

**FIGURE 2: FIRST ANCESTRY REPORTED (2000)**

*First Ward Neighborhood*





### **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. The following section identifies the key housing characteristics for the City and the First Ward neighborhood.

#### ***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.

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, only increased by one percent from 1990 to 2000.

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.

#### ***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 partially attributable to the transient student population associated with the presence of Binghamton University. However, the off-campus

## **KEY FINDINGS: HOUSING IN THE FIRST WARD**

- High vacancy rates, as are present in the First Ward, can have a number of negative implications on a neighborhood, including property maintenance issues that can result in poor aesthetics, reduced property values and increased criminal activity.
- The decrease in the number of housing units in the city and the increase in the number of housing units in the county suggest that suburban development has occurred outside the city over the course of the past decade.
- The higher demand for new housing permits within Broome County, as compared to the City, suggests that new housing development was concentrated in the more suburbanized communities.
- While the presence of 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.
- First Ward housing values relative to the City and the County indicate that the neighborhood is an affordable location within the City and the County.
- Apartments in the First Ward are an affordable housing choice for budget-conscious graduate students or young professionals. In addition, they may serve as transitional housing for senior residents who are no longer able to maintain a single-family property, but wish to maintain their independence.

student population is less than 20 percent of the City, indicating that the majority of rentals are attributed to the City's low-income levels. 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.

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.

### ***Housing Values***

The median housing value in the First Ward neighborhood (\$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).



*View of residential street in the First Ward neighborhood.*

### ***Rental Rates***

Over the past several years, the First Ward has become attractive to outside investors who have successfully revitalized some of the neighborhood's rental properties. Approximately 50 percent of rental units are occupied by tenured tenants who may pay \$375 to \$425 per month for a one bedroom, depending on whether or not utilities are included. Young professionals and graduate students are increasingly occupying the apartments along Front Street due to the ease at which they are able to access the downtown core. Tenants of shorter term apartments may pay rents between \$525 and \$575 for a one bedroom unit.

### **Transportation Network**

Mass transportation was introduced to Broome County in 1868 when the Binghamton and Port Dickinson Railroad Company introduced the first street rail service. The earliest vehicles were wagons on rail pulled by horses. Broome County later became known for operation of the first electric trolley in New York State (1887). In 1932, Triple Cities Traction rendered the street car obsolete and became the first organization to exclusively use buses as a means of mass transit. Today's mass transit network in Binghamton is primarily maintained by the Broome County Department of Public Transportation, which formed in 1968.



*Images of trolley system from Binghamton, NY.*

### **Road Network**

The First Ward is located in close proximity to major area roadways. Route I-17 is located north of the study area and connects many cities in the Southern Tier from east to west. As part of the I-86 expansion project, an egress will be developed from the highway into the First Ward neighborhood, improving accessibility to the Charles Street Business Park. In addition, the study area is located in close proximity to Interstate I-81, which provides access from the City of Binghamton north to Syracuse, New York. Route I-88 extends from the City of Binghamton to the northeast, connecting to the Capital Region. The network of highways and interstates in the City provides access to many major cities in New York State.

### **Bus Service**

The First Ward neighborhood is well connected to the mass transit service provided by Broome County Transit. Bus lines 7, 8, and 17 run through the neighborhood providing numerous stops along Front Street, Clinton Street, and Glenwood Avenue. Regular fare is \$1.25 per ride, although a special fare of \$0.60 per ride is available for seniors (65 years or older). Buses stop approximately every 30 minutes throughout the study area.



### ***Rail Service***

Binghamton is served by four rail lines: the Norfolk Southern Railway; the Canadian Pacific Railway; the New York, Susquehanna and Western Railway; and the Central New York Railway. Although well connected to industrial rail lines, Binghamton does not currently have any passenger rail lines. The last passenger rail through the area was provided by the Erie Lackawanna Railroad, and was discontinued in 1970 due to increasing demand for other forms of transportation. The nearest passenger rails are available in Albany, Utica, Poughkeepsie, and New York City through Amtrak.

### **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. This trend continues, even 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 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 indicates the region's 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. Regions 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.

