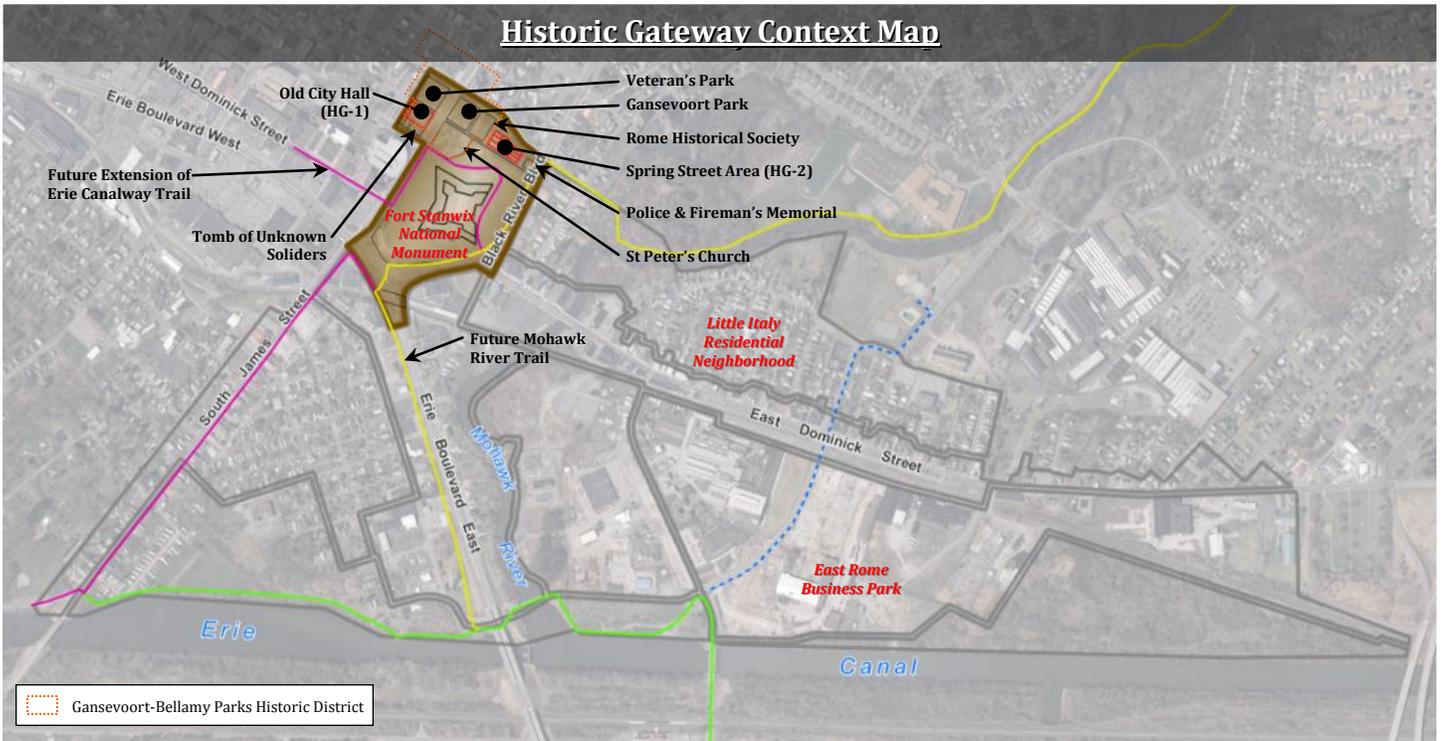




HISTORIC GATEWAY

From Brown to Green:
A Revitalization Strategy for the Downtown Rome BOA
City of Rome, New York
New York State Department of State
Brownfield Opportunity Areas Program



a snapshot

22.3 acres

- 88% public land
- 18.7 acres parkland

22 parcels

- 8 residential
- 8 publicly owned parcels
- 3 vacant parcels

2 Strategic Sites

- Old City Hall
- Spring Street Area

6 Landmarks

- Fort Stanwix
- Gansevoort Park
- Veteran's Park
- Police & Fireman's Memorial
- Tomb of Unknown Soldier
- Old City Hall

“Preserving history...”

As a site of strategic importance during the American Revolutionary period, Rome became a destination within New York State for investment and manufacturing over the course of the next two centuries. The Historic Gateway embodies the breadth of history found in Rome, from events that shaped a Nation and innovations that shaped industry, to investments that shaped an economy.

