

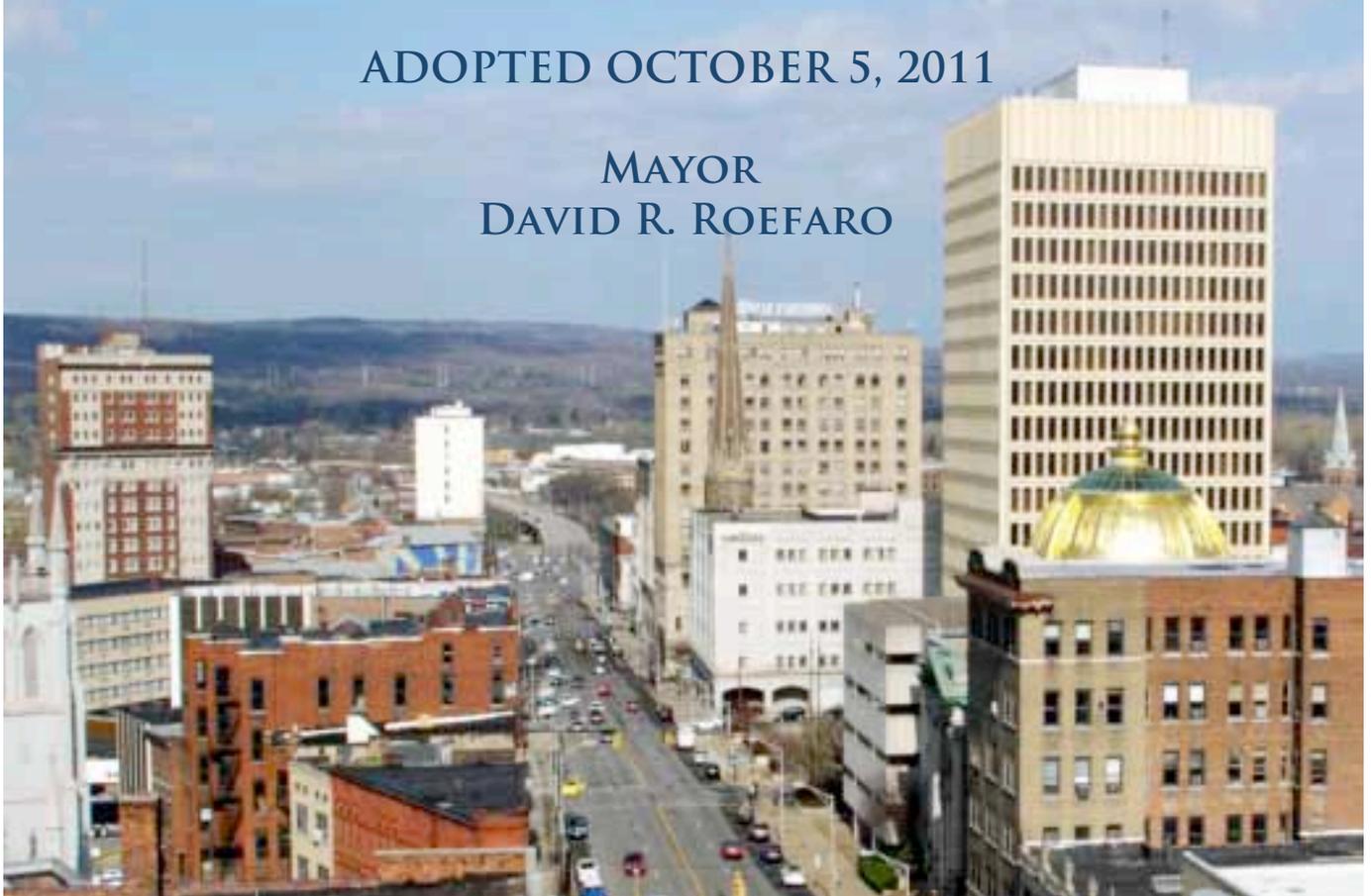
# UTICA NEW YORK

## A SUSTAINABLE NEIGHBORHOOD-BASED MASTER PLAN

A NEIGHBORHOOD-BASED PROCESS TO ESTABLISH  
THE VISION AND GUIDE FOR UTICA'S FUTURE

ADOPTED OCTOBER 5, 2011

MAYOR  
DAVID R. ROEFARO



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CHAPTER ONE  
INTRODUCTION



# A VISION FOR UTICA

This Master Plan positions the City of Utica to become a competitive city once again. Keeping this plan “alive” will require the continued involvement of all of our residents, business owners, and institutions working together. In many respects, this plan is about the entire future of the Mohawk Valley. Help us realize our vision to be the hub of regional collaboration, social diversity, sustainability and economic progress.



**Mayor David R. Roefaro**

## A WORD FROM THE PLANNING DIRECTOR

Brian Thomas

In working extensively with the people, the business and the civic leaders of Utica for the past year to develop the Utica Master Plan, one of our key objectives was to create a citizen-based living document that will move the city forward as a center of opportunity. I hope you agree that we have set the stage for success. Whether you are a resident, business owner, developer, or one of Utica’s many nonprofit organizations or institutions, the Utica Master Plan includes tremendous information for you to help us realize Utica as a regional leader.

This Master Plan appreciates that the strongest communities are built on support from all three sectors—public, private, and nonprofit. With that, collaboration is foundational to the success of this plan. Sustainability is another key ingredient to this Master Plan; our Master Plan aims to link the local economy, the community, and the environment. Your help is vital to helping build a stronger and healthier Utica. Please join us as we embark on this journey to be a great little American City.



## VISION STATEMENT

Utica is the place for people seeking a culturally rich, economically successful, and environmentally friendly place to live, visit, and conduct business. Our homes, our neighborhoods, our schools, our places of work and play allow for opportunities for an even exchange between people and place; Utica is a community that invites all the people to utilize their unique qualities to emerge and define our City. Utica is the hub of regional collaboration, social diversity, and economic progress. Our City is ripe with potential, which we will maximize with extensive community input, emphasizing high-performance, sustainable economic redevelopment, and a healthy network of neighborhoods, parks, and waterfront renewal.

**“A PARTNERSHIP OF  
RESIDENTS,  
CITY GOVERNMENT,  
UTICA INSTITUTIONS,  
AND NEIGHBORHOOD  
COMMUNITY GROUPS”**

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

As we move forward into the 21st Century, Utica will be...

**...A THRIVING CITY** with a vibrant downtown energized by a flourishing arts community and by healthy, safe, and interconnected neighborhoods. Neighborhoods will be active, interesting, and attractive places where people feel safe walking or biking and talking with neighbors.

**...A CENTER OF OPPORTUNITY** for collaboration and innovation that builds an entrepreneurial culture. Our thriving downtown will be at the core – a place of commerce and culture. A diversity of creative entrepreneurs built on a model of partnerships with our educational institutions, employers, community agencies, and students will drive the City's economy, increase job opportunities, and contribute to a greater quality of life for all.

**...THE HEART OF REGIONAL CREATIVITY** by supporting and attracting cultural venues, artisans, and talent. Utica's theaters, music venues, and art galleries will be the focus of the cultural economy in the Mohawk Valley. Our reputation as a lively center for arts and culture will attract more artisans, more visitors, and more residents and businesses. The City will protect and celebrate its historic character embodied in our unique architectural buildings.

**...A COMMUNITY THAT CELEBRATES DIVERSITY** as one of its greatest assets. As an urban center, Utica has traditionally been an economic and ethnic melting pot. We will continue to embrace different cultures and make Utica an attractive destination.

**...A CITY THAT PRACTICES SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT** in all public and private endeavors. At the core of this initiative is a focus on combating global environmental gradation by fostering the incorporation of sustainable practices in all of our community activities. As a City, we are committed to correct sizing and developing sustainable alternatives in our building designs, infrastructure systems, and neighborhoods, such as creating opportunities for urban agriculture to support our local residents and restaurants.

**...A GREAT LITTLE AMERICAN CITY** whose people come together with pride to guide the City's future.



# CITY OF UTICA MASTER PLAN

## A RENAISSANCE CITY

*Welcome to the City of Utica Master Plan.*

This Master Plan, created with the extensive involvement of citizens, business leaders, public officials and planners, describes a vision for Utica's growing and revitalized future – a bustling economic center amidst the beauty of Central New York – a renaissance city leading the transition of the region as an industrial center to one seeking to attract the creative class.

The purpose of the Master Plan is to provide policy direction and recommendations to guide the City and its partners in the formulation of development strategies, economic incentives, and land use controls that collectively will foster development supportive of, and complementary to, reestablishing Utica as a regional hub, while simultaneously strengthening the economic and social fabric of the City's neighborhoods. The Master Plan is a guiding document for the municipality, its citizens, academic and cultural institutions, business owners and any stakeholder interested in being active within the City of Utica. The Master Plan will allow the leadership of Utica to effectively lobby the state legislature on the community's behalf, and to communicate and forge new relationships with regional and private sector interests. Further, it is the intent of this Master Plan to identify common themes and to focus on how successful partnerships can be created and maintained over the long run.

The Master Plan will be reviewed every five years; however, changes to it will only be considered if the changes would bring significant benefit to the municipality. Each department in Utica will use the Master Plan as it prioritizes its needs based on the goals set in the Master Plan.

The vision for Utica is the starting point for planning the City's future. This short, single-paragraph statement pulls together the major components of a sustainable, thriving Utica in



the 21st century – a city that is attractive to residents, workers and visitors. A common theme that threads through the entire Master Plan is a call for collaboration. Genuine collaboration among leaders of all community sectors and people from all walks of life ensures better solutions informed by more perspectives, plus broad support for results. Proceeding through every stage of policy-making, decision-making, and funding this Master Plan holds that collaboration is most effective when it evolves into a diverse coalition committed to Utica's Vision and Master Plan.

Economic development is a cornerstone of growth. Today's new and growing businesses are built on the creativity and innovation of entrepreneurs, business people, and skilled workers. These people can choose to live anywhere in the world. Utica must seek ways to attract them to this city – to set up enterprises and put down roots. This Master Plan sets a solid foundation to make Utica attractive to the entrepreneurs of today.

Adding to that dimension – the concept of improving the "people climate" – is a major thrust of this Master Plan. A favorable business climate is important, but alone it can only take a community so far. Economic sustainability requires creating a place that people want to be and a place that works in a collaborative manner. The realization of this Master Plan must rely on the concept of partnership and cooperative actions across public and private sectors and among various levels and types of governmental units and non-profit interests.

This Master Plan is a road map for improving the "people climate" of Utica. The city has many attractive assets – its historic and urban

character, as well as, the surrounding region's natural beauty. Utica has some strong neighborhoods and natural resources to build upon. The plan builds on and protects these components in order to attract the "creative class" of people that will drive the economy in the decades ahead.

The business climate of the 21st century will require the city be prepared to house a variety of enterprises. Traditional heavy industries, though on the decline in the northeastern United States, still have a foothold in Utica and need to know the City and community support their continued growth. At the same time, many new businesses will be knowledge-based or creative enterprises. These operations would fit easily into mixed-use centers. In fact, many of the creative class of people would want to be in a place where they can blend the personal and professional hours of the day – work, grab coffee with friends, and then finish up a project. Entrepreneurs, no matter their field, need to have a business and people climate that suits their lifestyle.

### **MASTER PLAN BUILDING BLOCKS - REPORT FORMAT**

The Master Plan is designed to present key findings of the process along with supporting goals and action strategies in a user-friendly format. It relates all of the goals and recommendations to the same five subcommittees used to develop the plan, each of which includes goals and strategies to implementing the plan. The implementation strategies are presented in short-term (1 to 5 years), medium-term (5 to 10 years) and long-term (10 to 15 years) time frames. For some, plan graphics and renderings have been developed to further illustrate recommendations. At various points throughout the document, Case Studies are provided as examples given in exhibits. The report concludes with a discussion of implementation options, outlining the steps needed to begin plan implementation. The plan's strategies are illustrated in a matrix format that distills all of the recommendations of the Master Plan into a board-like sheet for all to be viewed at once.

The Master Plan includes a series of complementary notions of improving opportunities for the city's people, the physical setting and the business climate by weaving their way into all five of the basic building blocks of the City of Utica Master Plan. The five building blocks, based on our subcommittee format, include:

- Housing & Neighborhood Development;
- Downtown Development;
- Parks, Recreation, Arts/Culture & Historic Preservation;
- Business Technology Development;
- Infrastructure & Waterfront Development

Each building block contains the same elements, which include the following: 1) an introduction, 2) an inventory of the existing conditions using current and historical data as well as maps and spatial analysis, and 3) a list of goals that reinforce the community's vision as it pertains to the particular building block. These goals set forth a collection of economic, environmental, and community expectations which, should become the foundation for investment of resources and guidance for the City of Utica to move into the future. Over time, businesses and non-profit groups can mold their respective mission statements to make them compatible with Utica's goals. Finally, a list of strategies is given, which includes actions that should be undertaken, through collaborative efforts of both public and private entities, to achieve those goals and the community-wide vision.

The goals and strategies are outlined in the Master Plan Matrix. This Matrix is meant to serve as a concise, consolidated reference for the goals and strategies located within the chapters of the Master plan. As a reference document for the plan, the overall vision for the City becomes alive and the steps for how to achieve that vision are laid out with optimal timeframes shown.

## HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT

Vibrant, desirable neighborhoods are a key part of economic development. Business owners and their employees need safe, attractive places to live. During the public process much discussion focused on providing high quality and affordable residential areas as the foundation for social vitality and economic success.

Housing and neighborhoods in Utica run the gamut from some of the most sought after in the region to some of the most distressed. Cost and affordability are issues in some areas; quality and safety are top priorities in others. A major strategy of this building block is to find the right tools for the City to ensure the neighborhoods are an attractive and safe place for people to live.

The strategies emphasize the City becoming proactive in examining and acting to improve residential areas, particularly on a neighborhood-by-neighborhood basis. Protecting the character of each neighborhood is as important as is continuing to improve and broaden code enforcement and public safety across the city.



## DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT

Across the country, people are moving back into downtown areas. Studies across the country are finding that cities are more attractive because they are vibrant places. People enjoy being amidst the culture, services and historic architecture of urban places. More

and more businesses, especially those in the creative and knowledge-based industries, move to cities because that is where they can find the workers they need.

Through the master planning process, Utica residents and business leaders have described a vision for the city's future that builds on the architectural character and diversity of downtown. For many in Utica, the success of downtown will lead to further success in the City's other neighborhoods. This vision is one that enhances the quality of life for existing residents as well as creates an attractive place for new residents, visitors and businesses. Boosting historic and cultural resources located in downtown will serve to help strengthen Utica as a more exciting place for people and businesses.

The strategies outlined in Utica's Master Plan reflect a progressive approach to strengthening downtown – one that recognizes the vital need for collaboration between public and private actions as a continuous and evolving process. The plan aims to identify general initiatives and specific projects that will maximize private investment while enhancing the public realm and Utica's fiscal stability.



## PARKS, RECREATION ARTS/CULTURE & HISTORIC PRESERVATION

The City of Utica has something many other communities around the country want – a world-class park system, a vibrant arts and cultural scene combined with historic character, and a strong sense of authenticity.

Utica recognizes that its extensive, historic park system, combined with the City's arts, culture and historic elements, are key components to economic development. This Master Plan emphasizes the recognition that historic architecture and cultural venues are important assets in Utica. These can be leveraged to drive and enhance the City's entire economy – not just tourism; such assets increase the marketability of Utica to business people, entrepreneurs, and creative workers. In addition, this section tackles other issues such as the provision of recreational opportunities in Utica. Many of these are quality of life issues (and, therefore, economic development); the Master Plan seeks ways to provide for their ongoing operations and sustainability of Utica's parks and cultural venues.

The strategies outlined in this Master Plan for parks, recreation, arts/culture, and historic preservation outline ways to enhance and protect these assets as vital to the economic recovery and fiscal sustainability of the City. The mission is to create a vibrant environment to attract visitors while improving the quality of life offered to the residents of Utica and the region as a whole.



## INFRASTRUCTURE & WATERFRONT DEVELOPMENT

Many components of the physical environment impact the ability of a community to grow and thrive. Transportation, public facilities, and public services are crucial to supporting various land use, neighborhood, economic development, and open space initiatives. Other, non-physical infrastructure components such as education and emergency services are critical to the long-term success of the City. To a large extent, the health of the City is determined by its supporting infrastructure. All aspects from roads to public safety and education to sewer, water, and telecommunications need to be managed to meet the vision of creating a vibrant, economic center. This Master Plan aims to ensure that the City has the infrastructure and plans to attract new businesses and retain existing operations.

For Utica to grow into a place of excellence for business and residents, it must provide safe, comfortable, and convenient ways to move around. The automobile is not going away soon. However, car usage should not drive land use decisions. Many of the strategies in this element seek ways to increase the range of transportation options and connectivity for mobility including pedestrian, bicycle, and mass transit alternatives.

Other services must also support Utica's vision as a dynamic center of regional opportunity and creativity. Public safety, improving and publicizing it, is crucial to the City's revitalization. Other public facilities must also strive to become models of excellence that support the guiding principals to be a city that practices sustainable development. Education of young people, as well as continuing education, and vocational training for workers in transition, is important to ensuring that our businesses have the staffing they need to prosper. Strategies in this area also include requiring city operations to investigate new ways to become more economically and environmentally sustainable.

## **BUSINESS & TECHNOLOGY AND WATERFRONT DEVELOPMENT**

Economic health is a fundamental part of any revitalization effort. The goals and strategies outlined in this Master Plan support existing industries, but also set the stage to attract the new industries of the 21st century – better weaving both into the city’s urban fabric. All the basic building blocks of this plan, including improving the quality of life for residents with vibrant, desirable neighborhoods; building on the City’s recreational, cultural, and historic character amenities; and enhancing the infrastructure network, are about providing an improved economic development environment.

Regional economic development organizations have done much research and planning to capitalize on the assets of the region. The strategies in this Master Plan outline ways to adapt these regional plans to the Utica-specific level – making sure that the city has the plans to attract new businesses and retain existing operations.

This Master Plan also recognizes that Utica’s waterfront is a significant natural and historic resource. As a destination, the waterfront will provide improved public open space along the water’s edge, just minutes from downtown. Connections for pedestrians and cyclists will be improved. Improvements are also proposed for improved water-based recreational amenities.



## **THE UTICA MASTER PLANNING PROCESS: HONORING A LEGACY, BUILDING A FUTURE**

Cities must make choices. What kind of a community do residents want to live in? What kind of economic growth should be encouraged? Where and why? What should new businesses look like? Where should investments be made to enhance neighborhoods? Where can public resources be invested to show the private sector that the City is serious about economic success?

Utica residents, business owners and public officials have asked themselves these and many other questions during the master planning process. The result is a vision and a set of guiding principles supported by a series of goals for the future. Together, these set the stage for the policy and project recommendations set forth. Success of this effort will only come with implementation. To achieve this, the plan has outlined an innovative, cooperative approach to build a stronger and healthier Utica.

This Master Plan is not an instruction manual. It gives specific guidance in some areas, but, by and large, it serves a broader purpose. Utica’s Master Plan establishes a vision and creates a framework for collaboration and investment of resources. This plan gives decision makers and stakeholders (including elected officials, city and regional staff, planning and zoning board members, developers, property owners, nonprofit organizations and institutions and other citizens) a guide as they create new policies, judge new development projects and broaden the dialog in community development. It is critical to recognize that this plan cannot be implemented without broad collaboration among all community interests, local and regional alike. It also helps the community increase opportunities for grant money, as the state and federal government prefer to fund projects that fit into a plan for the future.

Utica’s Master Plan is a living document. The community must be alert to the need for changes and updates. It is important to remember, however, that adjusting the Master Plan does not mean lowering standards. The plan will not succeed if it is constantly changed

to meet the demands of every particular project. A good test is to make sure that a proposed change furthers the vision and accomplishes the goals of the plan; otherwise, the City should review and update the plan at least every five years. The master planning process never ends.

For this Master Plan, the Mayor and the Director of Urban Planning designated an advisory committee to craft the Master Plan with the help of a team of planning consultants led by Saratoga Associates. Each member of the advisory committee was assigned to a subcommittee and given the task of crafting the first draft of one of the plan goals and projects. Members of the City Council also participated actively in the creation of the Master Plan. The plan is the culmination of the work and effort of the citizen-based advisory committee.

Public participation weaves itself through all aspects of the master planning process. Engaging the public, educating them about planning, and listening to their concerns, ideas, and dreams, is crucial in developing a plan that will stand the test of time. It also helps to establish new dialog between various organizations operating within and around the City. In the Utica master planning process, there were many opportunities for the public to become involved.

A series of neighborhood-based meetings was a fundamental part of this process. To gain the insights and understandings of residents, a series of meetings were held in each section of the City. In addition, it should be noted that every one of the Master Plan Advisory Community meetings and subcommittee meetings was open to the public. All of the Master Plan Advisory Committee meetings were convened at the Radisson Hotel – Utica Centre downtown. Also open to the public was a presentation to the City Council’s Economic Development Committee. In addition to meeting with the residents of Utica, a series of focus group meetings were convened to gain specific insights to needs and opportunities within the City. A series of one-on-one meetings were held with many of the City’s department heads involved in the day-to-day operations of municipal management. Finally,

municipal leadership, advisory committee members, and the consultant team were involved in numerous impromptu discussions with city residents, business leaders, and nonprofit and institutional entities.

Through all of the public participation a number of common themes emerged. The vision, guiding principles, goals and strategies set forth in this Master Plan are based on these themes. The themes are noted below:

- Preservation of historic and urban characteristics
- Environmental sustainability
- Creation of high quality employment opportunities
- Educational excellence
- Enhancement of mobility throughout the City
- Increase in public safety, including the reduction of crime
- Improved maintenance and upkeep of rental units citywide
- Re-building the City’s image
- Ethnic diversity as an important quality to build from

#### STEERING COMMITTEE MEETINGS

- May 27, 2009
- June 23, 2009
- August 20, 2009
- October 6, 2009
- November 10, 2009
- December 15, 2009
- January 26, 2010
- February 23, 2010
- March 31, 2010
- May 24, 2010
- July 27, 2011

#### BRIEFINGS

- City Limits TV Program
  - April 11, 2010
  - April 18, 2010
  - April 25, 2010
- City Briefing at Sons of Italy
  - May 10, 2010
- Landmarks Briefing
  - May 12, 2010
- City Council
  - February 3, 2010

- Genesis Briefing
  - April 29, 2010
- Rotary Briefing
  - April 30, 2010

#### NEIGHBORHOOD MEETINGS

- Cornhill Master Plan Committee
  - June 2, 2009
- Cornhill Neighborhood Association
  - June 16, 2009
- West Utica Neighborhood Meeting
  - July 22, 2009
- East Utica Neighborhood Meeting
  - September 14, 2009
- South Utica Neighborhood Meeting
  - October 13, 2009
- North Utica Neighborhood Meeting
  - January 25, 2010

#### FOCUS GROUP MEETINGS

- August 2009
  - Downtown
  - Economic Development
  - Seniors
  - Youth (via EDGE)
  - Youth (via Genesis)
- September 2009
  - Parks, Recreation, Arts/Culture and Historic Preservation

#### DEPARTMENT HEAD MEETINGS

- July 2009
  - Fire Chief
  - Parks Commissioner
  - Youth Bureau Director
  - Police Chief
  - Section 8/ Subsidized Housing
  - City Engineer
  - Department of Public Works
  - Code Enforcement

#### COMMUNITY AT-LARGE MEETINGS

- Open House
  - April 22, 2010
- Committee Public Hearing
  - September 28, 2010

#### UTICA COMMON COUNCIL: URBAN AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MEETINGS

- January 12, 2011
- January 26, 2011
- February 9, 2011
- February 23, 2011
- March 9, 2011
- May 31, 2011
- August 16, 2011
- August 23, 2011

#### UTICA COMMON COUNCIL: MASTER PLAN REVIEW – MEETING OF THE FULL COUNCIL

- September 7, 2011
- September 14, 2011
- September 15, 2011
- September 21, 2011
- September 22, 2011

#### UTICA COMMON COUNCIL: PUBLIC HEARING

- October 5, 2011

# A BRIEF COMMUNITY OVERVIEW

## UTICA'S BEGINNINGS

Utica was first settled by Europeans in 1773, on the site of Fort Schuyler which was built in 1758 and abandoned after the French and Indian War. The settlement eventually became known as Old Fort Schuyler when a military fort in nearby Fort Stanwix was renamed Fort Schuyler during the American Revolution and evolved into a village. Perhaps the legendary account of Utica's naming suggests that around a dozen citizens of the Old Fort Schuyler settlement met at the Bagg's Tavern to discuss the name of the emerging village. Unable to settle on one particular name, the name Utica was drawn from several suggestions, and the village thereafter became associated with Utica, Tunisia, the ancient Carthaginian city.

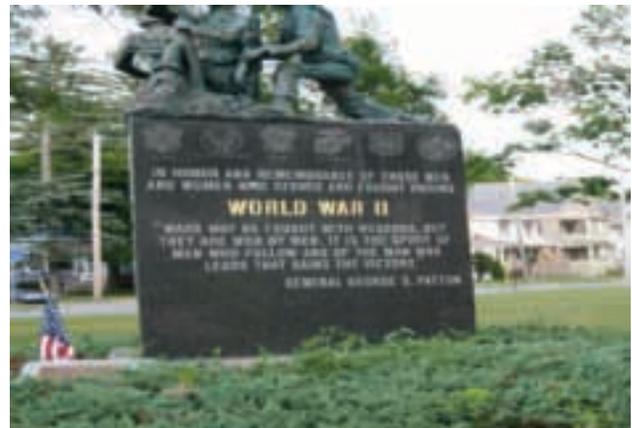
Utica's location on the Erie Canal stimulated its industrial development. The middle section of the Canal, from Rome to Salina, was the first portion to open in 1820. The Chenango Canal, connecting Utica and Binghamton, opened in 1836, and provided a further stimulus for economic development by providing water transportation of coal from Northeast Pennsylvania.

Utica was well positioned to benefit from the Erie Canal, the civil engineering marvel of its time. Utica was the virtual half-way point for canal travelers, thus making the town the perfect stop-over point for weary travelers. During the planning stage of the canal the cotton looms that would make Utica famous were in their infancy, and a vigorous real estate market in the town had ballooned lot prices tenfold since 1800. An anonymous traveler noted that by 1829, about five years after the canal's completion, Utica had become "a really beautiful place . . . [and Utica's State Street] in no respect inferior to [Broadway] in New York." Utica, along with other burgeoning towns such as Syracuse, would benefit from the fact that the Erie Canal ran directly through town.

By the late 19th century, Utica had become the home of the textile industry of the United

States, boasting dozens of mills. The City still served as a Northeast crossroads, hosting the day's most celebrated personalities. Samuel Clemens lectured to a sold-out Utica crowd in 1870, where Clemens noted in personal correspondence that he brought down the house "like an avalanche." It was during this time that Utica hosted the 1884 New York State Republican Convention. Senator Roscoe Conkling, a leading GOP lawmaker of the Stalwart political faction, resided in the City at this time, and figured as the region's most historically significant politician until local native James Schoolcraft Sherman was elected the 27th Vice President of the United States, serving under President William Howard Taft.

Despite Utica's success as an industrial powerhouse, by the mid-twentieth century the City, like many in the northeast, began to experience a decline in population.



## A COMMUNITY AT A CROSSROADS

Following World War II, and continuing into the early 1970's, "urban renewal" dominated public efforts to revitalize aging and decaying inner cities. Urban renewal advocated for tearing down dense areas, often designated as slums, and putting up enclosed malls, large parking lots, modern office buildings, and efficient transportation networks. Unfortunately, the results of urban renewal were not the rejuvenation predicted. This new form of engineering to the cityscape did little to return vibrancy to the streets of Utica. The City continued to lose its population because of larger economic factors. In terms of land use

planning, experiences around the country mirrored those in Utica. To a large extent, though, Utica was able to retain much of its rich historic character.

