

# City of Rome

## Comprehensive Plan

### Action Plan



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This Comprehensive Plan is the end product of nearly two years of work by dozens of individuals who worked cooperatively for the success of the city of Rome. The following people contributed many hours of concerted effort to the production of the plan. Their commitment, energy and enthusiasm made this plan possible.

### **Steering Committee Members**

Carol Alarie City of Rome Planning Department	Dave Gulla Gulla O J Pools
Ed Arcuri Cement Finishers of Rome NY, Inc.	John Kent Oneida County Planning Department
Doug Bartell Mohawk Valley EDGE	Chris Johnson Resident
Lou Campola Resident	Matt Miller Welcome Hall Community Center
Ron Carollo City of Rome	Patrick Murray Resident
Nerida Centeno Resident	Desiree Porter Resident
Jim Cilente Zoning Board of Appeals	Carl Quance Rome Fish Hatchery
Wes Cupp Rome Country Club	James Rizzo City of Rome
Julie Grow Denton McMahon, Grow & Getty	Nate Sellers Resident
Jim DiBella DiBella's Fancy Fruit Baskets	Becky Smith McCarey Contracting Group, Inc.
Lou DiMarco Common Council	John Sorbello City of Rome
Mark Domenico City of Rome	Mike Vanderhoof 1009 W. Liberty Street
Dr. Gale Fellows Rome Memorial Hospital	Phil Vescio, Jr. Franklin Hotel
Lenny Giardino BOCES	Frank Vetrone Resident



### **Introduction**

A comprehensive plan is simply a sheaf of papers, but infused with the energy, commitment and vitality of those who care about a city, it becomes a statement of vision and a road map for bringing that vision to life. The comprehensive planning process that led to the development of this plan has shown that this spirit of cooperation and enthusiasm is shared by leaders, residents and partners of the city of Rome.

This Comprehensive Plan is the end product of nearly two years of effort by dozens of individuals. It contains a set of initiatives proposed by residents, Common Council members, city staff, regional partners, and a team of consultants. This introduction provides some brief background on the city and summarizes the goals established for Rome by citizens and stakeholders during the planning process. The following sections describe the specific actions proposed to implement each of the goals described below.

The plan focuses planned investments in human, technological, educational, financial and physical infrastructure (including housing) with the goal of creating economic opportunity, achieving high levels of employment and quality jobs necessary to provide middle class opportunities for low income residents and newly recruited knowledge workers. The action plan portion of the plan examines new ways to provide the tax revenues necessary to support investments in education, environmental improvement, government services and quality of life, while increasing Rome's reputation as a high value community.

Targeting investment will revitalize the city's residential areas as "neighborhoods of choice" – viable, mixed-income neighborhoods of economic and cultural diversity, with sound physical structures, a clean, attractive environment and a well-maintained infrastructure. Safety and physical security, good schools, compatible land use, neighborhood character, high-quality recreational facilities and programs, social and commercial services and access to jobs are integral parts of the program.

Basic city services, efficiently delivered, are the foundation of the action plan. Rome will invest in roads, bridges, trails, telecommunication systems, sewers, and the water distribution system in target areas that are expected to yield significant benefits for the city's economy and improve the appearance and quality of life of its neighborhoods. The city will also pursue urban amenity projects including access to recreational opportunities, theater, the arts, and transit service.

The action plan focuses on preparing Rome to enter the 21<sup>st</sup> century economy. The service sector, including retail sales, professional, technical and financial services, has overtaken manufacturing as the core of the regional and national economy. Globalization has meant that Rome companies may trade more with international partners than with regional neighbors.

The loss of the Griffiss Air Base, combined with general economic decline in Upstate New York, will continue to have profound impacts on the city of Rome.

By focusing on increased tax base productivity the plan positions Rome to overcome the limited revenue capacity facing many cities. Limited revenues due to federal and state fiscal problems, unfunded mandates, suburbanization and sprawl, and declining levels of support for school districts create challenging problems. In Rome's case, these underlying factors are worsened by the realignment of the military sector, population loss, rising percentage of nontaxable land, large geographic size, and a significant amount of vacant and undevelopable land. Without adequate revenues and a stable tax base, Rome will be unable to provide services and amenities that residents expect a city to provide.

