

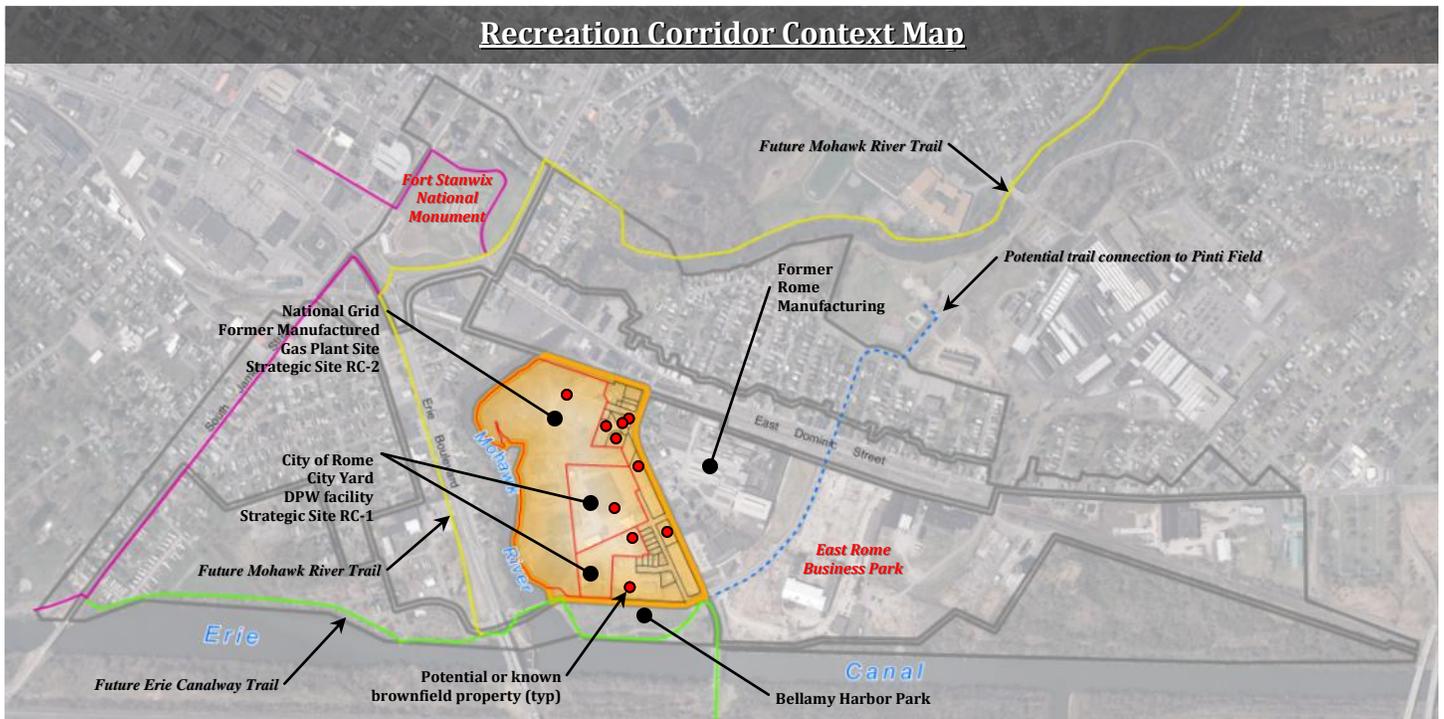


RECREATION CORRIDOR

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

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.

September 26, 2012



a snapshot

41.2 acres

- 24% community service
- 60% public services

29 parcels

- 14 residential parcels
- 2 City-owned parcels

10 brownfields

- 38 acres of potential brownfield

2 Strategic Sites

- City Yard
- National Grid

2,500 LF shoreline

“Come out and play...”

The Recreation Corridor currently serves as the site of Rome’s Department of Public Works (DPW) facility and other commercial/industrial uses. Its location along the Mohawk River, adjacent to Bellamy Harbor Park, and the East Dominick Street corridor provide opportunities for greater public use of the site, particularly as a linkage for visitors arriving via the Erie Canal.