Not surprisingly, the city's greatest employment losses were in the areas of Farming (30 percent), Production Occupations (17.7 percent) and

## **KEY FINDINGS: ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS**

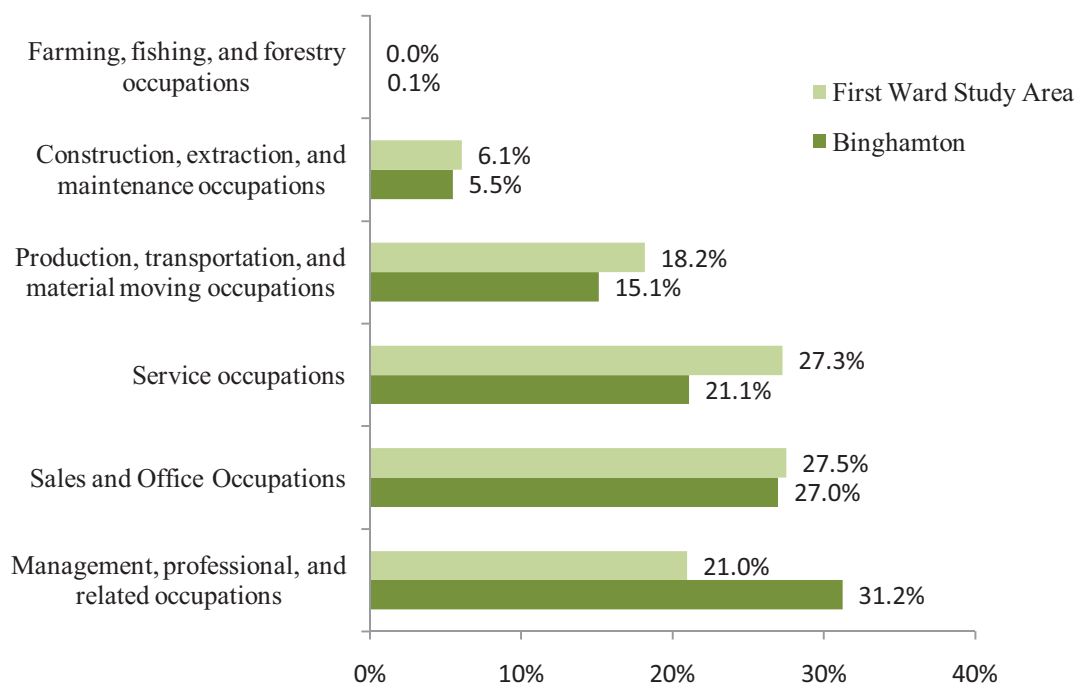
- High poverty rates, as are present in the City and First Ward neighborhood, can be indicative of a population that may struggle to meet their daily needs and may lack the capacity to heavily invest in their surrounding community.
- High concentrations of low-income residents may deter business development and consequently create obstacles for residents to access of needed resources.
- Losses in the areas of Farming, Production Occupations and Transportation and Material moving Occupations 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.
- According to data obtained from the U.S. Census Bureau, occupations held by First Ward residents are typically lower paying jobs.

Transportation and Material Moving Occupations (12.6 percent). The changing employment base of the City suggests that Binghamton is poised to compete in global markets.

Although positive employment growth has been occurring 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. Furthermore, the study area has a lower percentage of residents holding jobs in management or professional occupations than the City of Binghamton. Figure 3 illustrates employment in occupations as a percent of total employment for both the City of Binghamton and the First Ward.

