FROM BROWN TO GREEN:

A Revitalization Strategy for the Downtown Rome Brownfield Opportunity Area

Step 2: Nomination Study

INTRODUCTION & PROJECT OVERVIEW

FINAL – SEPTEMBER 2012

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City of Rome, New York
Department of Community & Economic Development

This document was prepared for the City of Rome and New York State Department of State with state funds provided under the New York State Brownfield Opportunity Area Program.

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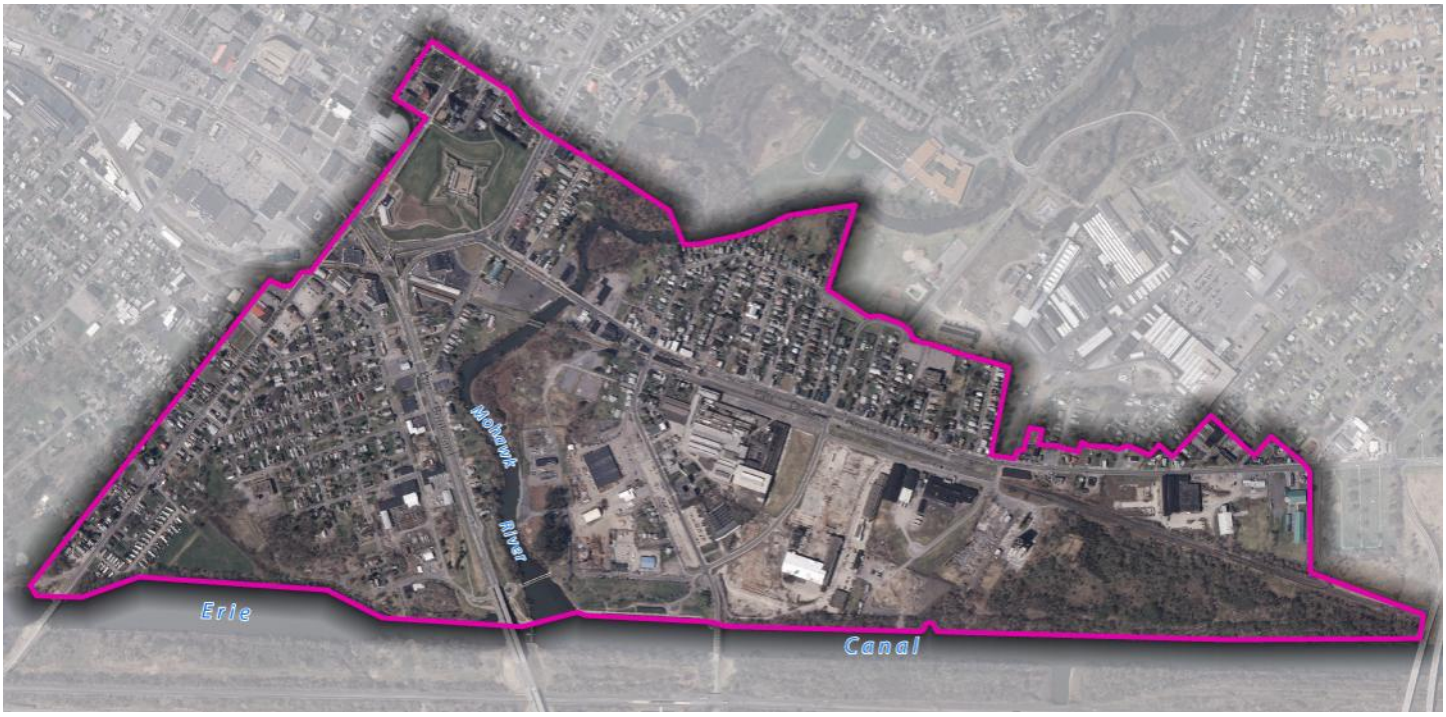


a snapshot

513 acres
- 24% community service
- 60% public services
- 78% in Investment Zone

991 parcels
- 516 residential
- 298 vacant
- 122 commercial
- 83 publicly-owned

92 brownfields
- 69 developed brownfields
- 23 vacant brownfields
- 272 underutilized properties

22 Strategic Sites
- 17 brownfields
- 9% of BOA parcels
- 29% of BOA acreage

INTRODUCTION & OVERVIEW

Project Background

The City of Rome has undertaken numerous projects and planning activities to spur revitalization. The Downtown Rome Brownfield Opportunity Area (referred to as "From Brown to Green: A Revitalization Strategy for the Downtown Rome BOA") is the City's culminating effort, combining planning, economic development and marketing to rebuild its former industrial and manufacturing core into a sustainable community with high quality neighborhoods, diverse job opportunities, and accessible recreation alternatives. The BOA provides a roadmap for redevelopment within this classic American City.

WHAT IS THE BOA PROGRAM?

The BOA program is funded, administered, and overseen by the New York State Department of State (DOS) and Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). The program is devised to assist communities in the establishment of a community-based revitalization plan and implementation strategy to achieve brownfield redevelopment. At the completion of the program, communities will be designated a Brownfield Opportunity Area, increasing their competitive position for access to funding and incentives under the DEC Brownfield Cleanup Program and the Empire State Development Corporation's economic development programs, among many others.

3 Step Program

STEP 1: Pre-Nomination study

- Preliminary analysis of community and potential brownfields
- Identification of a manageable study area
- Establishment of partnerships with key stakeholders
- Initial summarization of opportunities for renewal

STEP 2: Nomination study

- Comprehensive analysis of study area and brownfield sites
- Analysis of economic and market trends
- Recommendations for revitalization

STEP 3: Implementation strategy

- Detailed individual environmental site assessments
- Creation of detailed reuse and redevelopment strategies
- Marketing strategies for individual sites

The DOS and DEC recognize the expansive detrimental impacts brownfield sites have on their surrounding neighborhoods, and that brownfield impacts are not limited to individual sites or adjoining property. The marketability and viability of entire neighborhoods are impacted by the presence, or potential presence, of contaminated sites by negatively affecting the psychology of residents and potential investors. The negative psychological effects of brownfields can lead to disinvestment and blight radiating outward far beyond individual sites.

Overview of Downtown Rome BOA

The City of Rome's first Brownfield Opportunity Area (BOA) is a 513 acre site that includes a mixture of residential, industrial, commercial and retail land uses. The BOA includes some of the City's primary cultural resources, 529 residential properties, 200 retail businesses and miles of undeveloped land along the Mohawk River and Erie Canal that provide significant opportunities for revitalization and reinvestment.

The center of the BOA is an industrial area known as the East Rome Business Park, which includes 200 acres of public and private parcels. The former General Cable Corporation occupied approximately 17 acres in the Business Park until the mid-1960's. The closure of General Cable left behind a series of large and very visible vacant manufacturing buildings with connected basements and acres of underground storage tanks in contaminated soil.

Nearly $6 million in Federal, State and local funding has been leveraged during a 40-plus year period of investigative and cleanup processes for this property, leading to demolition, remediation and access improvements at the heart of the East Rome Business Park. An additional $1.5 million in DOS RESTORE-NY Program funding was secured and utilized in 2008 to rubblize remaining structures and bring much of the General Cable site to a "shovel-ready" condition. This investment resulted in the sale of six acres to American Alloy Steel (AAS) and the construction of the Business Park's newest building, a 60,000 square foot steel manufacturing facility.

The BOA project provides Rome with an opportunity to build on the successes of recent years, including the AAS new construction and recent waterfront and downtown development within the target area. With a goal to create jobs and improve the quality of life in Rome and the Oneida region, the BOA will help coordinate and accelerate smart and innovative business and residential growth, both public and private, within the City's core. Through the BOA study, the City will identify development opportunities and financial resources to enable residents to *live, work and play* within the Study Area.