The City of Rome has been actively studying the feasibility of relocating the DPW facility to an alternate site to allow for the development of a regional recreational asset that builds upon the areas strategic location and utilizes existing infrastructure.

IMAGINE...

passive and active recreational opportunities along the Mohawk River, centrally located in the City, that provide visitors, residents, and workers with a recreational retreat within walking distance of goods and services.

MAKING IT HAPPEN

Live.

- Enhance connectivity with adjacent neighborhoods via the Canalway Trail and Mohawk River Trail.
- Provide a variety of passive and active recreation opportunities to serve nearby residents, the City, and the region.

Work.

- Allow for the development of support businesses, such as casual dining and sporting goods retailers, that can enhance the recreational value of this subarea.
- Seek grant resources and funding alternatives for the relocation of the City's DPW to allow for the development of a recreation hub.

Play.

- As part of a larger Parks and Recreation Master Planning effort, create a focused master plan for the Recreation Corridor.
- Identify potential recreation-based reuse scenarios for the DPW building upon the relocation of City Yard facilities.
- Provide strong pedestrian connections to surrounding subareas via access to walking trails and pedestrian bridges.
- Enhance public access to the Mohawk River waterfront via a boardwalk, overlook, or other structure
- Develop historic interpretive elements within the corridor that recognize the importance of this area in the City's development (e.g. the former mill race between Race and Mill Streets).

CASE STUDY: Warehouse Athletic Facility, Spokane WA

The Warehouse Athletic Facility in Spokane, WA is located in a large building within an industrial park, and adjacent to Gonzaga University. The facility hosts indoor sporting events for baseball, basketball, soccer, and volleyball, with 5 full basketball courts and 6



regulation volleyball courts. The facility offers a variety of recreational activities for adults and youth, including camps, league play, and tournament hosting. This facility is very similar to what is possible through the reuse of the existing DPW facility at the City Yard site.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Land Use

The Recreation Corridor subarea is located in the heart of the Rome BOA Study Area and covers approximately 41.2 acres on 29 parcels (see Context Map).

- **Public services** (60%) and **community services** (24%) are the primary land uses by area.
- The Rome Substation 22.3A, owned by National Grid, is the single largest parcel in this subarea, covering 22.1 acres along the eastern shore of the Mohawk River.
- The City's DPW facility (City Yard) includes 10 acres on two parcels.
- Together, the National Grid and City Yard sites comprise 85 percent of the subarea.
- **Residential** (6%) uses include two small clusters of 14 homes on 2.5 acres.

See Appendix C for detailed information on land uses within the subarea.

Ownership

By area, property within the Recreation Corridor is largely controlled by two land owners (City and National Grid), yet the subarea's 41 parcels have 22 separate owners.

- Over 27 percent of the Recreation Corridor by acreage is under public control.
- The City of Rome controls four parcels covering 11.3 acres.
- The largest private land holder is National Grid, with 22.1 acres.

See Appendix C for maps and detailed ownership information.

Zoning

Two zoning districts are located within the Recreation Corridor subarea – Business and Industrial Park (E-1) and Light Industrial (E-3). Of the 29 parcels located in this subarea, 27 are currently zoned as Business and Industrial Park (E-1). The two parcels zoned as Light Industrial (E-3) are located in the southeastern corner of the subarea, off of Essex Street. It is anticipated that changes in zoning regulations will be needed to achieve the vision of subarea.

See Appendix C for additional information on zoning within the subarea.

Parks & Open Space

There are currently no formally recognized parks or open spaces present within the Recreation Corridor. However, the subarea is directly adjacent to Bellamy Harbor Park and the Erie Canal, and boasts over 2,500 feet of Mohawk River shoreline.



View east along Harbor Way, with the Recreation Corridor subarea to the left, and Bellamy Harbor Park on the right.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Transportation

The Recreation Corridor subarea is bounded on the east by Mill Street - one of the City's primary gateways that was recently upgraded with sidewalks, landscaping and lighting. Mill Street provides access to East Dominick Street to the north and Martin Street to the south. Nearly all vehicular traffic from within the subarea must utilize Mill Street to access the remainder of the transportation network.