### SEEKING THE CREATIVE CLASS

Economic development in the 21st century has taken on an added dimension. First, the trend towards smaller business continues. According to the U.S. Small Business Administration, 97.5 percent of firms have fewer than 20 employees – and those firms have generated up to 80 percent of new jobs over the past decade<sup>2</sup>.

As the “Renaissance City”, Utica has the potential to become an increasingly desirable place to live, work, and play and offers tremendous opportunities for residents, business owners, employees, and tourists.

As the region’s cultural hub, Utica hosts many artistic, culinary, entertainment, educational, and historic venues including the Stanley Center for the Arts, Sculpture Space, Children’s Museum of History- Natural History- Science & Technology, the International Halls of Fame: Bicycling, Rowing, Canoeing, Kayaking at the Children’s Museum, Utica Memorial Auditorium, and the National Distance Running Hall of Fame and numerous recreational facilities, including the Utica Zoo, Roscoe Conkling Park, F.T. Proctor Park, and T.R. Proctor Park. The City also offers superior higher educational experiences with Utica College, Utica School of Commerce, Mohawk Valley Community College, Munson-Williams-Proctor Arts Institute, and SUNY – Institute of Technology.

When such assets are combined with the restaurants, galleries, communitywide events and festivals, the City quickly becomes an ideal location for those wishing to spend a weekend, a summer, or a lifetime in Utica.

Attracting and retaining small business entrepreneurs, especially in the knowledge and creative sectors, takes a different approach to economic development. Successful communities no longer solely focus on creating a friendly business climate. Many have found

that they must devote some of their resources to creating the kind of environment that innovative people find interesting. The major proponent of this, Richard Florida, wrote recently that creative centers are not thriving due to traditional economic reasons such as access to transportation routes, tax breaks or fiscal incentives. “They are succeeding largely because people want to live there. The companies follow the people – or, in many cases, are started by them.”<sup>3</sup>

Florida’s research has found that creative and innovative people want to live in places that offer high-quality experiences, tolerate diversity, and validate their identities as creative people. He has found that most of these creative centers contain a vibrant, often historic, urban experience with easy access to natural recreation, such as hiking or biking.

Creating a “people climate” in Utica requires rethinking economic development to include the concept of attracting talented, creative people. In Utica, much work has been done in that regard by the arts and cultural institutions. The effort needs to be supported by economic, land use and infrastructure planning efforts – in terms of resources as well as the regulations and policies that protect the urban environment and find the physical forms that enhance vibrancy. This Master Plan seeks to integrate those efforts in order to create a city that seeks to attract new entrepreneurs and retain the ones we have while integrating sustainability in all that we do.



## **ESTABLISHING THE CONTEXT FOR THIS MASTER PLAN**

Located in the Mohawk Valley of Central New York, the City of Utica is taking this important step to develop a new *Sustainable Master Plan* through a neighborhood-based process to establish the vision and guide for Utica's future. In large measure, because of the duality of the region's natural beauty and transportation connections, the region developed in two ways—one surrounded by numerous opportunities of scenic and passive recreational pursuit, and another as a platform upon which industry has proliferated.

In many respects, Utica is the urban center of the Mohawk Valley. Like other post-industrial cities it has been hit hard in recent years with the decline of the manufacturing industry. Industrial buildings, many of which are vacant or significantly under utilized, characterize much of Utica's urban landscape. As the data indicates, many of Utica's neighborhoods are deteriorating and others are threatened with continued decline. While the City includes some of the most prestigious recreation opportunities in the region, many of the natural areas and scenic resources are strained and further threatened by lack of appropriate investment due to tightening fiscal budgets.

For the past half-century, Utica has been steadily losing its predominant position in the region as urbanization spreads outward from the urban core. At its peak, Utica was home to over 100,000 residents. Today, Utica is a much smaller city with approximately 62,000 people, but still retains many of the cultural institutions, parks and beautiful architecture from its past.

Utica's Master Plan recognizes that designing a strategy that harnesses a dynamic interface between environmental protection and economic development will be fundamental to sustaining future growth in the most efficient and compatible way possible, further advancing regional economic growth and enhancing Utica's quality of life amenities. Utica must be a leader of change for the region. Managing this change and determining how it should occur is an important challenge for the leaders of Utica to address. Through the Master Plan, we seek to form collaborative relationships between

residents, public officials, institutions and the private sector that will guide strategic investment and develop programs, policies, and projects that will bring about ongoing success.

One alternative for shaping change in the City represents a paradigm shift in the way development has occurred in the past. To be successful, investments will need to be made in the public realm, infrastructure, neighborhoods, and commercial districts that hold the greatest potential for continued redevelopment. In order to take advantage of efficiencies of scale, these investments will best be achieved in a coordinated fashion, this means engaging in a collaborative process that discovers needs and results in actionable items. The Utica Master Plan is grounded in the community-planning framework, helping to focus activities in areas that are strong and where the greatest opportunities lie.

## **EXISTING LAND USE & ZONING ANALYSIS**

In looking at an existing land use map for the City of Utica, a number of common understandings regarding historical development in the City are borne out, including:

- The earliest development in the City occurred along the Erie Canal, which once coursed where Oriskany Boulevard now lies. Development along this east – west corridor remains largely commercial and industrial in nature.
- Genesee Street is a mixed-use spine that runs north – south through the City.
- A significant amount of open space cuts across the City in an east – west direction between the Thruway and the CSX railroad tracks, separating North Utica from the balance of the City. The only development within this swath is along the Genesee Street spine.
- The neighborhoods of North, South, East, Southeast, West Utica and Cornhill are all primarily residential with clear boundaries comprised primarily of commercial and retail corridors.
- On both aerial photographs and the existing land use map, the former trolley

line that cuts diagonally through East Utica and Cornhill is clearly delineated and extends through South Utica to the shared municipal border with New Hartford.

One of the most significant threats to the existing land use patterns in recent years has been from incompatible land uses within residential neighborhoods. In the past ten years, the City Common Council has enacted moratoriums relative to establishing two specific uses in residential neighborhoods: auto-related uses and neighborhood convenience stores. In both instances, these uses were commonly established as part of the historical development of the City's residential neighborhoods in the earlier half of the twentieth century.

The City's current nonconforming use language within its zoning ordinance permitted these uses to continue so long as there was discontinuance in operation for a period greater than or equal to six months. The deleterious effects of both uses on residential neighborhoods are considerable and well-documented and have led residents to seek specific zoning language addressing the future viability of such nonconforming uses.

In the case of neighborhood convenience stores, the City worked with a committee of residents after the moratorium was enacted to develop regulations governing future permitted location of such stores and the required approval process in order to establish such stores. The amendment to the zoning ordinance that was adopted outright prohibited neighborhood convenience stores in residentially-zoned neighborhoods. The regulations further established such stores as special permit uses within the City's most restrictive commercial zoning district and prohibited such uses from locating within 2,000 linear feet of each other.

In the case of auto-related uses, the City found that residential neighborhoods were being overrun with makeshift auto repair facilities and used car sales lots. After study of the issue by Peter J. Smith of Buffalo, New York, an overlay zoning district was established where any new

auto-related uses had to be located. In addition, a strict set of design guidelines for such uses was established within the zoning ordinance.

Both issues point to the need for the City to update its zoning ordinance. The last time that the zoning ordinance was updated in any significant manner was in 1994. Given that the last update to the comprehensive plan was conducted in 1960, it is apparent that the 1994 update to the zoning ordinance was completed without the benefit of an updated comprehensive plan.

In addition to the issues regarding auto-related uses and neighborhood convenience stores, a review of the historic slate of appeals considered by the City of Utica Zoning Board of Appeals points to several other reasons to update the zoning ordinance.

A significant number of appeals heard every year by the Zoning Board of Appeals deals with setbacks. The current setbacks, particularly front yard setbacks in residential neighborhoods, are ignorant to current patterns of urban development within these neighborhoods and are instead more reflective of a suburban neighborhood. For instance, in the more densely developed residential neighborhoods of East and West Utica and Cornhill, front yard setbacks in the Two-Family Residential (RT-1) zoning district (which covers the majority of land within those neighborhoods) is 25 feet. The majority of homes, however, are often constructed between 5 and 15 feet from the front yard property line. As such, variances are needed for new construction in order for the front yards of new homes to match the front yards of adjacent older homes.

Another frequent appeal heard by the Zoning Board of Appeals deals with the maximum permitted size of private garages and sheds. All sheds in residentially-zoned neighborhoods are limited to a maximum of 100 square feet in area, regardless of the size of the lot in question or the extent of development on said lot. In much the same way, private garages are limited in size based on the number of stalls and garage doors. While a maximum of two stalls is reasonable within an urban area, the

square footage limitation without regard to the size of the lot or the intensity of other development on the lot appears arbitrary. Future amendments to the zoning ordinance should consider logical, alternative methods of limiting the maximum size of both sheds and garages.

While not a frequent occurrence, anecdotal evidence from the Planning staff also indicates that the age of the current zoning ordinance is evident in the types of uses currently permitted in various zoning districts. Since the ordinance was last revised on a wholesale nature in 1994, technological advancements and changes in human lifestyles have resulted in the development of new business types; these business types are not included in the list of permitted businesses in any existing zoning district. Such businesses include, but are not limited to: dog grooming, personal storage facilities (as opposed to industrial warehousing) and bottle redemption centers, to name just a few that consistently require interpretation by the Zoning Board of Appeals. Any re-write of the zoning ordinance in the future should consider the inclusion of new definitions and the appropriate location of these new business types.

The City's current zoning ordinance is largely based on the Euclidean model which separates the City into district and defines which uses are permitted in each district along with the intensity of development allowed on each parcel (setbacks, height restrictions, floor-area ratios, etc.). The design guidelines adopted by the City of Utica Common Council regarding auto-related uses represents a movement by the City toward a new type of zoning known as form-based zoning. This movement was fully embraced by the City for its Gateway Historic Canal District when the Common Council adopted a form-based code for the District in 2005.

This amendment permitted virtually all uses within the Gateway District, save for a select few businesses which were prohibited. Under the new zoning, three building types were identified and defined. The amendment included very strict and specific guidelines for each building type and defined neighborhood within the Gateway District where each type

would be permitted. Any new construction that followed the strict guidelines for a permitted building type only required review and approval by Planning staff, theoretically saving developers significant review and approval time and money. Developments that did not meet the strict guidelines were given the option of proceeding through the normal site plan review process by the City of Utica Planning Board and any necessary variances by the Zoning Board of Appeals.

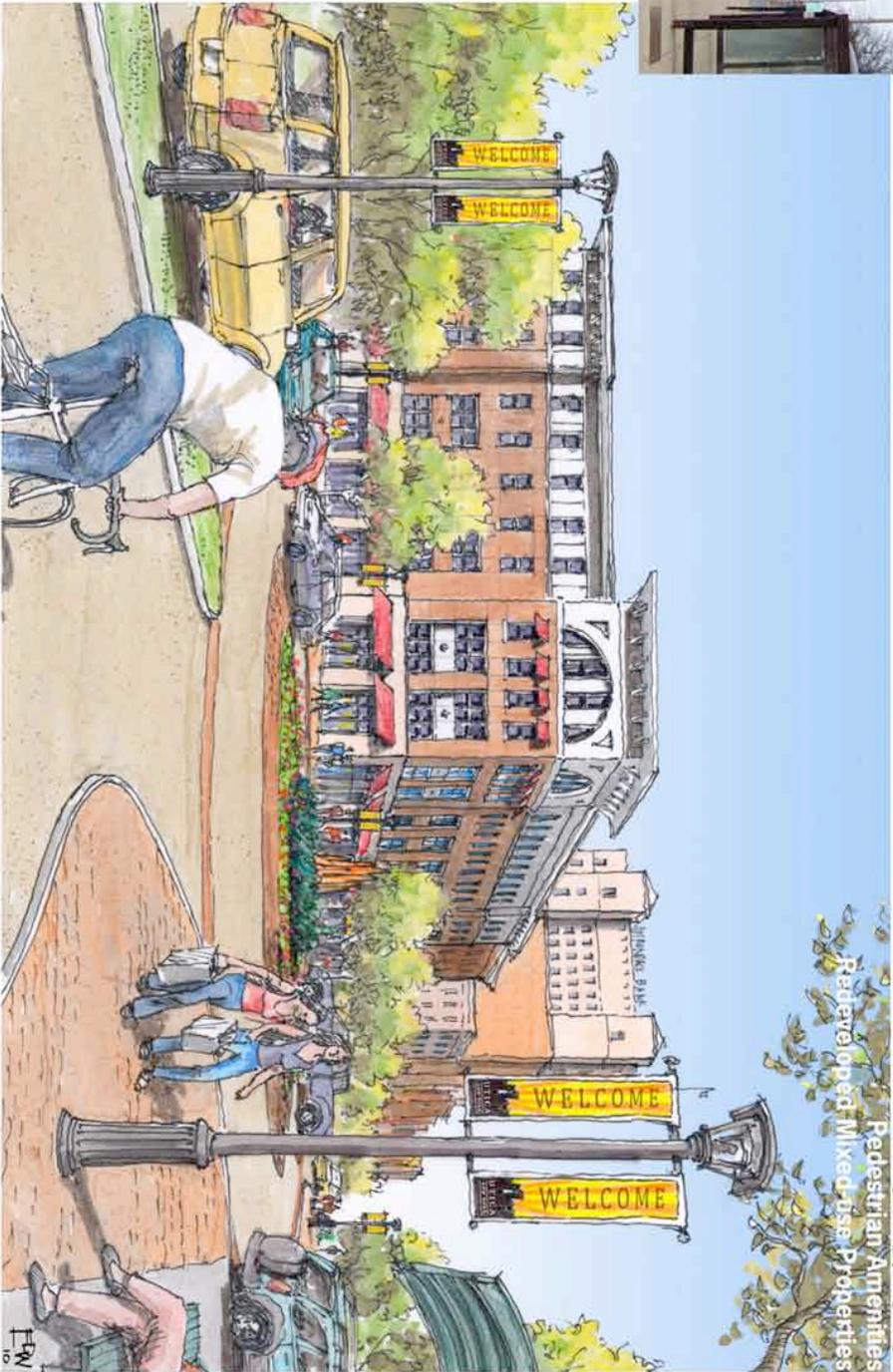
Though still untested as no new construction has been proposed within the Gateway Historic Canal District in the six years since the amendment was adopted, the original intent behind the form-based code was the preservation of the historic feel of the District. The buildings that remain within the District are some of the oldest in the City and are architecturally significant. With adherence to the strict design guidelines, new construction will echo the form and details of the older architecture.

Though currently limited to the boundaries of the Gateway Historic Canal District, consideration should be given in future revisions to the City's zoning map and ordinance to extending the boundaries of the form-based code to more of the downtown. Given the extensive number and types of uses currently permitted in the City's downtown, a form-based code together with the Scenic & Historic Preservation District regulations could greatly preserve and enhance the architecture of downtown.

The impact of the immigrant population in the City of Utica is particularly evident in a review of the historic slate of appeals heard by the Zoning Board of Appeals. Over the past five to ten years, the vast majority of appeals are filed by immigrants and refugees that now own the homes in which they reside and are now trying to invest in their properties. With this population, language barriers often make it difficult to convey the basic tenets of Euclidean zoning. Future amendments to the City's zoning ordinance should include a greater use of graphics and photographs, where possible, to convey the meaning and intent.



Existing View



**Genesee Street Gateway**

Traffic Roundabout  
 Historic Lighting / signage  
 Pedestrian Amenities  
 Preferred Mixed-use Properties

CHAPTER TWO  
HOUSING &  
NEIGHBORHOOD  
DEVELOPMENT



## HOUSING & NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT

This section of the Master Plan is based on a broad level of input from residents and housing experts; it assesses the general condition of housing and neighborhoods, sets policy goals, and describes strategies that will make Utica a more attractive and competitive community for a diverse population. The housing and neighborhood revitalization goals and implementation strategies outlined here are based on a view of neighborhoods as a collection of people and networks, as much as a collection of buildings, homes and businesses. Utica’s vision statement reads that “Our homes, our neighborhoods, our schools, our places of work and play allows for opportunities for an even exchange between people and place”. The goals and implementation strategies outlined below for revitalization of many of Utica’s neighborhoods involve significant collaboration to improve the lives of Utica’s residents, as well as improve the physical environment.

Housing and neighborhoods in Utica run the gamut from some of the most sought after in the region to some of the most distressed. Cost and affordability are issues in some areas; quality and safety are top priorities in others. Safe and affordable housing is the bare minimum that a municipality should provide its residents. Cities with vibrant, desirable neighborhoods attract people who will live, work, shop, and recreate in the community. Quality, attractive, and affordable residential areas are the foundation for social vitality and economic success. There must be enough desirable homes for workers and entrepreneurs – the people who will drive the city’s revitalization. The overall quality, attractiveness and affordability of Utica’s neighborhoods are some of the greatest assets of Utica. These assets will be key in attracting more middle-class families to the City.



The composition of the Neighborhoods and Housing Development subcommittee included some of the region’s leading experts in this complex discipline of neighborhood revitalization. Many on this subcommittee are practitioners, as well as potential funders, for neighborhood redevelopment. This Master Plan process has already resulted in enhanced coordination and a sharing of ideas about what the next steps are and where to find the resources to expand Utica’s neighborhood building efforts. A common theme that runs through all aspects of this Master Plan is a call for collaboration and partnering. This is especially critical for successful neighborhood and housing development as case study research clearly points to strong public/private partnerships as the common element for success. The process of developing this Master Plan has enhanced dialog among the variety of organizations working in Utica and the region to improve the quality of life offered in Utica.

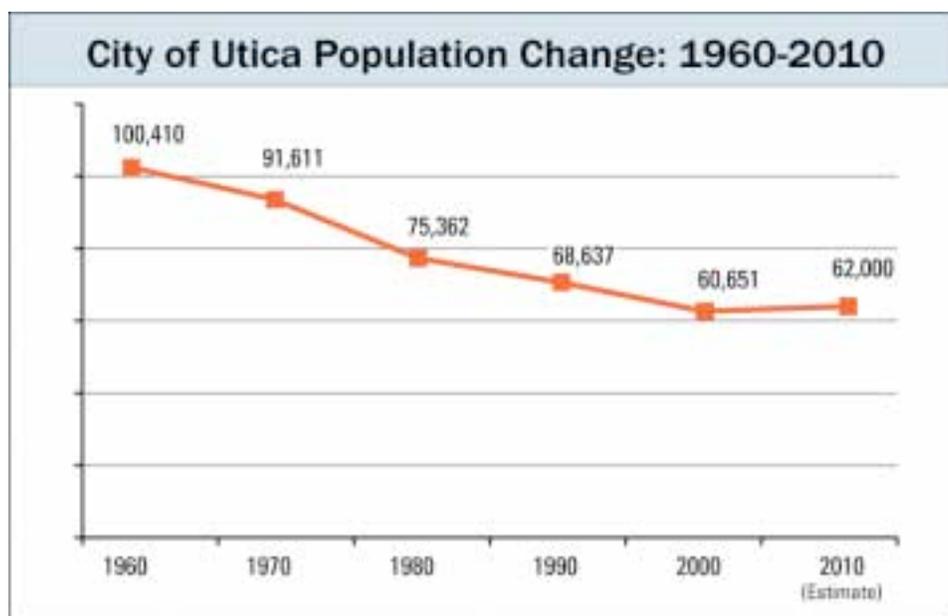
## NEIGHBORHOOD DISTRICTS IN UTICA TODAY

Utica is a city of neighborhoods, each with its own look and feel. Accordingly, this Master Plan evaluated a variety of information by neighborhood district. While the City consists of many neighborhoods, this Master Plan took a broader look at neighborhood districts, the boundaries of which were defined by existing census tracts (and in some cases, block groups, which are the next smallest unit of census geography, and used to present a more refined delineation between neighborhoods where necessary). This approach was taken in an effort to analyze larger trends within the key areas of the City, as well as efficient use of existing U.S. Census data. The six neighborhood districts analyzed in this Master Plan include East Utica, West Utica, South Utica, North Utica, Downtown Utica, and Cornhill.

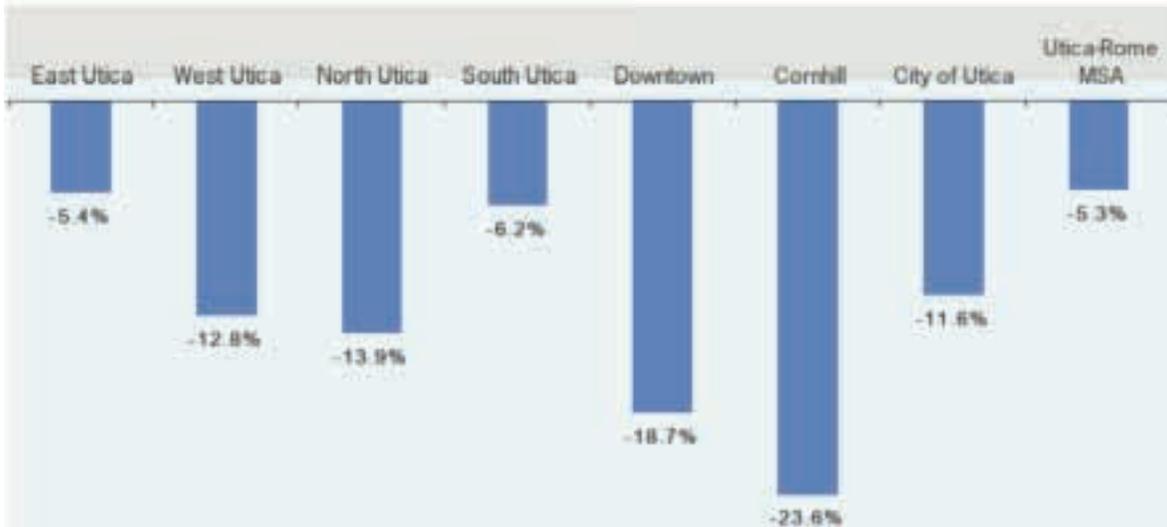
It is important to note that while citywide population estimates are available for 2008, the most recent data available at the census tract and block group level is from the year 2000 (the decennial census of 2010, is currently under review). Obviously, there has been great change since that time; however, the available figures nevertheless provide a means for comparison between neighborhood districts and are indicative of larger trends.

Located on the east border of Oneida County, Utica covers approximately 16.6 square miles and had a 2010 population of 62,000. Utica accounts for approximately one-quarter of Oneida County's population, despite its steady population decrease. Since the 1960s, Utica's population has progressively decreased as a result of continuing technological changes and the downsizing and restructuring of major employers such as Lockheed Martin and Griffiss Air Force Base. Many of today's demographics reflect these changes. In fact, Utica has lost a full 40 percent of its population since 1960, and its 2000 population represents an 11.6% decrease since 1990. In 2010, Utica has evidenced a small percentage of growth in its population, lending optimism for the future.

Various factors account for the loss of population in the City from 1960 to present. One factor is the relocation of manufacturing jobs to other areas of the United States. In the immediate postwar era, rising automobile ownership enabled many employers and urban residents to relocate to suburban areas, such as New Hartford and Marcy. Utica's livability, which was the very factor that was crucial to its growth, may have proved increasingly inadequate in comparison to the lifestyle afforded by the suburbs.



Neighborhood Population Change 1990-2000



**UTICA'S NEIGHBORHOOD DISTRICTS TODAY: A MELTING POT OF OPPORTUNITY**

Looking at individual neighborhoods, as seen in the chart below, it is evident that some have fared better than others. While all neighborhoods have had significant population declines since 1990, Cornhill and Downtown Utica had the steepest declines. Cornhill lost nearly one in four residents in a ten-year period. This is not insignificant when considering the City's overall population decline of nearly half that (11.6 percent) in the same period. Interviews with the Fire, Police, and Codes departments suggest that West Utica is currently undergoing a decline in homeownership, which is resulting in a weakening of neighborhood stability. South Utica and East Utica experienced population losses as well, but at slower rates than the City as a whole. Such trends could be attributed to migration from other neighborhoods, construction of new housing, or other factors to be explored in the Master Plan.

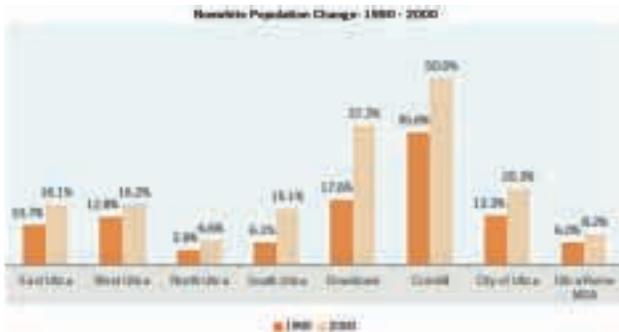
Utica is becoming more racially diverse, as its white population has decreased and its minority population has increased. As illustrated on the following page, between 1990 and 2000 nearly all minority group populations have increased in the region, City, and neighborhoods. Downtown Utica and Cornhill have seen the largest growth in their nonwhite population since 1990, in terms of proportion of the population as a

whole. While the Asian and Hispanic categories experienced higher rates of growth, the Black (Non-Hispanic) population remains the largest minority population in the region, City, and neighborhoods.

| Racial Diversity: 1990 - 2000<br>(Source: U.S. Census Bureau) |            |            |             |             |          |          |               |                |
|---|------------|------------|-------------|-------------|----------|----------|---------------|----------------|
|   | East Utica | West Utica | North Utica | South Utica | Downtown | Cornhill | City of Utica | Utica-Rome MSA |
| 1990  |            |            |             |             |          |          |               |                |
| White alone   | 82.2%      | 87.2%      | 88.1%       | 83.8%       | 82.4%    | 84.4%    | 88.7%         | 84.0%          |
| Black/African American, not alone                             | 5.7%       | 11.9%      | 2.9%        | 4.2%        | 14.7%    | 28.7%    | 12.4%         | 4.4%           |
| Asian alone   | 1.2%       | 0.8%       | 0.8%        | 1.6%        | 1.1%     | 1.2%     | 1.2%          | 1.7%           |
| Hispanic/Latino   | 3.8%       | 2.4%       | 1.8%        | 1.8%        | 3.2%     | 3.2%     | 3.1%          | 1.9%           |
| 2000  |            |            |             |             |          |          |               |                |
| White alone   | 83.9%      | 85.8%      | 83.4%       | 84.8%       | 82.7%    | 80.0%    | 78.7%         | 81.8%          |
| Black/African American, not alone                             | 6.4%       | 11.2%      | 2.3%        | 6.8%        | 27.3%    | 35.4%    | 12.4%         | 4.8%           |

One notable factor in Utica's population shifts is attributable to refugees seeking asylum. During the 1990s, Utica experienced an influx of several thousand Bosnian refugees throughout the war in the Balkans. The City of Utica has the fourth-largest Bosnian population in the United States, behind Chicago, St. Louis, and Phoenix. In addition to the Bosnian population, Utica has a large population of refugees from

the former Soviet Union, as well as Latin American countries. To a certain extent, this influx of refugees has helped to offset the population outflow from Utica in the last several decades, although this is not necessarily reflected in official Census figures.