The Historic Gateway offers a unique experience to become immersed in historic events at the local, state, and national levels. The subarea is home to the Marinus Willet Visitor's Center at the Fort Stanwix National Monument, the Rome Historical Society, and the Gansevoort-Bellamy Parks Historic District. The Historic Gateway continues to be at the confluence of activity, linking Rome's south and east sides to downtown through the Fort Stanwix National Monument and park.

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.

MAKING IT HAPPEN

Live.

- Rehabilitate Old City Hall for mixed use space utilizing RESTORE NY funding.
- Improve connectivity to surrounding residential neighborhoods.

Work.

- Provide incentives, such as reserved parking spaces in the adjacent garage, for businesses that locate within the historic district.
- Promote a range of professional/commercial/residential uses.

Play.

- Promote the use of the monument grounds as a public open space by programming community events and activities.
- Develop self-guided educational/interpretive walks geared towards adults and children.
- Enhance wayfinding to direct visitors into the historic district.
- Coordinate with the National Parks Service to cross-promote and advertise the tourism opportunities of Rome’s History Gateway.
- Continue to support efforts of the Rome Historical Society in the preservation of other historic properties within and adjacent to the subarea.

CASE STUDY: Tacoma WA, and Maquoketa, IA

Throughout the United States, aging municipal structures such as City Halls, Fire Stations and Police Stations are undergoing adaptive reuse, integrating these historic structures into the modern economy. In Tacoma, Washington, the former City Hall (top) was constructed in 1893, and has iconic status within the community. This structure was recently home to several artist spaces, mixed with general office use. The building is currently undergoing a transition to a restaurant and entertainment venue.



The former City Hall in Maquoketa, Iowa (bottom) is a small structure purchased by an artisan couple who run the building as an art gallery, while living on the upper floors. Originally a fire station and converted to municipal offices, the structure now houses artist studios.



EXISTING CONDITIONS

Land Use

The Historic Gateway is largely composed of **community service** (85%) land uses, consisting of parks, open spaces and the National Monument.

- The Fort Stanwix National Monument comprises 16.7 acres, or 75 percent of the Historic Gateway subarea.
- There are four additional **parks** (3 public, 1 private) that bring total **open space** within the district to 84 percent of the land area.
- The majority of the remaining land area consists of Old City Hall, St Peter’s Church, and the Old Federal Post Office (currently the Rome Historical Society).
- A unique enclave of **residences** (2%) is tucked behind the Old Post Office, with many of these residences dating to pre-1900.
- **Vacant** (2%) land comprises two small residential lots and a narrow parcel behind Old City Hall, suggesting that there are limited redevelopment opportunities on readily available land within the Historic Gateway subarea.

See Appendices C for additional land use information and detailed tables.

Ownership

Eight parcels (88% of land area) within the subarea are publicly-controlled, making this the largest publicly-controlled subarea in the BOA.

- National Parks Service is the largest public land holder by acreage (16.7 acres), with the City of Rome controlling 6 parcels on 2.5 acres.
- Oneida County IDA controls a small parcel along the railroad corridor that crosses Erie Boulevard.
- Private ownership is concentrated in the residential cluster along Steuben and Spring Streets.

See Appendix C for detailed ownership information.

Zoning

The entire subarea is zoned Central Commercial, which is intended to provide for commercial and residential development within Rome’s central business district, allowing a broad range of uses to reflect the district’s role as Rome’s cultural, office and governmental center.

Excelsior Investment Zones

The only parcel with Investment Zone designation within the Historic Gateway subarea is controlled by the Oneida County IDA as part of the Mohawk, Adirondack and Northern Railroad right-of-way. There are no redevelopment recommendations for this parcel.



Monument marker along North James Street in honor of Fort Stanwix.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Parks & Open Space

There are four public parks and one private park within the subarea. The City's Gansevoort and Veteran's parks are located in the Gansevoort-Bellamy Parks Historic District. At 0.8 and 0.9 acres, respectively, each of these parks is comprised of one square city block, and contain formalized plantings, mature trees, seating areas, historic monuments, and walkways. The Historic District includes the former City Hall building, St. James Church, the Onieda County Court House, and the Federal Post Office building.