PAST PLANNING EFFORTS

Rome Main Streets Assessment (2002)

The National Main Street Center, a division of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, provided Rome an assessment of its downtown in 2001. The project resulted in the identification and classification of three 'Main Street' commercial corridors: James Street; East Dominick Street; and West Dominick Street. The East Dominick Street corridor and parts of the James Street corridor are included in the BOA.

Kingsley Avenue and East Dominick Street Revitalization Plan (2003)

The East Rome Family Merchants Association, in coordination with the City and Fort Stanwix National Monument, completed a revitalization plan for East Rome incorporating the East Rome Business Park, East Dominick Street, Kingsley Avenue, and areas along the Mohawk River and Erie Canal waterfront. The Study focused on areas central to the BOA, and included a market analysis to identify potential market segments, as well as a proposed plan to attract tourists and niche businesses. The Kingsley Avenue Study indicated an overwhelming consensus from the community to provide a large-scale recreational component along the waterfront. Three redevelopment concepts were proposed within the BOA as a result of this study:

- a business park district
- a mixed-use urban village along East Dominick, and
- a waterfront entertainment district.

City of Rome Comprehensive Plan (2005)

The Plan identified seven key goals for Rome:

1) Provide a stable, balanced and productive tax base.
2) Become the most business-friendly community in New York State.
3) Train and educate a modern workforce
4) Offer higher quality, market-appropriate housing choices
5) Develop 21st century infrastructure.
6) Support a healthy community and environment.
7) Build and protect rich urban amenities.

At the core of the Plan are three detailed Catalyst Projects, each of which are pertinent to the Rome BOA: A) a proposed sports complex within the BOA Study Area, similar to that described in the Kingsley Avenue Study; B) gateway development initiatives; and, C) a focused plan for downtown development.

City of Rome Urban Design Plan (2006)

The Urban Design Plan was completed in response to recommendations from National Main Street Center Downtown Assessment and the Comprehensive Plan. Urban Design Plan recommendations are specific to all or portions of the BOA Study Area and will be considered in the planning process. The Design Plan includes a recreation component within the BOA area and focuses on physical and conceptual plans for improved visitors and resident access to Bellamy Harbor Park, the Mohawk River and the Erie Canal.

Main Streets Design Guidelines (2006)

As part of the Urban Design Plan development process, a series of design guidelines was prepared for the three designated Main Streets corridors focusing on both residential and commercial structures. The guidelines are intended to restore streets as civic places; improve quality; preserve character; improve pedestrian safety; encourage economic development; and retain the character of historic structures. The Plan relates directly to the BOA, specifically to East Dominick and South James Streets, and will be considered further in the Implementation Strategy phase of the project.

Rome-Utica Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice (2008)

The Analysis of Impediments report was completed as part of US Department of Housing and Urban Development requirements. The analysis aimed to identify issues which are facing residents of the City of Rome related to fair housing choices, difficulty receiving loans, housing discrimination and lack of safe housing conditions.

The Rome Main Streets Design Guidelines offer a series of examples on best practices for the design of building facades along the primary thoroughfares within the City's downtown.

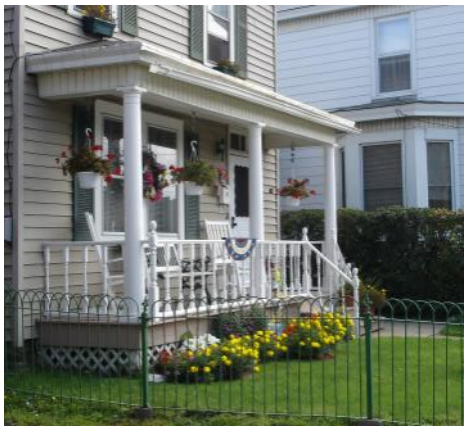
VISION

*The Downtown Rome Brownfield Opportunity Area is a vibrant gateway and viable node within the City of Rome where people can **live**, **work**, and **play**. The BOA is a sustainable and active mixed use urban neighborhood that offers a strong employment base, a variety of residential options, and a full spectrum of support services which enhance the quality-of-life and daily experiences for both residents and visitors.*

MAKING IT HAPPEN

Live.

Providing safe, enjoyable and accessible neighborhoods is a primary goal of the Downtown Rome BOA revitalization strategy. The two well-defined neighborhood clusters within the BOA are effectively located adjacent to centers of employment, service, and recreation. Recommendations range from identifying opportunities for redevelopment or new construction, to enhancing connectivity and accessibility of goods, services, and recreational opportunities. The residential components of the study area form the backbone for continued revitalization efforts to achieve the Downtown Rome BOA vision.

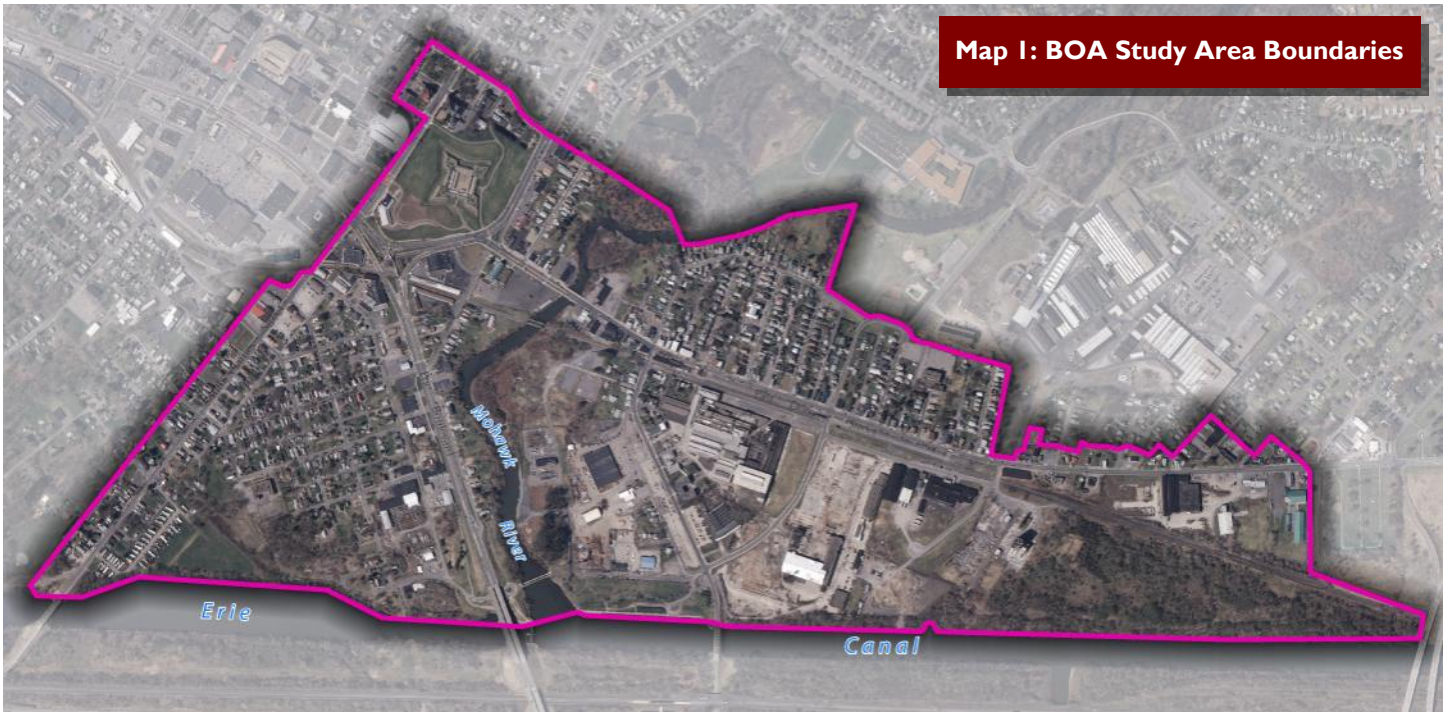


Work.