**FIGURE 3: PERCENT OF TOTAL EMPLOYMENT BY OCCUPATION**

*City of Binghamton & First Ward Study Area, 2000*



*Data Source: U.S. Census Bureau*

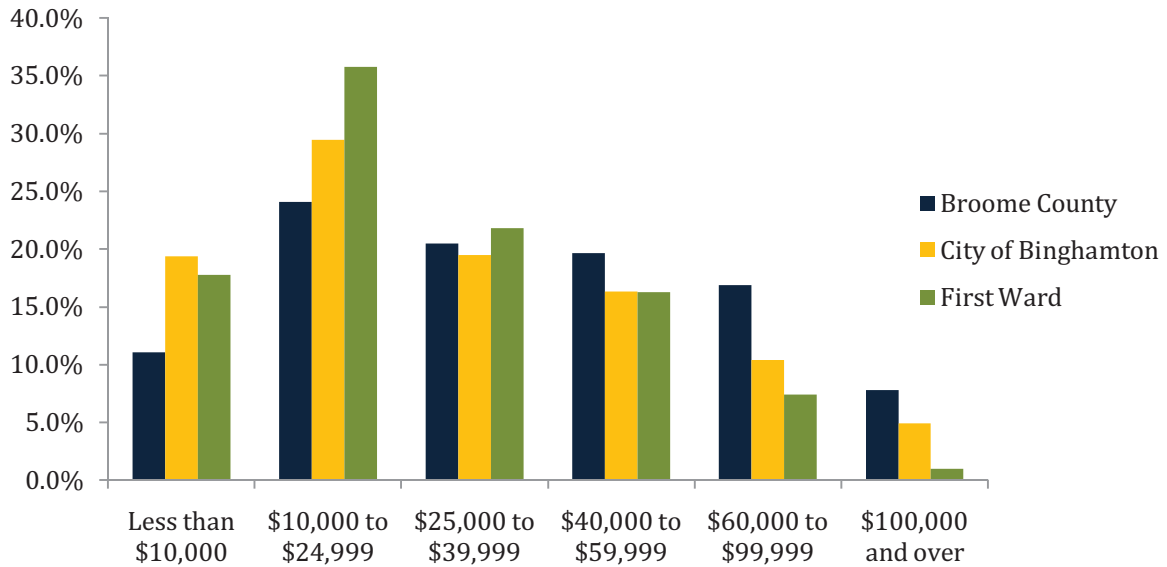
**Income**

As of the 2000 U.S. Census, the mean household income in the First Ward (\$36,352) was 74 percent of the average household income in the City of Binghamton (\$49,155). More than half (53.5 percent) of First Ward residents earned less than \$31,998 at that time.<sup>v</sup> 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 than the state level (14.6 percent). Figure 4 illustrates the distribution of income within Broome County, the City of Binghamton, and the First Ward.

**FIGURE 4: DISTRIBUTION OF INCOME, 2000**

*Broome County, City of Binghamton, and the First Ward*



*Data Source: U.S. Census Bureau*

**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 ongoing efforts provides a framework to guide the recommendations for the First Ward BOA. These ongoing efforts are summarized in Table 3 and discussed in greater detail below.

**TABLE 3: PLAN INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS**

	Target Area				Plan Focus					Type	
	Broome County	City of Binghamton	Specific Neighborhood(s)	First Ward Study Area	Transportation and Parking	Parks and Recreation	Economic Revitalization	Environmental Stewardship	Historic Preservation	Policy Based	Physical Projects
Front Street Gateway Plan (2008)		•		•	•				•	•	•
City of Binghamton LWRP (2005)		•		•	•	•				•	•
City of Binghamton Comprehensive Plan (2003)		•	•	•	•		•	•		•	•
Binghamton Metropolitan Greenway Study		•		•	•	•					•
EJ Industrial Spine BOA Nomination Study			•				•	•		•	
Route 17 expansion Project	•	•		•	•						•
<b>Totals</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>

**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 2008 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.

Part of the implementation of this plan includes the development of a road spur linking Front Street to Clinton Street north of the double railroad bridges. This is being proposed due to issues with the height of the railroad bridges, which have historically caused trucks to get stuck. This project is expected to be



completed in 2010. Other improvements and enhancements associated with this project are scheduled to be completed by 2011.

City of Binghamton LWRP (2005)

The City of Binghamton's Local Waterfront Revitalization Program is a plan to help Binghamton foster sustainable development along its waterfront. Using the catch phrase "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, trailway development, transportation issues, wayfinding 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 entrepreneurialism 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 Charles Street Business Park. Specific action items include developing a gateway to Clinton Street, which is branding itself as Antiques Row, a concentration of antique businesses that have been a catalyst for economic growth for 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 Charles Street Business Park into a commercial park that will accommodate information technology businesses, back door office operations, and green space amenities for future employees. One of the main recommendations from the Comprehensive Plan is to integrate the Charles Street Business Park into the community by improving vehicular and pedestrian connections. 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 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. The Study proposes a bike trail that would extend down Upper Front Street and connect with the Front Street Gateway. When implemented, the Plan would increase the accessibility of First Ward residents to recreational opportunities.