The Fort Stanwix National Monument is an approximately 16.7 acre reconstruction of an historic colonial-era military installation that was also utilized during the Revolutionary War. The park land surrounding the enclosed portion of the monument is open for public use as a recreational space, and the monument itself has no admission fee. The newly constructed 13,700 square foot Marinus Willett Collections Management and Education Center is run by the National Parks Service and functions as a regional tourism center and interactive museum and exhibit space on the grounds of the Fort Stanwix monument.

The 0.15 acre Fire and Police Memorial Park serves as a memorial and gathering site to honor local and national fire and police services members lost in the line of duty. This park was enhanced in 2005 to include a memorial site for the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, and includes sculptures, flagpoles, and seating spaces. This park is located across Black River Boulevard from the City of Rome Central Fire Station.

The Rome Historical Society controls a small courtyard area to the south of the Old City Hall. The space commemorates the Tomb of the Unknown Soldiers of the American Revolution. During reconstruction of Fort Stanwix, the remains of several Revolutionary War soldiers were discovered and reinterred in this location.

Transportation

The Historic Gateway subarea is flanked by North James Street on the west and Black River Boulevard on the east, and includes the mini-interchange at Erie and Black River Boulevards. The mini-interchange is the largest transportation area of concern, which experiences traffic volumes exceeding 22,000 cars per day. Visitors to the City can be confused by this complex interchange that makes wayfinding to the downtown core a significant challenge.

There is no single, primary entry into downtown when arriving along Erie Boulevard; motorists are not directed to take Black River Boulevard or to stay on Erie Boulevard. Visitors are provided few wayfinding cues beyond standard highway route shield signage. A high quality, clear and recognizable wayfinding system would alleviate much of the confusion, and would direct travelers to the most logical and straightforward route to their intended destination. North James Street should be utilized as the primary gateway into downtown, bringing visitors past the Marinus Willett Center and available parking into the core of the Historic Gateway Subarea at the intersection of North James Street and Park Street.

The Centro Bus Line provides good accessibility to all portions of the subarea, with routes from the surrounding areas of the city converging on North James Street and Black River Boulevard. Black River Boulevard has a small bus pull-off across from East Dominick Street that provides access directly to the front gate of the Fort Stanwix National Monument, as well as a pull-off in front of the Marinus Willett Center.

Infrastructure

It is not anticipated that any major redevelopment within this subarea will take place. Therefore, existing infrastructure capacities should be sufficient to support anticipated revitalization efforts.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Natural Resources

There are no natural resources within the subarea related to revitalization initiatives.

Historic Sites

The City of Rome contains five properties and one district listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The Fort Stanwix National Monument is the only individually listed property within the BOA, and was placed on the Register in 1966. The Gansevoort-Bellamy Parks Historic District was added to the Register in November 1975, and includes numerous properties within the subarea, including St. Peter’s Church, the Federal Post Office, the Old City Hall building, and Gansevoort and Veteran’s Parks.

Fort Stanwix is one of only two sites in the nation recognized as a National Monument for its association with the French and Indian War. It is most well-known for its roles in the American Revolutionary War, and as a gathering place for American Indians. The original fort was built in 1758 and rebuilt in 1776. Today’s Fort Stanwix is a reproduction built to near-original form in 1975. The Marinus Willett Collections Management and Education Center is a new addition to the site, serving as a National Park Service visitors’ center and museum which includes exhibit and storage space.

Fort Stanwix is not only important to the BOA for its historic significance, but also for its potential to serve as a regional tourism and interpretive destination. Connecting the Fort to other redevelopment areas and destinations within the BOA, including the waterfront and Little Italy, is a key element associated with the City’s continued revitalization.

Brownfield, Vacant, & Underutilized Sites

There are no properties currently within the Historic Gateway that have been identified as having environmental concerns. The Old City Hall building is currently vacant and represents a significant opportunity for redevelopment. The City recently received RESTORE NY funding from the Empire State Development Corporation to rehabilitate the structure for reuse as commercial, office and residential space. The City also owns an adjacent building on West Liberty Street formerly housing the water department. This structure is currently underutilized and available for reuse.



Marinus Willett Collections Management and Education Center presents a bold, yet complementary addition to the historic fabric of the subarea.



Fire and Police Memorial Park located at the corner of Black River Boulevard and Court Street.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Key Buildings

Three significant historic buildings provide the framework for the subarea’s unique character.