The subarea is bounded on the north by Railroad Street and the Mohawk, Adirondack & Northern Railroad. The peculiar alignment of these two segments is a challenge to enhancing connectivity between the Recreation Corridor and the East Dominick Street. The subarea is bounded on the south by Harbor Way which provides access to commercial businesses, the National Grid property, Bellamy Harbor Park and the pedestrian bridge over the Mohawk River.

The proposed extension of the NYS Erie Canalway Trail from Erie Canal Village to Bellamy Harbor Park will enhance pedestrian connectivity from this subarea to the remainder of the City.

The Centro Bus Line utilizes Mill Street, with several stops providing good access to the surrounding transit network.



Mill Street looking south, with City Yard to the right.

Natural Resources

The Mohawk River is a significant natural resource within the subarea, and offers the potential for water enhanced land uses such as passive recreation. A large stand of coniferous forest is located west of the City Yard property on the National Grid site. This forest stand provides visual and noise buffering for the subarea from the Erie Boulevard corridor 250 feet to the west. This vegetation also provides a strong sense of enclosure, though it limits viewsheds and physical access to the Mohawk River.



View from the pedestrian bridge over the Mohawk River to the north.

Infrastructure

The large National Grid property currently has limited sanitary and storm water sewer capacities. However, the projected use of this property for recreation decreases the likelihood that upgrades to on-site infrastructure will be needed. The remaining properties are well connected to the Mill Street corridor, and upgrades are not anticipated to meet the limited demands of associated future recreational uses as proposed. A more intense mixture of uses for this subarea may generate the need for further evaluation of infrastructure capacities.

Historic Sites

There are no known sites listed on the State or National Registers of Historic Places located within the subarea.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Brownfield, Vacant, & Underutilized Sites

Encompassing the western portion of the East Rome Business Park, the Recreation Corridor subarea has the second largest concentration of potential brownfield and vacant sites (97.1 percent of the subarea's total land area). This is expected based on the historical use of the area for industrial purposes since the mid-19th century and the current site uses.

There are 10 potential brownfields within the Recreation Corridor subarea and seven vacant parcels. The largest brownfield property is the 22.1 acre National Grid property. The site of a former Manufactured Gas Plant, this parcel is currently undergoing remediation in accordance with NYS DEC requirements, and is not likely to experience reuse other than recreation and open space. The City Yard facility is a potential brownfield due to the historic presence of underground storage tanks and several recorded spill incidents. Other potential brownfield properties are noted to have either a spill history or are sites with current/historic underground storage tanks.

Kingsley Avenue - National Grid - 242.020-1-1

Former Manufactured Gas Plant operated by National Grid

City Yard - 242.20-1-2 & 242.20-1-11.2

(2 properties) Documented petroleum spills.

321 Harbor Way - Verizon - 242.20-1-11.1

Documented petroleum spills.

116-120 Mill Street - 242.67-1-82

(4 properties) Documented petroleum spills.

201 Mill Street - 242.20-1-16.2

(2 properties) Documented petroleum spills.

See Appendices C and F for additional brownfield information.

Key Buildings

The most significant structure within the Recreation Corridor is the current DPW facility on the City Yard property. The City of Rome's Public Works facility (City Yard) currently occupies ten acres along the Mill Street corridor. The facility's 53,400 square foot primary structure is the most prominent building on the site. The building's high interior clear span would likely be good for a variety of warehousing and light industrial uses. Alternatively, the building was recently evaluated for a retrofitted use as an indoor soccer complex, which meets the long term vision of the subarea. Based on these findings, it is likely that this structure will be incorporated into City Yard redevelopment scenarios to complement recreation goals developed by the Comprehensive Plan, the Kingsley Avenue Study, and the BOA Plan.



A view of the primary City Yard building which houses vehicle maintenance and other activities.



View from Mill Street towards City Yard buildings.

STRATEGIC SITES

SITE RC-1: CITY YARD

The Department of Public Works site, known as City Yard, includes two parcels that were determined to be strategic sites based on their central location and their ability to be a catalyst for the overall waterfront revitalization efforts. These City-owned properties provide Rome with new opportunities to capitalize on a location adjacent to the Mohawk River, Bellamy Harbor Park, and the Little Italy Main Streets Corridor, as well as a connection between Downtown and the Erie Canal.