***Current and Ongoing Efforts and Initiatives***

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

EJ Industrial Spine BOA Nomination Study

The EJ Industrial Spine BOA is located adjacent to the First Ward study area, sharing the First Ward's western Glenwood Avenue boundary. The neighborhood was once home to the Endicott-Johnson Shoe Company, a successful shoe manufacturer that experienced regional success until the 1950s. The existing neighborhood is characterized by a deteriorating housing stock and amenities that were once intended to be accessible to Endicott-Johnson employees. The Nomination Study outlines several goals to be achieved throughout the BOA process that are similar to the First Ward, including: creating a mixed-use corridor along Main Street, expanding existing recreational opportunities, and capitalizing on the neighborhood's walkability, historic urban structures, and premier health care and performing arts establishments.

The EJ BOA Nomination provides an opportunity for the First Ward to link its own efforts for revitalization to the EJ BOA and take advantage of its momentum during the early stages of the process. Planning in coordination with the EJ BOA could serve to create a seamless transition between the two neighborhoods, and foster a strong relationship with Johnson City.

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 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 Charles Street Business Park. As part of the reconfiguration, a multi-purpose trail is proposed that will extend along the western bank of the Chenango River to Prospect Street, located in the First Ward. Although the majority of the project is located outside of the study area, it will provide First Ward residents with trail access and support the continuation of the trail as part of the Front Street Gateway.

Specific plans associated with this project are still pending, though a preferred alternative has been identified by NYSDOT. Due to funding limitations, it is not anticipated that this project will be completed in the immediate future.

### **1.3 Study Area Context**

#### **Introduction**

The project overview is intended to provide context of the BOA study area (see Map 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.