As people and businesses have moved out of Rome they have affected the level of services that must be provided, as well as the revenues the city can raise to fund those services. This action plan positions Rome to be competitive in the future by providing a high quality of life and rich urban amenities expected by a modern workforce. In addition, as Rome's population changes, income stratification has increased. In Rome, this trend has created a significant concentration of low and moderate income residents and will continue to drive city programs, activities, revenues, local housing markets, economic and demographic diversity.

Rome is facing the growth of the suburbs as both a residential and a business location. Suburbanization and sprawl have hastened housing and neighborhood deterioration and the concentration of people living in or just above poverty. Plans to mitigate the impact of suburbanization and sprawl on the city must be developed at the regional level through collaboration and intergovernmental partnerships. Rome's leaders must be involved in this regional planning process.

Rome's quality educational system and state-of-the-art high school is central to many aspects of the city's vitality. Residents and businesses view the schools as a key indicator of the area's desirability and a key area of investment for the city's future. Without a well-educated workforce, Rome will be passed over by potential businesses in favor of communities that pay more attention to education and workforce development. For the next few years Rome's high school will be the envy of communities across the state and opens a limited window of opportunity for residential and business recruitment efforts.

In guiding implementation of this plan, the city will continue to maximize citizen participation in key decisions and manage public/private partnerships to get important projects accomplished. The city will also adopt a more business-oriented approach to local government, including developing fee-for-service formats, and a strong virtual city presence with many municipal functions accessible online.

### **Summary of the Planning Process**

The following section describes the planning process, analysis and public participation effort that defined the action strategies included in this comprehensive plan.

Between April 2002 and November 2003, the city of Rome developed this comprehensive plan and a new zoning ordinance. A consultant team led by River Street Planning & Development was guided by a steering committee in the development of the comprehensive plan and a zoning subcommittee in preparation of the new zoning ordinance. Each committee was made up of local



residents, business people, economic development professionals, city staff and elected officials. The committees met periodically throughout the planning effort to set priorities, review materials and identify potential strategies for future action.

In addition to committee involvement, dozens of interviews were held with business leaders, economic development partners, residents and other important stakeholders. Committee input and stakeholder interviews were supplemented by community meetings including a visioning workshop, a meeting to educate residents about community profile findings, a design workshop, an action planning session and a zoning workshop.

Community and stakeholder outreach created the foundation for a citywide vision and goals that would guide the planning process. The outreach process was complemented by research and technical analysis that resulted in a detailed community profile (included as Appendix A). A series of hands-on sessions with municipal staff prioritized and refined the strategies for inclusion into the action plan.

### **Findings from the Community Profile**

The comprehensive planning process resulted in three main documents: a community profile, an action plan and a new zoning ordinance. Three technical memoranda were also prepared addressing historic preservation, tax base enhancement and freight movement within the city. These, along with the community profile, are included as appendices to the comprehensive plan. The community profile addresses a range of issues and provides a baseline analysis of conditions from which opportunities and constraints facing the city have been identified. The following briefly summarizes findings from the research and analysis phase of the comprehensive planning process:

- **Population & Income:** Rome's population decreased by a catastrophic twenty-one percent between 1990 and 2000. The city is growing older faster than other communities, with median age increasing from 31 in 1990 to 38 in 2000. Education levels remained steady between 1990 and 2000, while increasing for the state and county. Though median incomes have increased, a greater percentage of Romans lived below the poverty line in 2000 than in 1990 (15% vs. 12%).
- **Economic Profile:** The 1995 closure of Griffiss Air Base resulted in the loss of nearly 5,000 jobs. Several economic development organizations including Rome Industrial Development Corporation (RIDC), Chamber of Commerce, Mohawk Valley EDGE and the Griffiss Local Development Corporation exist, but marketing and development efforts lack coordination. Retail establishments are performing better than expected given demographics and are drawing shoppers from the county and metropolitan statistical area (MSA). Agriculture is still a significant economic generator for Oneida County and the city of Rome.
- **Housing Characteristics:** Closure of Griffiss Air Base flooded the market with vacant housing stock resulting in a double-digit vacancy rate for rental units and a 30% decrease in home values. Vacated structures have not been maintained or stabilized and many have deteriorated beyond repair. The city has responded with efforts such as the Neighborhood Improvement Program