The age profile of a population can answer basic questions about a community’s ability to provide for its residents and provide direction for future investments. For instance, the number of working-age residents from whom the City can raise revenue influences the level of services it can provide for more “dependent” residents such as the elderly and children. A population with a significant number of people age 65 and over may signify a need for additional senior programs or senior housing. A high number of people in the 20-29 age group may indicate a need for increased recreational activities for employment opportunities that target this demographic. Likewise, a municipality’s ability to compete for younger workers nationally, within the region, and within its neighborhoods may be an indicator of future vitality. While most of Utica’s neighborhoods’ median age is between 36 and 38, two neighborhoods stand out: North Utica is significantly older, with a median age of nearly 44. On the other end of the age spectrum, Cornhill is the youngest neighborhood by a significant margin, with a median age of 31.6, as indicated in the chart below.

|      | East Utica | West Utica | North Utica | South Utica | Downtown | Cornhill | City of Utica | Utica | Utica-Rose MSA |
|------|------------|------------|-------------|-------------|----------|----------|---------------|-------|----------------|
| 2000 | 37.3       | 38.1       | 43.6        | 38.9        | 37.4     | 31.6     | 37.0          | 38.4  |                |

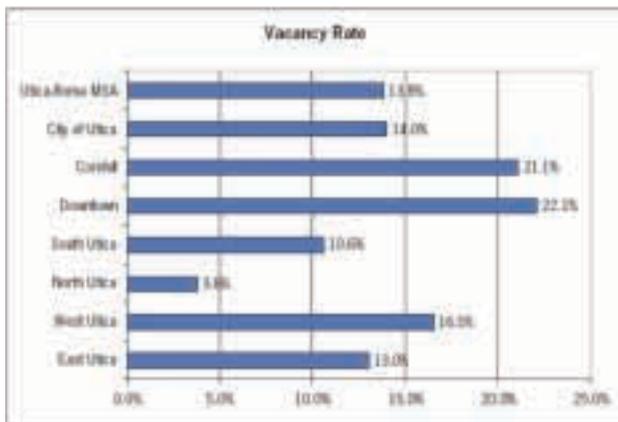
Households are defined by the United States Census Bureau as “all the persons who occupy a housing unit.” These may be family or non-family, and reflect overall population trends. It is not surprising, then, that the number of households in the City of Utica has declined by nearly the same amount as the population between 1990 and 2000. The number of households in Utica has declined at a much sharper rate than the region. Similarly, household size is an important factor when considering a community’s housing needs. The question to be answered is how to re-attract household formation to the City, or at least retain the City’s existing population.

Downtown Utica has a significantly smaller average household size than surrounding neighborhoods, as can be seen in the chart on the following page. This could be attributed to the type of housing in the area (for instance, housing for students or young singles, or the elderly living alone); alternatively, the types of amenities offered downtown may tend to attract different types of living arrangements. Similarly, Downtown Utica has the greatest proportion of non-family households in the city.

Understanding the occupancy and ownership rates of households within Utica and the neighborhoods is one measure for assessing the stability of the community. A community’s housing stock and owner-to-renter ratio is a strong indicator of its stability. Typically a homeowner is more attentive to property maintenance than a renter or absentee landlord. A homeowner also tends to remain in his or her home for a longer period of time than a renter, reducing the amount of turnover within a neighborhood. These and other factors contribute to the level of investment in a neighborhood and ultimately contribute to the value and character as well. At the same time, it is important to recognize that rentals should not universally be portrayed as a negative aspect of a community. Rentals help keep a community diverse and can suit people who have more flexible housing needs—whether students, artists, seniors, or those not in a position to buy. Rentals, when done well, can be an asset to a community.

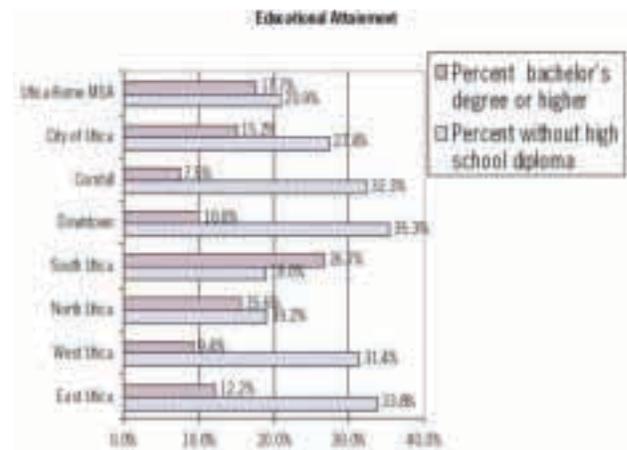
| Housing Occupancy and Tenure 2000<br>(source: U.S. Census Bureau) |            |            |             |             |          |          |               |                  |
|---|------------|------------|-------------|-------------|----------|----------|---------------|------------------|
|   | East Utica | West Utica | North Utica | South Utica | Downtown | Cornhill | City of Utica | Utica - Rome MSA |
| Number of Housing Units   | 8,360      | 4,830      | 3,259       | 7,482       | 1,868    | 3,891    | 29,164        | 134,829          |
| Owner-Occupied Units (as percentage of occupied units)            | 47.60%     | 46.90%     | 79.70%      | 60.80%      | 13.80%   | 44.70%   | 46.90%        | 68.10%           |
| Vacancy Rates   | 13.00%     | 16.50%     | 3.80%       | 10.60%      | 22.10%   | 21.10%   | 14.00%        | 13.80%           |

Downtown Utica and Cornhill have extremely high vacancy rates— over 1 out of every 5 homes is vacant, as evidenced in the chart below. This can greatly affect neighborhood stability. Owner-occupancy levels in Downtown Utica are extremely low, perhaps reflecting the more transient and flexible nature of downtown living, which is suitable for those with less traditional living arrangements—which may additionally be considered along with Downtown Utica’s small household size. On the other hand, North Utica has a vacancy rate that is much lower than the City as a whole, as well as an owner occupancy rate of nearly 80 percent. Clearly, there is a large disparity between neighborhoods in terms of housing availability and stability.



Education data is important to understand, as education levels strongly influence the economic success of a community. In the not-so-distant past, it was not unusual for an individual to graduate from high school and begin working in the manufacturing and trade industries. In Utica, the presence of manufacturing has not encouraged a more highly educated workforce, but the manufacturing industry has been dwindling.

Currently, information-driven industries, which many communities are seizing upon as a way in which to revitalize their economy, require workers with specific skill sets. As a result, the educational level of Utica’s workforce will play a critical role in the extent to which it is able to participate in an economy driven by knowledge-intensive industries.



Understanding a community’s income characteristics is an important indicator for determining a community’s economic well-being. The Utica median household income reflects many factors, including the transition from manufacturing employment to service sector employment, the educational attainment of its residents, and the age of the population. According to the 2000 Census, the City of Utica had a median family income of \$33,818 in 1999, up 25 percent from 1989 (measured in current dollars). This number is significantly lower than that of the Utica-Rome MSA (Metropolitan Statistical Area) (\$44,174) and of New York State (\$51,691).

As illustrated below, the median family income of several of the neighborhoods is even lower than both regional and City levels. Downtown Utica and Cornhill have the lowest incomes. North Utica and South Utica show the highest, by a large margin.

Utica and the surrounding region, whose employment history was based on a manufacturing economy for many decades, has suffered greatly as its largest employers downsized, realigned, or closed completely, including Lockheed-Martin and the Griffiss Air Force Base in the 1990s. Manufacturing jobs

gave way to lower-paid service sector jobs, which partially accounts for Utica's low household income. The population decline in age groups in their prime earning years also contributes to the City's and neighborhoods' low median household incomes.



The Age of Housing Table illustrates the age of housing stock in the region, City, and neighborhoods. While the majority of the housing stock in all areas was built before 1950—mostly before 1940—the census figures indicate that the region has a higher proportion of newer housing stock compared to both the City and neighborhoods—nearly 38% of the housing stock in Oneida-Herkimer Counties was built in 1960 or after, compared with 18% for the City. Again, North Utica appears to have the newest housing stock, while Cornhill and West Utica have the largest proportion of the oldest housing stock.

|                           | East Utica | West Utica | North Utica | South Utica | Downtown | Cornhill | City of Utica | Utica-Rome MSA |
|---------------------------|------------|------------|-------------|-------------|----------|----------|---------------|----------------|
| Constructed Prior to 1939 | 35.5%      | 61.1%      | 11.2%       | 37.5%       | 48.6%    | 63.4%    | 33.5%         | 38.2%          |
| 1940 - 1949               | 11.2%      | 17.2%      | 12.0%       | 15.3%       | 10.8%    | 19.1%    | 14.2%         | 9.2%           |
| 1950 - 1959               | 12.4%      | 11.1%      | 32.8%       | 14.5%       | 6.6%     | 10.8%    | 14.2%         | 14.8%          |
| 1960 - 1969               | 7.8%       | 6.2%       | 30.8%       | 9.6%        | 9.2%     | 4.2%     | 9.2%          | 10.9%          |
| 1970 - 1979               | 4.0%       | 2.6%       | 7.5%        | 2.8%        | 20.2%    | 1.6%     | 4.5%          | 10.0%          |
| 1980 - 1989               | 4.0%       | 1.1%       | 3.2%        | 3.4%        | 2.0%     | 0.5%     | 2.9%          | 8.8%           |
| 1990 - 1994               | 1.8%       | 0.1%       | 1.9%        | 0.3%        | 0.3%     | 0.0%     | 0.7%          | 4.7%           |
| 1995 - 1999               | 1.2%       | 0.2%       | 0.7%        | 0.1%        | 0.3%     | 0.0%     | 0.8%          | 2.6%           |

## POLICE DEPARTMENT

The following chart illustrates a snapshot of Utica's crime rates relative to the Utica-MSA and New York State levels. Violent crimes include murder, forcible rape, robbery, and assault. Property crimes include burglary, motor vehicle theft, and larceny. The data below has been collected from Crime in the United States (CIUS) an annual publication in which the FBI compiles volume and rate of crime offenses for the nation, the states, and individual agencies. It is important to note the following disclaimer from the Federal Bureau of Investigation: "Each year when Crime in the United States is published, some entities use reported figures to compile rankings of cities and counties. These rough rankings provide no insight into the numerous variables that mold crime in a particular town, city, county, state, or region. Consequently, they lead to simplistic and/or incomplete analyses that often create misleading perceptions adversely affecting communities and their residents. Valid assessments are possible only with careful study and analysis of the range of unique conditions affecting each local law enforcement jurisdiction. The data user is, therefore, cautioned against comparing statistical data of individual reporting units from cities, metropolitan areas, states, or colleges or universities solely on the basis of their population coverage or student enrollment."

Overall, the data suggests that Utica has both a real and perceived crime issue. The data indicate that both the violent crime and the property crime rates are higher per thousand for Utica than the Utica-Rome MSA and New York State. While these statistics indicate a crime issue within Utica, it is important to note that interviews with the police chief indicate that these issues do not hold for downtown; the biggest issue downtown is panhandling. While panhandling is not a serious crime, it does significantly contribute to Utica's perception as a high crime community and turns people away from visiting downtown. More serious crime issues are regularly surfacing in the City's neighborhoods. Recently, the Police Department has been using strategically located cameras to deter crime in the "Hot Spots". These cameras are often moved in

response to information gathered from the community's reporting of "Hot Spots" on the department's web page. While the cameras have proven to be effective in deterring crime, more cameras are needed. It will be important that the City continue to aggressively address these crime issues as the City strives to reestablish itself as a regional destination to live, work and play.

The Utica Police Department provides for the safety and security of City residents. The Department consists of a total of 185 personnel (based on a July 16, 2009 interview with the Police Chief). While bike and foot patrols have been used in the past, recent budget constraints have limited the department's ability to activate these services. Horse patrols have recently been eliminated because of the costs associated with the program. The department has discussed the purchase of a new Mobile Command Post service to be used as a crime suppression and deterrence vehicle, as well as for staging and deployment of a public relations tool. Space needs continue to be an issue for the Department, which is located in a building built in 1927. In addition to additional space needs, the building needs a new HVAC system, has significant plumbing issues, and water frequently leaks into the basement of the building during rain storms.

If the City is to rebuild its image as the place for people seeking a culturally rich, economically successful and environmentally friendly place to live, visit, and conduct business, then reducing crime, both real and perceived, will be a top priority for the City to continue to address. This need to address the crime in the City ought to involve a coordinated approach between the Police Department, the Codes Department, the Parks Department and the Department of Public Works: people see broken streetlights, dark parking lots, empty and/or dilapidated streets, and unkempt parks as signs of a City in decay.

Generally, people like to be in the presence of other people. Where public activity occurs, public safety concerns are generally reduced. Creating a comfortable public realm is fundamental to generating activity, particularly downtown. While budget constraints have

limited the Police Department's ability to have active bike, foot and horse patrols, efforts ought to be made to re-establish these services throughout the City as a mechanism to reconnect the people of the community with the police department.

## **FIRE DEPARTMENT**

The Utica Fire Department protects 65,000 residents in 17.5 square miles, 4 Engine companies, 2 truck companies (one being a Tower Ladder/Quint), 2 light duty Advanced Life Support (ALS) Squad companies, 1 Tactical Unit, and a deputy chief respond from 6 stations. The total complement is 130 members. All members with the exception of the Chief, are members of the International Association of Firefighters (IAFF) local 32 and NYSPPFA.

Engine and truck companies are normally staffed with 1 officer and 2 firefighters; and the Squads and Tactical Unit are staffed with 1 officer and 1 firefighter. The citywide commander (car 202) is a deputy chief. All engines are manned with at least one EMT at all times and all apparatus are equipped with automatic defibrillators. # 1 Truck and Tactical Unit 2 carry jaws of life, air bags, blocking and other extrication equipment. The Squads are Advanced Life Support (ALS) response units, staffed by Level III and/or Paramedics. The Utica Fire Department has provided first response BLS and ALS service since 1980. Transport is provided by a private ambulance service.

Dispatching is done from the City's 911 communications center at police headquarters. City firefighters and Oneida County 911 dispatch personnel handle all dispatching functions for the department.

Hazardous Material Emergencies are handled by the fire departments HAZ-MAT team. The HAZ-MAT team utilizes a 1998 25' custom designed trailer, pulled by a 1999 Chevrolet Suburban. The trailer is housed at station 3 on Mohawk Street.

The Utica Fire Department is also responsible for maintenance and repair of all traffic signals in the City of Utica. Two linemen utilize 2 utility

lift vehicles, car 210 and car 211, to perform these duties.

While the City's Fire Department provides high quality, responsive service to the community, many of the facilities in which the department operates are old and do not accommodate much of today's modern equipment. A study was completed several years ago to consolidate several stations with a new station that could service Utica as well as surrounding communities.

The intent was to create a regional public safety facility that would include space for police and ambulance services. A new facility would allow for centralized purchasing with adjoining communities, training facilities, and a centralized mechanic shop to service equipment (that would reduce duplicative services). As existing buildings continue to age and new equipment is added, the City of Utica should continue to build resources to accommodate this continued need.

## **UTICA SCHOOLS**

The responsibility of the Utica Public School System is to help every student develop their interests and abilities to their full potential. There are a total of twelve schools in the system. As of 2008-09, the nine elementary schools had 4,459 students and an average class size of 20.2 students. Two middle schools have a total of 2,034 students and the high school has an enrollment of 2,578 students. The school system also includes vocational training at the high school level and adult learning opportunities.

The Utica City School District, as a part of the \$187.6 million Facilities Capital Improvement Project approved by the District's voters in July 2008, is currently renovating three elementary schools: Albany Elementary School, General Herkimer Elementary School, and Jefferson Elementary School.

The project at Albany Elementary School will consist of significant site improvement work including a new parking area and bus loop, reconstructed parking and parent drop-off and pick-up areas; a small classroom addition at the front of the building; a stair addition at the rear



neighborhoods and enhance the strategic planning initiatives among the various organizations already rebuilding Utica's neighborhoods.

#### CASE STUDY

*Food policy councils (FPCs) typically operate at the city or county level, sometimes in collaboration with government and community members and sometimes as a nongovernmental advocacy group. They often include experts in health, farming, planning, education, and food access. The Portland/Mulnomah County Food Policy Council in Oregon exemplifies a "strong" version of a FPC in that it seeks to develop policy and advise government in policy implementation. In Portland, the FPC interfaces directly with a city official who coordinates programs related to urban agriculture and local food. Portland describes its food systems planning efforts in two reports: Diggable City (2005), which includes an inventory of the City's available vacant land and a map of the City color-coded by how its zoning affects urban agriculture, and Food Cartology (2008), which explains the benefits of street food and includes design requirements for food carts.*

## **MASTER PLAN GOALS & STRATEGIES FOR HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT**

Central to this section of Housing and Neighborhood Development is to provide improved access to employment prospects while creating enhanced asset building opportunities, particularly home ownership. Many of the goals and action strategies outlined here are intended to develop leadership skills within the neighborhoods and enhance the strategic planning initiatives among the various organizations already rebuilding Utica's neighborhoods. The goals and strategies outlined below are a reflection of the City's commitment to invest resources in a manner that is consistent with the City's vision to be the place for people seeking a culturally rich, economically successful, and environmentally friendly place to live, visit, and conduct business.

Given the fiscal crisis now facing the City of Utica, and most other Upstate New York urban centers, public resources need to be carefully targeted to leverage nonprofit and foundation funding along with private capital in the effort to rebuild and sustain neighborhoods.

**GOAL 1: WITH A LOW OF 13.8% AND HIGH OF 79.7%, AS FOUND IN THE HOUSING OCCUPANCY AND TENURE CHART, THE GOAL IS TO INCREMENTALLY INCREASE THE PERCENTAGE OF OWNER OCCUPIED STRUCTURES IN NEIGHBORHOODS WHERE THERE IS THE GREATEST POTENTIAL AND NEED SUCH AS:**

- **EAST UTICA**
- **WEST UTICA**
- **CORNHILL**

### **Implementation Strategies:**

- Promote first time home-buyer education
- Aggressively market tax incentives for newly constructed homes
- The City will require that the purchase of city-owned residential properties, located in residential districts of the city, will be by property owners who will live in the residence
- Provide owner occupied exemptions to perform housing rehabilitation work on their residential properties

- The City will offer incentive programs to promote homeownership city-wide and tailored to the neighborhood
- Expand the City's existing tax incentive program to include homes purchased from the city
- Use HOME grant funding to provide housing rehabilitation assistance for homes that are for sale to first time homebuyers
- Develop Purchase-Rehab Loans for owner-occupied home buyers
- Develop 60% grant – 40% Loan Program for current owner-occupied homeowners to help them remain in their current home
- Work with housing agencies that provide services to Utica residents to develop the incentive programs
- Institute a Community Incentive District (CID) grant or loan program

**GOAL 2: THE CITY WILL CREATE AND ADOPT A MIXED INCOME HOUSING MODEL, PROVIDING GREATER ACCESS TO A DIVERSITY OF HOUSING OPTIONS WITHIN EACH NEIGHBORHOOD FOR PEOPLE OF ALL AGES AND INCOME LEVELS.**

### **Implementation Strategies:**

- Evaluate various mixed income housing models
- Create a citizen/expert panel, including participation of MHA, to research current mixed income housing models and present options to the City
- Enforce strict residential zoning that does not adversely affect the current fabric of the neighborhood
- Institute a subsidized housing plan

**GOAL 3: HAVE ALL PROPERTIES MEET PREVAILING CODE THROUGH UTILIZATION OF CITIZEN BASED AND COMMUNITY BASED IMPROVEMENT DISTRICTS.**

### **Implementation Strategies:**

- Study the regulation, enforcement and implementation of city codes and contractor licensing

- The City will offer incentive programs for housing/codes compliance that are city-wide and tailored to neighborhoods.
- Develop programs (ex: Codes Enforcement Volunteer Program) which will train citizens in codes regulations, to assist residents with maintenance of properties
- Codes officials will attend all neighborhood meetings on a consistent basis
- Educate residents about how to improve their properties and their neighborhoods
- Build on the existing Association for Block Coalitions and community empowerment programs – expand into underrepresented neighborhoods

**GOAL 4: THE CITY WILL PROMOTE GREEN BUILDING & HOME REHABILITATION IN ITS NEIGHBORHOODS BY INCORPORATING LEADERSHIP IN ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN (LEED) FOR NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES**

**Implementation Strategies:**

- Foster and promote dialogue about green building issues among public and private design and construction professionals and other experts
- Examine key barriers to sustainable design and construction and develop consensus recommendations on how to overcome these barriers
- Promote widespread incorporation of sustainable design practices and technologies into all city government construction
- Provide Education and Training
- Support education and training of key design and construction personnel and a broad outreach program through partnerships with academic institutions, utilities, professional associations, and other sources of expertise
- Facilitate awareness of and access to grants, loans, and other green building financial and/or technical assistance that are or may become available

**GOAL 5: INCREASE THE NUMBER OF DOWNTOWN RESIDENTS BY 10%.**

**Implementation Strategies:**

- Increase the quality of life by offering downtown amenities that includes sufficient public transportation
- Utilize small open areas not suitable for building or parking as “Green Spaces” within the downtown area for small pocket parks
- Develop individual marketing plans to attract specific populations to (ex: college students) to downtown

**GOAL 6: TO ENHANCE PERSONAL SAFETY, IMPROVE MOBILITY ALONG NEIGHBORHOOD STREETS AND FOSTER OPPORTUNITIES FOR A HEALTHY COMMUNITY.**

**Implementation Strategies:**

- Adopt “Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design” (CPTED) for the City, detailing action plans for each neighborhood
- Educate residents and provide workshops on CPTED concepts through the Neighborhood Block Associations
- Conduct a comprehensive lighting survey of residential streets and develop a plan to replace ineffective traditional lighting with new directional lighting
- Conduct a survey of streets and develop a plan to repair and/or replace pavement as necessary
- Association meetings, community town hall type meetings, and other venues (look at merging strategies)
- The City will emphasize the importance of and promote healthy life styles in neighborhood development
- Ensure that sidewalks are pedestrian friendly
- Adopt policies and regulations that foster healthy living as outlined by the Centers for Disease Control’s Healthy Communities Program
- Complete the signage installation of the Utica Bike Loop
- Establish a Utica Bicycle & Pedestrian Committee (UBPC) that will also work cooperatively with the Oneida-Herkimer

Counties Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Committee

- The UBPC, in cooperation with the City, will develop, publish & distribute bicycle and pedestrian route maps to city residents and adjoining communities to encourage exercise
- The UBPC will coordinate with local transit companies to facilitate access (ex: bike rack installation on transit vehicles, bus route coordination) to bicycle/pedestrian trails
- Develop the proposed “Urban Trail”
- Establish a new Community Park at the Kemble Street property

### **GOAL 7: TO EMPHASIZE THE ATTRIBUTES OF NEIGHBORHOODS THAT ENHANCES THEIR ATTRACTIVENESS AND USEFULNESS.**

#### **Implementation Strategies:**

- Promote neighborhood commercial/retail development that positively affects the current fabric of the Neighborhood
- Review codes/zoning ordinance to ensure compliance
- Work with neighborhood block associations and other neighborhood groups to identify unique uses of vacant buildings within certain districts of the city
- Enforce strict residential zoning that does not adversely affect the current fabric of the neighborhood
- Promote the development of community gardening and urban agriculture in neighborhoods
- Work with neighborhood block associations and other neighborhood groups to identify vacant land that can be utilized for this purpose
- Establish relationships with local restaurants to purchase fruit and vegetables from the community gardens
- Consider establishing a Food Policy Council (FPC) to foster community-wide implementation and development of urban agriculture
- Work with Utica City School District and local colleges to establish and maintain the community gardens

- Work with neighborhood block associations and other neighborhood groups

### **GOAL 8: PROMOTE COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT AND DIVERSITY AND STRENGTHEN THE VOICE, ENGAGEMENT, AND LEADERSHIP OF NEIGHBORHOOD RESIDENTS AND COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS.**

#### **Implementation Strategies:**

- Provide support to build sustainable Neighborhood Associations, Block Coalitions, and community empowerment programs in all neighborhoods city-wide
- Explore funding sources such as CDBG dollars, CID districts, etc.
- Work cooperatively among residents, municipal departments, and not-for-profits fundraising activities
- Provide seminars/workshops for leadership training, community development, code enforcement, and public safety
- Representatives from Codes, Public Safety, and the Utica Common Council will attend neighborhood meetings on a consistent basis in their respective districts to learn of community needs and opportunities
- Neighborhood Associations will send notices to the City of Utica announcing schedules for upcoming meetings and specify recommended municipal representation
- City of Utica will notify requested representatives to attend meetings in their respective districts.
- Neighborhood Associations will work with the City of Utica to maintain current scheduled meetings on the City’s website page for Community Monthly Meeting Notices
- Outreach and education will be in a culturally and linguistically appropriate manner in cooperation with appropriate organizations such as: the Mohawk Valley Resource Center For Refugees, local ethnic associations, BOCES NYSED Literacy Zones, MAMI (Multicultural Association of Medical

Interpreter), and the regional Literacy Coalition

- Encourage and support the establishment of CID's (Community Improvement Districts) tailored to Neighborhoods citywide. \*see Appendix of Programs

### **GOAL 9: REDUCE/ELIMINATE DETERIORATED INFRASTRUCTURE AND BLIGHT.**

#### **Implementation Strategies:**

- Establish vacant building registry program and utilize the associated fees and fines
- Create a land bank program to efficiently hold, manage and develop tax-foreclosed property
- Develop a Brownfield Opportunity Area and Brownfield Inventory with NYS Department of State Programming dollars

### **GOAL 10: ENCOURAGE AND STRENGTHEN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE UTICA SCHOOL DISTRICT AND THE CITY OF UTICA. BY CREATING OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVED COMMUNICATION AND COORDINATION OF PUBLIC RESOURCES.**

#### **Implementation Strategies:**

- Coordinate semi-annual joint meetings involving the Common Council and the Board of Education to discuss common issues and opportunities for collaboration
- Designate a member of the Department of Urban and Economic Development as a representative to participate in and/or be a liaison between the City and the School District to enhance communication
- Host an annual meeting with all of the schools' PTA presidents and representative from the Student Council
- Develop a city wide public-safety plan focused on school-age children

### **GOAL 11: PROVIDE THE HIGHEST LEVEL OF PUBLIC SAFETY SERVICES FOR THE RESIDENTS OF UTICA.**

#### **Implementation Strategies:**

- Perform a shared services consolidation study to understand how emergency services, particularly fire and EMS, could be shared with neighboring communities
- Develop a long range plan for the construction of new, strategically located public safety buildings
- Continue to search for funding to construct a new emergency services facility to house modern equipment, a centralized mechanic shop and centralized purchasing for emergency services
- Coordinate the development and implementation a Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) program to create a safer environment
- Establish a city-wide public safety plan



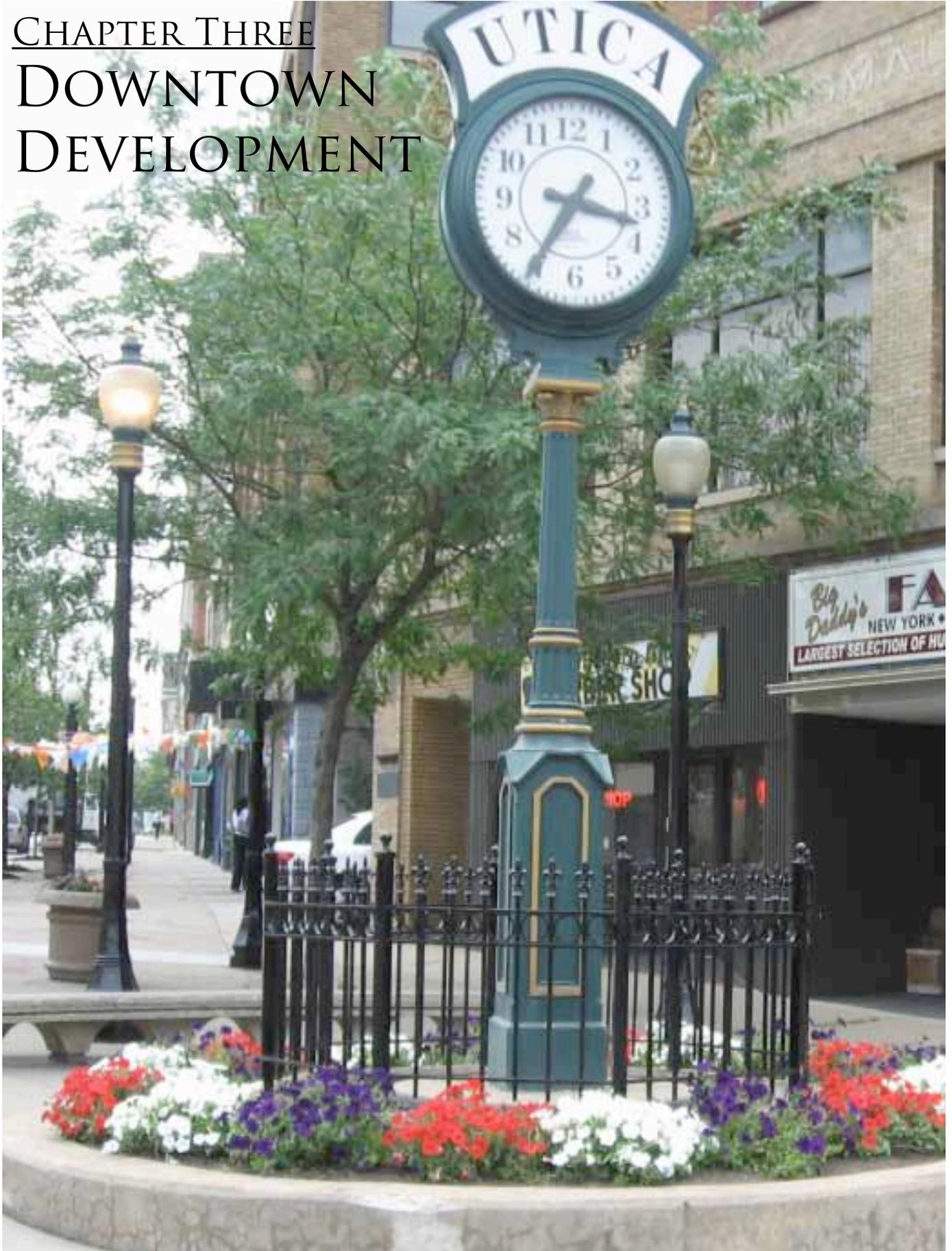
Existing Park Aerial



# **Kemble Street Park**

- Neighborhood Community Center
- Skate Park
- Playground
- Open fields

CHAPTER THREE  
DOWNTOWN  
DEVELOPMENT



## DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT

Across the country, people are moving back into downtown areas. Studies across the country are finding that cities are more attractive because they are vibrant places. A report by the Harvard Business School's Initiative for a Competitive Inner City tracked 100 urban areas and found that the influx of people has boosted these core areas. The study found that median household incomes rose faster than the national average and poverty fell faster as well. These and other statistics illustrate the promise of cities. This happens in cities with vibrant downtowns. People enjoy being amidst the culture, services, and historic architecture of urban places. More and more businesses, especially those in the creative and knowledge industries, move to cities because that is where they can find the workers they need.