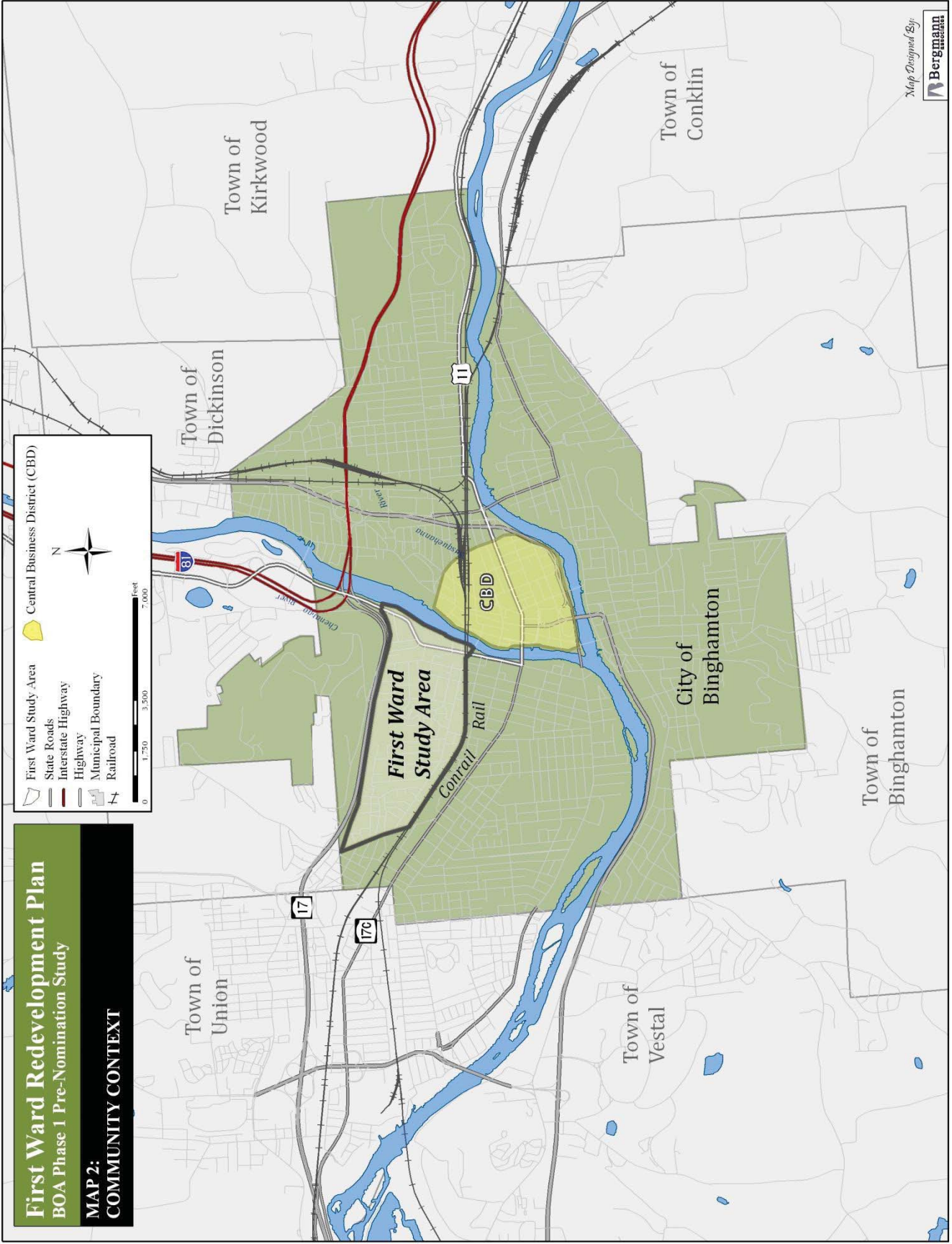
#### **Community Assets**

##### ***Organizations***

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 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 seven 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 ongoing collaboration with the First Ward Neighborhood Assembly is an important part of the BOA planning process.

Founded in 1982, the First Ward Action Council, Inc. is a local organization whose mission is to improve the neighborhood through advocacy, housing rehabilitation, housing development, and preservation. The First Ward Action Council additionally strives to provide affordable housing to area residents. The organization actively buys and renovates historic buildings throughout the First Ward. Most recently, the council was noted for its successes associated with the New Dwightville project, which renovated eight abandoned Victorian homes. Its efforts won the organization the acclaim of Victorian Homes magazine. To date, the First Ward Action Council has renovated more than 20 historic homes. Its efforts have served to maintain the historic charm of the First Ward while aggressively updating older homes and providing affordable housing for area residents.





### ***Parks and Open Space***

The neighborhood is home to open space and recreational opportunities which include the First Ward Pool, First Ward Park, Valley Street Park and the Spring Forest Cemetery. The First Ward Park is located adjacent to the historic First Ward Pool, which is still utilized by residents. In addition to a baseball diamond, Valley Street Park also has basketball and tennis courts.

More formally established recreational opportunities are available through the Boys and Girls Club, which opened in October 2009 on Clinton Street. Aside from formally established recreation areas, the First Ward also abuts the Chenango River, though physical and visual access is limited from the First Ward due to the presence of a retaining wall.



*Sign at First Ward Park.*

### ***Community Organizations and Cultural Sites***

The First Ward also has several religious and cultural facilities in place which provide programming, special events, and other services to local residents. Religious institutions located along Clinton Street include, but are not limited to, St. Michael's Greek-Catholic Church, the Holy Spirit Byzantine Church, and Ascension Lutheran Church. In addition, the neighborhood is home to the Trinity A.M.E. Zion Church and the Iglesia Vide Nueva En Cristo, the presence of which may be indicative of emerging diversity in the First Ward population.



*Tri-Cities Opera is an important cultural asset within the First Ward neighborhood.*

The Tri-Cities Opera is also located on Clinton Street. Founded in 1949, the Tri-Cities Opera has been devoted to training young singers and producing high quality entertainment to serve as a regional attraction. Performances debut at either the Clinton Street Opera Center, located in the First Ward, or at the Forum Theater, which is located on Washington Street in downtown Binghamton.