Neighborhood revitalization begins with a strong employment base and good-paying jobs that support industries, retail establishments, and households. The Downtown Rome BOA has several nodes of employment, with the largest being the Employment District subarea that forms the core of East Rome's commercial and industrial activity. Recommendations range from providing incentives that attract and retain small businesses, to continued economic development efforts to spur the redevelopment of industrial areas. The support and promotion of viable employment opportunities will be critical to renewal efforts within the Downtown Rome BOA.

Play.

A 'complete' community requires more than residential and employment options; liesure opportunities are necessary to enhance the overall quality of life for residents, employees, and visitors. Recreation alternatives abound within the Downtown Rome BOA, including numerous waterfront, park and historic alternatives. Recommendations include encouraging multi-use trail development, providing new and improved parks, and strengthening the link between federal, state, and local tourism efforts. The continued advancement of recreational and educational offerings within the Downtown Rome BOA will assist in promoting Rome as a destination for families, businesses and tourists in Central New York.



Map 1: BOA Study Area Boundaries

BOA BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION & JUSTIFICATION

The BOA is bounded on the south by the Erie Canal, on the west by West Street, on the north by East Court Street and Mohawk Street, and on the east by the Route 49 interchange. The primary organizing features of the Study Area include the Fort Stanwix National Monument, the Erie Canal, East Dominick Street, Erie Boulevard, and South James Street. These elements define the project's study districts and establish a framework of interconnected neighborhoods, streets and nodes.

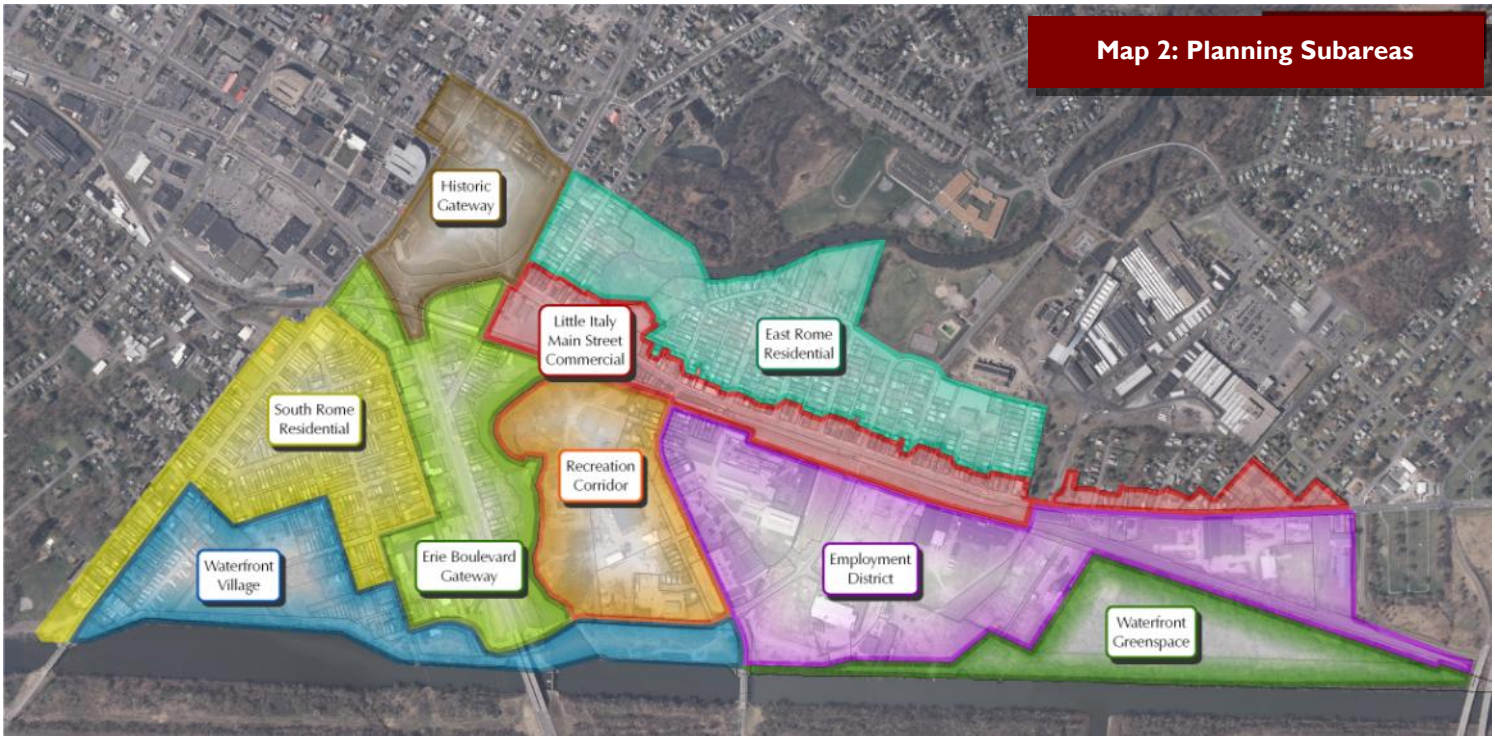
As shown in Map 1, the BOA is centered on an industrial area between East Dominick Street and the Erie Canal. The Study Area boundary leverages the canal as a primary community asset by maximizing potential canal frontage, terminating at logical boundaries at South James Street and the Route 49 interchange.

The South Rome and East Rome residential neighborhoods form the critical mass of residents necessary to provide a sustainable and full-functioning urban revitalization district, complete with employment centers, residential options, supporting services and recreational amenities.

The City of Rome's brand identity of *'live. work. play.'* further supports the inclusion of adjacent residential areas within the BOA to improve the likelihood of success in revitalization efforts.

The Fort Stanwix National Monument and the Marinus Willett Visitor's Center are important drivers of visitation and tourism within the City. Similar to the Erie Canal, these are recognized destination features within the BOA. The opportunity to link the Fort with the waterfront via a recreation corridor through the East Rome Business Park is a logical extension of the City's mantra, and are further supported by the Comprehensive Plan's goals to support a healthy community and build and protect rich urban amenities.

The adjacent commercial/retail corridors along East Dominick Street and South James Street are contiguous with the City's three primary Main Street corridors, the inclusion of which is critical to preserving continuity between the BOA and the City's past visioning and planning efforts.



SUBAREA OVERVIEW & DISCUSSION

Overview

The Rome BOA has been divided into nine subareas to assist with the completion of the inventory and analysis and to ensure that recommendations address neighborhood-specific issues and opportunities. The subareas were identified based on physical characteristics of both the built and natural environments, as well as the community's vision for future redevelopment. The boundaries of each of the planning subareas are depicted on the above map.

Separate reports have been generated that provide tailored and detailed information for each of the nine subareas. The reports include the following components specific to each subarea:

- an overview of existing conditions;
- a vision for future revitalization;
- description of strategic sites;
- an analysis of strengths and weaknesses;
- recommended future land use and zoning updates; and
- actions for implementation.

The separation of the BOA into subareas is a critical step towards developing and implementing targeted recommendations for renewal. Each of the nine subareas has a unique identity and role in revitalization. The East and South Rome Residential subareas provide the bulk of existing housing options within the study area, and represent the largest portion of the study area's daytime population. These residential districts are supported by the Erie Boulevard Gateway and Little Italy Main Street corridors, providing opportunities for employment, convenience retail and commercial services.

The Employment District provides significant opportunities to grow and expand businesses in the BOA, generating demand for goods and services that can partially be met within the existing commercial districts, and jobs that can be filled from residents within the BOA. The remaining districts provide opportunities for recreation and mixed-use development that can service area residents and tourists. Together, the BOA provides all the necessary functions of a complete community, with each component reliant on others for success.