One important challenge facing Utica and its downtown is the regional economy. As a whole, central New York continues to lose population. Through the master planning process, Utica residents and business leaders have described a vision for the city's future that builds on the architectural character and diversity of downtown. For many in Utica, the success of downtown is the foundation for further success within the City's other neighborhoods. This vision is one that enhances the quality of life for existing residents as well as creates an attractive place for new residents, visitors, and businesses. Boosting historic and cultural resources located in downtown will serve to help strengthen Utica as a more exciting place for people and businesses. Downtown can also be a core of sustainability, a significant element of this Master Plan. Although a city street seems an odd place to protect the environment, it offers many opportunities to reduce stress on a region's ecosystem. This is particularly true if the road network is designed to include bio-swaales and permeable pavements as well as bike and pedestrian amenities.

There are many challenges that were identified during the master planning process including lack of a common "brand" for downtown, threats to historic character, lack of market rate units to

attract downtown residents, perceptions of poor safety, and zoning that works against traditional forms. The city, business improvement district, and local merchants already strive to overcome some of these hurdles. Still, in a community such as Utica, which is located in a generally sluggish region of Central New York, these challenges must be dealt with over the long-term.



The bottom line is that Utica's downtown needs to become an interesting, safe and easy place to move around. Downtown success in the 21st century requires that places be pedestrian-oriented. Cars are not going away soon, but in too many places the transit balance has shifted to favor automobiles over walkers. This has proved to be one of the most environmentally and economically unsustainable problems for cities around the nation.



People like to window shop – walking from store to store – as long as the experience is comfortable, interesting and safe. A fun and engaging place will get people out of their cars. That same kind of place can become a destination for regional residents and even travelers on their way to places beyond Utica. Realizing this, many private developers now build “town center” developments to attract shoppers – trying to recreate what Utica has already on its Genesee Street. Utica has the potential to capture travelers along the Thruway to points east and west. Further, Utica is a gateway community to the Adirondacks. Opportunities not only exist to bring highway travelers into the City, but also canal boat travelers.

The statistics show that such a strategy bears economic fruit. In 2005, an International Council of Shopping Centers survey found that customers spent an average of \$57.50 an hour in enclosed shopping malls versus an average of \$84.00 an hour in town center developments.

In some ways, downtown Utica could take a lesson from the most successful new retail developments.

### **DOWNTOWN RETAIL OPPORTUNITIES**

To identify retail opportunities in Utica’s Downtown area, sales leakage analysis was conducted to help determine in which retail categories Downtown Utica is strong and where it is losing potential sales. A Leakage Analysis looks at a variety of merchandise categories and determines if the shopping district is capturing its full retail sales potential. This is done by comparing demand, in terms of consumer expenditures, and supply, in terms of retail sales, within the trade area. Consumer expenditures were taken from the Consumer Expenditure Survey published by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, while retail sales were derived from the Census of Retail Trade published by the U.S. Economic Census. For goods that are not readily available within the identified trade area, or when a greater selection and/or better prices are available elsewhere, residents will travel outside the area to make purchases. When purchases are made outside the area and merchants capture the expenditures that

local residents, businesses, or employees could otherwise have made with local merchants, this is called a “leakage.” When non-residents, businesses or employees outside the local area make purchases from local businesses, this is called an “injection of retail sales.” When retail sales exceed what local residents, businesses and employees expended, this indicates a “surplus,” meaning that local merchants have captured sales from consumers outside the local area. A “leakage” indicates an opportunity for a specific merchandise line or retail type, while a “surplus” indicates that the local need is already being met and that there is possible saturation for a specific retail type or merchandise line.

#### **CASE STUDY: BUILDING A SUCCESSFUL DOWNTOWN**

*One of the most successful new downtown developments is in Mashpee, Massachusetts, where developers created a true downtown called Mashpee Commons. “We felt we could have an impact,” says Douglas Storrs, one of the developers, who is trained as an environmental planner. “We had seen what had happened to commercial patterns on Cape Cod, and we didn’t want to exacerbate the problems of poor planning in the past.”*

*Mashpee Commons follows typical downtown designs with sidewalks, comfortable pedestrian envelopes to separate pedestrians from cars, and engaging facades to generate customer interest. The layout makes it enjoyable to walk amongst the more than 80 shops and restaurants arrayed along a small network of streets. The buildings are all built right up to the sidewalk allowing window shopping and easy walks.*

*At first, Storrs admits, national chains eyed Mashpee Commons warily. To woo a hesitant Gap, the developers offered to build out the store and to take a portion of the sales revenue instead of rent. In essence, Storrs explains, it cost Gap nothing to move in. “In a year, Gap was doing so well that it was paying the highest rent in Mashpee Commons.” Since then, the clothing store has quadrupled in size to occupy 12,000 square feet on two floors. According to Storrs, the chain’s experience in Mashpee encouraged it to open stores in downtown areas elsewhere. Today, most of the national chain stores are represented at Mashpee Commons.*

Residents within a 1-mile radius from the Intersection of Genesee Street and Columbia Street spent almost \$166.60 million, while retailers sold over \$276.85 million. This indicates that Downtown Utica is able to draw customers from outside the Downtown area. Within a 3-mile radius from the Intersection of Genesee Street and Columbia Street, residents spent approximately \$954.85 million, while retailers sold a total of \$1,052.50 million. Retailers and services within a 3-mile radius of Downtown Utica captured sales of over \$97.64 million from consumers outside this trade area, which covers the entire City of Utica. These two trade areas indicate opportunities for Downtown Utica with the appropriate businesses.

The Leakage Analysis shows there are opportunities for all types of Food and Beverage Stores within Downtown Utica and the City of Utica. These stores include Supermarkets and Grocery Stores; Convenience Stores; and Beer, Wine and Liquor Stores. In 2008, Downtown residents spent \$24.6 million in groceries, while City of Utica residents spent almost \$120.5 million, while existing grocers and supermarkets sold around \$105.3 million. The majority of the opportunity exists in Downtown Utica, indicating the need for a smaller-footprint supermarket or grocery store. Opportunities exist for Cosmetics, Beauty Supplies, Perfume Stores; and Other Health and Personal Care Stores, which include services such as nail shops, hair salons, barbers, tanning salons, and day spas. There are substantial opportunities for all types of Clothing and Clothing Accessories Stores. These include Men's, Women's, Children's and Infants, Family and Clothing Accessories Stores, and Other Clothing Stores. There are also opportunities for Jewelry Stores. These types of stores are staples for many downtown shopping districts and would help draw customers to Downtown Utica.

The Leakage Analysis indicates that there are not enough stores related to Sporting Goods, Hobby, Book, and Music Stores within Downtown Utica. This indicates a substantial opportunity for such types of stores to relocate to downtown. The types of stores that fall under this category include Sporting Goods Stores; Hobby, Toys and Games Stores;

Sewing/Needlework/Piece Goods Stores; Musical Instruments and Supplies Stores; and News Dealers and Newsstands. These types of stores would thrive in Downtown Utica due to the demand shown in the leakage analysis for the 1-mile, 3-mile, and 10-mile radii.

|                                       | 1-Mile Radius | 3-Mile Radius | 10-Mile Radius |
|---------------------------------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|
| Total Consumer Expenditures           | \$166,594 M   | \$954,847 M   | \$2,198,419 M  |
| Total Retail Sales                    | \$276,851 M   | \$1,052,488 M | \$2,423,781 M  |
| Total Retail Opportunity Gap/ Surplus | (110,257 M)   | (97,641 M)    | \$225,261 M    |

The Retail Opportunity Gap analysis shows that there are opportunities for more *Full Service Restaurants* and *Limited-Service Eating Places*. The analysis also shows that the needs of residents are being met for *Special Food Services* and *Drinking Places* such as bars and taverns. While these types of establishments have drawn customers from outside the Downtown Area and the City of Utica, it is important to continue building a cluster of such food service and dining places to help support other retail categories and create a destination in Downtown Utica.

### OPPORTUNITIES FOR NEW RESTAURANTS IN UTICA

The NPD Group, a worldwide market research company, reports that despite 2007's weak economic conditions, the restaurant industry remained stable for most of 2008 with visits and earnings higher than 2007, but with traffic and earnings dipping in the fourth quarter due to the worsening economic crisis.

Experts believe that consumers will not abandon restaurants and dining completely – they will just be more cost-conscious in their choices. "There will be no recession in eating; there will just be winners and losers. The restaurants that deliver value and make it easy to get food cheaper, in new and compelling ways, will win."

While national trends seem to favor chains, ethnic and independent restaurants in Downtown Utica could thrive under this situation. Following the model set by quick-

service restaurants, these small independents could capture the dining public through a variety of strategies. These include aggressive marketing, providing affordable choices with ambience, and offering promotions and discounts that draw the cost-conscious diner.

| Potential Spending on Food Away from Home<br>(Sources: Consumer Expenditure Survey 2007, Analysis by Saratoga Associates) |                      |                                  |
|---|----------------------|----------------------------------|
|   | Number of Households | Potential Spending Power (\$000) |
| Downtown Utica  | 3,705                | \$10,907                         |
| City of Utica   | 26,178               | \$75,230                         |
| Utica-Rome MSA  | 294,731              | \$847,057                        |

The Consumer Expenditure Survey shows that the typical American household in the Northeast spent an average of \$2,874 in 2007 on food away from home. Based on this data, downtown residents have the potential to spend approximately \$10.9 million on food away from home, while city residents as a whole have the ability to spend over \$75.2 million on dining outside the home. Households within the Utica-Rome MSA (Metropolitan Statistical Area) have the potential to spend over \$847.0 million on food away from home.

Downtown restaurants have the potential to draw over 7,700 customers from the City of Utica alone based on household income profile, with special focus on households earning over \$50,000 per year. Demographic data also shows that there are almost 13,500 residents in the 35 – 54 age cohorts. While other age cohorts could potentially be restaurant customers as well, mid-lifers, or those within the 35 – 54, age cohort have the highest levels of disposable income and highest levels of restaurant usage.

| Profile of Potential Restaurant Customers |                               |                               |
|---|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
|   | City of Utica                 | Utica-Rome MSA                |
| Residents 25 - 54                         | 13,504<br>24.3% of population | 82,847<br>28.1% of population |
| Household Income:                         |                               |                               |
| • \$50,000 - \$74,999                     | 1,738<br>14.2% of households  | 24,556<br>19.4% of households |
| • \$75,000+                               | 2,972<br>15.2% of households  | 31,209<br>24.3% of households |

(Source: Eschenberg Associates 2008; Analysis by Saratoga Associates)

## DOWNTOWN AREA HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES

Despite the nationwide housing crisis, downtown living is thriving in urban areas across the United States. According to Christopher Leinberger, an urban planning professor at the University of Michigan and visiting fellow at the Brookings Institution, “the American dream is absolutely changing.” Shifting lifestyles, rising gas prices, and long commutes have changed developers’ focus on accommodating the growing number of empty-nesters, baby boomers, young singles, and couples who are looking for housing close to downtown and/or major transportation corridors. Across the country, many households are choosing to trade life in suburbia for the convenience of denser and revitalized neighborhoods. This allows for a greater variety of and better access to jobs, a wide range of shopping, restaurants, cultural amenities, entertainment, and services, as well as easy access to public transit and shorter work commutes.

This shift to downtown living is reflected in a recent survey of real estate agents with Coldwell Banker. The survey indicates that 78 percent of prospective home buyers are now more inclined to live in an urban area, due to high fuel prices. This demand has subsequently spurred much investment in downtowns over the past several years. U.S. Census Bureau statistics show that Houston, Seattle, Chicago, Denver, Portland, Atlanta, Memphis, and San Diego all experienced greater percentage increases in their downtown populations than in their entire urban areas over the past decade. Other cities, including Cleveland, Baltimore, Philadelphia, and Detroit incurred downtown population increases while losing population as a whole.

New lofts, condominiums and apartments have emerged to cater to this rising demand for downtown living. For example, in downtown Nashville, Tennessee, the number of residential units jumped from 1,380 to 2,146 units between 2001 and 2007, an increase of over 55 percent. In the same location, the number of condominiums in the housing stock grew from 15 percent in 2003 to 35 percent of all housing units in 2006. This indicates the significant

demand for such detached units in downtown Nashville.

Downtown Utica and its adjoining neighborhoods have an unusually high percentage of rental units. Over 77 percent of all units in the Downtown area are rental. These areas are also experiencing a very high vacancy rate, with 18 percent of all units vacant in 2008. Vacancy is higher with rental units than with for-sale units. High vacancy rates the Downtown area indicates the need to renovate vacant structures and convert these to housing unit types that may be more attractive to potential new residents.

The Zimmerman/Volk housing study identified the need for market-rate housing units that include lofts/apartments with leaseholder and condominium/co-op ownership arrangements and for-sale townhouses/rowhouses for Downtown Utica. Household growth, despite population decline during the first decade of the 21st century, indicates a trend towards smaller households in Downtown Utica. Potential target market segments for Downtown housing include single professionals, young couples with no children, empty-nesters, active seniors and young retirees.

Vacancy in the City of Utica at 12.2 percent, while still considered high, is typical of vacancy rates throughout the Utica-Rome MSA. Reflective of trends in many urban areas, the City of Utica has an almost even distribution between owner-occupied and renter-occupied housing. Over 51 percent of occupied units in the City of Utica are owner-occupied, while almost 49 percent are renter-occupied.

Housing trends in the Utica-Rome MSA in its entirety are typical of rural and suburban areas, with a higher percentage of owner-occupied units than renter-occupied units. Almost 71 percent of all occupied units in the region are owner-occupies, while just over 29 percent are renter-occupied.

Downtown Utica has an unusually high percentage of structures with more than 50 units per structure, as evidenced in the chart. This could be attributed to public housing administered by the Municipal Housing

Authority (MHA). The Municipal Housing Authority website lists 9 public housing developments in the City of Utica.

| Units in Structure<br>(Source: Esri/Demographics 2008) |                |               |                |
|--|----------------|---------------|----------------|
|  | Downtown Utica | City of Utica | Utica-Rome MSA |
| 1-unit, detached                                       | 18.1%          | 41.1%         | 62.7%          |
| 1-unit, attached                                       | 1.6%           | 1.8%          | 1.4%           |
| 2-units  | 15.8%          | 26.9%         | 11.8%          |
| 3 - 4 units  | 17.3%          | 12.7%         | 6.4%           |
| 5 - 9 units  | 11.2%          | 4.8%          | 3.3%           |
| 10 - 19 units  | 7.6%           | 3.0%          | 1.8%           |
| 20 - 49 units  | 6.3%           | 3.0%          | 1.5%           |
| 50+ units  | 23.7%          | 6.3%          | 2.9%           |
| Trailer  | 0.4%           | 0.4%          | 0.2%           |
| Other structure  | 0.0%           | 0.0%          | 0.0%           |

The City of Utica is well positioned to capture demand for downtown living. Four major factors drive demand for housing in the City of Utica:

1. The immigrant population
2. High-technology
3. Arts, history, and culture
4. The City of Utica's urban setting

### THE IMMIGRANT POPULATION

With its rich industrial heritage, first as home of the textile industry in the late 19th century and later with the tool and die industry in the early 20th century, the City of Utica was home to a population of over 100,000 from 1930 to 1960. Population declined over the next decades with the demise of these manufacturing industries. The arrival of new immigrants starting in the late 1970's has reportedly stanching the population decline.

### HIGH TECHNOLOGY AND KNOWLEDGE-BASED RESOURCES

The City of Utica has the advantage of having a cluster of higher-educational institutions. There are several knowledge-based resources in the City of Utica and the Utica-Rome MSA that could drive demand for housing in Downtown Utica. These educational resources include Utica College, the State University of New York Institute of Technology, Pratt at Munson-Williams-Proctor Arts Institute, the Mohawk Valley Community College, and the Utica

School of Commerce. Colleges and educational institutions in the region include Hamilton College in Clinton, New York; Herkimer County Community College in Herkimer County, New York; and Colgate University in Hamilton, New York. Leveraging the strengths of these academic resources is important in bringing about economic revitalization. These area colleges and universities provide technology-related courses that could leverage new industries with higher-paying jobs, which could drive demand for housing in the City of Utica. The key is to provide an environment that will be attractive to high-tech workers and companies.

### ARTS, HISTORY AND CULTURE

The City of Utica is distinguishing itself for its arts, history, and culture. The City has established Scenic and Historic Preservation Districts, that include Genesee Street from the New Hartford town line to Water Street at the railroad tracks; an eastern extension off Genesee Street including areas around South and Rutger streets, Park Avenue and Steuben Park; Pleasant Street and the Parkway east to Tilden Avenue; Herkimer Road in North Utica from Leland Avenue to the Schuyler town line; and in West Utica, an area known as “The Brewery District,” bordered roughly by Varick, Schuyler and Columbia streets.

### THE CITY OF UTICA’S URBAN SETTING

The City of Utica provides an urban setting that is often attractive to creative class workers: bohemian type artists, graphic designers, media workers, venture capitalists and consultants. Internationally renowned economic and social trend forecaster, Joel Kotkin, noted in his book, *The New Geography*, that revitalized inner cities are often characterized by a mixture of diversity, retail, art, and culture. These urban places have not only drawn the younger set of technology workers, but have also been attracting middle-aged, middle-class educated people.

Within the Mohawk Valley and Central New York, the City of Utica has the potential of attracting creative class urban dwellers, particularly singles, professionals, empty

nesters and retirees. In a *Place and Happiness* Survey conducted as research for his book, Richard Florida writes that urban dwellers “value their ability to meet new colleagues and make new friends; they prize their access to diverse cultural resources such as theaters, museums, art galleries, live music, and vibrant nightlife filled with bars, clubs, and restaurants.

They appreciate the availability of public transit. They also derive satisfaction from living in communities that are open to a wide range of groups – racial and ethnic minorities, immigrants, young people, and gays and lesbians...there are other incentives for living in cities: Some people trade their suburban house for an urban condo when the kids move away, or they decide to live closer to the city center.”

As shown in the Zimmerman/Volk Housing Study for the City of Utica, there are several market segments that could have interest in housing in Utica's Downtown area. These include:

> **Empty Nesters and Retirees:** These are older households, many with grown children, as well as retirees with incomes from pensions, investments, savings, and social security.

> **Traditional & Non-Traditional Families:** Non-traditional families include a wide variety of family households such as grandparents with children; single parents with children; and same sex couples with children. Traditional families are married couples with children.

> **Young Singles & Couples:** This market segment is comprised of younger, mostly childless couples that are attracted to urban neighborhoods that exhibit diversity, history, and culture, as well as singles.

> **New Immigrants & Minority Households:** These include individuals and households that have settled in the Mohawk Valley Region, whether new immigrants from Eastern Europe, Asia, or Latin America, as well as minority households looking to move into the region.

| Potential Pool of Homebuyers from the Utica-Rome MSA<br>(Source: Esdemographics 2008; Analysis by Saratoga Associates) |                         |                          |  |                         |                                 |
|--|-------------------------|--------------------------|--|-------------------------|---------------------------------|
|  | Income Needed to Afford | Empty Nesters & Retirees | Traditional & Non-Traditional Families | Young Singles & Couples | Immigrant & Minority Households |
| <b>Soft Lofts: 1- and 2-bedrooms</b>   |                         |                          |  |                         |                                 |
| First-Time Homebuyer   | \$25,100 to \$40,000    | 9,234                    | 21,502                                 | 5,330                   | 2,244                           |
| Non-first-time home-buyer  | \$30,000 to \$54,500    | 5,987                    | 14,978                                 | 3,338                   | 1,354                           |
| <b>Luxury Apartments: 2- and 3-bedrooms</b>  |                         |                          |  |                         |                                 |
| First-Time Homebuyer   | \$34,750 to \$91,000    | 7,458                    | 25,449                                 | 3,288                   | 1,091                           |
| Non-first-time home-buyer  | \$68,000 to \$95,000    | 7,491                    | 25,937                                 | 3,203                   | 1,078                           |
| <b>Townhouses: 2- and 3-bedrooms</b>   |                         |                          |  |                         |                                 |
| First-Time Homebuyer   | \$45,500 to \$78,500    | 10,653                   | 32,073                                 | 5,367                   | 1,914                           |
| Non-first-time home-buyer  | \$50,000 to \$88,000    | 8,202                    | 27,542                                 | 3,685                   | 1,223                           |

| Potential Pool of Renters from the Utica-Rome MSA<br>(Source: Esdemographics 2008; Analysis by Saratoga Associates) |                         |                          |  |                         |                                 |
|---|-------------------------|--------------------------|--|-------------------------|---------------------------------|
|   | Income Needed to Afford | Empty Nesters & Retirees | Traditional & Non-Traditional Families | Young Singles & Couples | Immigrant & Minority Households |
| <b>Hard Lofts: 1- and 3-bedrooms</b>  |                         |                          |  |                         |                                 |
| Hard Lofts: 1- and 3-bedrooms   | \$26,400 to \$50,400    | 14,518                   | 28,272                                 | 7,822                   | 3,044                           |
| <b>Soft Lofts: Studios to 3-Bedroom</b>   |                         |                          |  |                         |                                 |
| Soft Lofts: Studios to 3-Bedroom  | \$38,000 to \$89,600    | 10,667                   | 13,308                                 | 2,840                   | 1,155                           |

## **MASTER PLAN GOALS & STRATEGIES FOR DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT**

The goals and strategies outlined in Utica's Master Plan reflect an approach to strengthening downtown – one that recognizes the vital need for collaboration between public and private actions as a continuous and evolving process. The plan aims to identify general initiatives and specific projects that will maximize private investment while enhancing the public realm and Utica's fiscal stability.

### **GOAL 1: PROVIDE SAFE, COMFORTABLE AND EFFICIENT MULTI-MODAL CONNECTIVITY.**

#### **Implementation Strategies:**

- Develop a self-sufficient public parking strategy to accommodate future public and private development/redevelopment
- Visually link downtown providing common streetscape amenities while still allowing for improvements to express the unique attributes of the various districts
- Create a bicycle and pedestrian plan for on-street and off-street routes that connect key destinations and link to adjoining neighborhoods and regional trails, including the waterfront
- Ensure that the pedestrian links within downtown are accessible and well maintained
- Rejuvenate the Genesee Street and Oriskany Street corridors as boulevards
- Provide bike storage space.
- Develop a parking education and signage strategy for downtown
- Upgrade existing infrastructure to include environmentally sustainable technology and design into infrastructure reconstruction projects
- Implement Transportation Demand Management strategies to increase the efficiency of the transportation system

### **GOAL 2: PROVIDE A FRAMEWORK, GUIDELINES, AND ACTION PLAN FOR THE ARTS THAT WILL CONTRIBUTE TO CREATING A CULTURALLY DYNAMIC DOWNTOWN.**

- Market the downtown area as one suitable for arts and trades, as well as, a great place to live
- Allow for and encourage live/work space in appropriate areas and districts of the downtown
- Institute form-based code in downtown area
- Incorporate public art in all new construction downtown
- Market and encourage the development of a "Restaurant Row" that celebrates the diversity of the City's ethnicity

### **GOAL 3: IDENTIFY WAYS TO ENCOURAGE CREATIVE PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATIONS WORKING TO SUPPORT A DYNAMIC DOWNTOWN WITH AN ENTREPRENEURIAL SPIRIT.**

#### **Implementation Strategies:**

- Work with and support Utica College's efforts to create a museum and seminar space downtown
- Work with higher education institutions to create off-campus housing opportunities downtown
- Create a public safety and visitor assistance program for downtown to build an atmosphere of safety, friendliness and goodwill
- Develop a tourism marketing plan and a tourism-readiness training program for staff in tourism industries and downtown business owners
- Develop a program that integrates "green" building technologies in all buildings downtown, public and private alike
- Ensure a continuing dialogue between the City and the downtown businesses through DUDA

### **GOAL 4: ENSURE A SAFE DOWNTOWN ENVIRONMENT.**

#### **Implementation Strategies:**

- Create a public safety and visitor assistance program in Downtown to build an atmosphere of safety, friendliness and goodwill
- Implement "Safescape" principles to enhance sense of comfort and safety downtown

## **GOAL 5: RECOGNIZE DOWNTOWN AS A COMMUNITY GATHERING PLACE.**

### **Implementation Strategies:**

- Farmers' Market - Establish a high visibility permanent location that is easily accessible by the public
- Support an aggressive schedule for outdoor festivals and events
- New zoning should foster and encourage an environment for outdoor seating in front of restaurants at ground level

## **GOAL 6: FOSTER AN ENVIRONMENT FOR ECONOMIC VITALITY DOWNTOWN.**

### **Implementation Strategies:**

- Develop a brand identity for downtown
- Give Downtown locations the highest priority when siting City and government facilities which have significant employment or destination potential
- Develop a marketing plan to sustain a long-range marketing and communication plan to attract investment and talent to Downtown
- Offer a resource, perhaps through a BID (Business Improvement District), to help shop owners succeed
- Fill vacant storefronts with art or other signs of life
- Create a technology plan for downtown that is integrated into regional economic development plans and undertake a "Wireless Utica" initiative that ensures high-speed wireless Internet access is available throughout Downtown Utica
- Make a strong, visible connection between the Utica Auditorium and the commercial core
- Create a comprehensive system of signs to help pedestrians and motorists alike navigate Utica
- Identify and develop Downtown sub-districts that encourage development to radiate from existing prominent business and activity centers

## **GOAL 7: USE DOWNTOWN TO EXPRESS THE PRIDE OF UTICA RESIDENTS.**

### **Implementation Strategies:**

- Develop sign ordinance to create standards, which results in signs oriented to the pedestrian instead of the motor vehicle
- Use street banners to celebrate Utica
- Support ongoing efforts of existing organizations to promote civic and community events that foster community pride and promote Downtown Utica
- Foster and encourage opportunities to display public art downtown, potentially utilizing vacant storefronts
- Recognize the intersection of Genesee Street and Oriskany Street (Route 5) as a key gateway into downtown to welcome residents and visitors and redevelop the area to "Celebrate Utica"

## **GOAL 8: PROMOTE RESIDENTIAL AND MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT DOWNTOWN THAT IS CONSISTENT WITH UTICA'S HERITAGE AND ARCHITECTURE.**

### **Implementation Strategies:**

- Utilize local, state, federal and private dollars for the rehabilitation of historic buildings and buildings that contribute to Utica's historic character
- Develop design standards for that complement and enhance predominant use and architecture in each of downtowns neighborhoods and sub-districts
- Provide a diversity of housing options, particularly condominiums and high quality rental units
- Encourage multifamily housing as part of mixed-use development within Downtown Utica in the appropriate areas and sub-districts
- Work with higher education institutions to provide downtown student housing opportunities

## **CASE STUDY**

In Troy, New York the city partnered with local businesses and building owners to expand its existing wireless network. A private firm worked with building owners to place 26 wireless transmitters in strategic locations. All are backed up with emergency generators to keep the network alive during power outages. The City paid for access to the broadband network. Residents and visitors can either pay for internet access or connect free if they agree to watch a 30 second commercial every two hours.