### ***Developable Land***

Following city-wide deindustrialization during the mid 20<sup>th</sup> 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. However, the loss of Anitec and the remediation of the site has resulted in a significant asset and opportunity for the First Ward in the form of a 32-acre vacant site that is ready for development.

## **Description of the First Ward Study Area**

### **Land Use**

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 line 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 (11.9 percent of total land area) and are scattered throughout the neighborhood, with the largest vacant property being portions of the Charles Street Business Park. 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 four to five similar light industrial or warehouse uses.

*The presence of large amounts of vacant land within the First Ward 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 small business development and housing, and offer additional locations for green space, parks, and walking trails.*

While 11.9 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. The presence of vacant properties can be problematic to communities, lowering tax revenues and often having significant economic, environmental and health consequences, regardless of how they are manifested.

### **Potential Brownfields and Underutilized Sites**

The First Ward has 136 potential brownfields, underutilized, and vacant sites that comprise 22 percent of the study area. Approximately 32 sites have been identified as existing or potential brownfield properties to be assessed within the First Ward study area. Properties were determined based on historical use of the sites as well as concerns about possible environmental degradation within the area. Additional information on brownfield, underutilized, and vacant sites is included in Section 2.3 of the Pre-Nomination Study and in Appendix E – Site Profiles.

### **Neighborhood Gateways**

The First Ward has four primary gateways that connect it to the Binghamton CBD, Johnson City, NYS Route 17, and I-81. Two primary gateways are located along Front Street, providing easy access to the CBD and to areas north of the First Ward. The gateway located at the intersection of Front Street and Clinton Street is the focal point for people entering the First Ward commercial core and could be enhanced to help welcome people to businesses and restaurants located along both corridors. In addition to the study area's eastern gateways, two gateways exist along the western boundary of the study area. Both are important as they provide visitors' first impressions of the First Ward neighborhood.

## **1.4 Brownfield Opportunity Area Boundary Description and Justification**

### **Boundary Summary**

The proposed study area boundary encompasses most of the 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 boundary also seeks to connect the neighborhood to regional planning initiatives, aligning planning efforts to the greatest extent possible. This comprehensive approach gives the area potential to serve as a foundation for city-wide revitalization strategies.

Over the course of the planning process, participants recognized that a small part of the First Ward neighborhood has been excluded from the boundary because it is primarily residential in nature with no indications that any brownfield or questionable properties may exist. However, the Steering Committee recognizes that while there may not be sites of environmental concern, the residential neighborhoods to the west of the current boundary have been impacted by surrounding properties, such as those along Clinton Street and the Charles Street Business Park. The expansion of the BOA boundary to incorporate these residential areas within the First Ward that exist to the west of Glenwood Avenue will be considered in Step 2 of the BOA process.

### **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. Map 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.<sup>vi</sup>

#### ***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.





***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 Endicott-Johnson Industrial Spine BOA project. Incorporating areas to the east of Glenwood Avenue will help create 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**

### **Community Vision Statement**

A direction and vision for the First Ward neighborhood was first explored during the City’s 2003 Comprehensive Plan Update process. The Comprehensive Plan discusses the need for enhanced gateways, the development of the Charles Street Business Park, increased amounts of green and open space, and expanded resources for the greater community. These ideas, as well as others, have been reiterated and identified by the First Ward community as part of the Redevelopment Plan process. Preliminary recommendations and action items to support the vision, goals, and objectives are presented in Section 2.6 of the First Ward Redevelopment Plan.

### **FIRST WARD VISION**

The First Ward Neighborhood Brownfield Opportunity Area is a vital and attractive mixed-use neighborhood that provides residents with access to a full range of goods and services. Clinton Street is a vibrant commercial corridor with engaging storefronts, attractive landscaping, and ample pedestrian amenities to welcome visitors. The Charles Street Business Park is the source of job creation and economic development and is seamlessly integrated into the surrounding residential neighborhoods with open space, trails, and sidewalk connections. Community resources and transportation alternatives are available to all and contribute to a high quality-of-life for area residents.

