

Section VII. Major Recommendations

A. Introduction

The E-J BOA Study Area provides a number of unique opportunities to develop large-scale properties in a highly accessible urban setting. Considering the Study Area brownfield properties in the context of the regional real estate market, many Study sites possess key locational advantages that enhance their development appeal.

Wilson Hospital supports hundreds of employees in medical and healthcare-related fields, and is a regional destination for medical services. State-of-the art services such as Cyber Knife treatment are offered by Study Area establishments associated with the hospital. Healthcare industries account for almost 20% of the Southern Tier Region’s projected growth from 2004-2014, so hospital-related spinoff growth represents a potentially viable development option for the Study Area. Practitioner offices, medical billing services, laboratory space, and hospital-related storage space are just a few examples of medical-related uses that may be viable in the Study Area.

The socioeconomic characteristics of the projected future population for the area indicate that there will be a significant growth in the 55-64 year age group referred to as “empty nesters.” This age group generally elicits a demand for apartments or condos located close to urban areas such as the Village of Johnson City. In addition, older age groups (65+) are also expected to experience relatively high population growth in the near future. This could create opportunities for “aging-in place” housing arrangements to be constructed within the study area. And lastly, the projected population growth in individuals age 25 to 34 in the region presents the opportunities for housing built or current residential structures to be renovated for graduate students and young professionals.

Office and/or light industrial uses could take advantage of the Study Area’s accessibility while enjoying the benefits of urban surroundings. A high-tech manufacturing operation has been operating successfully at the 18 Park Street/25 Ozalid Road property, providing a fine example of a manufacturing reuse with potential to serve as an anchor establishment in the future. National real estate trends indicate a renewed interest in urban office locations, and the Study Area’s brownfield properties could allow the development of competitively priced, modern office space within close proximity to the Main Street commercial corridor and the Goodwill Theatre Complex, as well as Wilson Hospital. Flex development formats could accommodate the needs of various office, R&D, and/or light industrial uses in the area.

The recently completed Walmart Supercenter will increase flows of consumer traffic throughout the Study Area. Brownfield sites along Lester Avenue are poised to benefit from increased exposure to Walmart customers. In the future, Study Area retail establishments – particularly those located along Main Street – should complement Walmart’s comprehensive offerings by providing specialty retail and/or services. Increased exposure to retail customers will likely enhance the vitality of Main Street retail, in turn boosting the area’s appeal by providing improved retail support services to nearby employees.

To capitalize on these opportunities, the Nomination Study identifies 10 goals. These are as follows:

- Goal 1:* Direct development efforts to distressed properties while preserving viable sites and operations
- Goal 2:* Ensure that the revitalization plan is well-grounded in current market conditions, reflective of the E-J BOA study area’s character, and realistically addresses environmental constraints
- Goal 3:* To guide future development, create a General Land Use Plan that will serve as a basis for a Master Plan of the study area.
- Goal 4:* Use the existing character to provide recommendations specific to each BOA sub-area
- Goal 5:* Connect the BOA internally, to adjacent neighborhoods, and to the larger region
- Goal 6:* Provide appealing, marketable opportunities for private investment
- Goal 7:* Create the Willow Street Business Park
- Goal 8:* Revitalize priority sites in a manner that is consistent with community plans, needs and vision
- Goal 9:* Capitalize on the emerging Goodwill Theatre district by expanding cultural and recreational opportunities available to residents and employees
- Goal 10:* To ensure the redevelopment process remains grounded and does not lose momentum; continue to foster partnerships with institutions and stakeholders

Since the first publication of the Nomination Study, some progress has been made toward achieving these goals. The Town of Union and Village of Johnson City have prepared a unified zoning ordinance which addresses Goal 3 the creation of a general land use plan. In addition the Binghamton Metropolitan Transportation Study has nearly completed the *Main Street Corridor Study*, which addresses Goal 5. Specifically, the draft *Main Street Corridor Study* puts forward six goals:

- Create a Sense of Place
- Improve Safety for All Users
- Support Economic Growth
- Maintain Traffic Flow

- Preserve Transportation Infrastructure
- Manage Access

For the E-J BOA study area, the corridor study recommends that Main Street have a ‘pedestrian friendly, walkable feel’. The plan goes on to promote ‘Providing outdoor café space, public space, and walking path connections leading from the downtown area to the UHS campus and surrounding areas’ to ‘greatly enhance the character and accessibility of the area.’ The corridor study also sees the Goodwill Theatre as a catalyst for ‘arts development and revitalization’ for the area.

To achieve the remaining goals, the following recommendations will serve as a basis for the targeted Implementation Strategy set forth in Step 3 of the Brownfield Opportunity Areas Program. They are provided as an outgrowth of the detailed review of the priority sites presented in Section V of this report as well as the formulation of the General Land Use Plan presented in Section VI. In addition, recommendations are provided that provide direction towards managing and financing the redevelopment of the Brownfield Area.