The Oneida County Court House was erected in 1851, and it features a portico facing Gansevoort Park and a central dome. Oneida County has committed itself to continued use of this court facility. The four Ionic columns of the portico support a simple Greek Revival frieze, entablature and pediment. The structure is brick and the decorations are wood. The east wing of the courthouse was constructed in 1874 in order to provide rooms for the judge and jury, and washrooms. The dome was added to the courthouse in 1902. Although outside the BOA study area, this building sits across from Gansevoort Park along the northern boundary of the Historic Gateway subarea.

St. Peter’s Roman Catholic Church stands opposite Old City Hall on the south side of North James Street. The Romanesque church was designed by Archimedes Russell of Syracuse, and constructed from 1895-1897 utilizing Medina sandstone with brownstone trim. The adjacent rectory building faced East Liberty Street until 1975, when the street was removed and the right-of-way incorporated into the Fort Stanwix National Monument.

The Federal Post Office building houses the Rome Historical Society, whose aim is to preserve and present the historical importance of Rome and Oneida County. This structure flanks the east side of Gansevoort Park, and provides a stately backdrop when visiting both historic parks.



The Oneida County Courthouse



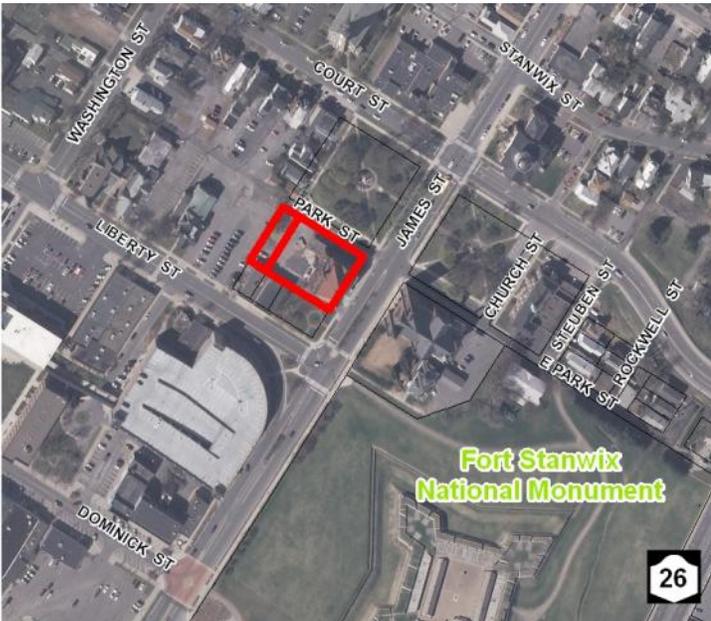
St. Peter's Basilica



Former Federal Post Office, now the Rome Historical Society

STRATEGIC SITES

SITE HG-1: OLD CITY HALL



SITE LOCATION MAP

Strategic Site HG-1 consists of Old City Hall and an adjacent parcel, totaling 0.6 acres in the Gansevoort-Bellamy Historic District, a cluster of handsome nineteenth century public and private structures surrounding Gansevoort and Veteran’s Parks. The District’s sense of history contributes greatly to the aesthetic quality of downtown Rome.

Old City Hall was constructed in 1895 and was the home to city operations for over eight decades. With the construction of a new City Hall in the late 1970s, the Rome Urban Renewal Agency took ownership of the structure. Over the past 25 years, the building has housed a number of operations, yet currently sits vacant.

Old City Hall is a 20,000 square foot, three-story structure with a large attic and an elevator on the northwest side of the building providing handicapped access to all floors. The former city jail at the rear of the building was recently demolished to create additional parking.

Significant upgrades and rehabilitation are required to bring the building to contemporary

standards. Many of these improvements will be made under RESTORE NY program funding provided by the Empire State Development Corporation. Upon renovation, this structure holds significant potential for mixed use or office operations. The City announced a developer RFP in 2010 to solicit proposals for the buildings’ reuse and rehabilitation. The City is actively considering all options for this structure, including an outright sale to private interests for redevelopment. This catalytic building has the potential to kick-start revitalization of the surrounding neighborhood.



An archival view of City Hall from North James Street.



View of Old City Hall, St Peter’s Basilica and the Tomb of the Unknown Soldiers along North James Street from the adjacent parking structure.

STRATEGIC SITES

SITE HG-2: SPRING STREET AREA

The residential cluster along East Park Street has become isolated and disconnected from the surrounding neighborhood as a result of the realignment of Court Street and the reconstruction of Fort Stanwix. In its current form, this small grouping of residences does not create a critical mass necessary to sustain an individual neighborhood. Furthermore, the small lot sizes and proximity to Black River Boulevard does not provide a high quality environment for single family residences. However, proximity to the City's largest tourist destination provides the opportunity to revitalize the area and leverage its location within the Historic Gateway and adjacency to the Fort.