### **Community Goals and Objectives**

Priority goals associated with revitalizing and transforming the First Ward BOA study area are identified on the following pages. The goals and objectives will be further refined in Phase 2 – Nomination Study of the Brownfield Opportunity Area Program.



**GOAL #1: Economic Revitalization**

A strong economic presence that provides jobs and opportunities to surrounding neighborhoods is critical to the long term success of the First Ward neighborhood. Improving the aesthetic character of key business areas, such as Clinton Street and Front Street, to make it a more inviting destination for neighborhood residents and for people throughout the City and adjacent communities is a primary goal of the Redevelopment Plan.

**Objectives:**

- To fill remaining storefronts and attract new businesses and retail uses.
- To provide a wide range of retail and service uses that support the daily needs of local residents.
- To improve the appearance of existing and future businesses.
- To identify a niche market for Clinton Street.
- To capitalize on the location and accessibility to and from major roadways.
- To remediate remaining brownfield, vacant, and underutilized sites along commercial corridors and identify appropriate, viable new uses for these properties.



*Images from Clinton Street streetscape as it exists today.*

**GOAL #2: Business Development and Job Creation**

The remediation and availability of the former Anitec site, now known as the Charles Street Business Park, is a brownfield success story for the City of Binghamton. Full build out of the Charles Street Business Park will have significant positive impacts on both the First Ward neighborhood and the City of Binghamton.

**Objectives:**

- To create a strong employment center node within the First Ward neighborhood, reestablishing neighborhood as a walk-to-work community.
- To establish a concentration of employment opportunities for First Ward residents and customers to support neighborhood shops and restaurants.
- To promote the success of the City of Binghamton and Broome County Industrial Development Agency as leaders in promoting and fostering new business development in the City.
- To create attractive and sustainable development in the First Ward that considers the importance of open space, architectural design principles, and connections in its layout.
- To increase the City's tax base with new light industrial and business park development.
- To create a business center that is attractive to knowledge-based and professional businesses.



*Emerson's new headquarters should serve as a catalyst for further investment and redevelopment in the First Ward neighborhood.*

***GOAL #3: Smart Growth and Sustainability***

Smart growth and sustainable development principles ensure a community is capitalizing on its existing resources and assets, while promoting a healthy and active environment for residents and workers. Incorporating these ideas into the First Ward Redevelopment Plan will ensure the long term health and viability of the community as a great place to live, work, and play.

**Objectives:**

- To create a varied network of opportunities for residents to meet their full range of daily needs within the First Ward neighborhood.
- To limit further suburban oriented development in outlying areas.
- To create new opportunities for living, working, and relaxing that are unique to the region.
- To encourage the reuse of existing buildings and infrastructure.
- To create walkable, pedestrian oriented neighborhoods.
- To create access to and encourage use of public transportation and alternate methods of transportation.
- To create access to locally grown produce.
- To encourage incorporation of LEED design principles into building and site design, such as porous pavement, street trees, rain gardens, green roofs, and native landscaping.
- To support city-wide efforts to create a continuous greenway network through the City and its core neighborhoods.



**GOAL #4: Quality-of-Life**

Retaining the unique assets and character-defining features of the First Ward neighborhood is critical to enhancing and improving the quality-of-life for First Ward residents. Historic buildings, parklands and open space, access to transportation, and community and social services all play in an important role in defining the quality-of-life that a person experiences.

**Objectives:**

- To rebuild and strengthen residential neighborhoods.
- To support local efforts to rehabilitate and/or adaptively reuse existing historic building stock.
- To preserve the existing scale, character, and integrity of the streetscape.
- To increase the levels of home ownership and owner occupancy in the neighborhood.
- To provide opportunities for people to age in place.
- To provide access to a variety of transportation options for all age groups and social classes.
- To provide programs for all age groups that meet the economic, social, and recreational needs of the community.
- To incorporate the rich history of the neighborhood into everyday experiences that will promote pride and a sense of community.
- To facilitate the clean-up of brownfields and environmentally impacted sites in order to foster opportunities for new investment and redevelopment.
- To improve access to quality health care.
- To improve the quality, availability and access to area parks and recreation.