City Yard has been identified in numerous planning efforts undertaken over the past decade as an ideal location for one or more public recreation facilities, including the Kingsley Avenue and East Dominick Street Revitalization Plan and the City's Comprehensive Plan. The preferred vision for the Recreation Corridor subarea includes developing a series of active and passive recreation facilities, including parkland, play fields, and trails that link the subarea to surrounding destinations and land uses.

Preliminary research indicates the sites have been potentially contaminated from their use by the Department of Public Works. The site historically utilized underground and aboveground storage tanks for fuels, and several spill incidents over the past two decades have been reported to the NYS DEC. Additional study and analysis of the exterior yards, the building, and subsurface locations within the building for contamination will assist the identification of potential reuse scenarios and any redevelopment limitations. It is recommended that this property be considered for a site assessment grant.



SITE LOCATION MAP



Centro of Oneida currently utilizes this building on the City Yard complex.



View from the Mill Street gateway at East Dominick Street towards the City Yard property.

STRATEGIC SITES

SITE RC-2: NATIONAL GRID PROPERTY



SITE LOCATION MAP



Kingsley Avenue looking east into the National Grid property.



The National Grid site during remediation, as seen from Railroad Street.

The National Grid parcel is one of the largest sites in the BOA and ranked as a strategic site based on known contamination present on site and its location along the Mohawk River. This property is currently under remediation pursuant to the NYS DEC's State Superfund Program. The current owner has been engaged in discussions about the future of the site and has indicated that some remediation has taken place and that the site could be considered as a potential future location for open space, recreational uses, and trail development. The site will receive a soil cap to prevent contact with subsurface soils, as well as a barrier wall along the Mohawk River to prevent any groundwater infiltration off-site into the river. Given the liabilities associated with more formal development, such as commercial or residential uses, the potential for these uses are limited. However, the permissible future uses of the property are consistent with the vision for the property and would provide desirable connections, linkages, and access to the Mohawk River.

This property's location along the Mohawk River, its large size and contiguous reach from Harbor Way to Railroad Street are among the reasons it is considered a strategic site. It is recommended that dialogue with the current owner remains open to ensure that potential for redevelopment of the property as open space and trails remains a viable option.

The development of a recreational node in this location would help fulfill one of the City's three catalyst projects identified in the Comprehensive Plan.

ANALYSIS, FINDINGS, & RECOMMENDATIONS

Strengths

- Adjacency to the Mohawk River and Bellamy Harbor Park offer opportunities for green connectivity and linkages.
- National Grid site has potential to serve as a connective element for a waterfront trail system.
- Vacant and underutilized sites have potential to be redeveloped to uses that capitalize on strategic location. Public ownership of 10 acres of land make redevelopment options more feasible.
- Connectivity to Erie Boulevard, East Dominick Street, and the Employment District can help support revitalization of this subarea.

Challenges

- Development limitations exist along Mohawk River waterfront due to contamination (only open space and trail development permitted on National Grid site).
- Current residential land uses, though limited, are not consistent with long-term vision for subarea.
- Significant number of privately owned parcels may hamper redevelopment efforts if property owners are not willing partners.
- Need to balance public uses and recreation-based enhancements with need for tax revenues.



A view looking into the City Yard site from Mill Street towards the principal DPW building.

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

- Provide connections to adjacent trails and greenways, such as the Mohawk River Trail and the Erie Canalway Trail and complete trail segments.
- Provide access to the Mohawk River waterfront via a boardwalk, viewing/fishing platforms, and a second pedestrian bridge south of Railroad Street.
- Identify desirable recreation support services and develop an implementation strategy to attract niche businesses that complement recreational services.
- In an attempt to provide a level of self-sufficiency, identify potential user-fee based programs that could be implemented within the Recreation Corridor.
- Provide for both spontaneous recreational opportunities and programmed spaces that are geared towards select, niche activities, such as soccer, bocce, street hockey, and a skate park.