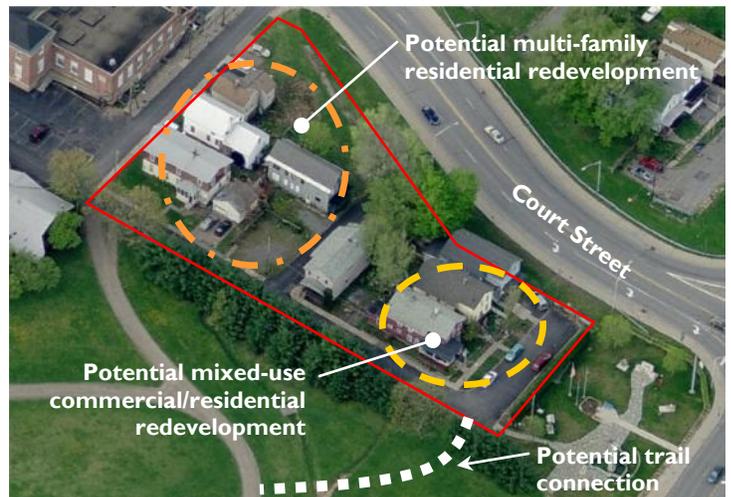
The Spring Street area is small at just 0.6 acres. To increase the viability of potential reinvestment, the City should identify portions of the Court Street right-of-way to expand the footprint of this potentially catalytic site.

The City should investigate the potential for the development of new townhomes, or the conversion of properties to support a mix of uses, including 1st floor boutique retail, restaurants and cafes, and upper story residential units. The identity of this subarea should retain the 19th century character of the current structures and be complementary to the remainder of the Historic Gateway. The uses within this area should largely cater to visitors to Fort Stanwix and the Historic District through improved signage, advertising, and pedestrian connections.

Standing at the eastern gateway to the Historic Gateway, this area's prominent location is of significant influence to the surrounding neighborhood, including areas north of Court Street. This location should be considered a secondary gateway into the Historic District, and redevelopment should be consistent with the architecture, form, and massing of the historic neighborhood.



SITE LOCATION MAP



Although small in footprint, the Spring Street area has good potential for redevelopment as mixed use with residential components.



ANALYSIS, FINDINGS, & RECOMMENDATIONS

Strengths

- The district has a strong sense of place and is extremely walkable, with transit linkages to surrounding neighborhoods.
- Ample available parking via adjacent garage (~700 spaces) and surface lot improves opportunities for increased density.
- Strong tourism potential from the Fort Stanwix National Monument and the Marinus Willett Collections Management and Education Center.
- Environmental contamination not a factor in redevelopment.

Challenges

- Lack of signage results in difficult wayfinding through the Boulevard's interchange.
- Overpowering scale of James Street and Erie Boulevard intersection does not provide a welcoming entrance into the subarea.
- Lack of a coordinated experience between Fort Stanwix, the historic district, and neighboring subareas limits visitor interaction with the City.
- No clear sense of arrival and the transportation infrastructure dominates the landscape.
- Poor pedestrian connectivity.

Key Objectives *(see Implementation Strategy section for additional information)*

- Retain the district's historic character and ambiance through the implementation of design standards for rehabilitation and new development projects.
- Encourage limited residential and small-scale commercial uses to occupy Old City Hall, with infill development located in adjacent areas to add vibrancy, foot traffic, and services for visitors.
- Create self-guided tours and cultural interpretive stations with interactive elements such as audio and video content available via wireless or cellular technologies.
- Right-size the transportation infrastructure to diminish its prominence in the landscape.
- Consider enhancing other areas, such as the southeast stair tower on the Liberty/James parking garage, to call attention towards the historic district.

Future Land Use

The Historic Gateway subarea should be protected as publicly accessible open space that may include some or all of the following: historic memorial and park, small neighborhood parks, tourist center, limited residential, and small-scale business enterprises that complement the historic character and ambiance of the subarea.

Due to the large amounts of available parking in the Liberty/James parking deck, the City should prohibit the development of additional off-street surface parking to retain the character, density, and sense of place within the subarea.