*Cleaning up existing brownfield, underutilized, and vacant sites within the BOA will help to create new opportunities, improve the character of the neighborhood, and enhance quality-of-life for residents.*



## **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 Appendix A, details three types of community outreach efforts that were utilized during the development of the Pre-Nomination Study including 1) steering committee meetings, 2) neighborhood assembly and public meetings, and 3) outreach to other key stakeholders.

### **Meeting Summaries**

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

#### ***Steering Committee Meetings***

At the onset of the planning process, a committee was formed representing a wide range of interests associated with the First Ward Redevelopment Plan. The Steering Committee consists of City representatives, County representatives, representatives from the First Ward Neighborhood Assembly, First Ward business owners, and First Ward residents. The Steering Committee was formed to provide local knowledge and guidance throughout the planning process. Meeting minutes from each of the Steering Committee Meetings are provided in Appendix B, with meetings summarized below.

#### 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 B. Additionally, the Steering Committee participated 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

Additional opportunities for community outreach were discussed during the second Steering Committee meeting. Specifically, the NYSDOS stressed the importance of having targeted stakeholder meetings that focus on representatives associated with economic development opportunities. These meetings were held in place of senior focus groups or student outreach, as previously proposed. In addition, the consultant team presented an overview of the project status and distributed draft copies of the Community Overview and Project Overview sections of the Pre-Nomination Study.

Meeting #3- October 15, 2009

The consultant team presented the Steering Committee with the draft vision, goals, inventory and analysis, and preliminary recommendations for the First Ward Brownfield Opportunity Area. In addition, meeting attendees discussed the need to identify strategic sites based on community factors, in addition to environmental factors. The NYSDOS suggested that the City, with the help of the consultant team, consider submitting the application for Step 2 funding prior to the final 2009 BOA grant cycle. Finally, next steps in the process were discussed.

Meeting #4- December 7, 2009

Meeting #4 was held at Emerson Network Power, to showcase the new facility to committee members. The primary discussion topic at the meeting was the identification of strategic development sites and strategic enhancement sites. The consultant team also provided an update on the Application for Project Advancement to Step 2 of the program.

Meeting #5- December 16, 2009

The final committee meeting was held after the final public meeting to provide the committee the opportunity to review feedback generated by the public. At this meeting, final revisions to the document were identified and final steps to close out the project were discussed.

***Public Meetings***

Meeting minutes from each of the Public Meetings held as part of the planning process are provided in Appendix C and summarized below.

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 14, 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 outcomes 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. Attendees participated in a visioning exercise that identified aspects of the neighborhood that should remain the same, as well as aspects of the neighborhood that should change.

Meeting #2- October 15, 2009

The focus of the second public meeting was to present the key findings developed from preparation of the First Ward Redevelopment Plan. In addition, the consultant team presented preliminary opportunities for redevelopment of the First Ward. Key recommendations that had been developed were presented to the public for feedback in an interactive forum. All but two of the recommendations were unanimously agreed upon by members of the public. In addition, the community expressed the desire to see a farmers'

market and community garden locate near the neighborhood, and to encourage efforts for the adaptive reuse of historic structures and existing lots.

Meeting #3- February 15, 2010

A public workshop was held on Monday, February 15, 2010 at the new Boys and Girls Club Facility on Clinton Street in the First Ward neighborhood. The meeting was attended by approximately 35 members of the public. Attendees had the opportunity to mark-up maps with their ideas for projects in the neighborhood and to rank recommendations. The open house was followed by a brief presentation and a question and answer period.

***Stakeholder Outreach Efforts***

A series of three stakeholder meetings were held on September 16, 2009 with representatives of the local business community, community and social service providers, and city leaders and agencies. The purpose of these meetings was to get targeted feedback on specific focus areas of relevance to the revitalization of the First Ward.

An additional stakeholder meeting was held with employees at Emerson on December 7, 2009. The purpose of this meeting was to better understand employees' perceptions of the neighborhood, what goods, services, and amenities could enhance their experience of working in the neighborhood, and what they would like to see change.

Summaries from each of the stakeholder meetings are included in Appendix D. Comments from each of the meetings have been incorporated into the Redevelopment Plan as appropriate.