The subarea visions on the following page provide a quick overview of their future role within the BOA.

SUBAREA VISION STATEMENTS

South Rome Residential

IMAGINE...South Rome Residential as a close-knit residential neighborhood offering diverse housing options in close proximity to neighborhood-scale establishments providing goods, services and open space.

Waterfront Village

IMAGINE...Waterfront Village is a unique destination where the sights and sounds of the Erie Canal offer both residents and visitors an unrivaled waterfront lifestyle and experience.

Erie Boulevard Gateway

IMAGINE...the Erie Boulevard Gateway serves as a principal entry welcoming residents and visitors from the south. The gateway provides services and employment opportunities within a safe, attractive and walkable environment - connecting the waterfront to the center city.

Historic Gateway

IMAGINE...the rich legacy of Rome's historic core is preserved and on display to educate and entertain within a neighborhood of beautiful parks and greenspaces set amongst timeless architecture and a district shaped over the course of 250 years.

East Rome Residential

IMAGINE...the East Rome residential neighborhood as one of the City's most desirable neighborhoods to live and raise a family thanks to its convenient proximity to jobs in the Employment District, culture and amenities in Little Italy, and easy access to amenities along the waterfront and in downtown.

Little Italy Main Street Commercial

IMAGINE...the Little Italy Main Street Commercial subarea is a multicultural mixed use corridor that displays a full complement of retail, commercial, office and residential uses that link to the Employment District and Recreation Corridor, while functioning as East Rome's cultural and economic center.

Recreation Corridor

IMAGINE...passive and active recreational opportunities along the Mohawk River at the center of the City that provide visitors, residents, and workers with a recreation-based retreat within walking distance of goods and services.

Employment District

IMAGINE...that the Employment District offers a range of light industrial and commercial employment opportunities in a well-maintained and attractive business environment. The modern business park remains one of Rome's primary employment centers within close proximity to services and housing.

Waterfront Greenspace

IMAGINE...the Waterfront Greenspace as a unique location in the downtown that provides a natural setting for passive recreation, environmental education, and opportunities for sustainable and renewable energy technologies to benefit the adjacent Employment District.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

The City of Rome Department of Community and Economic Development (CED) is overseeing the preparation and projects associated with the Downtown Rome BOA Nomination Study and Implementation Strategy. They have actively engaged various stakeholder groups and members of the public, including BOA property owners and prospective developers, in conversations about the future of the study area.

A variety of consultation techniques have been used throughout the planning process to date, to inform project partners, local residents, and interested stakeholders and to gather their feedback regarding the planning effort. Examples of consultation methods that have been utilized include:

- Meetings between CED staff and property owners
- Meetings between CED staff and interested organizations, such as Chamber of Commerce
- In-person and conference calls between CED, consultant team, and DOS
- Presentations to interested groups / organizations
- Website with interactive comment page
- Project booth at local community event
- Stakeholder meetings with consultant team
- Public Meeting at Rome Air Force Research Laboratories

It is anticipated that public participation and involvement of additional local, regional, and state agencies will continue in subsequent project phases. The City would like to participate in a roundtable discussion with representatives from various state agencies to generate feedback on how they may be able to assist in the implementation phases of the project.

Community involvement efforts associated with the Study are summarized below. Further information can be found in Appendices A and B.

Steering Committee Meetings

The City identified government, business and resident representatives to serve as the BOA Steering Committee which was tasked with gathering input, reviewing project deliverables and determining "next steps" in the planning process.

Public Meetings

The first scheduled Public Meeting was held at Rome City Hall on November 17, 2008. The meeting focused on introducing the BOA concept to the public, and included a visioning session, with participants encouraged to provide ongoing feedback throughout the process. Additional public participation events will be scheduled at the conclusion of Phase 2, Draft Nomination Study to present the final plan and solicit feedback regarding the findings, strategic sites and summary analysis. It is expected that this meeting will be followed by other public outreach efforts addressing implementation projects.

Other Outreach Efforts

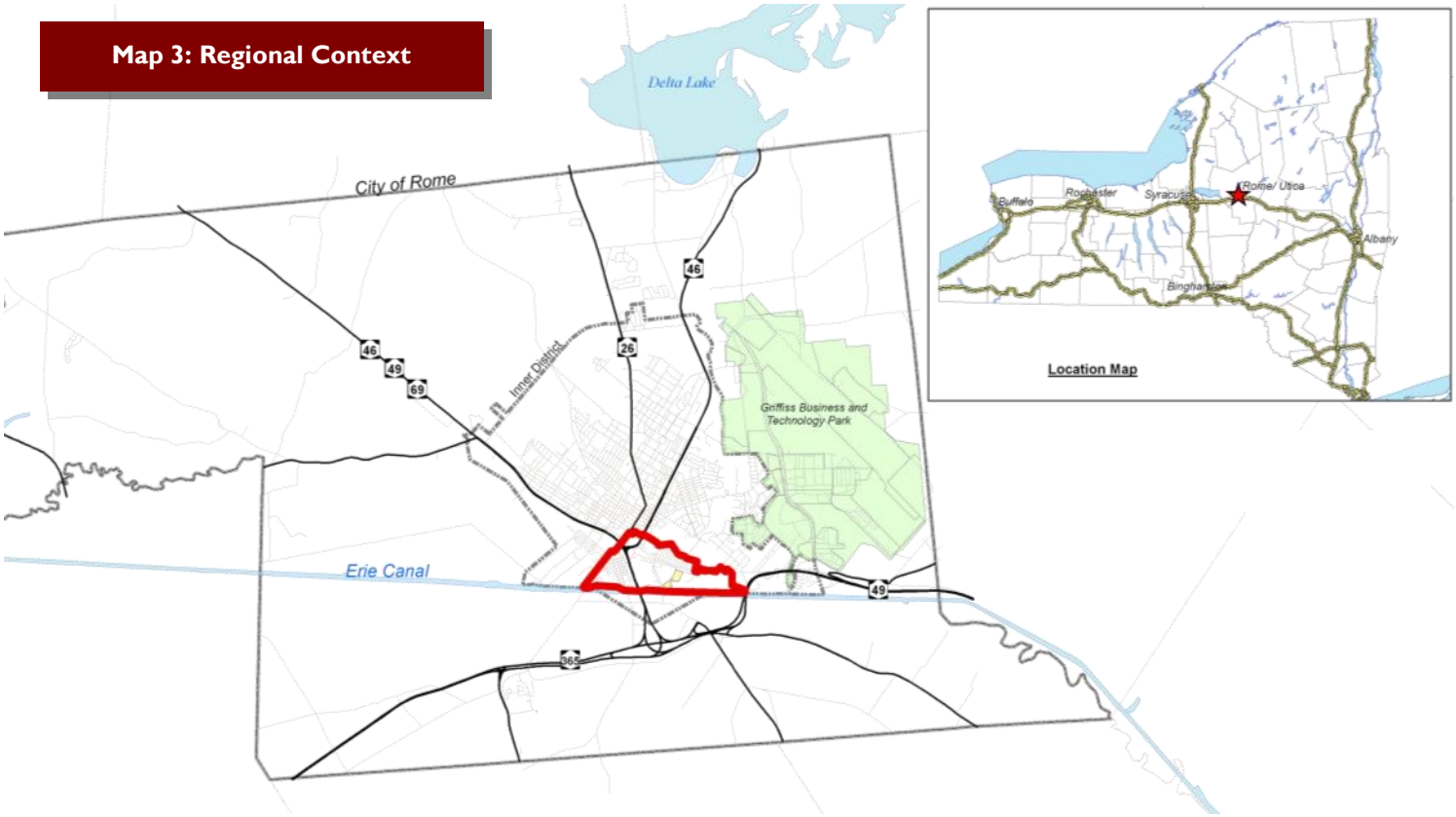
The City of Rome recognized early on that traditional public meetings may not be effective due to consistent low turnouts for such meetings. The City identified alternative means for soliciting input from the public.