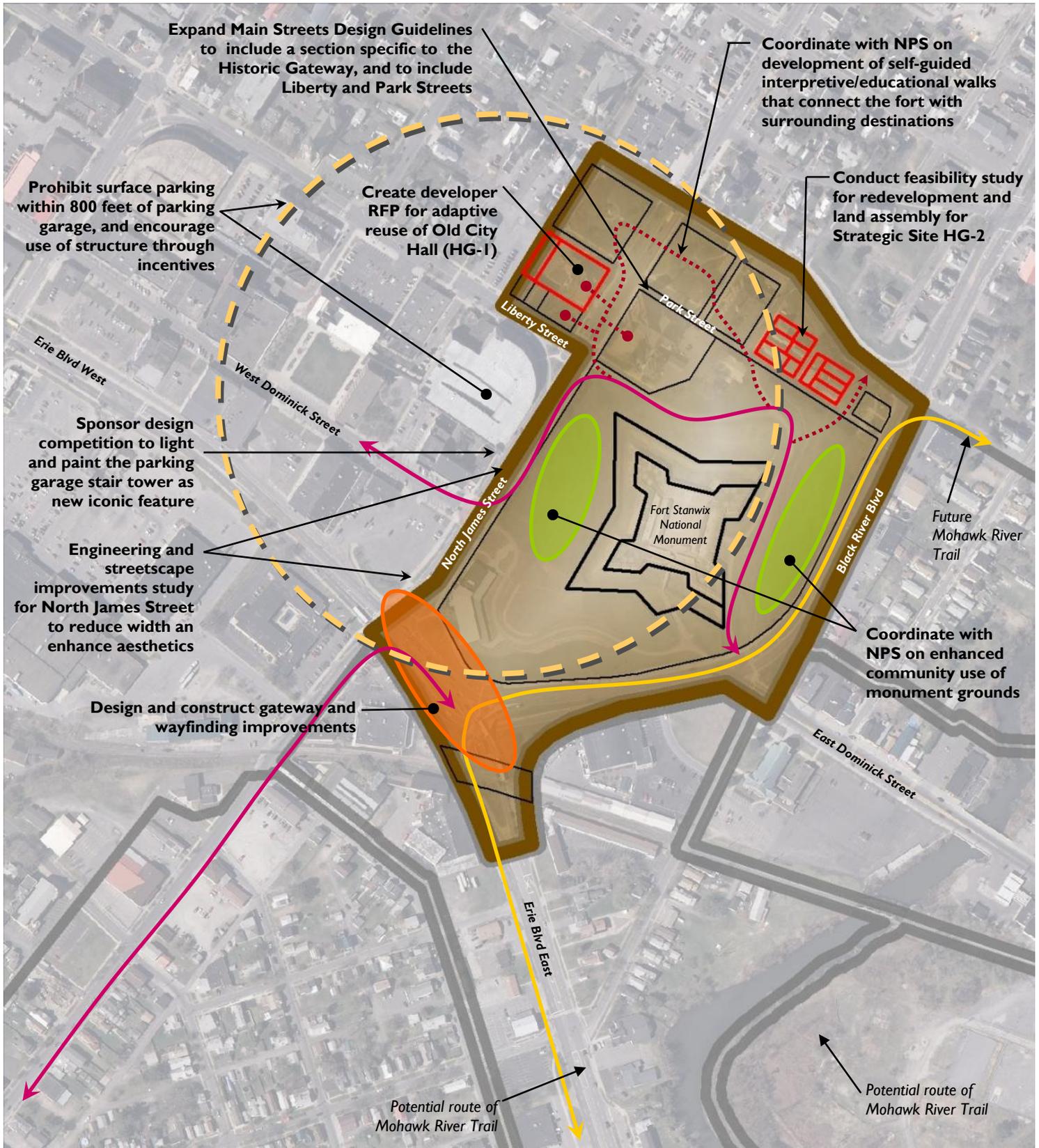
See the Summary Analysis, Findings and Recommendations Section for more information on recommendations.

Regulatory Updates

The Historic Gateway subarea currently includes two zoning districts, Mixed Commercial / Residential (C-2) and Central Commercial (C-4). Based on the descriptions and purpose of the existing districts, the current zoning is appropriate and meets the objectives for this subarea as defined within this Revitalization Strategy. An overlay that addresses the historical merits and architectural integrity of buildings and landscape features would ensure the protection of the desired historic character, and should be considered during future regulatory updates to the City's Zoning Code.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

Historic Gateway Concept Map



IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

Land Use & Zoning Recommendations

1. Retain the historic character of the neighborhood during redevelopment and infill projects by expanding the City's existing Main Streets Design Guidelines to include a section specific to the Historic Gateway.
2. Prohibit the future development of surface parking lots within 800 feet of the Liberty/James Street parking garage to increase the density of development within the subarea.