## **CASE STUDY: BUILDING A SUCCESSFUL DOWNTOWN**

*A Local Model for Green Building.*

In 2006 Hage & Hage LLC bought a vacant building with the intent of integrating green building technologies and “making it a prime model of best practices for green construction and innovation”. In November 2008 the office was occupied by the staff of Hage & Hage LLC. During construction, a green building education initiative was created; through this initiative tours were provided to members of the public, local business owners, politicians, and utility companies. Today the building is a living, breathing model of how energy efficient technologies and sustainable methods can be applied to benefit building owners, occupants, and the environment.

The building achieved LEED NC Gold Certification from the USGBC’s Green Building Certification Institute. Some key features of the building’s Green Technologies include:

- LED & compact fluorescent lighting
- Daylight harvesting & occupancy-light sensors
- Geothermal HVAC system
- In-floor radiant heat
- Thermally efficient windows and glass
- Vegetated roof
- Innovative storm water management
- Recycled & recyclable materials
- Water saving fixtures
- Energy-Star or higher computers & appliances

## **CASE STUDY:**

*PEOPLE GENERATORS HELPING DRAW CROWDS TO  
DOWNTOWN SCHENECTADY*

In the days before the suburban malls, Schenectady’s downtown was once a thriving destination, the economic and social hub of the county.

Today, many Capital Region residents are finding an attractive destination in downtown Schenectady because of what it has to offer. New restaurants, like Bombers Burrito Bar, coupled with a new movie complex downtown and Proctor’s Theater, are creating a critical mass of activities that are making downtown a preferred destination for business owners, residents, and those seeking entertainment opportunities. Much of the change is being led by the Metroplex Development Authority, which was created 10 years ago to revitalize downtown.

From the start, Metroplex placed the central focus of the downtown revitalization on Proctor’s. After significant investment funded by Metroplex, the theater has once again become a regional venue for Broadway shows, dance, movies and other entertainment. Opening bars and restaurants was part of the strategy to revive downtown, creating an arts/entertainment/technology district. A significant people generator was the opening of a new, modern movie theater complex operated by Bow Tie Cinemas. Further refinements are planned, including relocation of the Schenectady branch of the Capital District YMCA to downtown.

CHAPTER FOUR  
PARKS, RECREATION,  
ARTS/CULTURE &  
HISTORIC PRESERVATION



## **PARKS, RECREATION, ARTS/CULTURE & HISTORIC PRESERVATION**

Historic and cultural resources are important, irreplaceable assets that enrich lives and can distinguish a community. These resources can include buildings, historic districts, landscapes, and places of great cultural significance. Through their presence, a tangible link is made that connects places with the past. Utica's parks and open spaces bring significant value, distinction and amenity to the city, enhancing both the environmental and social aspects of city life. Combined, Utica's park system, buildings and historic districts play a critical role in creating a unique sense of place that adds value to the City's quality of life opportunities as well as economic development opportunities. These resources provide a solid foundation to guide Utica as we move forward into the future.

Economic development is, quite simply, using a community's human, physical, natural and capital resources to generate marketable goods and services – and in the process create jobs, raise incomes and enhance the tax base. Much of this Master Plan is aimed at aligning the City of Utica's resources in such a way as to set the stage for the City's continued economic revitalization. Utica's parks and recreational opportunities, combined with its arts and cultural venues and historic qualities set a solid foundation for a sustainable, healthy community.

Traditionally, Utica has been a manufacturing community. Much of the material presented in this Master Plan points to how the City is facing significant economic challenges. A silver bullet does not exist for re-building the city's economic base; creative solutions will need to be uncovered. Utica has started to transition from a manufacturing focus to a more diversified economy that includes the sectors of knowledge and creativity. To do this, the city must attract the entrepreneurs and skilled workers that will create and support the 21st century companies that will drive the City to success. The City's recreational, cultural and historic resources will play a vital role in Utica's ability to attract this type of investment to improve its future. To do this, the City has to be

prepared to accommodate the preferences and diversity of needs of businesses and their employees.

University of Toronto professor Richard Florida's widely cited work, "Competing in the Age of Talent: Environment, Amenities, and the New Economy" identified the preferences of knowledge workers:

- Large numbers of active young people
- Wide range of outdoor activities and recreation
- Vibrant music and performance scene
- Nightlife diversity, including many options without alcohol
- Healthy environment and a dedication to sustainability
- Lifestyle which is youth-friendly and supportive of diversity

Utica has an unusually diverse amount of recreational, cultural and historic opportunities for a small urban community. These amenities align nicely with the preferences of knowledge workers that Richard Florida has identified as those essential to the New Economy. The City needs to use these resources as a tool to actively attract new residents and businesses to the region.



## PARKS, RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE

The goals and projects outlined in Utica's Master Plan hold that the City's parks and open spaces bring significant value, distinction and amenity to the City, enhancing the social, environmental and economic aspects of life in Utica.

Recreation includes a variety of activities, whether leisurely picnicking or more intense physical activities. Public parks are fundamental features of livable and enjoyable communities. In fact, new research recognizes parks as valuable contributors to larger urban policy objectives, such as job opportunities, youth development, public health, and community building. Further, studies have shown the value parks bring to neighborhood quality and stability by demonstrating a statistically significant link between property values and proximity to green space. Utica's parks and recreation network is one of the City's greatest assets.

It is also important to note that Utica's recreational programming should consider the needs and expectations of not only the neighborhood community, but also the regional community. With that, this Master Plan recognizes opportunities to incorporate new types of recreational programming that responds to regional trends and emerging recreational pursuits.

### PARKS

City parks include:

- ❖ F.T. Proctor
- ❖ T.R. Proctor
- ❖ Roscoe Conkling
- ❖ Val Bialas Ski Center
- ❖ Addison Miller Public Pool
- ❖ Buckley Public Pool
- ❖ Parkway Recreation Center
- ❖ Mott Tennis Courts

Named for Frederick T. Proctor, this large city park of 500 acres was donated to the City of Utica by the Proctor family in 1923. The famous landscape architect, Frederick Law Olmsted, who designed Central Park in New

York City, was instrumental in designing this park. Smaller, neighborhood-based district parks include Addison Miller, Chancellor Park, South Park Drive, Seymour, Wankel, and Greenman Estates.

Additional green space resources are found at Utica's numerous monuments that include:

- ❖ Liberty Bell Corner
- ❖ Mini Hanna
- ❖ Kopernicus
- ❖ Sailor's Monument at Oneida Square
- ❖ Sherman School Craft
- ❖ Brigadier General Pulaski
- ❖ Major General Friedrich Wilhelm Baron von Steuben
- ❖ Eagle
- ❖ Christopher Columbus
- ❖ Swan Fountain
- ❖ Statue of Liberty
- ❖ Fire Police Memorial
- ❖ Spanish American, WWI, WWII, & Korea Memorial, Vietnam POW memorial,
- ❖ Proctor
- ❖ Oneida County War Memorial
- ❖ Purple Heart Park
- ❖ Soldiers Monument on Oneida Square
- ❖ Nurses Monument.

### A ZOO

The *Utica Zoo* has served the region for over 88 years. Located in Roscoe-Conkling Park, the zoo is part of a recreational complex made possible by the donation of land from Thomas R. Proctor in 1909. Of the 80 acres of land set aside for the zoo's use, 35 are presently developed. The zoo property is owned by the City of Utica, and until 1964, was operated by the Parks Department. In order to ensure the Utica Zoo's continued existence, the Utica Zoological Society assumed full management of the zoo in 1964.

The first building made exclusively for animal use was completed in 1927 and still houses the cat and primate collections. Other major exhibits include the Bear exhibit, the Siberian Tiger outdoor exhibit (completed in 1989), and the California Sea Lion exhibit (finished in 1986). Major improvements planned for the near future include renovation of the Cats and

Primates Building, Snow Leopard and former Grizzly Bear exhibits, and the revitalization of the Children's Zoo.

*Valley View Municipal Golf Course* was first designed and built in the mid-1920s. The Course was subsequently redesigned in 1939 by Robert Trent Jones, Sr. and reopened in 1940. The Clubhouse was finished in 1960 and was completely remodeled in 2003.

### **HISTORICAL PARK ASSETS**

*Rutger Park* is the centerpiece of the area in Utica known as the Rutger-Steuben Park Historic District, which includes the Park and properties around Steuben Park, Rutger Street from Steuben Park east to Taylor Avenue and Second Street. The elegant mansions of Rutger Park, which are listed on the National Register of Historic Places, reflect not only the stature of their owners, but also the general prosperity of Utica between 1830 and 1890. During that period the establishment of the textile mills, together with the opening of the Erie and Chenango canals, brought major economic growth.

The Landmarks Society of Greater Utica was chartered by the State of New York on October 25, 1974, as a nonprofit educational corporation to preserve historic buildings and districts in the Utica area. The Landmarks Society's concept focuses on turning Rutger Park into a National Trust Site devoted to 19th-Century Politics and Architecture. Future plans are to build off of these Heritage Tourism destinations and create a series of "Mansion Museums".



Artist rendering of redeveloped Rutger Park

To that end, on June 5th, 2008, the Landmarks Society purchased #1 and #3 Rutger Park, as well as the land where #2 once stood. Continuing to restore these special assets and celebrating them is an important part of highlighting Utica's history, architecture, architects, arts, politics and the significance of its immigrants, all of which/whom have had a considerable influence on Utica and far beyond its boundaries. The efforts of the Landmarks Society also help to build partnership opportunities among a variety of organizations within Utica, furthering the appeal for enhanced partnerships as a fundamental element of the Master Plan. Finally, Rutger Park also serves as a park for residents, providing green space and a place for picnics.

### **WATER AS OPEN SPACE**

*Utica Marsh* is a unique urban wetland situated partly on the edge of the City of Utica, partly in the Town of Marcy, sandwiched between the Mohawk River on the south and the New York State Barge Canal on the north. The mixture of cattail wetlands, wet meadows, open water pools and flooded willows create a diverse marsh habitat that harbors a tremendous variety of plants and animals, especially birds.

In the late 1970's, the City of Utica awarded DEC 50 acres of river floodplain with the condition that the state begin buying additional land here and managing this wetland area. Now the WMA (Wildlife Management Area) 213 totals acres, has two observation towers, one handicapped accessible viewing platform, several trails complete with boardwalks over the wet areas, water control dikes, parking areas, a pavilion and car top boat launch site on the Mohawk River. A large parking lot and boat ramp are located on the Barge Canal just off the north-west corner of the WMA and a bike trail passes along the marsh and barge canal on the north.

### **WATERFRONT RESOURCES**

The City of Utica, with the assistance of Saratoga Associates, Cornell University, and the State University at New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry's Center for Brownfield Studies collaborated to develop a Waterfront Access Plan (WAP). This WAP was

developed with grant funding and assistance from the New York State Department of State's Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP). The purpose of the WAP is to outline a clear set of investments necessary for improved connectivity and enhanced access along the 21 miles of waterfront along the Mohawk River and Erie Canal in the City of Utica.

This WAP identifies enhanced public access opportunities on the Mohawk River and Erie Canal through circulation improvements for pedestrians, bicycles, and vehicles. Also included are project and action item recommendations coupled with potential partnering and funding opportunities for their realization. The WAP divided Utica's waterfront into three distinct and separate areas based on existing land use patterns: Western Portion, Central Portion and Eastern Portion. The proposed uses and initiatives outlined the potential to stimulate reinvestment in the waterfront areas for a variety of uses. The Central Portion will be an area of higher intensity commercial mixed-use activities and is most likely to experience redevelopment. The Western and Eastern Portion will provide significant opportunities for passive recreational uses or environmental/ heritage interpretation, while safeguarding and enriching the right of the public to access the waterfront.

Utica's waterfront is and should continue to be a Citywide resource to be enjoyed by all of Utica's residents and visitors, providing a variety of themes, activities and experiences. The waterfront should be a destination that attracts all residents as well as visitors and should be an integral ingredient to the high quality of life offered in Utica. With this as a foundation, Utica recognizes its waterfront as a vital economic development opportunity and access to the waterfront should be increased and improved. Utica is committed to investing resources that promote accessibility to and create continuous connectivity along the waterfront, offering the Mohawk Valley a unique recreational, cultural and commercial development experience along the Erie Canal, one of Americas most treasured and historic waterways, and the Mohawk River.

| Utica's Parks             |               |
|---------------------------|---------------|
| <b>Neighborhood Parks</b> |               |
| Pishey Park               | 4.22          |
| Lincoln Park              | 2.97          |
| Flannery Park             | 0.70          |
| Fort                      | 1.19          |
| O'Connor                  | 7.25          |
| Quinn Playground          | 8.78          |
| North Utica Park          | 50.13         |
| Norzet Park               | 0.71          |
| Wilson Park               | 0.86          |
| Chancellor Park           | 3.54          |
| <b>Sub-total</b>          | <b>78.28</b>  |
| <b>Neighborhood Parks</b> |               |
| F.T. Proctor              | 50.29         |
| T.H. Proctor              | 75.94         |
| Russell Corning           | 94.22         |
| <b>Sub-total</b>          | <b>221.45</b> |
| <b>District Parks</b>     |               |
| Addison Miller Park       |               |
| Chancellor Park           |               |
| South Park Drive          |               |
| Seymour                   |               |
| Walker                    |               |
| Greenman Estates          |               |
| <b>Sub-total</b>          | <b>118.31</b> |

## RECREATIONAL NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) is the leading advocacy organization dedicated to the advancement of public parks and recreation opportunities. NRPA is a leader in educating professionals and the public on the essential nature of parks and recreation. Through their research, they have developed community standards for parks and recreation lands that should be available to the residents of a given community. NRPA recommends the following standards for parkland:

By NRPA standards, the City of Utica should have approximately 103 acres of Neighborhood or Playground Parkland, indicating about a 25-acre deficit for the City. NRPA standards also indicate that Utica should have about 425 acres of Community Parklands available to its residents. Using this same standard, and combining the City's Community Parks and District Parks, Utica has roughly an 88-acre deficit of larger parks. Of course, neither of these calculations account for the extensive important recreational resources like the Valley View Golf Course, the Utica Zoo, the Utica Marsh nor the riverfront, all of which are

important community recreational resources.

It should be noted that school parks have not been included as part of the parks analysis because they are not always available for general public use. For example, when school is in session and the fields are being used for school programs, the field is not available for general public use. In other cases, school properties are not open for general public use.



### PROXIMITY ANALYSIS

The Recreational Land and Open Space Map graphically illustrates recreation and open space lands in relation to the areas served. This map was created to help understand the relationship of City parks to each other and to City residents. Because people are generally willing to walk approximately 1,500 feet within their neighborhood, for the purposes of this analysis a neighborhood boundary has been roughly estimated as a 1,500-foot radius from community parks. Based on this map, the following general conclusions were drawn:

- ❖ The central part of the City is relatively well serviced with local parks
- ❖ West Utica could use a neighborhood scale park in the central portion. Perhaps any future redevelopment of the former Psychiatric Center could include a new neighborhood park
- ❖ The southern portion of South Utica is under served. Sites should be sought out to develop a small neighborhood park on the south side of Genesee Street, perhaps in the area of Higby Road
- ❖ While much of East Utica is well served by Proctor Park, a smaller neighborhood park may be considered to serve the residents in the northern portion of the neighborhood. A neighborhood park might be located along

Broad Street between Kossuth Avenue and Millgate Street

- ❖ North Utica is under served with parks. Opportunities may exist to locate a new neighborhood park along Trenton Road



| Park Type                       | APPC Standard                    | APPC Standard for Parks    | Neighborhood Park Land |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|
| Neighborhood Park or Playground | 1.7 acres/1000 population        | 500 sq. ft./person         | 28.28 acres            |
| Community Park                  | 2.0 acres/1000 population        | 600 sq. ft./person         | 136.76 acres           |
| <b>Total Parks/Land</b>         | <b>3.7 acres/2000 population</b> | <b>1100 sq. ft./person</b> | <b>165.04 acres</b>    |

\*an enlargement of this map is located in the Appendix of Maps for this document\*

### ARTS/CULTURAL AND HISTORIC RESOURCES

The City of Utica has something many other communities around the nation want – historic character and a strong sense of authenticity. Since appearance is fundamentally linked to economic success, these urban attributes are fundamentally tied to the city’s ongoing revitalization effort. The City recognizes this and wants to move to protect these very important assets. In some cases, historic assets have been preserved and protected by the government or through the efforts of local institutions and citizens. However, these efforts, though devoted, are often uncoordinated and largely dependant on committed individuals.

Utica’s most historic structures and areas are protected and managed through the work of Utica’s Scenic and Historic Preservation Commission, and the Scenic and Historic Districts. An increasing number of structures are being recognized and utilized as sources of community pride and catalysts for revitalization. The Commission was established in January 1994 by Utica’s Common Council following passage of the Scenic and Historic

Preservation Act. The Commission's role is to protect and enhance landmarks and historic districts that represent distinctive elements of the City's historic, architectural and cultural heritage — in the process, fostering civic pride, enhancing the City's attractiveness to visitors, and promoting future growth and development. Essentially, the City's Scenic & Historic Preservation Commission was designated as guardian of the historic character of the Districts. The Commission works with property owners to ensure that new construction, restoration, alterations or renovations comply with prescribed standards.

In addition to the Scenic & Historic Preservation District, the City of Utica has an arts focused area that is slated to obtain formal recognition as a separate district. The arts and cultural resources in this area, combined with the variety of attractions related to arts and culture throughout the City, draws visitors from all over the Mohawk Valley and beyond. These include the following attractions:

- > **Stanley Center for the Arts:** the organization offers support services and individual arts programs to art organizations, individual artists and residents in Oneida, Herkimer and Madison counties. The organization has acquired and restored the Stanley Theatre, a 1928 movie theater designed in the Mexican baroque style of architecture. The Stanley is now home to the Broadway Theatre League, the Great Artists Series, Mohawk Valley Ballet, and Utica Symphony Orchestra. The Theatre offers classic film festivals and all types of performances for children.
- > **The Munson-Williams-Proctor Arts Institute:** is a regional fine arts center with three areas of focus: Museum of Art, Performing Arts, and School of Art. The Museum of Art features a renowned art collection, exhibitions, and education programs. The Performing Arts offers more than 100 events annually that include international soloists and ensembles, rising stars, cinematic features, outdoor concerts and special events. The School of Art offers a variety of art programs that include fine arts and crafts, photography and digital imaging, and dance. The School of Arts also offers a nationally accredited college program, Pratt MWP. Students could complete the first two years of their Fine Arts degree at Pratt MWP in the fields of Fine Arts, Communications Design or Art and Design Education.
- > **Sculpture Space:** is unique in North America for its support of sculptors, both those who come to Utica, New York, as residency participants and those who continue after their residencies as working artists. The organization selects 20 artists each year for two-month residencies and has helped to advance the careers of more than 400 national and international artists since 1976. A non-profit organization with a 30-year record of success, Sculpture Space also offers the public a valuable opportunity to meet innovative artists and to learn about contemporary sculpture. As a unique cultural resource, Sculpture Space promotes interaction between national and international visiting artists and the local community throughout Utica and the surrounding region. The organization places works in the public domain, hosts studio tours, welcomes school groups to meet and watch working artists, collaborates with other organizations to exhibit artists' projects, and arranges lectures at area educational institutions
- > **The Oneida County Historical Society Museum:** offers a museum, historical and genealogical reference library, programs and book/gift shop in Utica's landmark former Christian Science Church.
- > **The Utica Memorial Auditorium:** was built in 1959 on the site of the old Erie Canal and is dedicated to the memory of area veterans. The Auditorium has hosted numerous concerts and is undergoing renovation.
- > **The Children's Museum of History, Natural History, Science & Technology:** is one of the oldest children's museums in the country. The museum is a hands-on learning center with emphasis on local history, environmental science, the arts, and space science.
- > **National Distance Hall of Fame:** was established to honor the sport of distance running. The National Distance Running Hall of Fame is dedicated to honoring the athletes

who have made contributions to the sport of distance running, contributions that have brought distance running fame and recognition.

Given Utica's cultural and historic amenities, a key market segment to target is heritage and cultural travelers. In 2001, over one-fourth of U.S. adults (53.6 million) reported taking at least one trip which included a visit to a historic place or museum. Seventeen percent of U.S. adults (33 million) reported taking a trip in the past year, which included a visit to a cultural event or festival. When combined, one-third of U.S. adults (65.9 million) reported taking either a historic trip, a cultural trip, or both in the past year. The key difference, which distinguishes historic or cultural travelers from other travelers, is their reason for traveling. They are over twice as likely to travel for entertainment; they are more likely to shop while traveling; and visits to national and state parks are popular among these travelers. Cultural travelers take more trips to visit family and friends and drive their own cars more than historic travelers. Cultural travelers take more trips by themselves and on average, take more day trips and stay a shorter time. Cultural travelers stay in private homes more often, and spend, on average, \$557 per trip.

Historic travelers, on the other hand, journey more often for entertainment. They also fly more frequently, and travel with children more often than cultural travelers do. Historic travelers generally take longer trips and more often spend the night in hotels. They participate in virtually every travel-related activity more often, particularly visits to national and state parks. Historic travelers spend, on average, \$688 per trip. Either way, Utica's cultural and historic assets are key features to attracting visitors to the City and enhancing the quality of life offered to its residents. Oneida County Tourism recently completed a study that supports the importance of attracting tourists to the region. Overall, the study found that visitor spending in the Greater Utica-Rome Area was \$1 billion dollars in 2008, resulting in directly employing 11,470 residents. These findings are a compelling reason to continue to build on the City's recreation, arts, cultural and historic amenities. In addition to helping attract visitors to the region, the City's historic buildings can

help to satisfy two other goals of this Master Plan. First, older buildings tend to be more attractive to urban pioneers, like artists; because they often have lower rents. Second, reuse of an existing building is considered by many to be more sustainable because reuse of an existing building makes efficient use of existing infrastructure.

## **MASTER PLAN GOALS & STRATEGIES FOR PARKS, RECREATION, ARTS/CULTURE & HISTORIC PRESERVATION**

The goals and projects outlined in Utica's Master Plan appreciate the enormous value that the arts, culture and historic resources bring to the lives of the people of both Utica and the region.

### **GOAL 1: INTRODUCE AND REINTRODUCE POPULATION TO CITY PARKS, NON-CITY PARKS, AND RECREATIONAL FACILITIES.**

#### **Implementation Strategies:**

- Reopen and refurbish existing bathroom facilities in all park areas currently in use.
- Create four-season brochures for all park activities, to include biking, golf, family recreation, festivals, celebrations, skiing, snowshoeing, etc.
- Develop "Saturday in the Parks Mentality." Encourage community groups to create celebrations, fairs and festivals, sports competitions, etc
- Make the City more bike friendly by instituting trails throughout the City, canal trails, switch backs and extended park areas. Consider a yearly bike race of the caliber of the "Boilermaker," using existing clubs as the base group for the development of biking initiatives.
- Consider a bike and pedestrian trail following the abandoned trolley line through the central portion of the City (generally following an East-West orientation).

### **GOAL 2: USE OUR PARK SYSTEM AND NATURAL AREAS FOR STIMULATING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND A HEALTHY COMMUNITY.**

#### **Implementation Strategies:**

- Complete a comprehensive, City-wide Parks Master Plan that inventories, assess and plans for all green, recreational, open and park space.
- Create Public Arts Projects in the form of a "Sculpture Trail," similar to Griffiss Business and Technology Park. Define sites and commit to a 10-year development of the trail, with an

installation each year.

- Develop a committee of artists and arts organizations to work with site consultants (city, county, private.)
- Elements of the "Sculpture Trail" should be included in the redesign of the North-South Arterial, which will include a bike and pedestrian trail.
- Enhance the current farmers market to include more components of the "Slow Food Movement," using local farmers currently involved in the movement. Add educational components, i.e.: Cooperative Extension lectures. Also look to establish an urban agriculture program that brings fruits, vegetables and flowers grown within the City to city residents

### **GOAL 3: DEVELOP USE OF THE ERIE CANAL AND THE MOHAWK RIVER AROUND HISTORIC, RECREATIONAL, AND REGIONAL OBJECTIVES TO STIMULATE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.**

#### **Implementation Strategies:**

- Change the perception of safety and accessibility by making entrance points more inviting and clearly marked and signed, increasing use for family activity.
- Include Utica police bike patrol (or volunteer patrols) on trails and launching areas on the river.
- Celebrate the Utica Rome connection via the canal. The first shovel was dug in Rome and the first trip on the canal began in Utica. Mark these historic happenings at the sites.
- Create an annual festival that celebrates the Sister Cities' connection with fun re-enactments, interactive children's plays, and races on the canal with four man "mule teams" pulling bateaus and similar events.
- Work with National Grid to develop the establishment of a multi-use, multi-seasonal recreational facility at the southwest portion of the Harbor Point area.
- Enhance the northeast area of the Harbor Point for passive recreational uses.
- Explore the relocation of Murnane Field facilities as part of a multi-use, multi-

seasonal facility located in the Harbor Point area

to attract new, talented employees.

#### **GOAL 4: FORMALIZE PROTECTION, AND ENFORCEMENT OF THAT PROTECTION, FOR HISTORIC BUILDINGS, HISTORIC DISTRICTS AND HISTORIC NEIGHBORHOODS.**

##### **Implementation Strategies:**

- Develop a standardized survey and apply it to all of the defined districts/neighborhoods within the City and engage architecture graduate students to participate.
- Extend the Scenic and Historic Districts throughout the City and root them in law that will allow the specifications that make an historic district enforceable.
- Examine the potential for new historic districts such as turning Rutger Park into a National Trust site devoted to 19th Century Politics and Architecture.