that assists low-income homeowners with home repairs and the Real Property Program to dispose of tax foreclosed properties through sale and rehabilitation agreements or demolition.

- **Land Use:** At seventy-two square miles (46,000 acres) Rome occupies a very large land area. At 32%, vacant land accounts for more area in the city than any other land use, a reflection of the difficulties in developing much of the land in the Outside District. In 2000, 16% of the city's residential properties (rental and for sale) were vacant. The 3,506 acre Griffiss Business and Technology Park offers considerable capacity for new commercial and industrial development. Outside Griffiss, about half of the city's 740 acres of industrial land is vacant. Nearly 22% of Rome's 950 acres of commercial land is vacant or underutilized. These parcels are scattered throughout the city.
- **Inner/Outside District:** For taxing purposes, the city is divided into an Inside District and an Outside District. The distinction is in the level of public services and infrastructure provided to properties in each district and the corresponding rate of property taxation levied to pay for these services. Rome is one of only three communities in New York State still using this taxing approach. Today many services once only available in the Inside District are now offered in the Outside District; however there are significant development impediments in much of the Outside District including critical environmental areas and wetlands in the western and southern portion.
- **Natural Resources & Environment:** The Mohawk River and Erie Canal provide significant recreation and tourism opportunities for the city and region. The historic and natural significance of the Rome Sand Plains provide strong recreation, tourism and educational opportunities. The city has made considerable progress in identifying and remediating potential brownfield sites to make them available for redevelopment.
- **Historic Resources:** Rome's historic resources are a key element of several existing and developing federal and state heritage areas. Heritage tourism is a growing part of the regional economic development strategy. Fort Stanwix, Erie Canal Village, and other amenities are good visitor "draws" that should be protected, enhanced and promoted. Owners of the city's high proportion of older, historic, and potentially historic homes could benefit from incentives to maintain and improve their properties. The city's protections for historic resources need to be reevaluated and updated to maximize economic and preservation benefits.
- **Recreation:** Rome has twenty park and recreational areas on 150+ acres that provide a wide variety of activities for residents. The recently completed Parks Master Plan is a fifteen year program to improve park and recreational areas. The city's waterfront assets have not been maximized as recreational opportunities. A Friends of the Parks group has recently formed and has completed two projects at Franklyn's Field. The recently implemented "Adopt a Park" clean-up program provides materials for volunteer use in maintaining park and recreation facilities.



- **Infrastructure:** Sewer and water infrastructure are generally in good condition with ample expansion capacity. Inexpensive services are tools to attract industries with high water demand. Streets are generally in good condition and, with a few exceptions, have capacity to serve future development. Rome has a good transit system, but pedestrian and bike facilities are limited. Transfer of the management of Griffiss Business and Technology Park's extensive infrastructure from Griffiss Local Development Corporation to the city is being negotiated.
- **Community Services:** The new high school is a state-of-the-art facility that will enhance attraction of businesses and employees. School drop-out rates are significantly lower than statewide averages. Rome Memorial Hospital is a valuable facility, providing a full range of medical services. A low crime rate creates a safe environment for residents.

### **Vision and Goals**

Rome launched the community planning process in June 2002 with a major public visioning workshop designed to expand citizen awareness of issues and trends facing the city. More than eighty residents, property owners and business owners attended the meeting to share ideas and ask questions. The community visioning workshop was an opportunity for residents, businesses and stakeholders to image the future of the city. A group exercise helped residents to identify strongly held community values, challenges facing the city and the image and flavor of a vibrant community. The exercise asked participants to answer three questions:

"What I love about the city of Rome..."