- A **project website** was developed and updated to include a comment page that allowed viewers to look at subareas, view subarea descriptions, identify potential brownfield sites, and provide comments on the BOA or specific subareas.
- The CED and consultant team developed a **presentation booth** for the 2009 City of Rome Home Show. Consultant staff met with residents, shared information about the planning process, and solicited input. A community contact list was compiled based on resident interest in the process.
- A **public meeting** was held at the Rome Air Force Research Laboratory as part of an Earth Day forum, with attendees providing feedback on the BOA revitalization study.

Stakeholder Meetings

The City of Rome identified project "stakeholders" and held formal and informal meetings to gather input. Residents from the South James Street and East Dominick Street neighborhoods were invited at various project phases to provide background information and identify issues and opportunities, as well as their vision for the BOA area.

Map 3: Regional Context



COMMUNITY & REGIONAL SETTING

Rome's history is defined by geographic features, including the Mohawk River, the Erie Canal and its location in the "center" of New York State (NYS). Known as the "Copper City," Rome was home to numerous metal industries such as Revere Copper, Rome Cable and General Cable. From 1950-1995, Rome was the home of Griffiss Air Force Base which closed in 1995 causing Rome and the region to suffer notable economic and demographic declines. However, the departure of the Air Force provided the City an opportunity to rediscover and diversify itself, and identify a new course moving into the future.

Covering 72 square miles with 34,950 residents, Rome is one of two principal cities in the Utica-Rome New York Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). With three interchanges on the NYS Thruway System (I-90) and convenient access to Interstate 81, the City is ideally located within a day's drive of 25 percent of the US-Canadian population (less than five hours to New York City, Philadelphia, Boston, Toronto and Montreal). The County Airport at Griffiss Business and Technology Park features a 12,000-foot runway and provides commercial air service to Rome. Passenger air service is available at the Syracuse Hancock International Airport (50 minutes) and Albany Airport (90 minutes). Amtrak provides passenger rail service from Rome to New York City, Niagara Falls, Boston, Chicago and Toronto via the City's newly-renovated historic train station. CSX and Susquehanna rail freight service is available to area businesses in Rome's downtown and at Griffiss Business and Technology Park.

More than 57 percent of Rome's parcels are classified as single-family residences, making it the predominant land use in the City. The former United States Air Force base, now known as the Griffiss Business and Technology Park, is home to 50 businesses and 5,500 employees on 3,506 acres of land. Considerable capacity for new commercial and industrial development remains at the complex. The Park's mix of uses includes light industry (e.g., research and development), health care, office space, the Rome Free Academy High School, and recreational amenities such as ball fields and a golf course.

The BOA is recognized and characterized by for its industrial activity. Defining an appropriate mix of land uses and changing the common perception of the Downtown Rome BOA Study Area will be an important element and outcome of the planning process.

SUMMARY OF EXISTING CONDITIONS

Land Use

Land use within the BOA is mixed, with public services, residential, industrial, and commercial uses accounting for the greatest amount of land. Vacant properties account for one-quarter of the total Study Area. Although vacant lots may be viewed as potentially negative, they also represent opportunities for redevelopment. The Study Area land uses are well-rounded, with a high quality mixture of employment, service and residential opportunities. There appears to be a deficiency in recreation and entertainment uses to satisfy the needs of the residential and business populations. There are six public parks occupying 25.5 acres of land within the Study Area. In conjunction with a positive mix of land uses, the concentration of residential uses in two distinct neighborhoods provides a critical mass necessary to support future commercial, industrial, or recreational development within the BOA.

Additional information about land use and a Land Use Map for the BOA can be found in Appendix C.

Zoning

Eight of the City's 13 zoning districts are present in the BOA Study Area, including 2 residential districts, 3 commercial districts, 2 industrial districts, and a preservation district. . The distribution of zoning districts across the BOA Study Area closely mirrors the pattern of existing land uses. Although current zoning permits a wide variety of development types, existing district regulations may prevent the full realization of the BOA vision.

For example, the proposed Recreation Corridor subarea is currently zoned as E-1 (Business and Industrial Park). This zoning classification does not permit residential land uses, and only permits commercial/retail land uses that are directly supportive of adjacent industrial development. Such limitations potentially limit options for the redevelopment of the subarea. Modifications to the existing zoning within the Rome BOA may be warranted to provide a greater level of flexibility in order to achieve the desired vision for the BOA and individual subareas.

Brief descriptions of each zoning district within the BOA, as well an existing zoning map are included in Appendix C

Ownership

Revitalization within the Rome BOA is likely to include the rehabilitation and redevelopment of individual parcels and larger-scale projects across multiple parcels. Subarea's such as the Employment District are characterized by sizeable parcels that can accommodate large single uses or numerous smaller uses. Other subareas are defined by small parcels that would require land assembly prior to an extensive redevelopment project; a situation requiring time and resource intensive coordination efforts with multiple land owners. Understanding land ownership patterns and their potential implications is an important step in formulating future development scenarios.

Approximately 70 percent (280.4 acres and 910 parcels) of the land area within the Rome BOA is currently held in private ownership. Of the 81 parcels held in public ownership, 69 parcels are owned by the City of Rome. Although the City is the largest public landowner, its property's represent only 13 percent (51.8 acres) of total BOA land area.

In some instances, publicly-owned land has increased potential for redevelopment as the costs and timeline associated with acquisition and assembly can be greatly reduced. Additionally, more than 60 percent of the Mohawk River and Erie Canal waterfront is publicly-owned, which could facilitate land assembly in these valued locations and provide potential locations for water-dependent or water-enhanced development and recreation opportunities.

Additional information about land ownership in the BOA can be found in Appendix C.

The iconic watertower from the former General Cable site is now owned by the City of Rome, with recommendations to paint and illuminate the structure.

SUMMARY OF EXISTING CONDITIONS

Transportation

The BOA Study Area includes approximately 12.4 miles of local roads and 2.8 miles of State Routes. Traffic data is commonly utilized by the real estate development industry to determine appropriate locations for commercial and retail uses based on the amount of exposure a given site has to area travelers. Based on traffic count data provided by the NYS Department of Transportation, the average annual daily traffic for the state routes in 2006 was 17,882 vehicles. Traffic count data has not been collected for the local roads within the Study Area. In terms of public transportation, public bus service is provided to the City of Rome by Centro of Oneida, which operates six routes in the City. Centro Route 4 and Centro Route 7 service the Rome BOA Study Area, providing an easy and efficient means of transporting people to Study Area destinations and other important locations throughout the City (e.g., Griffiss Business & Technology Park).

The Erie Canal provides approximately two miles of waterfront property within the Rome BOA and is a valuable asset in terms of recreational opportunities, commercial potential, and cultural heritage. Promoting the Canal and providing greater opportunities for public access and use are key components of the BOA vision. Several proposed multi-use trails are located within the BOA, including the proposed NYS Canalway Trail and the Mohawk River Trail run, representing important linkages with adjacent neighborhoods and recreation destinations.

The Mohawk, Adirondack & Northern Railroad currently operates an industrial rail spur that services the Revere Copper facility and the current American Alloy Steel facility on East Dominick Street. Although passenger service has been discontinued along this portion of the corridor, the track does connect to the CSX Transportation, Inc. Chicago Line approximately two miles southwest of the Study Area.

Additional information regarding transportation in the BOA can be found in Appendix C.

Existing railroad infrastructure running parallel to East Dominick Street and Railroad Street.