Capital Project Recommendations

1. Construct the Mohawk River Trail to connect with the trail system on the Fort Stanwix National Monument property.
2. Design and construct gateway improvements, including signage, striping, landscaping and lighting, at the Boulevard's mini-interchange and the North James Street intersection.
3. Sponsor a design competition and implement winning design to paint and light the southeast stair tower on the Liberty/North James Street parking garage as a new iconic element within the Historic District.

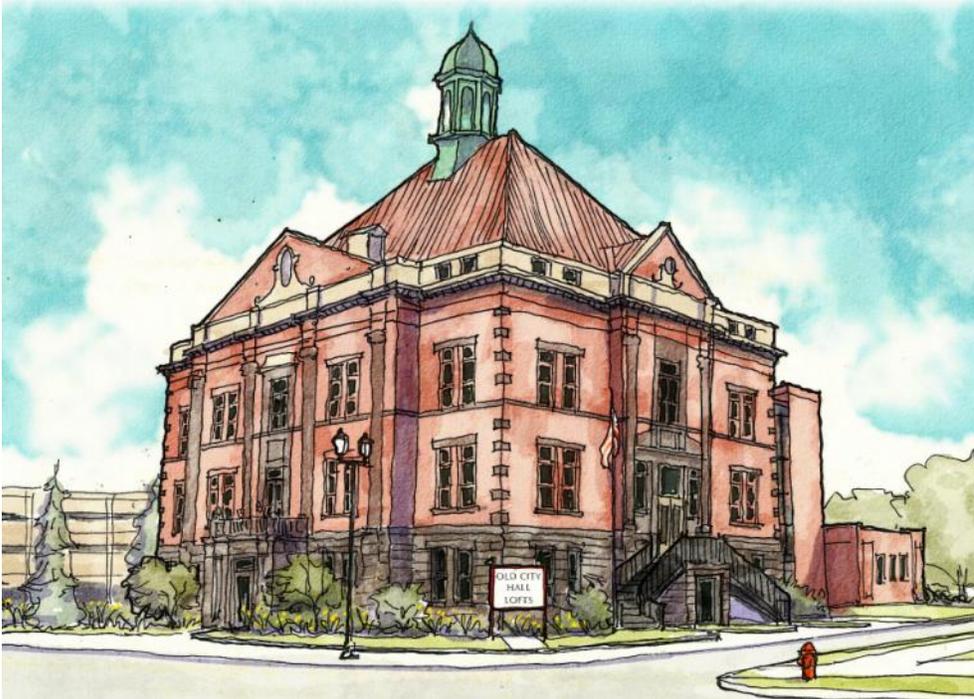
Recommended Non-Capital Actions

1. Create a developer request-for-proposal for the adaptive reuse of the Old City Hall building and that incorporates the requirements identified in the 2009 RESTORE NY application.
2. Conduct a feasibility analysis and implementation strategy for land assembly and the redevelopment of the Spring Street Area (HG-2).
3. Conduct an engineering and streetscape improvements study for North James Street to investigate reducing overall width and improving the aesthetics as experienced by visitors entering the Historic District.
4. Develop an incentive program that provides reserved parking spaces within the Liberty/North James Street parking garage for businesses that locate within the district, including businesses entering the district as part of the Old City Hall adaptive reuse.
5. Coordinate with the National Parks Service on the programmatic use of the parklands surrounding the Fort Stanwix National Monument to take advantage of this resource.
6. Enhance the Fort Stawix trail and surrounding Historic District through the provision of self-guided educational/interpretive walks geared towards adults and children, and to direct visitors to the numerous destinations within the subarea and adjacent neighborhoods.
7. As part of a larger downtown-wide wayfinding strategy, develop a high quality, clear and recognizable system for directional and locational signage.

See the Summary Analysis, Findings and Recommendations Section for more information on implementation.