"Things I would change about Rome..."

"When these things are preserved or changed, Rome will..."

Participants identified many things that they love about Rome. One of the main themes that emerged was that Rome is a welcoming, open community with a hometown atmosphere. People valued opportunities to get involved in their community saying that "Rome is small enough to make a difference, big enough to make an impact." The Erie Canal and Mohawk River were identified as critical resources. Excellent transportation access and circulation, historic structures, Fort Stanwix, Rome Hospital and community arts and cultural centers were also identified as important assets. The low cost of living and a good family quality of life were described as benefits to living in Rome. Many value the opportunity to live in an urban or rural setting within the city's boundaries.

The top needs identified were tax base enhancement, development of a stronger commercial center, and an expansion of commercial and retail uses in general. Participants felt that a clearer vision was needed for Griffiss Business and Technology Park but that Griffiss alone would not "save" Rome. Neighborhood blight was cited as a critical issue that is negatively impacting quality of life and the city's tax base. Downtown revitalization and waterfront development were identified as high priorities for the city. People wanted to see businesses moved out of residential neighborhoods and into attractive and well-maintained commercial areas. Many felt that the city could be doing a better job of marketing its assets. The need to

improve Rome's parks and create more places for people to gather was mentioned by several participants.

Workshop participants would like to see a prosperous Rome in which people have choices about where to live and work with strong commercial areas, a variety of housing options and protected natural resources. The ideal Rome would have a vibrant downtown center, attractive gateways and jobs that will encourage today's youth to stay in Rome or entice them back after a time away. Rome would support small business development that would create a balance of white- and blue-collar jobs. Abandoned properties would be redeveloped to create new homes and businesses. A new or refurbished ice rink would offer expanded recreational opportunities.

River Street Planning developed a vision statement and set of seven goals to guide the plan development based on feedback from the initial visioning workshop and the later community action planning workshop, issues identified by the Steering Committee and community stakeholders. The goals address tax base enhancement, economic development, workforce development, housing, infrastructure, health and environmental quality and urban amenities. The vision statement and goals are summarized below.

### ***Vision Statement***

Over the next two decades the city of Rome will transform itself into an economically vibrant community while protecting its hometown, family atmosphere. It will revitalize and grow by preparing citizens to enter the 21<sup>st</sup> century workforce and attracting knowledge workers and a broad array of technology companies and supportive services. Rome will provide unparalleled quality of place and amenities that offer vibrant commercial and entertainment districts, unique neighborhoods and housing options, diverse recreation choices, arts and culture, and environmental quality. Working closely with regional economic development partners, the city will be home to a cluster of new technology companies. It will support the entrepreneurial climate that creates talented workers and adaptable businesses. As an increasingly "virtual city," Rome will streamline its permitting and economic development framework to become the "community of choice" for residents and businesses locating in upstate New York.

### **Community Goals**

The city of Rome's comprehensive plan is focused on enhancing the city's tax base by encouraging new investment in infrastructure, commercial and residential properties. This action plan outlines a set of specific goals and projects that will assist in accomplishing the tax base enhancement.

- **Goal One - Stable Tax Base:** The city of Rome will enjoy a stable tax base with expanded contributions from commercial, employment and industrial sectors.
- **Goal Two - Business Friendly Community:** The city of Rome will be known as the most business-friendly city in New York State by implementing a technology-oriented economic development strategy.
- **Goal Three - Modern Workforce:** The city of Rome will pursue a forward-looking workforce development strategy focused on expanding the percentage of



residents employed in growing occupations such as technology workers, education, healthcare and professional services.