Infrastructure

To better understand development potential within the BOA, it is important to assess the existing available infrastructure, including water, sanitary sewer, and storm water management. The current water supply provides adequate service to residents and business, and is capable of providing adequate pressures to the study area without the need for booster pumps. The City of Rome operates a gravity sanitary sewer system which collects wastewater and delivers it to a treatment facility; there is currently over one million gallons per day of excess capacity to service future development in the City. Utilizing conservative rates determined by the NYSDEC, this equates to approximately 10 million square feet of additional retail and/or office space.

Additional information regarding infrastructure conditions and capacity can be found in Appendix C.

Natural Resources

While there are some limitation to development in the BOA associated with existing natural resources they also present great opportunities. Appendix C provides a detailed overview of natural resources within the BOA, including soils, wetlands, floodplains, and topography, and details any limitations to redevelopment associated with these resources. The Mohawk River, Erie Canal, and remaining open space resources within the BOA study area should be viewed as valuable assets to the revitalization of the study area, with opportunities for enhancement incorporated into future redevelopment scenarios.

ECONOMIC & MARKET TRENDS ANALYSIS

The Economic and Market Trends Analysis looks at the general economic outlook for the region, demographics, and an analysis of trends in real estate, consumer spending, office use and industrial activity.

The trade area was defined to provide a wide-range view of what is occurring within the region by looking at Oneida County as a whole. The BOA is a large area and has the potential to be redeveloped in numerous of ways and a variety of land uses. It was determined that the most successful redevelopment scenarios can be analyzed by utilizing Oneida County as the trade area. The finding at the County-level were translated and applied to the BOA study area, with specific trends identified on a more local basis. Quantitative findings were supplemented with anecdotal information provided through interviews and other source material.

The intent of this analysis is to provide a market-based perspective on the BOA and identify opportunities that warrant further study as part of the redevelopment and implementation plan. The full version of the Economic and Market Trends Analysis can be found in Appendix D.

Demographic Characteristics

- The County population is decreasing very slowly, approximately 0.01 percent annually through 2013. In comparison, State's population is expected to grow approximately 0.30 percent annually and the National population is projected to grow by 1.23 percent annually between 2008 and 2013.
- The median household income is expected to increase at a rate of just over 3 percent annually through 2013 or a total of 14 percent by 2013, slower than both the state and the nation.
- The age distribution in the County is heavily skewed toward an older population as compared to the State average, with significantly more people age 80 and older in the County as percentage of the population.
- In the next five years, the population of 60-75 year olds is expected to increase substantially. At the same time, the 20-35 year old age group is also projected to rise, while other age groups will remain relatively stable.

General Economic Outlook

- The economic base of Oneida County is heavily weighted towards government, services and manufacturing, with approximately two-thirds of the region's earnings attributed to these three sectors.
- Growth in the County will be modest, with total jobs projected to increase two percent by 2014 compared to the Upstate growth rate of four percent, the State rate of six percent and the National rate of nine percent.
- Growth in Oneida County is expected to include the creation of over 3,000 new jobs, primarily between 2008 and 2010 and then flatten out approaching 2014.
- The unemployment rate in Oneida County varies by industry sector. Most occupations in Oneida County show a lower unemployment rate than the State.
- The highest unemployment rate is in the 'construction and extraction' occupations, with 7.5 percent unemployment as a percentage of the total jobs in this category, lower than the State and National rates.
- The occupation with the lowest unemployment rate is 'healthcare practitioners and technical occupations' with only 0.5 percent unemployment, or 43 unemployed persons.
- The occupation with the highest number of unemployed is 'office and administrative support' occupations, with 1,195 unemployed, or a five percent unemployment rate.
- The health care industries and associated fields not only have low unemployment but are also expected to grow at one of the quickest rates in the next few years, adding over 400 jobs.
- The computer and mathematical occupations are expected to grow quickly as well, adding almost 3,000 jobs in the next six years. There is expected to be a large decline in production occupations, losing over 500 jobs in the next six years or a decrease of six percent.

ECONOMIC & MARKET TRENDS ANALYSIS

Residential Characteristics

- There are over 100,000 housing units in Oneida County, 60 percent owner-occupied, about 30 percent renter-occupied and the rest vacant.
- Vacancy rates (16%) within the BOA are similar to the County in 2008. The number of properties rented is expected to increase slightly in the next five years.
- Of the vacant properties, the largest percentages are 'for-rent' properties followed by 'other vacant' (abandoned and other). In the City itself, 16 percent of residential units are vacant with almost half of those categorized as 'other vacant'.
- Most of the residential units are single family detached structures, with the next most common being a 2 family house.
- Compared to Upstate New York, the County has a higher proportion of two family houses and a slightly lower proportion of single family houses.
- The value of owner-occupied homes increased dramatically between 2000 and 2008, jumping over 80 percent in the County. However, the projected increase between 2008 and 2013 is a much slower 2 percent. This is a similar trend for Upstate New York, the State and the Nation.
- The average monthly mortgage is approximately $950 a month, while average monthly rent in Oneida County is lower than the Upstate average.
- The median value of owner occupied residential units in the BOA in 2008 was $83,077 with a slight increases expected by 2013.
- As compared to the County, a significantly higher portion of housing units in the BOA are two-family structures. The average monthly rent in the BOA ($327 without utilities, $439 with utilities) is slightly lower than the Oneida County and Upstate New York averages.

Retail Market Analysis

- The consumer spending index identified that households in the County spend proportionately more of their income on health care and utilities as compared to the National average and relatively less on other goods such as apparel.
- Part of this spending pattern compared to the National average may be explained by the high proportion of older residents with fixed incomes and higher health care needs.
- As unavoidable expenses such as health care and utilities continue to go up, County residents may have less money to spend on discretionary items such as travel and entertainment.

Office and Industrial Real Estate Analysis

- The growth of industrial site-utilizing sectors is slow and in some cases negative. Forecasts anticipate a weak demand for "traditional" industrial space.
- Indications of unmet demand for special types of industrial uses, such as flex-industrial space and highly efficient warehousing space.
- There is going to be slow growth (4 percent) in the office space-utilizing industries, and there is more than enough existing available office space to absorb projected growth.
- The Griffiss Business and Technology Park has both available acreage suitable for development and existing available office space. Asking rents for office space are currently low relative to the cost of construction, making any new privately-funded speculative construction project unlikely.

Summary Analysis

Continued population decline, an increase in average age, and relatively stagnant incomes provide significant challenges to growing the region's workforce and creating high paying jobs. The region will continue to face pressure in supporting the health of the aging population. Niche industries must be identified to retain youth and build a sustainable base of economic activity for future generations. The regional surplus of affordable housing alternatives should be a strong marketing tool to attract businesses and employees back to the region. As unavoidable expenses such as health care and utilities continue to go up, County residents may have less money to spend on discretionary items such as travel and entertainment. Development within the BOA should focus on flexible and niche industrial space to fill a market gap. Low asking rents and ample supply make new, privately-funded speculative office construction projects unlikely.

BROWNFIELD, VACANT & UNDERUTILIZED SITES

Overview

Based on a review of existing environmental databases, reports and property assessment data, 364 parcels encompassing approximately 229 acres were identified as potential brownfields, vacant sites, or both. These parcels comprise nearly two-thirds of the total land area within the Rome BOA boundary.

What is a brownfield?

A 'brownfield' is real property whose expansion, redevelopment or reuse may be complicated by the presence or potential presence of a hazardous substance, pollutant, or contaminant. These sites are typically former industrial or commercial properties where operations may have resulted in environmental impairment.