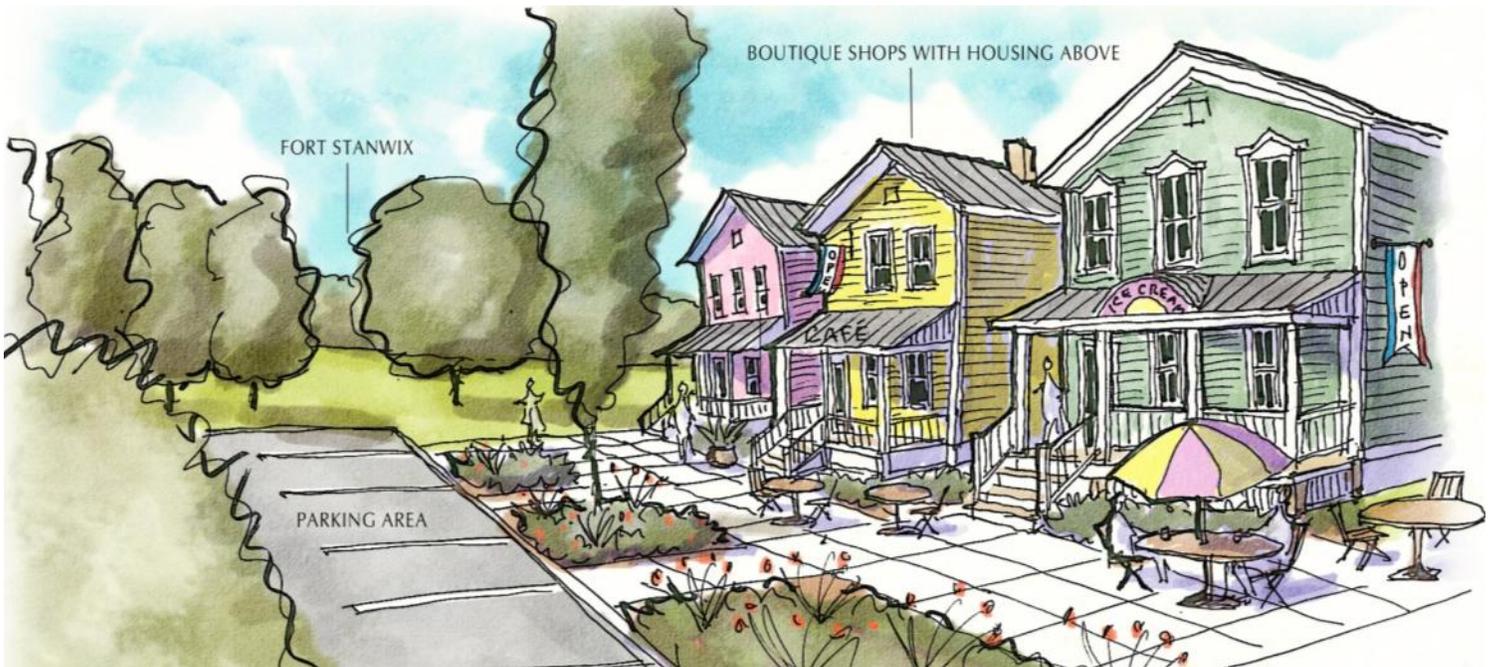
IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

Redevelopment of Old City Hall (Strategic Site HG-1)



The Old City Hall building represents a significant opportunity to revitalize an aging historic property and bring vibrancy and activity back to the Historic Gateway. Rehabilitation of Old City Hall will result in mixed-use commercial, professional, and/or residential space in the heart of Rome's central business district and adjacent to the Fort Stanwix National Monument. The roughly 20,000 square foot structure has the potential for reuse as office space, artist studios, or modern, energy-efficient residential units. The City was recently awarded RESTORE-NY grant funding to undertake the historic preservation of the exterior, interior rehabilitations, and Leadership in Energy and the Environment (LEED) certification for the structure. The adjacent parcel to the rear offers ample space for an outdoor plaza or programmed pedestrian space if the building were converted to a commercial use. The adjacent parking garage is only 250 feet away, creating the potential for a redevelopment incentive package which includes dedicated parking stalls contingent upon the purchase and successful reuse of the Old City Hall building.

Spring Street Area Revitalization (Strategic Site HG-2)



The Spring Street Area has the potential to provide support and visitor services to the Historic District and Fort Stanwix, including boutique retail, cafes and restaurants. This type of redevelopment scenario would require coordination with Fort Stanwix on trail extensions, wayfinding and promotional materials. Other opportunities include potential multi-family housing or townhomes, which may require the utilization of additional Court Street right-of-way to assemble a parcel of sufficient size.