#### **GOAL 5: INCREASE PUBLIC AWARENESS OF HERITAGE TOURISM.**

##### **Implementation Strategies:**

- Institute kiosk and signage programs that celebrate Transportation on the Erie Canal, Abolitionist History, Revolutionary War Trail, Architectural Tourism, etc.
- Coordinate local non-profit organizations and events programming, marketing and promotion initiatives to establish a synchronized, year-round program and to effectively pool resources.
- Commemorate the Saturday Globe, Telegraph and American Express origins in Utica, NY. Perhaps a public art competition that celebrates these origins would be a fun, educational way to express the City's heritage.
- Support and coordinate with the Oneida County Visitors Bureau in their efforts to promote Utica as a regional entertainment destination.
- Develop a tourism marketing plan and a tourism-readiness training program for staff in tourism industries and the community at large.
- Encourage local and regional employers to understand all that Utica and the region have to offer as a marketing tool

#### **GOAL 6: DEVELOP THE CITY'S IDENTITY AS A PLACE FOR ARTISTS AND AS A PLACE FOR ART.**

##### **Implementation Strategies:**

- Zones in appropriate areas of the City for artists to live, work and sell from their domiciles, through Common Council legislation. (i.e.: Syracuse Armory Square legislation in the 80's)
- Create artists housing, with anti-gentrification guards, which will maintain the artist's communities once they have been established.
- Establish "Percentage for Arts" legislation on all new and major rehabilitation construction within the City.
- Create a Web Site that highlights all of Utica's recreational opportunities, cultural opportunities and historic districts.
- Created a community operated (i.e.: food co-op) Welcoming Center on the Canal. Such a facility could be a part of redeveloped Harbor Point. In the short-term, the facility could be located above Aqua Vino.

#### **CASE STUDY**

##### *Healthy Communities Case Study*

*The City of Decatur, Georgia, has long focused on building a community that supports active living. The City developed a Community Transportation Plan that focuses on making active modes of transportation an easy choice. The plan incorporates a health impact assessment, which evaluates the public health impacts of specific transportation options, to guide decisions about future transportation investments. The plan was developed with significant community input to infrastructure improvements that would benefit pedestrians. Shortly before it was adopted in 2008, the City created an Active Living Division to oversee programs that include its SRTS (Safe Routes to Schools) efforts. In March 2009, a nine-member Active Living Advisory Board was formed to provide guidance on active living and urban agriculture goals. This focus on active living and creating a walkable community through sidewalk improvements, streetscape work, and mixed-use development has had a number of benefits: "You go out there any day, any time now and there's pedestrian activity," Lyn Menne, the assistant city manager in charge of economic development, noted. "It used to be at 5 p.m., when the office buildings closed, everyone went home. The mixed-use projects have energized pedestrian activity and stretched it away from the town square.*



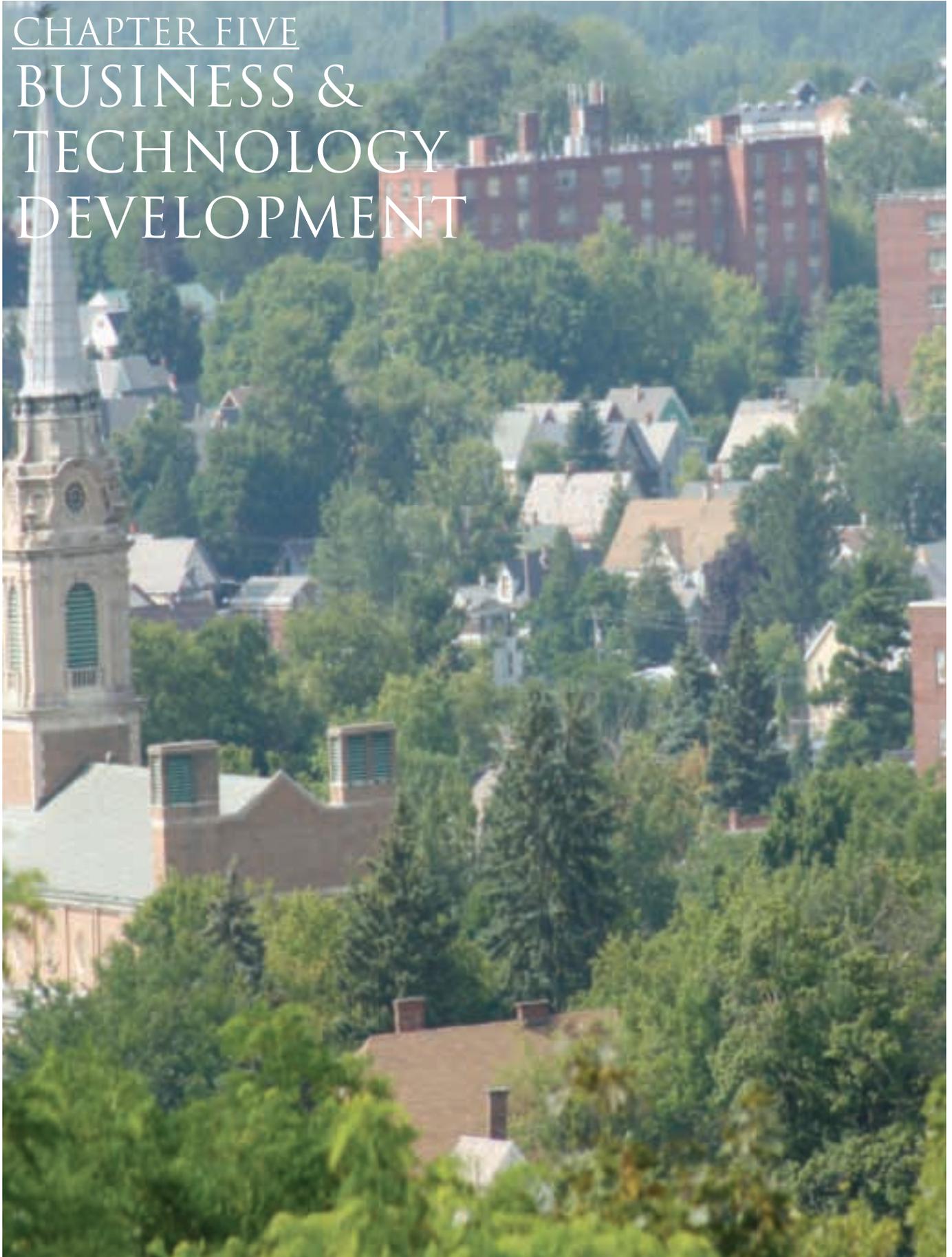
Existing View



## **Boulevard Genesee Street**

- Bulb out curbs
- Street tree infill
- Central Treed Island
- Historic, cutoff lighting / banners
- Lane Reduction

CHAPTER FIVE  
BUSINESS &  
TECHNOLOGY  
DEVELOPMENT



## BUSINESS & TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT

Utica was once home to thriving industry that added life and vitality to its urban core. Early day accessibility to the Erie Canal and railroads made Utica a booming textile town. In the mid-twentieth century Utica became a significant player in the in the tool and die industry and later became known as “The Radio Capital of the World” for its General Electric radio production plant that employed over 8,000 people at its peak. By the mid-1960s Utica began to fall prey to the slowing manufacturing economy. As businesses left, so, too, did the people. The economy has slowly been shifting itself into a service-based economy.

Economic health is a fundamental part of any revitalization effort. The goals and strategies outlined in this Master Plan support existing industries, but also set the stage to attract the new industries of the 21st century – better weaving both into the City’s urban fabric. All the basic building blocks of this Plan, including improving the quality life for residents with vibrant, desirable neighborhoods; building on the City’s recreational, cultural and historic character amenities; and enhancing the infrastructure network, are about providing an improved economic development environment.

Regional economic development organizations have done a lot of research and planning to capitalize on the assets of the region. The strategies in this Master Plan outline ways to adapt these regional plans to the Utica-specific level – making sure that the City has the plans to attract new businesses and retain existing operations.

This Master Plan also recognizes that Utica’s waterfront is a significant natural and historic resource. As a destination, the waterfront will provide improved public open space along the water’s edge, just minutes from downtown. Connections for pedestrians and cyclists will be improved. Improvements are also proposed for improved water-based recreational amenities. Across the country, people are moving back

into downtown areas. Studies across the country are finding that cities are more attractive because they are vibrant places. People enjoy being amidst the culture, services and historic architecture of urban places. More and more businesses, especially those in the creative and knowledge industries, move to cities because that is where they can find the workers they need.

## ECONOMIC COMPOSITION

Understanding a community’s income characteristics is an important indicator for determining a community’s economic well-being. The Utica median household income reflects many factors, including the transition from manufacturing employment to service sector employment, the educational attainment of its residents, and the age of the population. According to the 2000 Census, the City of Utica had a median household income of \$24,916 in 1999, up 25 percent from 1989 (measured in current dollars). This number is significantly lower than that of the Utica-Rome MSA (\$35,292) and of New York State (\$43,393). The median household incomes of several of the neighborhoods are even lower than both regional and City levels. Downtown Utica and Cornhill have the lowest income, and North Utica has the highest, closely followed by South Utica.

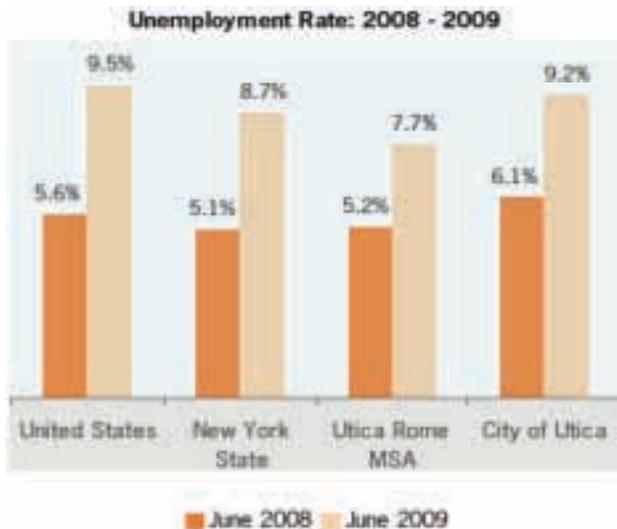
Utica and the surrounding region, whose employment history was based on a manufacturing economy for many decades, has suffered greatly as its largest employers downsized, realigned, or closed completely, including Lockheed-Martin and the Griffiss Air Force Base in the 1990s. Manufacturing jobs gave way to lower-paid service sector jobs, which partially accounts for Utica’s low household income. The population decline in age groups in their prime earning years also contributes to the City’s and neighborhoods’ low median household income. Utica is a dramatic example of a community that has been affected by the transition from a manufacturing-based to a service-based economy, and must develop strategies to address this in order to facilitate revitalization of the area.

## EMPLOYMENT

The social and economic condition of a community is reliant at least partially on its residents' ability to succeed in the labor force. In our knowledge-based economy, good jobs require higher levels of skill and knowledge than ever before. Many jobs that were considered non-college level by employers are now classified as college level. Education upgrading has occurred in many occupations due to changes in job duties, business practices, or technology.

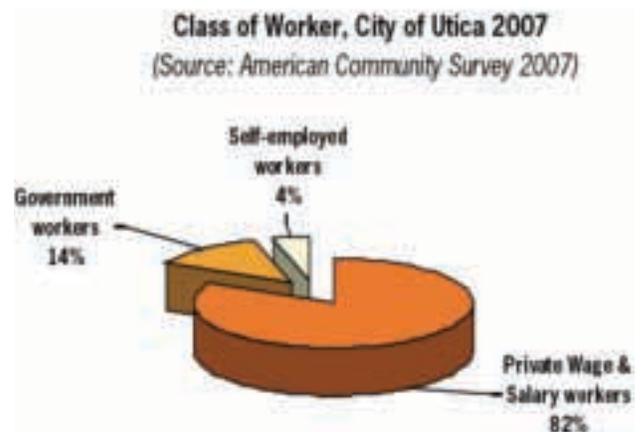
It is important to understand labor trends in Utica and the neighborhoods as the City develops strategies to connect its residents with the labor market, and as the City identifies its approaches to develop programs that benefit people in need.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics tracks unemployment data down to the city level. Clearly, 2009 was one of the most volatile years for employment and the economy in decades, and this is reflected in the unemployment rate for all geographies. The graph below, however, indicates that Utica's unemployment rate has been higher than the region, state, and country even before the economic downturn. Currently, the national rate surpasses that of the City of Utica's, but only slightly.



The table illustrates the workforce composition for the City of Utica and the neighborhoods, as well as comparisons with the region. The numbers suggest that the workforce within the neighborhoods is relatively reflective of the City as a whole. That is, Educational, Health and Social Services are the industries with the highest proportion of residents in all geographies. Manufacturing, Retail, Finance, Insurance, Real Estate, Rental, and Leasing round out the other top categories, though not necessarily in that order. In West Utica and Downtown Utica, those employed in Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, Accommodation and Food Services outnumber those employed in Finance, Insurance, Real Estate, Rental, and Leasing. It is notable to observe the data for the manufacturing industry, which has been declining across the region: North and South Utica, which have higher income and education levels, have the lowest employment in manufacturing. As a whole, however, Utica still maintains a significant number of residents who are employed by the manufacturing industry.

Approximately 82.3 percent of the workforce in the City of Utica is employed by the private sector. The public sector provides jobs for 13.5 percent of residents in the City, while 4.2 percent are self-employed.



| Occupation Category, 2009<br>(Number of Full-time Jobs)           | Utica<br>MSA | Utica<br>City | North<br>Utica | Utica<br>City | Utica<br>City | Utica<br>City | City of<br>Utica | Utica<br>Rome<br>MSA |
|---|--------------|---------------|----------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|------------------|----------------------|
| Executive, Manager, Owner, Self-Employed, and Working             | 1.0%         | 1.1%          | 1.0%           | 1.1%          | 1.0%          | 1.1%          | 1.1%             | 1.1%                 |
| Construction  | 4.7%         | 3.2%          | 2.3%           | 3.6%          | 3.2%          | 2.7%          | 3.1%             | 3.6%                 |
| Manufacturing   | 17.0%        | 13.1%         | 1.2%           | 12.2%         | 12.7%         | 11.2%         | 12.0%            | 13.1%                |
| Wholesale Trade   | 4.1%         | 3.7%          | 4.3%           | 3.4%          | 3.7%          | 3.2%          | 3.2%             | 3.2%                 |
| Retail Trade  | 11.7%        | 12.0%         | 12.0%          | 11.3%         | 11.6%         | 11.6%         | 11.2%            | 12.2%                |
| Transportation & Information, and Utilities                       | 1.3%         | 1.1%          | 1.2%           | 1.4%          | 1.2%          | 1.4%          | 1.2%             | 1.3%                 |
| Government  | 2.7%         | 2.2%          | 1.8%           | 2.1%          | 2.1%          | 1.8%          | 2.0%             | 2.1%                 |
| Health Services, Education, and Social Assistance                 | 17.5%        | 17.9%         | 19.0%          | 16.7%         | 17.1%         | 16.7%         | 17.4%            | 17.5%                |
| Professional, scientific, technical, and management services      | 11.7%        | 9.9%          | 11.2%          | 12.3%         | 11.6%         | 10.8%         | 11.6%            | 11.7%                |
| Education, Health, and Social Services                            | 22.0%        | 20.7%         | 19.4%          | 21.2%         | 21.2%         | 19.9%         | 20.6%            | 21.7%                |
| Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, Accommodation, and Food Services | 2.2%         | 3.7%          | 1.8%           | 2.4%          | 2.7%          | 1.9%          | 2.2%             | 2.2%                 |
| Other services (except public administration)                     | 4.0%         | 4.3%          | 4.4%           | 3.4%          | 3.7%          | 3.4%          | 3.7%             | 3.8%                 |
| Unemployed  | 1.3%         | 1.4%          | 1.2%           | 1.2%          | 1.2%          | 1.2%          | 1.2%             | 1.2%                 |

The biggest employers in the City of Utica are mainly health care, social services, and finance/insurance companies. Major employers in the health care in the City of Utica include the Mohawk Valley Network, St. Elizabeth Medical Center, the Masonic Care Community and the Slocum Dickson Medical Group. Major employers in the social services industry include Upstate Cerebral Palsy and the Resource Center for Independent Living. The Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, Bank of America, and the Utica National Insurance Group provide jobs to thousands in the City of Utica.

**Tying Business Development to Regional Initiatives**

Demand for office space in the City of Utica is directly tied to the growing and emerging industry clusters of the regional economy, particularly the Mohawk Valley and the Utica-Rome MSA. The Mohawk Valley EDGE (Economic Development Growth Enterprises Corporation) has identified target industry clusters that will foster economic growth in the region. Some key industries currently include:

- Aviation
- Logistics
- Metals Manufacturing
- Finance, Insurance and Real Estate
- Information Technology and Information
- Assurance
- Nanotechnology

In addition to the above-mentioned industry clusters, the New York State Department of

Labor identified existing industry clusters in the Mohawk Valley using data from the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages of the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Potential users of office space include those in the Back Office & Outsourcing; Communications, Software & Media Services Cluster; Financial Services Cluster; Front Office & Producer Services Cluster; and the Information Technology Services Cluster. Users of office space may also include those in other sectors particularly related to their administration, as well as associated suppliers and buyers. Demand for office space in the City of Utica could come from education, health care, and government sectors.

To evaluate the size of future demand for office space in the City of Utica, occupational growth projections for the Mohawk Valley Region from the New York State Department of Labor were used. A factor of 250 square feet per job was used to determine the size of office real estate for the entire region. From regional projections, the spatial demand for office space in the City of Utica was determined by using the estimated capture rate derived by the ratio of employment by occupation in the City of Utica versus the entire region.

| Company                                   | Industry          | Local Employees |
|---|-------------------|-----------------|
| 1. Mohawk Valley Network                  | Health Care       | 2,945           |
| 2. St. Elizabeth Medical Center           | Health Care       | 1,912           |
| 3. Upstate Cerebral Palsy                 | Social Services   | 1,600           |
| 4. Metropolitan Life Insurance Co.        | Finance/Insurance | 1,513           |
| 5. Resource Center for Independent Living | Social Services   | 1,300           |
| 6. Cornell Corporation                    | Medical Devices   | 1,200           |
| 7. Bank of America                        | Finance/Insurance | 980             |
| 8. Utica National Insurance Group         | Finance/Insurance | 825             |
| 9. Masonic Care Community                 | Health Care       | 681             |
| 10. Mohawk Valley Community College       | Education         | 587             |
| 11. Slocum Dickson Medical Group          | Health Care       | 366             |

Spatial demand projections based on the above-mentioned methodology indicates that approximately 170,000 square feet of office space would be needed in the City of Utica to meet employment growth over five years (from 2011 to 2016). This projection excludes demand coming from replacement jobs and the need for more modern, updated office space and/or Class “A” office space arising from changing needs. Biggest demand would come from Health Care, particularly medical office space, as well as demand from Community and

Social Services occupations, Computer and Math occupations, and Office and Administrative Support occupations. The latter occupation supports other sectors of the economy. The following table shows details of office space demand projections for the City of Utica and the Mohawk Valley Region.

The findings above indicate that Utica is still feeling the effects of a major economic transition. Nonetheless, despite the economic upheavals of the 1990s, the City has a well-educated population with the potential to be a regional destination and attract a new population with the presence of its cornerstone institutions like Utica College, Munson-Williams Proctor Arts Institute and the Stanley Theatre. In the past, companies like Lockheed-Martin and Griffiss Air Force Base thrived in the Utica region because of their strengths, which was essentially built on a dedicated, hard working, and well-educated citizenry.

| Projected Office Space Demand for Utica-Rome MSA & City of Utica (2011 - 2016) (Sources: NYS Department of Labor; US Census Bureau; Analysis by Saratoga Associates) |   |  |  |  |
|--|---|--|--|--|
|  | Mohawk Valley 5 Year Growth 2011 - 2016 | Regional Office Space Demand SF (250 SF/Job) | City of Utica % Share of Regional Employment | City of Utica Office Space Demand SF (2011 - 2016) |
| Management Occupations   | 200                                     | 50,000                                       | 15.93%                                       | 7,950  |
| Business and Financial Operations Occupations  | 200                                     | 50,000                                       | 17.30%                                       | 8,650  |
| Computer and Mathematical Occupations  | 400                                     | 100,000                                      | 18.50%                                       | 18,500   |
| Architecture and Engineering Occupations   | 0                                       | 0  | 13.60%                                       | 0  |
| Life, Physical, and Social Science Occupations   | 50                                      | 12,500                                       | 11.50%                                       | 1,438  |
| Community and Social Services Occupations  | 650                                     | 162,500                                      | 21.20%                                       | 34,450   |
| Legal Occupations  | 50                                      | 12,500                                       | 20.2%  | 2,525  |
| Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media Occupations   | 100                                     | 25,000                                       | 19.4%  | 4,850  |
| Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations   | 1,350                                   | 337,500                                      | 16.1%  | 54,330   |
| Healthcare Support Occupations   | 100                                     | 25,000                                       | 24.3%  | 6,075  |
| Sales and Related Occupations  | 100                                     | 25,000                                       | 17.2%  | 4,300  |
| Office and Administrative Support Occupations  | 450                                     | 112,500                                      | 20.0%  | 23,062   |
| <b>Total All Occupations</b>   | <b>3,900</b>                            | <b>975,000</b>                               |  | <b>167,139<br/>94%<br/>170,000</b>                 |

## BROWNFIELDS REDEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITY

The City of Utica intends to complete a Brownfield Opportunity Area (BOA) Pre-Nomination Study for an approximate 1,579-acre area characterized with over 50 potential brownfield sites, based on known or perceived brownfields and active spill sites, located along the old Erie Canal and main railroad corridor in Utica, described as the “Central Industrial Corridor.”

The proposed study area covers a large geographic area through the central area of the City of Utica. In an effort to break this area into manageable work areas, the proposed Central Industrial Corridor BOA has been divided into four sub-areas based on land use patterns. These sub-areas include the following:

- ❖ **Oriskany Street Corridor** – 198 acre sub-area follows Oriskany Street from the North-South Arterial interchange westerly to the Utica-Yorkville border.
- ❖ **Bagg’s Square District** – 125 acre sub-area (both east and west of Genesee Street) which includes most of the area also known as the Gateway and Lower Genesee Street Historic Districts.
- ❖ **Harbor District** – 149 acre sub-area includes North Genesee Street plus the Harbor and area between Genesee Street and Leland Avenue.
- ❖ **Broad Street Corridor** – 407 acre sub-area follows Broad Street from the Mohawk Street intersection easterly to the Utica-Frankfort border. The sub-area is bounded by CSX railroad tracks to the north and Catherine Street to the south.

The primary objectives to be achieved by this project include:

- ❖ Integration of BOA studies with the Master Plan;
- ❖ Re-engagement of stakeholders who have participated in previous brownfield redevelopment initiatives and discussions and gain new input from existing neighborhood interest groups and Master Plan Advisory Committee;

- ❖ Facilitation of future investment and growth through focused planning and strategic investment and marketing;
- ❖ Conversion of dozens of properties from brownfields to potential sites of redevelopment;
- ❖ Revitalization of City areas that have high historic interest, under utilized natural resources, or architectural potential including such areas as the Erie Canal Harbor and the Bagg’s Square District which is recognized on the National Register of Historic Places.

### SUB-AREA 1 – ORISKANY STREET CORRIDOR

This 198-acre sub-area follows Oriskany Street from the North-South Arterial interchange westerly to the Utica-Yorkville border. The sub-area is bounded by CSX railroad tracks to the north and Whitesboro Street to the south.

Oriskany Street generally follows the path of the Old Erie Canal on the western side of the City. The sub-area includes the parcel associated with the former Foster Paper Company.

The Yorkville portion of Oriskany Street has seen significant commercial development over the years but the Utica section is inhibited by brownfields and structures that may have been part of manufacturing facilities in the past but are currently being used for low-end warehousing and storage. Future property transactions involving these structures will be prohibitive because Phase I Environmental Site Assessments will likely indicate the past industrial activities which may be a source of environmental concern.

### SUB-AREA 2 – BAGG’S SQUARE DISTRICT

The 125-acre Bagg’s Square District is one of the oldest developed areas of the City.

Bagg’s Square East (east of Genesee Street) includes Union Station and former industrial parcels along Main Street. Former industrial facilities in this area included former meat dressing and packing operations including Sweet & Co., Armour & Co., Adrian Lees Sons, and Jacob Dold and textile and clothing manufacturers including H.D. Pixley & Son, Kincaid & Kimble, and Frisbie-Stansfield.

Bagg's Square East also includes the original ConMed location on Broad Street. ConMed has recently announced that it will close this facility, potentially creating another long-term vacancy in this area.

Bagg's Square West (west of Genesee Street) is also known as the "Gateway Historic Canal District" (Gateway District) and includes Whitesboro Street near the Utica Memorial Auditorium, where currently the City is completing a NYSDEC-funded Environmental Restoration Program (ERP) at Potter Street, immediately behind the auditorium, where a former tannery and button factory were once located. Fifteen (15) acres in this area, bounded by Whitesboro and Water Streets to the south and north and Potter (adjacent to the ERP site) and Seneca Streets to the west and east, has been made "shovel ready" for future development under a federal Economic Development Administration (EDA) grant.

A portion of the Gateway District is also listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) as the "Lower Genesee Street Historic District." The text below, regarding past industrial activity in the district, is from the 1983 Nomination Document:

The Lower Genesee Street Historic District was the location of a number of manufacturing firms. Textile production was the leading industry of Utica, and a number of manufacturers and wholesalers of ready-made clothing were located within the district along Lower Genesee Street during the nineteenth century. The national headquarters (1840-1898) of the Warnick and Brown tobacco company, manufacturers of pipe, chewing, snuff tobacco and cigars, was located at 86 Genesee Street from 1840 to 1898. Its factory and warehouses were built directly behind, at 121 Hotel Street. The Divine Brothers Company, manufacturers of buffing wheels, had one of its early factories (1904-1924) at 100 Whitesboro Street. This building and others located on Whitesboro Street later served as the principal manufacturing and distribution facilities for the Horrocks-Ibbotson Company, manufacturers of fishing tackle.

In 1905 it was the largest such firm in the world; the Gladding Corporation subsequently purchased the firm and closed the Utica plant in 1978.

The Horrock-Ibbotson site has also been the subject of past ERP studies.

As a result of a revitalization plan for the Gateway District that was completed in 2003, the City Common Council adopted a form-based zoning code in 2005 to regulate development within Gateway. The form-based code acknowledges the significant architecture that remains in the Gateway area and provides for a mixture of uses compatible with the historic development.

### **SUB-AREA 3 – HARBOR DISTRICT**

The 849-acre Harbor District includes North Genesee from the CSX railroad overpass northerly to the River Road interchange. It includes Utica Erie Canal Harbor and waterfront areas along the Erie Canal between North Genesee Street and Leland Avenue.

This sub-area includes the former Utica Gas and Electric Company site, known as Harbor Point. This site, which now is a legacy site of National Grid, was once the location of the largest energy-producing complex in North America. Harbor Point is approximately 140 acres of land located between Utica Erie Canal Harbor and the Mohawk River. The area was developed around 1850 and has been the site of two manufactured gas plants (MGPs), a coal-fired steam plant, a petroleum storage and distribution facility, and a tar products plant. National Grid continues to make progress toward final remediation under a voluntary cleanup agreement with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) of the site but additional time and work are necessary before portions of the property can be released from NYSDEC oversight.

In July 2008, the State legislature approved the conveyance of a less contaminated harbor-area property known as the "Inner Harbor" from the New York Canal Corporation to the City of Utica. The legislation directs the Canal Corporation to remediate and transfer about 20

acres of the Inner Harbor to Utica. Ownership would be completed through a development corporation managed by the Utica Urban and Economic Development Department.

A corridor management plan for North Genesee Street was completed by Saratoga Associates in 2009. The plan considered issues and opportunities relative to land use, transportation, circulation, access, design, and signage along the corridor. The planning effort was funded through a \$45,000 grant through the New York State Department of State.

Expanding beyond the North Genesee Street Corridor Management Plan, the ultimate goal is to develop a Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan (LWRP) that would include the Harbor Point and Inner Harbor sites. The City has successfully secured a \$50,000 grant from the Department of State (DOS) to conduct a Waterfront Access Plan (WAP) that is anticipated to be completed by 2012.

The Harbor District also includes an area known as "Waterfront Zone 1A" which encompasses approximately 50 acres that the City has studied previously in accordance with Department of State (DOS) BOA Pre-nomination Study guidelines. This waterfront area is along the Mohawk River on both sides of Leland Avenue; many of these parcels were used for major petroleum storage and distribution.