B. Apply for a targeted Step 3: Implementation Strategy

The purpose of the Implementation Strategy is to detail a set of activities that are necessary to redevelop the priority sites. A highly targeted application for Step 3 with a short timeline for completion should be submitted to the Department of State and Department of Environmental Conservation.

C. Strengthen Partnerships between the County, City, Town, Village and the Private Sector

Redeveloping the E-J BOA is largely dependant upon the collaboration of many public and private individuals and organizations including Wilson Hospital, private investors and the local community. These partnerships are critical in advancing the initiatives to be put forth in the Master Plan as well as redeveloping the priority sites. The Steering Committee created to oversee the preparation of this Nomination Study should convene throughout Step 3 of the BOA Program to continue the relationships built to date. This effort will address the following goal of the Nomination Study:

- Goal 10: To ensure the redevelopment process remains grounded and does not lose momentum; continue to foster partnerships with institutions and stakeholders

To achieve this goal, the membership of the Steering Committee from the Step 2 Nomination Study will be assessed to ensure that it remains relevant to the project. The selected consultant will prepare a Citizen Participation Plan (CPP) in collaboration with the Steering

Committee. The CPP will be a useful tool for the County to foster communication between the selected consultant, residents, stakeholders, regulatory agencies, and elected officials

D. Prepare Priority Sites for Redevelopment

There is much work to be done to get the priority sites ready for redevelopment. These steps need to be itemized based on the current disposition of the individual building. To begin the redevelopment process, Phase I and, as appropriate, Phase II environmental assessments should be completed for all priority sites to clearly understand the environmental concerns inherent in each property. Conceptual site plans should be prepared for use in a marketing plan explaining the virtues of each site. Eventually, updated architectural and engineering plans and cost pro formas will be required to show to potential developers. As discussed in Section V, it appears to be financially feasible to pursue the renovation of the first-floor of the existing buildings at each priority site to current building standards, improving the building exteriors, and ‘mothballing’ upper stories for possible future use. These targeted redevelopment plans will address the following goals:

- Goal 1: Direct development efforts to distressed properties while preserving viable sites and operations
- Goal 2: Ensure that the revitalization plan is well-grounded in current market conditions, reflective of the E-J BOA study area’s character, and realistically addresses environmental constraints
- Goal 4: Use the existing character to provide recommendations specific to each BOA sub-area
- Goal 6: Provide appealing, marketable opportunities for private investment
- Goal 7: Create the Willow Street Business Park
- Goal 8: Revitalize priority sites in a manner that is consistent with community plans, needs and vision

Specifically the priority site redevelopment plans will consist of the following:

Environmental Assessments/Engineering Analysis: For priority sites, the Step 3 Implementation Strategy will include four elements: 1) Updated Phase I Environmental Assessment; 2) Phase II Environmental Assessment (where necessary); 3) Hazardous Material Survey (where necessary) and 4) Structural Analysis. Site access agreements will need to be negotiated with property owners for this work. It is anticipated that three priority sites will be characterized as part of the Step III Implementation Strategy. Broome County has already contracted with an environmental engineering firm to prepare Phase I assessments for two priority sites: 48 Corliss Avenue and 59 Lester Avenue.

Reuse of Strategic Sites: Cost-Benefit Scenario: Building on the reuse scenarios developed in the Step 2 Nomination Study and the more in-depth Environmental Assessments/Engineering Analysis, the consultant will prepare cost-benefit scenarios for priority sites.

Design Alternatives and Illustrations for Strategic Sites: Conceptual site plans, elevations, and renderings will be prepared for the priority sites that will be the basis for SEQRA review and the Marketing Plan.

E. Marketing Plan

The consultant for the targeted Step 3: Implementation Study will develop a marketing plan for the priority sites, including all materials for distribution. This will address the following goals of the Nomination Study:

- Goal 6: Provide appealing, marketable opportunities for private investment
- Goal 7: Create the Willow Street Business Park
- Goal 9: Capitalize on the emerging Goodwill Theatre district by expanding cultural and recreational opportunities available to residents and employees

The primary component of the marketing plan will be:

Profiles of Strategic Sites for Marketing Purposes: Descriptive profiles of strategic sites will be prepared to publicize and market the site's availability for redevelopment for desired end land uses. The descriptive profiles will be designed so they can be included in real estate portfolios, marketing brochures, or for posting on web sites.

F. Aggressively continue to pursue brownfield funding and incentives for targeted sites

The E-J BOA contains priority sites that are ripe for funding through federal and state brownfield programs. Grant applications should seek to target funding for the priority sites and overall redevelopment of the BOA. This effort will address the following Nomination Study goals:

- Goal 1: Direct development efforts to distressed properties while preserving viable sites and operations
- Goal 6: Provide appealing, marketable opportunities for private investment
- Goal 7: Create the Willow Street Business Park
- Goal 8: Revitalize priority sites in a manner that is consistent with community plans, needs and vision

It is not feasible to expect public monies to solely finance the redevelopment of the BOA. The goal is for public funds to be used to create an environment where private developers will want to invest in a specific project that will provide a return on their investment. These projects will in turn spark other private sector interest and the tide will be turned.