Vacant Lands

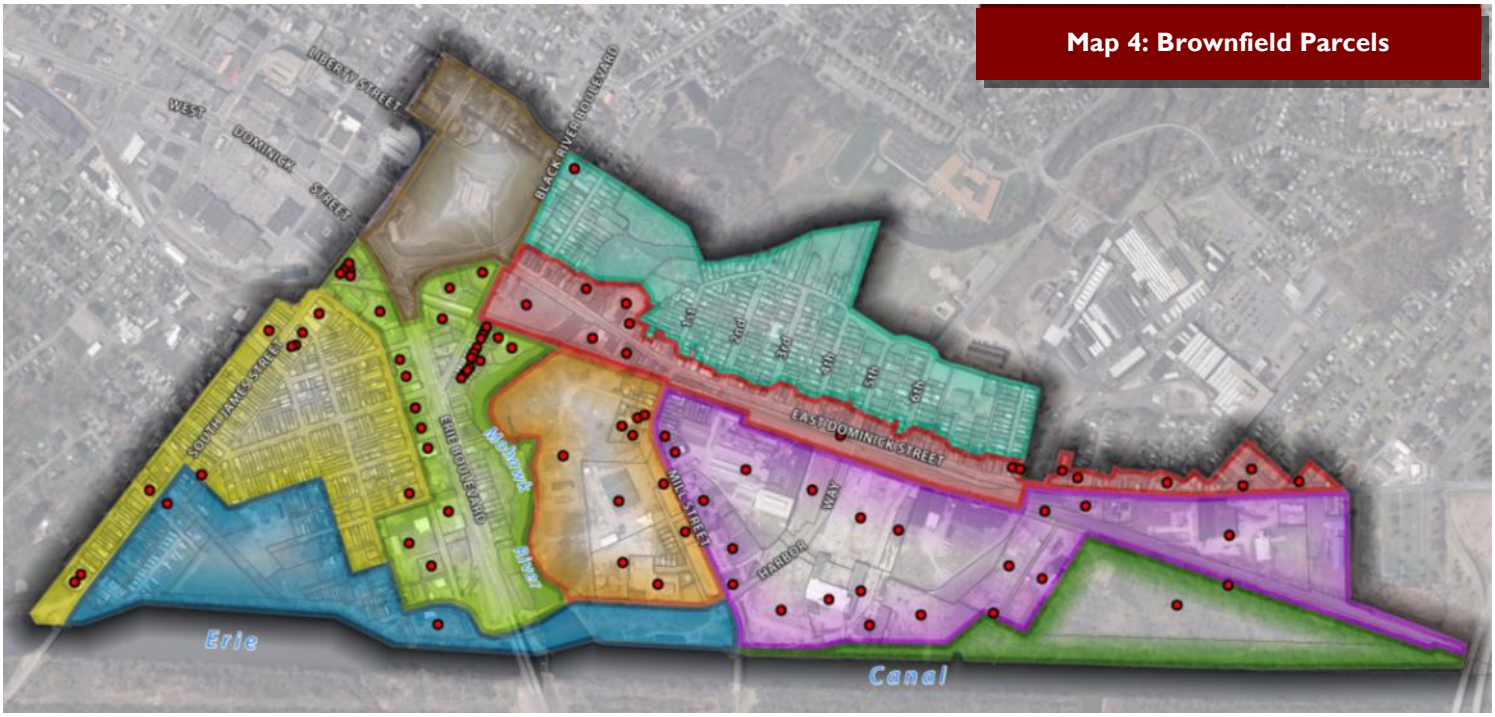
As noted in the *Existing Land Use and Zoning* section found in Appendix C, NYSORPS classifies vacant lands as "property that is not in use, is in temporary use, or lacks permanent improvement." As vacant sites can present substantial opportunities for redevelopment, it is important to note that any property located within the Rome BOA assigned to the *Vacant* category was included in this analysis to assist in the identification of strategic sites.

Brownfields

- A total of 92 sites have been identified as potential brownfields occupying 181 acres (35% of BOA).
- Sixty-nine brownfield sites are in some form of active use, with the remaining classified as both potential brownfields and vacant sites (50 acres).
- There are currently 16 sites in some stage of remediation as part of the NYSDEC Environmental Restoration Program.
- Publicly-owned parcels account for 55 of the 364 categorized as potential brownfields and/or vacant parcels (15%).
- Only two publicly-owned parcels are vacant brownfield sites.

While most of the properties identified in the BOA as potential brownfields are commercial or industrial in nature, properties from which underground storage tanks (USTs) were removed have also been included, regardless of the property's land use classification (e.g., residential uses).

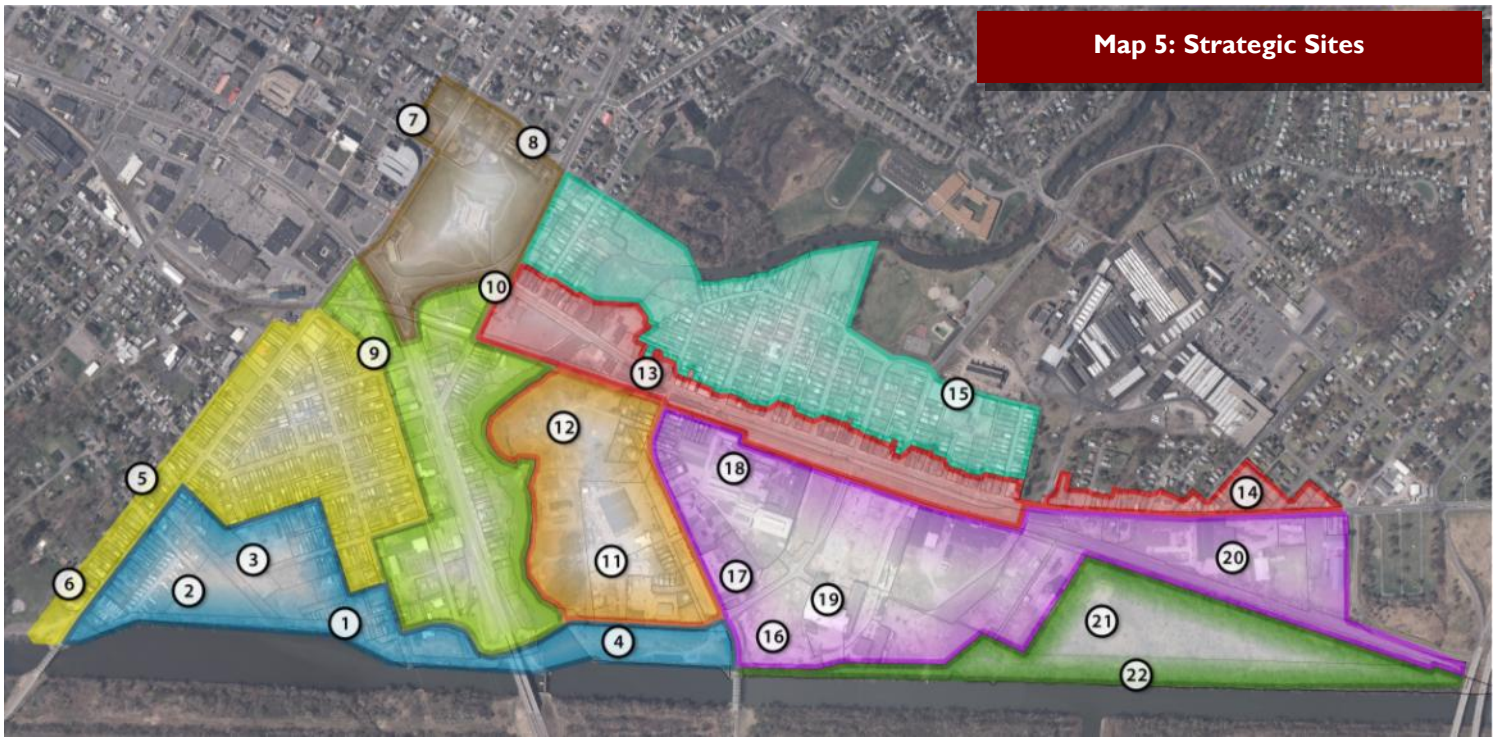
Please see Appendix F for a map identifying brownfield and vacant sites, and Appendix G for information regarding primary pollutant concerns for each potential brownfield property.