#### **SUB-AREA 4 – BROAD STREET CORRIDOR**

This 407-acre sub-area follows Broad Street from the Mohawk Street intersection easterly to the Utica-Frankfort border. The sub-area is bounded by CSX railroad tracks to the north and Catherine Street to the south. The sub-area once was the main manufacturing area in Utica and abandoned and dilapidated factory buildings are still present along its length.

The Corridor was a subject of a prior economic growth study completed in 2001 by HR&A.

The sub-area includes the former General Electric manufacturing facility, a 0.5 million square foot, 3 to 4 story, building complex on the north side of Broad Street. One major success story in the sub-area is Casa Imports

which occupies several of the older factory buildings for storage and distribution of food products imported from Italy.

Like the Oriskany Street corridor, future property transactions in the Broad Street Corridor sub-area involving former manufacturing facilities will be prohibitive because Phase I Environmental Site Assessments will likely indicate that their past uses are sources of environmental concern.

## MASTER PLAN GOALS & STRATEGIES FOR BUSINESS & TECHNOLOGY

The challenge to Utica City leaders today is to create an environment that is appealing to new business and industry, as well as to new and returning residents. This means renewing the City's image in the region, revitalizing Utica's more challenged neighborhoods (while protecting those that work), and establishing an attractive environment for business development efforts. To be successful, Utica's municipal leaders, residents, institutions and business owners alike must be willing to commit to a common direction, take simple coordinated steps to reinvestment, and attract new partners. Finally, and most importantly, the community must be prepared to maintain a long-term commitment to reestablishing itself.

### GOAL 1: DIVERSIFY THE CITY'S ECONOMY BY ATTRACTING NEW BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY TO UTICA THROUGH A MULTIFACETED PLAN AND INCENTIVES.

#### Implementation Strategies:

- Develop a Brownfields Redevelopment Strategy taking into account Environmental Conservation Law standards and incentives
- Develop a varied list of positive impact business establishments desired in Utica (social cafes, family centers, etc)
- Develop ideas for the types of businesses to attract by anticipating future needs and coupling current realities
- Update the City's economic development marketing plan to sustain a long-range marketing and communication plan to attract investment and talent to the City and the region
- Recognize the retirement population as a key economic generator for the community. Work with higher education institutions to develop programs that attract the retirement population to Utica to live and attend college. This type of intergenerational experience can benefit the College and the City alike

## GOAL 2: FACILITATE THE RETENTION AND EXPANSION OF LOCAL BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY IN THE CITY OF UTICA

#### Implementation Strategies:

- Engage higher education institutions and other economic development entities in determining growth industries, and location of current job placement markets for current students
- Develop a program in which the City will sponsor an internship for local businesses to hire local students for the summer months
- Establish a Brownfield Redevelopment Ad Hoc Committee
- Establish an Urban Redevelopment Ad Hoc Committee
- Fully develop high-speed Internet connections for all business operations that will allow Utica to become recognized as the "Wired City of Central New York"
- Promote programs that help existing businesses in Utica diversify their product base or expand their distribution area

### GOAL 3: CREATE MORE SITES FOR BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES.

#### Implementation Strategies:

- Develop site/zone/corridor specific plans and marketing strategies to maximize the use and/or redevelopment of the following:
  - CNY Psych Center
  - West Utica Industrial Area
  - TRW
  - Broad Street
  - Oriskany Boulevard
  - Greenman Estates
  - Gateway District
  - Leland Ave/ Wurz Ave
  - Inner Harbor
  - Bagg's Square
  - Dominic Assaro Industrial Park
  - Murnane Field
- Assemble properties to create larger development opportunities that meet the needs of targeted cluster industries
- Create an incubator program that works with emerging businesses within Utica

**GOAL 4: CREATE AN ENVIRONMENT IN THE CITY OF UTICA THAT FOSTERS ENTREPRENEURSHIP.**

**Implementation Strategies:**

- Develop programs that continuously recognize youth contributions - project leadership, young poets, Jr. Frontiers, etc
- Offer incentives for entrepreneurs to establish or rebuild business - free local advertising, low/no-cost loans, etc.
- Raise awareness of and financial support for existing businesses in the local and regional cluster of target industries
- Recognize the inner city economic potential and develop economic strategies for businesses to flourish
- Promote programs that support new business owners who live in and employ people within their own neighborhood

**GOAL 5: DEVELOP A SKILLED AND EDUCATED WORKFORCE THAT WILL MEET THE NEEDS OF EXISTING BUSINESSES AND EMERGING INDUSTRIES IN THE CITY OF UTICA.**

**Implementation Strategies:**

- Work with Utica City School District to restore a full Voc-Ed program
- Amend laws to allow youth to participate in vocational activities at a younger age
- Secure local business desire to pre-employ Utica students
- Create a school and City partnership that improves lots as a bona-fide school program, with service learning opportunities
- Ensure schools have the necessary support to develop 21st century learners
- Ensure the school system meets the standards desired, and support school functions through direct interaction with local government and businesses
- Rebuild/enhance areas within 4 square city blocks of each school to ensure blight is less visible to current students and potential dwellers
- Support not-for-profit initiatives that enhance employment opportunities for all Utica residents
- Work with higher education institutions to match local employer needs with job

skills

- Partner with business, labor and higher education institutions to make sure residents are trained in fields that align with regional cluster needs

**GOAL 6: MAINTAIN THE HIGH QUALITY OF LIFE ALREADY PRESENT IN UTICA AND IMPROVE THOSE ELEMENTS MOST LIKELY TO ATTRACT YOUNG PROFESSIONALS.**

**Implementation Strategies:**

- Ensure the school system meets the standards desired, and support school functions through direct interaction with local government and businesses
- Re-rebuild/enhance areas within four square city blocks of each school to ensure blight is less visible to current students and potential dwellers
- Re-engage the WAN WiFi to include a radius of two square miles of schools

**GOAL 7: EXPAND AND CAPITALIZE ON UTICA'S DIVERSE HISTORIC AND CULTURAL FABRIC**

**Implementation Strategies:**

- Develop a tourism marketing plan and a tourism-readiness training program for staff in tourism industries and the community at large
- Encourage local and regional employers to understand all that Utica and the region have to offer as a marketing tool to attract new, talented employees
- Provide free public transportation for school-aged children to local establishments
- Work closely with the school system to ensure equitable access to resources yearly.
- Establish on-going community contests for youth that increase their awareness and foster a sense of pride in the community
- Work with higher education institutions to create a "College Town" downtown. Consider locating the "College Town" in and around Bagg's Square

## GOAL 8: REDEVELOP BROWNFIELD SITES

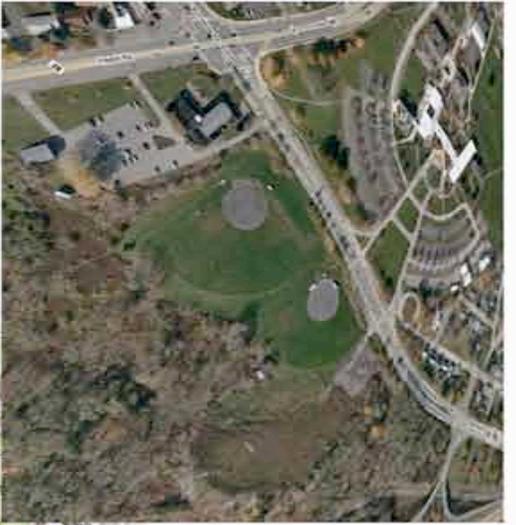
### Implementation Strategies:

- Ensure that remediation required by DEC is consistent with community redevelopment goals
- Produce a Land Use Plan for the redevelopment area north of the Utica Auditorium
- Work with Cornell University, through the R2G Program, to guide municipal initiatives for the City to invest in appropriate sustainable development projects
- Use the State's Brownfield Opportunity Program to foster redevelopment and return dormant and blighted land into productive and catalytic areas while restoring environmental quality

### CASE STUDY

#### *Emerging Local Example*

*The Johnson Park Center has prepared a green project, which includes the use of geothermal and solar technology. Johnson Park Center is trying to promote a prototype format including a day care center, a technology center and 31 rental units. The programs are set up to be sustainable and cost effective. Renewable energy technologies will be utilized. Resources and materials will be chosen that are durable, environmentally friendly and regionally sourced when possible. Johnson Park Center intends to seek LEED certification when the facility is complete.*



Existing View



## Greenman Venture Center

Adjacent to Utica College  
Vibrant campus environment

CHAPTER SIX  
INFRASTRUCTURE &  
WATERFRONT DEVELOPMENT



# INFRASTRUCTURE & WATERFRONT DEVELOPMENT

Utica is a diverse place with much to offer. The City boasts an exceptional quality of life, with access to outstanding medical care, educational facilities, recreational opportunities and sources of entertainment for all ages. When combined with the historical and cultural resources, the City offers an exceptional experience to its residents, employees and visitors.

However, Utica faces several major challenges within its infrastructure network. A sound transportation network that includes a variety of mobility opportunities, an efficient sewer and water network, and citywide accessibility to high speed, dependable telecommunications, is crucial to supporting various land use, neighborhood, and economic development goals. For Utica to become a place of excellence, it must provide safe, comfortable ways to get around. As an urban area, the transportation system must be multi-modal and not focus only on motor vehicles but also include buses, bicycles and pedestrians. The automobile will continue to be important, but it cannot drive land-use decisions. A comprehensive transportation system will enhance ongoing economic revitalization efforts, support existing business and meld with City land use goals. Likewise, the City's sewer and water systems must be brought to contemporary standards to meet the needs of existing businesses and new businesses as well as the neighborhoods.

Quality and efficient services are all important factors in realizing the City's vision when it comes to Utica's future – hallmarks of a community with a high quality of life. Typically, when infrastructure is discussed, most think first of roadways and sewer and water systems. When thought of more holistically, community infrastructure is broadened to include telecommunications. Efficient, dependable and quality infrastructure services underpin the City's efforts to become an economically vibrant and environmentally-sustainable community.

The notion of integrating sustainability principles into the City of Utica underlies virtually every recommendation within the Utica Master Plan. These sustainability principles are evident in the region's infrastructure needs. The Utica Master Plan aims to foster opportunities to build an economically competitive region that provides opportunities for healthy living, such as affordable housing, safe and reliable transportation choices, and healthy and walkable neighborhoods. Further, the Utica Master Plan encourages not only the City of Utica, but its surrounding communities and regional agencies, to think regionally about development and the interrelationships of housing, transportation and the environment and how choices can not only impact the environment but also local and regional fiscal conditions.

As the Mohawk Valley continues to strive to be competitive in the global economy, it will be important that all projects be evaluated within a regional context. It is hoped that the goals and implementation strategies outlined here can bring a renewed focus to Utica as “the hub of regional collaboration” by emphasizing an improved balance of resource allocations. In order for Utica and its neighboring regional communities to once again become competitive, it will be necessary to work collaboratively to protect the region's assets and improve the fiscal stability of all. Providing quality services, a range of housing opportunities and a variety of transportation and recreation choices will be imperative for success. Recognizing Utica as a “regional hub” is central to this success. The City of Utica should take the lead in fully coordinating regional policies that influence land-use, recreation, housing and infrastructure in a manner that creates focused, orderly development and investment that benefits the region as a competitive choice.

## EXISTING CONDITIONS- MUNICIPAL WATER

The City of Utica is served by public water supplied by the Mohawk Valley Water Authority (MVWA). Water is gathered in the streams and creeks of a remote 373 square mile Adirondack Mountain watershed. The West Canada Creek carries the water to the New York State owned

Hinckley Reservoir. A water treatment and filtration plant was constructed near the Village of Prospect and became operational in 1992. The filtration system removes most of the organic matter and contaminants before the water is chlorinated and fluoride is added. The filtered water is also treated to control corrosion of plumbing that may contain lead and copper by using small amounts of calcium hydroxide (lime) and sodium carbonate (soda ash). Lead levels are in compliance with the Federal Lead Monitoring Program action levels. The MVWA served a total of 130,000 people in 2008.

The MVWA's service area includes the City of Utica and all or parts of 15 Towns and Villages in Oneida and Herkimer counties. The City is represented on the MVWA Board of Directors by 6 of the 12 members who were appointed by the Mayor or by/with the consent of the City Common Council. The MVWA owns and operates all facilities (treatment, storage, transmission, and distribution) within its service area. Municipalities are responsible for funding and constructing water main extensions and related projects that benefit localized areas. Where larger town capital projects are determined to provide a larger regional benefit, the MVWA may fund a portion of those project costs.

Current MVWA funded capital projects include:

- Marcy Reservoir and Toby Road Tanks
- Hydraulic Modeling
- Leak Detection Program
- Water Main Replacement & Extensions
- Water Treatment Plant Filtration and Building Upgrades

Within the City of Utica, the MVWA operates Service Zones established by system operating pressure. Service Zones in the City include:

- Low Zone
- Intermediate Zone
- High Zone
- High-High Zone

Within the City of Utica, the MVWA owns, operates, and maintains approximately 750 miles of water main, 25 active water storage tanks, three new in tanks under construction and 20 active booster pump stations. The

MVWA is also responsible for maintaining several large open water storage reservoirs located just south of the City, in the Town of New Hartford. One of these reservoirs is maintained in stand-by service, the others are not part of the water supply system.

Based on 2000 Census population of 60,651 and the information acquired from the MVWA, the City's average daily potable water usage for the following categories is:

| Category     | Water Usage (CF)   | Approx. MGD |
|--------------|--------------------|-------------|
| Residential  | 157,550,800        | 3.23        |
| Commercial   | 63,045,500         | 1.3         |
| Industrial   | 19,975,100         | 0.41        |
| Municipal    | 18,018,300         | 0.37        |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>258,589,700</b> | <b>5.31</b> |

### EXISTING CONDITIONS – SANITARY AND STORM SEWERS

The City of Utica owns and operates a combined gravity wastewater collection system that was originally designed to transport sanitary wastewater and storm water runoff within the City to natural watercourses. These originally included Nail Creek, Halleck's Ravine, Ballou Creek, Grace Creek and Starch Factory Creek. The City is divided into north and south areas separated by the Mohawk River and Erie/Barge Canal. The topography slopes from the sides of the valley and all drainage is deposited into the Mohawk River.

The sewer system includes over 300 miles of sanitary, storm, and combined sewers which serve an area of approximately 11,000 acres. North Utica has predominantly separate storm and sanitary sewers. However, the South Utica area from the Mohawk River to the City Limit consists primarily of combined sewers with a smaller number of areas served by separate sewers where outfalls to the Mohawk River or local tributaries could be constructed. These tributaries are Nail Creek (flows in closed conduits through West Utica), Ballou Creek (flows in closed conduits through the westerly section of East Utica), and Starch Factory Creek (flows in an open channel through the

easterly section of East Utica), Sauquoit Creek (flows in an open channel along the southern border of the City), and Hallecks Ravine (flows in an open channel from South Utica into Nail Creek).

Sewer service areas within the City have been defined by the boundaries of their gravity collection systems and main trunk or interceptor sewers, these include:

#### HIGHLAND/STATE HOSPITAL TRUNK SEWERS

- Both built during the early 1900's and connect to the Railroad Interceptor.

#### 3RD & 7TH WARD TRUNK SEWER

- Residential area with a mix of commercial, office and light industry, connected to the Railroad Interceptor.

#### NAIL CREEK INTERCEPTOR

- Built during the 1920's serving low-density residential and commercial properties with a connection to the 3rd & 7th Ward Trunk Sewer.

#### STATE AND JOHN STREET TRUNK SEWERS

- Serving the older central business district with connections to the Railroad Interceptor.

#### GULF TRUNK SEWER

- Built in the late 1800's to originally discharge to the Mohawk River, now connected to the Railroad Interceptor.

#### RAILROAD INTERCEPTOR

- Not a service area but accepts flow from all five previously mentioned areas and connects to the County's Mohawk River Interceptor (MRI).

#### GRACE CREEK INTERCEPTOR

- Built between the 1880's and late 1920's, serves mostly residential and some commercial properties with a connection to the MRI.

#### STARCH FACTORY CREEK INTERCEPTOR

- Built by the County in 1976 to convey wastewater from the Towns of New Hartford and Frankfort to the Oneida County Water Pollution Control Plant (WPCP), this sewer also serves a

portion of eastern Utica's medium to low-density residential and mix of commercial/light industrial properties.

#### NORTH UTICA

- Five Oneida County interceptors convey flow to the WPCP. Area is primarily single-family homes with some commercial development.

#### MOHAWK RIVER INTERCEPTOR

- This is not a service area, built in 1967, this interceptor receives flow from all of South Utica with the exception of Starch Factory Creek and conveys it to the WPCP.

In 1970 Oneida County constructed a water pollution control plant (WPCP) and associated interceptor sewers to convey wastewater from the City and Towns within the county. With an upgrade in 1987, the WPCP has an effective treatment capacity of 45 MGD during the summer months and approximately 55 MGD during the winter and spring seasons. Due to the original construction of the City sewers as a combined system, relief points or Combined Sewer Overflows (CSO) were provided throughout the City and at connections to the County interceptors. This design allows wet weather flows that exceed the system capacity to be diverted to local waterways. These CSOs have been determined by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) to have an impact on the receiving water quality. Therefore, the NYSDEC has issued permits to the City for inspection, best management practices, and long-term control measures in order to eliminate or reduce the frequency of combined sewer overflow events. Over the years, the City has funded several major engineering studies to assess ways to effectively comply with these regulatory directives. Originally the City had as many as 149 CSO locations. By 2003 the total had been reduced to 82 active CSOs. Through the City Engineering Departments efforts, this number has been significantly reduced to 50.

The City of Utica is under permit conditions to establish a Long Term Control Plan (LTCP) to reduce the overflow volume from the remaining 50 CSOs to the local water bodies. The LTCP report is due to the NYSDEC in July 2011. The

report will identify various projects that will either reduce or slow the amount of stormwater entering the system during rain events and introduce treatment at some of the overflow outfalls.

The City of Utica is one of fifteen member municipalities within the Oneida County Sewer District (OCSD). The OCSD is currently under Consent Order with the NYSDEC for wet weather overflows at the Sauquoit Creek Pump Station (SCPS), located in the Village of Whitesboro. Projects associated with mitigation of the SCPS overflow are being coordinated with Utica's LCTP projects in order to establish a comprehensive improvement program understanding the existing and potential resources of the WPCP, benefits of district-wide maintenance planning, and cooperative funding opportunities.

### **EXISTING CONDITIONS - TRANSPORTATION**

Assessment of existing roadway network:

- ❖ The existing street network in the Downtown area is served by several major north/south and east/west streets. The North/South Arterial (NYS Routes 5, 8 and 12) is owned and maintained by New York State. Within the study area, it has both at-grade intersections and interchange with the local street system. Interchanges are provided at Oriskany Boulevard and Burrstone Road. At-grade signalized intersections are located at Oswego Street, Noyes Street, Sunset Avenue, Warren Street and Court Street. Left turns from the arterial are prohibited. Left turns from intersecting streets onto the arterial are allowed at some intersections. Left turns from westbound Court Street to the southbound arterial are prohibited. Motorists are required to turn left from Court Street onto Lincoln Avenue and then right onto Warren Street in order to be able to make a left turn onto the arterial. These left turn prohibitions limit access and mobility and can lead to unpredictable and unsafe driving behavior. The North/South Arterial serves both local traffic and inter-regional traffic and provides two lanes in each direction.
- ❖ The North/South Arterial has been identified as a high accident location with accidents particularly noted at the Court Street intersection, the southbound entrance ramp from Oriskany Boulevard and at other ramp terminals at the Oriskany Boulevard interchange. A number of pedestrian accidents have occurred with two fatalities within a three-year study period from April 2004 through March 2007. The New York State Department of Transportation is currently progressing a project to address the operational and safety issues along the North/South Arterial. As plans continue to develop for the Arterial, it is fundamental to ensure that the arterial not only moves vehicle travelers safely and efficiently, but also incorporates aesthetics as an integral part of design and provides for safe mobility options for the residents of Utica.
- ❖ Genesee Street is the other primary north/south street in the study area, running from New Hartford in the south, to Herkimer Road in the north. Genesee Street provides two lanes in each direction. There are no provisions for left turn lanes along Genesee Street. South of Oriskany Boulevard, on-street parking is allowed on both sides of the street. Sidewalks on both sides of Genesee Street are also provided. On-street parking is prohibited north of Oriskany Boulevard. North of Oriskany Boulevard, sidewalks are provided along the ramps to and from Broad Street and along both sides of Genesee Street from the ramps north. There are no sidewalks on the Genesee Street Bridge over Broad Street. Numerous signalized and stop-sign-controlled intersections are present over its entire length. An interchange with the NYS Thruway is located at the northern end of Genesee Street. The city of Utica is presently preparing plans to upgrade many of the signals along Genesee Street. As part of that project, signals which are no longer warranted will be removed.
- ❖ The primary west/east corridors in the study area are the Burrstone Road/Utica Memorial Parkway, Court Street/Hopper Street/Rutger Street, Lafayette Street/Bleecker Street and Oriskany Boulevard/Broad Street corridors. The Burrstone Road/ Utica Memorial

Parkway corridor is located in the southerly portion of the study area. It provides two lanes of traffic in each direction with additional turning lanes at some intersections. Traffic signals along the Memorial Parkway were upgraded as part of the recent Parkway reconstruction project to provide both vehicular and pedestrian actuated signals. Sidewalks are available for use by pedestrians along the entire length of the corridor.

- ❖ The Oriskany Boulevard/East West Arterial/Broad Street corridor is in the northerly portion of the downtown area. These streets provide two lanes in each direction and turn lanes at some intersections. Left turns from Oriskany Boulevard are prohibited at its intersection with Genesee Street. A frontage street is provided along the south side of Oriskany Street between Genesee Street and Second Street. The combination of frontage streets and the multiple-lane Oriskany Boulevard creates a wide crossing for pedestrians. While no project has been programmed at this time, the New York State Department of Transportation is evaluating options to make this section of Oriskany Boulevard/East West Arterial more pedestrian friendly. Sidewalks are provided throughout the corridor.

- ❖ The Lafayette Street/Bleecker Street and Court Street/Hopper Street/Rutger Street corridors both provide east/west travel through the heart of the downtown area. Both have signalized intersections with Genesee Street. While Court Street intersects the North/South Arterial as discussed above, Lafayette Street has no direct connection to the arterial. The traffic signals along each of these corridors are generally antiquated, pre-timed signals which are not responsive to traffic demands. Except for the intersections with Genesee Street, pedestrian signals are not provided at any of the other signalized intersections along either corridor. Sidewalks are provided along the entire lengths of both corridors.

Sidewalk conditions within the study area range from poor to very good. Some sections show

severe cracking and slab movement, while other sections are in very good condition. The majority of the sidewalks are constructed of concrete. The city of Utica has maintained an active street paving program for many years. As a result, pavement conditions are generally fair to good. However, a further analysis of the mobility network including roadways, sidewalks, crosswalks, traffic signal control systems, and transit facilities will help to facilitate a better user experience throughout the City.

The roadways and traffic signal control system is evaluated by the delay time experienced at each intersection. Recent traffic studies performed for various locations within the study area have found that existing streets and intersections operate at high levels of service. For urban areas, Level of Service "D" is considered acceptable. These studies have found that the subject intersections operate at levels "A" or "B". Level of service is a qualitative measure describing operational conditions within a traffic stream. The table below describes the various levels of service and the associated delay for both signalized and unsignalized intersections.

| Level of Service | Average Control Delay (sec/veh) |              |
|------------------|---------------------------------|--------------|
|                  | Signalized                      | Unsignalized |
| A                | ≤10                             | 0-10         |
| B                | >10-20                          | >10-15       |
| C                | >20-35                          | >15-25       |
| D                | >35-55                          | >25-35       |
| E                | >55-80                          | >35-50       |
| F                | >80                             | >50          |

As mentioned above, many of the traffic signals within the downtown area are antiquated, pre-timed traffic signals. These signals operate on a pre-timed cycle and are not responsive to traffic demands. In addition, most of the existing traffic signals do not provide pedestrian push buttons or pedestrian signals. The City is currently progressing a federally aided project to upgrade many of the traffic signals in the downtown area. The project includes a study of existing signalized intersections to verify that signalization is in fact warranted. Where intersections do not meet the warrants for a traffic signal, the existing signals will be removed and the intersection converted to stop sign control.

**Sidewalks/Crosswalks:** Sidewalks are provided throughout the study area. As mentioned above, their condition ranges from poor to very good. The sidewalks generally have sufficient widths to accommodate pedestrian needs. Marked crosswalks are maintained along Genesee Street, the North/South Arterial, Burrstone Road/Utica Memorial Parkway and Oriskany Boulevard/East West Arterial. At most other intersections, crosswalk pavement markings are not provided.

As has been noted in other studies, the North/South Arterial is a barrier to pedestrian traffic between the West Utica neighborhood and the Downtown area. The ongoing North/South Arterial project is evaluating methods to improve pedestrian traffic across this roadway. Improvements to make this roadway more pedestrian-friendly are currently being evaluated for inclusion in the North/South Arterial redesign project by the New York State Department of Transportation.

**Transit Facilities:** Transit service in Utica is provided by Centro. The map located in the Appendix of Maps depicts the current routes which serve the City and the location of bus stops along each route. The majority of the routes follow the major roadways within the downtown area. Centro, as the transit operator determines routing based on city wide and regional ridership.

The U.S. Census indicates that in the 2000 Census 4.3 percent of Utica residents (age 16 and over) used public transportation as their primary means of transportation to work, while another 6.6 percent bicycle or walk to work. In total, therefore, about 11 percent of the City's total population relies on alternatives to the car as their primary means of mobility.

## **WATERFRONT PLANNING FOR DEVELOPMENT**

The City of Utica, with the assistance of Saratoga Associates, Cornell University, and the State University at New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry's Center for Brownfield Studies have worked collaboratively to develop a Waterfront Access

Plan (WAP). This Plan has also been developed with funding and assistance from the New York State Department of State's Local Waterfront Revitalization Program.

The purpose of this Plan is to outline a clear set of investments necessary for improved connectivity and enhanced access along the 21 miles of waterfront in the City of Utica. This WAP also incorporates findings and initiatives presented in the 2010 Utica Marsh Development Strategy, 2009 North Genesee Street Corridor Management Study, the Gateway Historic Canal District Revitalization Strategy and the 2001 Harbor Point Redevelopment Framework Plan.

Utica's waterfront has been divided into three separate areas based on existing land patterns: Western Portion, Central Portion and Eastern Portion. The Central Portion will be an area of higher intensity and commercial type uses and is most likely to experience redevelopment. The Western Portion will provide significant opportunity for passive recreational uses, environmental and heritage interpretation, while safeguarding and enriching the right of the public to access the waterfront. The Eastern Portion shares many of the same characteristics of the Western Portion.



The WAP provides a variety of access and circulation improvements for pedestrians, bicycles, and vehicles, and includes recommended projects and actions along with potential partnering and funding opportunities. This WAP establishes a good start for a broader Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan (LWRP), which the City intends to develop with future LWRP grant funding from the NYS Department of State.

## **MASTER PLAN GOALS & STRATEGIES FOR INFRASTRUCTURE & WATERFRONT DEVELOPMENT**

A sound transportation network that includes a variety of mobility opportunities, an efficient sewer and water network, citywide accessibility to high-speed, dependable telecommunications, efficient public safety programs, and a commitment to cooperation between that City and the Utica City School District, are crucial to supporting various neighborhood and economic development goals outlined in this Master Plan. For Utica to become a place of excellence, it must recognize how vital its community infrastructure network is to help the City realize success.

The goals and strategies outlined below are a reflection of the City's commitment to invest resources in a manner that is consistent with the City's vision to be the place for people seeking a culturally rich, economically-successful and environmentally-friendly place to live, visit, and conduct business.