ANALYSIS, FINDINGS, & RECOMMENDATIONS

Future Land Use

Land uses in the Recreation Corridor subarea should be largely comprised of recreation facilities and complementary support services for recreational uses, including:

- parks and playgrounds;
- active and passive recreation facilities;
- indoor field house;
- small restaurants and snack stands;
- recreation-oriented retail;
- office space associated with recreational uses ; and
- open space facilities.



The images above depict views from the area surrounding the City Yard facility, including a view into the site from Bellamy Harbor Park (top), and north along Race Street (bottom).

Regulatory Updates

The vision for this corridor is to create a centerpiece and regional destination for recreation and open space activities. Land uses in this area are intended to focus on recreation, open space, and complementary support services. The desired vision for this corridor may not be fully achievable without the creation of a new zoning designation that identifies appropriate recreation uses and facilities and identifies appropriate types of support uses.

A Recreation Corridor Zoning District would help meet the desired goals for this subarea. This district should describe appropriate relationships between land uses, dictate required buffers, and allow for complementary uses along the periphery to provide support services and promote economic development amongst private enterprise.



A view from the Railroad Street bridge over the Mohawk River looking southwest along the river as it meanders towards the Erie Canal. The National Grid property is on the left-hand side. The homes in the distance front along Whitesboro Street and Erie Boulevard.

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

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

Recreation Corridor Concept Map



IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

Land Use & Zoning Recommendations

1. Modify current zoning to include a Recreational Corridor district that supports the range and diversity of uses proposed for this subarea.
2. Continue to further the recommendations made in the City Yard Relocation Study.
3. Identify alternative sites for residential, industrial and commercial for potential relocation from the Recreation Corridor upon full build-out.
4. Develop a Master Plan for the Recreation Corridor which includes a land use plan as well as specific programmatic improvements.
5. Create a prominent connection between Bellamy Harbor Park and any future recreational uses of the City Yard site.

Capital Project Recommendations

1. Construct improved trail head access points at end of East Whitesboro Street.

Recommended Non-Capital Actions

1. Investigate the economic impact of creating a multipurpose recreational facility within the Recreation Corridor.
2. Undertake a consolidated/shared services study, utilizing funding from New York State, with the City and other potential partners, including Rome City Schools and the Griffiss Business and Technology Park to identify and analyze municipal waste reduction, recycling, alternative energy development, vehicle/equipment maintenance, refueling, and other initiatives.
3. Determine the potential retrofit alternatives for the conversion of the City Yard facility to a recreation oriented building.
4. Conduct a Relocation and Reuse Feasibility Study for the Verizon property south of City Yard tht will identify alternative locations for existing uses, and develop potential programmatic improvements for the site.
5. Apply for Phase II environmental site assessment funding for strategic redevelopment sites within the subarea, including the City Yard site, to further understand areas of potential contamination.

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

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

City Yard Reuse (Strategic Site RC-1)



The City Yard site offers significant potential for reuse as a community destination for recreation within the BOA Study Area. The site's proximity to Bellamy Harbor Park, the Erie Canal, East Dominick Street and the Employment District provide support linkages to surrounding uses and recreational opportunities. A recent study identified the City Yard DPW structure as having potential for reuse as a multipurpose indoor field complex. Additional recommendations include the creation of active and passive playfields adjacent to Bellamy Harbor Park. The rear of the complex could also incorporate flexible/multipurpose program space that can accommodate a range of athletic and entertainment events underneath a covered/open-air structure, complete with bleacher seating.

Strategic Site (RC-2)



The remediation of the National Grid property is nearing completion, and final uses are expected to include a public access trail that will connect the existing pedestrian foot bridge over the Mohawk River northward to East Dominick Street. The southern boundary of the site adjacent to Bellamy Harbor Park is a logical spot for a trail head that incorporates wayfinding and interpretive signage, as well as bench seating and a larger public space that takes advantage of the high quality views to the River and Canal. A future trail should be wide enough to support multiple users while also providing wayfinding, educational and interpretive elements to inform trail users about the historic importance of the Mohawk River in the development of the City. The trail should seek to provide connections to the waterfront via overlooks and sections that meander to and from the bank.