Map 4: Brownfield Parcels

Knowledge of the type and degree of contamination present on a site can be helpful to inform property owners of the potential financial costs and timeframes necessary for remediation, and provide insight into contaminant-specific government assistance funding that may exist.

STRATEGIC SITES



Map 5: Strategic Sites

Overview and Methodology

A total of 102 properties were identified in the BOA as worthy of consideration as a strategic site based on their significance associated with achieving the overall redevelopment vision for the Study Area. This included the identification of not only primary catalyst sites, but also complementary sites that could ultimately play an important role in the revitalization of the Downtown Rome BOA. A ranking analysis was developed that considered environmental, planning, and infrastructure characteristics and resulted in the classification of strategic parcels as high, medium, and low priority.

Twenty-two Strategic Sites, encompassing 90 parcels on 150 acres, were identified within the Downtown Rome BOA based on the following information:

- feedback from community members, project partners and stakeholders;
- a review of recent planning documents and studies;
- an understanding of basic existing conditions; and
- field assessments.

Table 1 provides a complete summary of the BOA's Strategic Sites.

Please see Appendix G for information regarding preliminary site assessments and pollutant concerns for each potential brownfield property.

Evaluation Criteria

Planning

- whether site has been identified in other plans
- ability of property to help implement vision and goals
- strategic or high-profile location
- location along the waterfront
- ownership status
- impact of property's condition on surrounding properties

Land Use / Environmental History

- whether site is a hazardous waste generating facility
- documented NYSDEC spill history
- site registered as a PBS or CBS
- visual evidence of abandoned waste or underground storage or historic use as a commercial dry cleaner, service station, or similar use
- site listed in NYSDEC remediation database
- previous level of environmental investigation

Infrastructure

- road accessibility
- water and rail accessibility
- transit accessibility
- size of site
- presence of existing structures

STRATEGIC SITES

Summary Analysis

Several evaluation criteria were established to prioritize sites based on land use and environmental histories, and existing infrastructure available for redevelopment efforts. Additionally, project partners were asked to identify any additional criteria that should be considered in the identification of Strategic Sites based on their ability to further the specific goals and objectives of the individual planning subareas and overall BOA study area. The inclusion of these planning criteria ensured that critical, non-brownfield sites were also provided adequate consideration in the determination of Strategic Sites. This additional outreach effort recognizes that the BOA program is intended to foster and facilitate neighborhood revitalization as it applies to both brownfield and non-brownfield sites. Several non-brownfield properties with a history of neglect or having significant potential to serve as catalysts for revitalization were also selected as Strategic sites.

The presence of known or potential brownfields was a heavily weighted criterion during the selection of Strategic Sites. The following provides a brief overview of brownfields within the 22 Strategic Sites.

- Fourteen of the 22 Strategic Sites contain at least one brownfield property (68%).
- Seventeen of the 90 potential brownfield parcels are located within a Strategic Site (20%).
- Brownfields account for 102 acres, or 67 percent of Strategic Sites by area.
- Brownfields within Strategic Sites account for 55 percent of all brownfields, by area.

The Rod Mill and Echo Beach Industries Strategic Sites in the BOA.

Site Assessment Funding

A number of the target Strategic Sites have also been identified as potential candidates for site assessment funding. An expanded environmental site assessment provides sufficient information regarding contamination to assist in decision making regarding the redevelopment potential of a particular BOA property. The properties identified below are prioritized and require further site assessment in order to determine the best use, technically and economically, for the property as it relates to achieving the BOA vision.

The following criteria, established by the NYSDOS, have been considered for each of the target Strategic Sites to ensure they meet eligibility requirements for site assessment funding:

- Real property whose reuse may be complicated by the presence or potential presence of contaminants;
- Additional environmental information is necessary to determine an appropriate land use for the BOA;
- Must be owned by a volunteer or a municipality;
- Cannot be a Class 1 or 2 site on the Registry of Inactive Hazardous Waste Disposal sites in New York;
- Cannot be on the Federal National Priority List;
- Cannot be a permitted Resource Conservation and Recovery Act site;
- Cannot be subject to an order for cleanup under Article 12 of the Navigation Law or Article 17 Title 10 of the Environmental Conservation Law; and
- Cannot be subject to an enforcement action under State or Federal remedial program.

Supplemental assessment funding should be sought for the Former Rome Manufacturing site.

STRATEGIC SITES

Strategic Sites by Subarea

The Strategic Sites listed below are discussed in detail within each subarea plan, including a summary of key considerations and factors that contributed to the identification of the parcel as a target strategic site. Each subarea contains at least two Strategic Sites, with the Employment District and Waterfront Village accounting for nine of the 22 as a result of redevelopment potential and environmental contamination. Within the subarea plans, potential reuse strategies are explored for each Strategic Site, as are opportunities to leverage adjacent development activities.

The Strategic Sites are all considered potentially catalytic. Redevelopment, investment and reactivation of these sites has the potential for dramatic spill-over effects that will be essential to the sustained revitalization of Downtown Rome. An Implementation Strategy has been developed that outlines critical steps and the timing associated with the revitalization of the subarea, and the role of each Strategic Site in the process. Each subarea plan contains a tailored Implementation Strategy, while an overall strategy for the BOA can be found at the end of the document.

Table 1: Strategic Sites

M#	Subarea	Site Name	Parcels	Acres	ESA	Status	Priority
1	Waterfront Village	Undeveloped Land	12	2.6	N	V	M
2	Waterfront Village	Waterfront Development	3	7.3	N	D/U	H
3	Waterfront Village	DeWitt Clinton School - 423 Ann Street	1	3.7	N	D/U	H
4	Waterfront Village	Bellamy Harbor Park - Harbor Way	1	6.6	N	D/U/B	M
5	South Rome Residential	Underutilized Land	8	1.2	Y	D/U/B	L
6	South Rome Residential	South James Street Enhancements	5	1	Y	D/U/B	H
7	Historic Gateway	Old City Hall - 207 North James Street	2	0.6	N	D/U	H
8	Historic Gateway	Spring Street Area	10	0.6	N	D/U	L
9	Erie Blvd Gateway	Former Rome-Turney - 109 Canal Street	2	2	Y	D/U/B	M
10	Erie Blvd Gateway	Whitesboro Street	27	3.2	N	V/U	L
11	Recreation Corridor	City Yard - Race Street	2	10	Y	D/U/B	M
12	Recreation Corridor	National Grid - Kingsley Avenue	1	22.2	N*	V/B	L
13	Little Italy Commercial	Grand Hotel - 293 East Dominick Street	1	0.3	N	V	H
14	Little Italy Commercial	Nolan Building - 1333 East Dominick	4	2.3	N*	D/U/B	H
15	East Rome Residential	Columbus Ave School - 112 Columbus Avenue	2	2.8	N	D/U	H
16	Employment District	Former Rod Mill - Mill Street	1	6.5	N*	V/U/B	H
17	Employment District	Former Canterbury Press - 301 Mill Street	3	3.2	Y	D/U/B	M
18	Employment District	Former Rome Manufacturing – Railroad Street	1	12.6	Y	D/U/B	H
19	Employment District	Rod Mill Market – 540 Harbor Way	1	3.5	N	D/U/B	M
20	Employment District	1212 East Dominick Street	1	12.4	Y	D/U/B	M
21	Waterfront Greenspace	Vacant Land	1	24	Y	V/B	L
22	Waterfront Greenspace	Canal Corp	1	21.7	Y	V/B	L
		Totals	**90**	**150.3**			

ESA = environmental site assessment funding candidate V = vacant D = developed U = underutilized B = brownfield
* site is undergoing or has completed remedial activities