### **GOAL 1: ENHANCE THE OVERALL QUALITY OF UTICA'S PHYSICAL INFRASTRUCTURE BY SUPPORTING AND ADOPTING POLICIES THAT ARE SUSTAINABLE AND CONSISTENT WITH SMART GROWTH PRINCIPLES.**

Developing infrastructure that is green means thinking differently about what is built and how it is built. The broad intent of this goal is to create a system that will help the City of Utica focus its limited resources in a manner that is environmentally responsible. The goal should encourage a variety of agencies to take advantage of opportunities for greener ways of doing business (i.e. reducing waste, saving energy and water, controlling storm water, etc).

From a storm water management perspective, Green infrastructure is the interconnected network of open spaces and natural areas, such as greenways, wetlands, parks, forest preserves and native plant vegetation, that naturally manages storm water, reduces flooding risk and improves water quality. Green infrastructure usually costs less to install and maintain when compared to traditional forms of

infrastructure. Green infrastructure projects also foster community cohesiveness by engaging all residents in the planning, planting and maintenance of the sites.

### **Implementation Strategies:**

- Adopt municipal policies that promote a green Infrastructure program aimed at reducing the overall impact on the urban ecology, and may include the following aspects:
  - 1) Storm water management practices aimed at preserving, restoring or mimicking natural hydrology, which targets the reduction in impervious surfaces and encourages the beneficial re-use of urban runoff.
  - 2) Maximization of "green space", including wetlands restoration, tree planting, rain gardens, green roofs, swales, and porous pavements.
  - 3) Reduction in "heat islands" created by dark colored impervious surfaces. Encourage the utilization of high reflective index materials, such as light colored roofs or light concrete.
  - 4) Maximize the use of recycled, or recyclable building materials. Also consider locally available building materials from renewable resources.
  - 5) Develop a set of municipal construction standards that are based on the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) rating system – that promote sustainability, water and energy efficiency, indoor air quality, and on-site storm water management.
- Determine how to work with neighboring municipalities to expand and/or share services.

**GOAL 2: DEVELOP A WATER INFRASTRUCTURE AND A SMART GROWTH PLAN THAT ELIMINATES WASTE, CONSERVES WATER, PRESERVES CAPACITY FOR INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT AND ENSURES A SUFFICIENT WATER SUPPLY TO SUPPORT UTICA'S REGROWTH IN A MANNER THAT IS FISCALLY EQUITABLE TO UTICA RESIDENTS.**

**Implementation Strategies:**

- Recommend system-wide projects proposed by Mohawk Valley Water Authority (MVWA) are considered carefully by Utica Water Board members to assess if proposed improvements are equitable to all rate payers.
- Recommend Utica's representatives on the MVWA Board are in close communication, through direct participation or regular planned meetings and forums, with City of Utica Planning and Engineering Departments, Utica Common Council and the implementation committees to ensure current and future water needs are being addressed by the MVWA.
- Formally request that the MVWA update the 1968 Comprehensive Water Supply Study, so as to provide a new regional planning policy for meeting water supply needs. The scope of the study should provide for public participation.
- Encourage water conservation by:
  - 1) Installing smart water meters
  - 2) Recapture and recycling programs

**GOAL 3: BRING SANITARY AND STORM WATER SEWER SYSTEMS THAT SERVE UTICA INTO COMPLIANCE WITH PERMIT REQUIREMENTS AND EMPLOY BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES IN A MANNER THAT IS FISCALLY EQUITABLE TO UTICA RESIDENTS.**

**Implementation Strategies:**

- Recommend system-wide projects

proposed by Oneida County Sewer District (OCSD) are considered carefully by Utica's OCSD representatives to assess if proposed improvements benefit all rate payers.

- Recommend Utica's representatives on the OCSD steering committee remain in close communication with City of Utica Planning and Engineering Departments and Utica Common Council to ensure current and future sewer needs are being addressed by OCSD.
- Incrementally introduce combined sewer overflow (CSO) control strategies such as separation and treatment and programs such green infrastructure and roof leader disconnection (redirect roof leaders to storm water lines) reduce storm water inflow into the sanitary system.
- Implement with cooperation from the NYSDEC and County a "sewer credit" system for removal of storm water from flow to the Oneida County WPCP (Water Pollution Control Plant) similar to one already in place for the Sauquoit Creek Pump Station tributary area.

**GOAL 4: EXPLORE TECHNOLOGIES AND DELIVERY SYSTEMS TO GENERATE POWER IN A COST EFFICIENT AND ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY MANNER. REDUCE THE COST OF AND IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF POWER.**

**Implementation Strategies:**

- Explore options of smart grid and other technologies among clusters of buildings and in emerging new development areas to reduce costs associated with power generation. Give special attention to brownfield sites as locations for this benefit in the Old Erie Canal and Central Industrial Corridors.
- Ensure that technologies, including but not limited to windpower and hydrofracking, related to the development of new sources of power and energy do not negatively impact the City's critical natural resources.
- Explore the use of distributed power and

greener energy production.

- Explore options for LED street lights and traffic signals.
- Explore the creation of a City of Utica Power Authority and/or other methods to buy and distribute power at lower costs.

**GOAL 5: EXPLORE THE VALUE OF COOPERATIVE ARRANGEMENTS WITH NEIGHBORING COMMUNITIES AS A MEANS TO ACHIEVE FISCALLY RESPONSIBLE, MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL, HIGHER QUALITY SERVICE THAT IS IN THE BEST INTEREST OF THE CITY OF UTICA. ADOPT SHARED SERVICES CONSOLIDATION AGREEMENTS FOR ROAD AND SEWER MAINTENANCE WITH NEIGHBORING COMMUNITIES IN A MANNER THAT IS FISCALLY RESPONSIBLE, MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL, DELIVERS A HIGHER QUALITY SERVICE AND IS IN THE BEST INTEREST OF THE CITY OF UTICA.**

**Implementation Strategies:**

- Perform a shared services consolidation study including a cost benefit analysis to determine whether road and sewer maintenance services could be shared with neighboring communities in a manner that would be at lower cost and provide a higher quality service to the City of Utica.
- Bring City of Utica and neighboring municipalities together to discuss collaboration and cooperation to determine strategies that will help ensure the delivery of services while achieving efficiencies.
- Explore ways to equitably allocate the cost of maintenance considering urban sprawl effects (i.e. public infrastructure serving less-densely populated areas).
- Promote policies and develop asset management systems to support a comprehensive preventive maintenance program.
- Explore the development of a regional maintenance repair program based within the City of Utica.

**GOAL 6: STRIVE FOR STRONGER OVERSIGHT BY ONEIDA COUNTY DEPARTMENTS AND LEGISLATURE IN PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES THAT HAVE INTERMUNCIPAL IMPACTS.**

**Implementation Strategies:**

- Explore the development of a regional plan with Oneida County and neighboring towns and villages.
- Coordinate semi-annual joint meetings involving the Utica Common Council and the Oneida County Legislature to discuss common issues and opportunities for collaboration.
- Recommend Utica’s representatives on the Oneida County Legislature are in close communication with the City of Utica Planning and Engineering Departments and the Utica Common Council.

**GOAL 7: CREATE INVITING FRIENDLY STREETSCAPES, ENHANCED GATEWAYS, AND DEVELOP CORRIDOR PLANS.**

**Implementation Strategies:**

- Define individual areas of Utica with streetscapes that emphasize an area’s character, for example a public sculpture plan for a theatre and arts district. Create themes based on each neighborhood’s historic ethnicities and express them with unique lighting, banners and similar streetscape amenities. Establish neighborhood-based design standards for development that will maintain and enhance the character and identity of existing neighborhoods.
- Re-assess and adopt consistent strategies presented in the State Street Corridor Plan and North Genesee Street Corridor Management Plan. Assess Oriskany and Broad Street Corridors as part of Brownfield Opportunity Area (BOA) studies.
- Recognize that value of key gateways into Utica. Image is fundamentally important to economic success. People

form their first impressions of Utica at its gateways. The degree to which a community takes care of this ‘first impression’ can say a lot to visitors and potential investors about the values of residents, businesses and government leadership. Examples of some key gateways include:

- Intersections where the Thruway enters the City at North Genesee Street
- North Genesee Street
- Route 5S coming in from the Town of Schuyler
- Intersections of Broad Street and Route 5S
- Burrstone Road to Utica College and along Culver to Rutger Street
- Genesee Street from the Town of New Hartford
- Court Street to Yorkville and Whitestown
- Oriskany Street from the Town of Whitestown – From Oriskany Boulevard to Whitestown
- Develop a new lighting ordinance consistent with Dark Sky principles.
- Reduce the visual blight in the City by undergrounding utility lines.

## **GOAL 8: CREATE AN EFFECTIVE TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM, INCLUDING PUBLIC TRANSIT, AUTOMOBILES, AND A PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE PATH SYSTEM IN THE CITY OF UTICA**

### **Implementation Strategies:**

- Implement Complete Streets practices in conjunction with a sidewalk replacement program to create a safe and quality multi-modal transportation system.
- Snow on Sidewalks: Reevaluate current policy on snow removal from sidewalk
- Consider Olmsted Report (1908) design principles when major street work is anticipated including improvements and enhancements to Parkways and bikeways. Potential projects to be evaluated include extension of Parkway (look and feel) along Burrstone Road to Utica College and along Culver to

Rutger Street with corresponding bikeway improvements.

- Adopt a Complete Streets Policy that provides streets that have facilities for all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, transit users and motorists, to the extent appropriate for the land use or the context of the street. This strategy would include evaluating the replacement arterial highways and major streets, as they approach the end of their useful lives, with conventional streets or Multi-way Boulevards.
- Work with the New York State Department of Transportation to incorporate context sensitive solutions along the North-South Arterial. Potential elements to be included in the project are dedicated pedestrian/bike trail adjacent to the corridor, historic lighting, street trees and landscaping and opportunities to display public art.
- Work with the NYS DOT on the implementation of a boulevard treatment to the Oriskany Street/ NYS Route 5s corridor that utilizes “Complete Streets” principles.
- Develop improved access to the Rayhill Trail.

## **GOAL 9: INCREASE PUBLIC AWARENESS, PUBLIC ACCESS AND CONNECTIVITY TO THE HISTORIC DISTRICTS AND ERIE CANAL/MOHAWK RIVER.**

### **Implementation Strategies:**

- Create better access to the following districts and subdistricts:
  - East and West Bagg’s Square (Lower Genesee Street Historic District)
  - Gateway District – Whitesboro between Seneca and Potter
  - West Utica – Sunset Avenue and York Street Corridors
  - Harbor Point and Inner Harbor
  - Erie Canal – East of North Genesee Street
  - Varick Street/Brewery District
- Establish better connections between:
  - Varick Street and the Utica

- Memorial Auditorium
  - Downtown and North Utica
  - Bagg's East and West to North Genesee to Inner Harbor
  - East Utica to Leland and Wurz Ave
- Develop "Way Finding Signage" and visual links to direct residents and visitors to key areas around the City.
- Work with the Town of Frankfort, Oneida County and NYS Canal Corporation to develop a plan to extend the Canalway Trail from Harbor Lock Road into Frankfort. (Currently the trail leaves the water's edge at North Genesee Street, heads south to Bleecker Street heading west into Frankfort. In Frankfort the trail reconnects with the water's edge along south Side Road via Dyke Street)
- Develop a Local Waterfront Access Plan (LWAP) in accordance with NYS Department of State programs.

**GOAL 10: DEVELOP APPROPRIATE PORTIONS OF THE WATERFRONT AND INNER HARBOR AS A MIXED USE DESTINATION ATTRACTION FOR UTICA THAT ENHANCES THE EXISTING WATERS EDGE WITH PUBLIC AND PRIVATE INVESTMENT.**

**Implementation Strategies:**

- Implement consistent portions of National Grid's Harbor Point Plan.
- Create public (or mixed public and commercial) uses at Harbor Point and Inner Harbor.
- Upon completion of the LWAP, complete the LWRP (Local Waterfront Redevelopment Plan) with the assistance and financial support of the NYS Department of State.
- Preserve environmentally sensitive areas of the waterfront as protected open space.

**GOAL 11: ENCOURAGE THE DEVELOPMENT OF NEXT GENERATION INTERNET CONNECTIVITY WITH RELIABLE OPEN ACCESS NETWORKS, PROVIDING AFFORDABLE ACCESS FOR BUSINESSES AND RESIDENTS.**

**Implementation Strategies:**

- Develop a comprehensive tele-communications strategy for the City of Utica.
- Create and maintain internet connectivity in the City of Utica.
- Conduct a study, including focus groups, on telecommunications needs in the City of Utica, including access and infrastructure needed to support economic development opportunities.



The North Genesee Street Corridor Management Plan calls for aesthetic improvements to the corridor such as a decorative pavement in the center turning lane, a dedicated bicycle lane, historic lighting, a green median between the road, bus shelters, sidewalks and street trees to help define and visually soften the feel of the corridor

## CASE STUDY

### Lighting the Night Sky

*A growing body of evidence links the brightening night sky directly to measurable negative impacts on human health and immune function, on adverse behavioral changes in insect and animal populations, and on a decrease of both ambient quality and safety in our nighttime environment.*

*Light pollution is excessive and inappropriate artificial light. Increased urban sky glow is responsible for the disappearance of the Milky Way from our night skies. The adverse effects of light pollution extend well beyond astronomy. New research suggests that light at night may interfere with normal circadian rhythms—the 24-hour cycle of day and night that humans have used to maintain health and regulate their activities for thousands of years. While research is still ongoing, it is becoming apparent that both bright days and dark nights are necessary to maintain healthy hormone production, cell function, and brain activity, as well as normal feeding, mating, and migratory behavior for many species, including humans.*

*Light pollution also wastes money and energy. Billions of dollars are spent on unnecessary lighting every year in the United States alone, with over \$2.2 billion going directly into the nighttime sky via unshielded outdoor lights. Unshielded outdoor lights are directly responsible for 14.7 million tons of carbon dioxide waste. Simply reducing and removing unnecessary lighting saves money and energy, often at minimal expense. Over-lighting the night neither improves visibility nor increases nighttime safety, utility, security, or ambiance.*

*International Dark-Sky Association (IDA) is the leading authority on the problems and solutions related to light pollution, and IDA's Web site is a great educational resource. \*further information is provided in the Appendix\**



Also known as infiltration swales, biofilters, grassed swales, or in-line bioretention, bioswales are vegetated open channels specifically designed to attenuate and treat stormwater runoff for a defined water volume. Bioswales intentionally promote slowing, cleansing and infiltration along the way, thereby reducing runoff volumes into the Utica stormwater systems.



Permeable pavement can be used instead of standard asphalt and concrete for surfacing sidewalks, driveways, parking areas, and many types of road surfaces.

## CASE STUDY

### *Implementing Complete Streets Principles*

*Commitments to Complete Streets principles have been adopted via state law, local ordinances and resolutions, agency policies, comprehensive plans, tax measures, and design manual re-writes. Regardless of the format, the best Complete Streets policies apply to all road projects and require high-level approval of any exceptions (more on elements of a good policy can be found at <http://www.completestreets.org/policies.html>). Once a policy is adopted, full integration of all modes requires revamping decision-making procedures, providing additional training for engineers and planners, rewriting design manuals, and establishing new performance measures.*

*The city of Seattle adopted a comprehensive Complete Streets Ordinance, shortly after including a complete streets provision in a transportation bond measure. The ordinance directs the city to integrate complete streets practices into all Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) plans, manuals, rules, regulations, and programs as appropriate. And it specifies that “all sources of transportation funding be drawn upon to implement Complete Streets.” This is an important provision — rather than creating a new funding pot, complete streets policies can leverage existing, mainstream transportation dollars, minimizing the cost of new bicycle, pedestrian, and transit facilities and reducing the need for costly retrofits. The Seattle ordinance specifically includes maintenance and operations in the policy; this is valuable as many minor but crucial improvements for biking and walking can and should be made during routine maintenance and operations projects.*

*Source: Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center Case Study Compendium, January 2009*



The Harbor Point Redevelopment Plan prepared for the Niagara Mohawk Power Corporation calls for a series of waterfront buildings to include restaurants, shops and marina services. The plan also brings the visitor to the water's edge via a boardwalk/promenade with themed lighting, ornamental railings, decorative pavements, benches and signage.



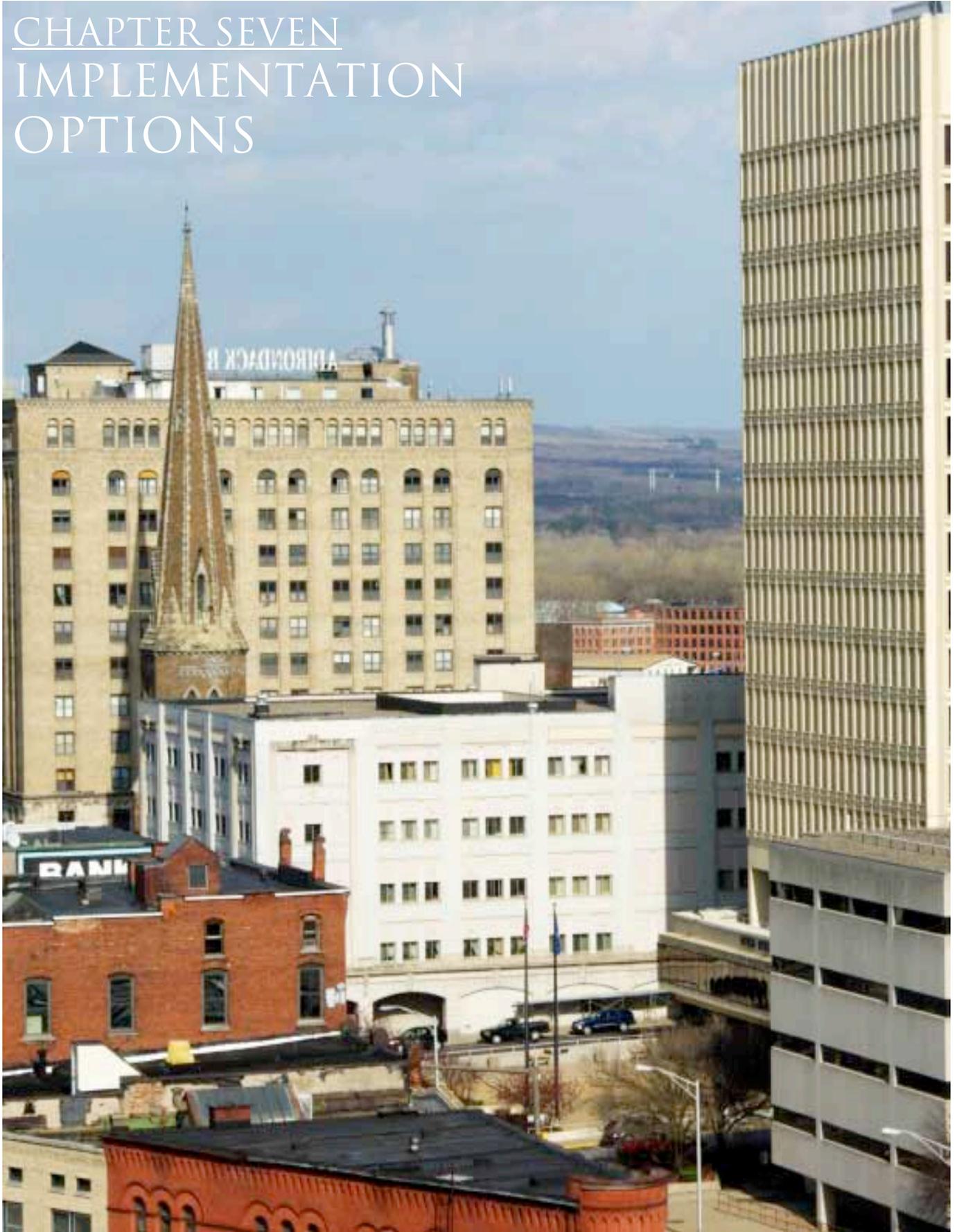
Existing View



## **Harbor Point Fields**

- Promenade along water's edge**
- Mixed-use commercial development**
- Strong pedestrian circulation network**
- Waterfront connection to downtown**
- Multi-use, multi-seasonal complex**
- Baseball stadium**
- Marina**

# CHAPTER SEVEN IMPLEMENTATION OPTIONS



## IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Utica's Master Plan is a statement of intent, which recommends steps toward action. The Master Plan provides policy direction and recommendations to guide the City and its partners. It translates community goals into a long-range social, economic, and land use action program. It is designed to obtain a commitment by both public and private decision-makers to a coordinated set of actions that will maintain and improve Utica's quality of life for future generations. Further, it is the intent of this Master Plan to identify common themes and to focus on how successful partnerships can be created and maintained over the long run.

At the most basic level, this Plan identifies steps that are needed to enhance the quality of life and improve the economic opportunities within the City of Utica. The specific recommendations are provided as a guide to those who participate in the effort to implement the vision and goals of the community. Achieving this vision and related goals will require the efforts of local government, federal and state agencies, and significant participation from the residents, business owners and institutions within the City and the region. No single person or group will be able to achieve the goals independently. It will command the determination, strengths and diversity of many offices, agencies and community stakeholders working toward a common vision.

Community redevelopment today cannot be accomplished all at once in the way that many Urban Renewal projects have in years past. Given the limited resources with which both the public and private sectors have to work with today, implementation must be incrementally phased with a commitment to the long-term. This course of action will allow Utica to focus on short-term successes, capitalize on funding as it may be available, and realize the cumulative success leading to comprehensive community-wide revitalization.

Utica is in the process of building a long-term sustainable future. Success comes down to one thing: defining a course of action and being committed over the long-term. Staying

the course will require dedication to the spirit of the vision, goals, policy direction, and recommendations outlined in this Master Plan.

As Utica continues to reconnect its people and places in a community fabric for generations to come, community-wide interaction and dialogue are critical. To a large extent, it is a matter of maintaining and building upon the interaction that has been established among numerous people and organizations resulting from this master planning process. As long as this interaction continues to embrace the full diversity of the community, Utica will set the standard for community renewal for many of Upstate New York's urban centers.

## SETTING THE STAGE FOR THE FUTURE

Utica's Master Plan sets the stage for shaping change within the community and region. It also represents a paradigm shift in the way municipal operations have occurred in the past. To be successful, investments will need to be made in the public realm, infrastructure, neighborhoods, and commercial districts. This means engaging in a collaborative process that discovers needs and results in partnerships for implementation.

One of the most resounding and repeated comments heard from the public during the neighborhood meetings was that the plan should transcend future changes in City administration. A wide range of options exists to ensure the continued viability of this document.

**The Plan details two possible alternatives – from the most simple to a much more complex structure. These alternatives are offered as possible options; other alternatives that accomplish the same objectives could be researched and considered subsequent to the adoption of the Plan.**

## ACHIEVING THE BASICS

The goal of ensuring that all future actions are consistent with the adopted Plan, regardless of the City administration under which the action is being taken, is enactment of a local law

requiring a consistency review. Under this scenario, the City of Utica Common Council could enact a local law that simply states that all future actions by the City's legislative body or any part of the administration, including the Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals, shall ensure that such actions are consistent with the nature and intent of the City's Master Plan. Such a local law would have greater weight over a resolution or ordinance and would require a public hearing prior to enactment. This method is similar to the federal consistency review more commonly associated with the federal Coastal Zone Management Act that places similar requirements on Federal agencies.

At the other end of the spectrum, the establishment of a Utica Master Plan Partnership Advisory Board, as described below, proposes a strategy to incrementally coordinate public, private and not-for-profit efforts to long-term success. It is a somewhat different approach from the way in which similar municipally led initiatives have been implemented. The implementation approach outlined below calls for a uniquely defined Master Plan Partnership Advisory Board comprised of citizens, institutions, business owners and municipal leaders to work together collaboratively to realize a better Utica.

### **UTICA MASTER PLAN PARTNERSHIP ADVISORY BOARD: ESTABLISHING THE CAPACITY FOR IMPLEMENTATION**

Experience shows that plans move much more easily into action when those involved in the planning process are also involved in the implementation process. This is especially so when the goal is to create a partnership framework that must draw its success from the commitments and collective actions of a large number of public agencies and private groups, in the region as well as at the state level. Thus, implementation of the Utica Master Plan needs to be characterized by continued public involvement. This continued public involvement is critical to the ultimate success of the master planning process. The ever-increasing demand for the City of Utica to operate more efficiently has pushed the City to re-think how to

effectively respond to the need for technical competence in the management of operations and the delivery of services to residents. The Master Plan Partnership Advisory Board identified here will be responsible for implementing, monitoring and updating the Utica Master Plan in a collaborative manner, drawing from the various expertise of the City's residents and business owners, to further the success of Utica and the region as a whole.

The Utica Master Plan Partnership Advisory Board is established to foster a stronger working collaboration between the private sector, municipal department heads and elected officials by bringing resources together that produce efficient, effective results. Bringing this broader perspective forward allows for policy discussions to take place that will help to connect the past and future by focusing on what needs to be accomplished in the present. Further, one of the goals of this Master Plan is to foster a greater level of transparency in decision-making. This Partnership Advisory Board will foster consensus among the various stakeholders with a community-wide perspective, generating alliances to implement various policies and projects. Finally, by bringing together various levels of expertise within the community, this Partnership Advisory Board will promote innovation in municipal operations while better aligning resources with the vision, guiding principles, goals and recommendations set forth in this Master Plan.

### ***Partnership Structure***

Creation of the Partnership Advisory Board should ensure a diverse set of skills, expertise, and feedback. To be most effective, the Partnership Advisory Board will be comprised of people of diverse backgrounds and viewpoints. Consideration should be given to develop a broad range of people, including neighborhood development experts, attorneys, CPAs, executives, realtors, small business owners, arts and tourism leaders, educators, and regional interests.

Staff and management for the Partnership Advisory Board ought to come from the City of Utica's Department of Urban & Economic

Development. To be most effective, it may be necessary for the City to staff a full-time Long Range Planner dedicated to implementing the Master Plan and working with the Partnership Advisory Board. This position will deal with a variety of issues relating to Master Plan implementation including economic analysis, infill development, retail and neighborhood revitalization, and grant writing to support needs related to plan implementation. In summary, responsibilities for the Long-Range Planner should include:

- Evaluation and monitoring Master Plan implementation
- Coordinating partnerships for plan implementation
- Staff the Executive and Standing Committees
- Resource funding related to Master Plan implementation
- Provide annual reports on activities related to Master Plan implementation

Working from the same framework used for the Master Plan committee itself, the Partnership Advisory Board should include five Standing Committees that support the Executive Committee: Housing & Neighborhood Development; Downtown Development; Parks, Recreation, Arts, Culture, & Historic Preservation; Community Infrastructure; and Business & Technology Development and Waterfront Development. A sixth Standing Committee should include fiscal experts to help uncover new, innovative ways to balance current community needs with investments that will lead to future community improvements.

This Standing Committee should be recognized as Finance and Fiscal Policy. As the Partnership Advisory Board evolves, it may be necessary to develop special, temporary Ad Hoc Committees that address specific needs as they are realized. Each Standing Committee should include one resident for each of the six neighborhood districts identified in this Master Plan. Finally, Utica residency should be a requirement for at least 50% of those who comprise each Standing Committee.

**Establishment of the Utica Master Plan Partnership Advisory Board**

The City recently developed a committee of municipal representatives to review and update the City Charter. In an effort to memorialize the work developed in the Master Plan and to maintain momentum, the City should examine the possibility of incorporating the Utica Master Plan Partnership Advisory Board as an element of the City Charter and drafting a Local Law establishing the Master Plan Partnership Advisory Board.

**UPDATING THE UTICA MASTER PLAN**

Master Plan evaluation and monitoring should be the responsibility of the Long Range Planner. Over time, conditions in Utica will change and new opportunities will emerge. The Master Plan should be reviewed on an annual basis to understand areas that need refinement and/or to reflect new or emerging opportunities that are consistent with the spirit of the Master Plan. The Master plan should be fully updated on a 5-7 year schedule. Review of the Master Plan ought to become a fundamental element to the City’s annual Capital Improvements Plan. The Long Range Planner should be responsible for leading these initiatives.



A series of small victories can create and sustain momentum for the future.