- **Goal Four - Housing of Choice:** The city of Rome will enjoy and offer unparalleled housing choice and quality to residents of all ages and backgrounds.
- **Goal Five - 21st Century Infrastructure:** The city of Rome will maintain and expand a 21<sup>st</sup> century municipal infrastructure that will act as an incentive for housing and economic development goals.
- **Goal Six - Healthy Community & Environment:** The city of Rome will become a model “healthy community” providing quality recreation, health care and arts and cultural organizations for a community of life-long learners. It will rehabilitate, protect and utilize scenic and natural features to create a pristine physical environment.
- **Goal Seven - Rich Urban Amenities:** The city of Rome will be distinguished by amenity development, beautification and reinvestment that will drive and sustain rising property values.

### **Action Plan**

The action plan component of the Comprehensive Plan is intended to provide city leaders and other stakeholders, both current and future, with guidance regarding the kind of place residents would like Rome to become, a set of goals for achieving that future vision, and a set of catalyst projects and implementation strategies that will facilitate the accomplishment of each goal. The stakeholders and partners to be involved and a list of funding sources are provided for each action plan element.

The action plan focuses and condenses the inventory of initiatives that the city will pursue. This element builds on the vision and goals that are described in the previous section. The Action Plan will guide decision-making by concisely focusing resources on shared goals, objectives, and implementation strategies. Further, the plan will clarify roles, responsibilities and commitments of key stakeholders and developers.

The action plan begins with a set of three catalyst projects that, on their own, have the power to transform the city. They include a waterfront recreation campus along the Erie Canal, improvements to the central business district and development of a set of “main street” corridors. The catalyst projects are supported by an array of projects in each of the seven identified goal areas: tax base enhancement, economic development, workforce development, housing choice, infrastructure improvements, health and environmental quality and urban amenities.



### **Catalyst Project: Rome Family Recreation Campus**

#### **Introduction**

Americans are living longer, working longer hours, and demanding more quality and opportunities in their recreation and leisure experiences. Comprehensive recreation campuses with unique programming innovations, indoor facilities, technology integration, and collaborative financing are one way that communities are evolving their recreation programs and facilities. Senior citizens, along with young professionals, are driving the demand for high-quality design and programming to enhance their active lifestyles. Parents of youth athletes are increasingly involved in year-round sporting endeavors, many of which involve travel in the region, state or even across the nation. Recreational campuses have evolved as leisure, recreational, cultural and family centers, and increasingly serve as town centers as well as recreational facilities. In lieu of providing many smaller facilities throughout the community, the trend has been to provide a major full-service facility that provides for more economical construction and operational costs than scattered facilities and also provides greater positive economic impact.

The Rome Family Recreation Campus is a catalyst project that addresses a critical issue for the city and has the potential to make a major impact on the community, its waterfront and the youth sports community. It was the subject of many discussions including a facilitated session at the community design workshop conducted as part of the Comprehensive Plan process. The goal of the planned recreation campus and combined hockey/indoor soccer center is to position Rome to become a destination for youth sports in the region – providing great practice facilities and adequate space for tournament play in both soccer and hockey.

In addition to youth athletes, the recreation campus will target working women and young adults who are being recruited to the city as part of its technology-oriented economic development strategy as users. Communities that meet the growing demands of these advocates of healthy lifestyles and position themselves to compete in the face of seemingly endless choices about how to spend limited leisure time find an easier time attracting and retaining residents, stimulating property values and growing companies with health-conscious employees. In Rome's future, recreation is a critical economic development amenity.

#### **Replacement of Kennedy Arena**

The need to replace the aging Kennedy Arena drove the city's early consideration of a new hockey facility. The Kennedy arena facility is located in a residential neighborhood just northwest of the central business district. It provides a single sheet of ice, basic locker room facilities and related amenities. Limited parking at the facility forces players, their families and spectators to park in the adjacent residential neighborhood, creating conflicts for neighborhood residents. The physical condition of the rink has deteriorated and would necessitate significant spending to remain in operation. The size limitations of the current facility make it impossible for Rome to accommodate the increasing demand for hockey games, figure skating and free skating. In addition, the community has been unable to host large tournaments and consequently has missed out on the significant economic spin-off such events generate.

## **Site Selection Process**

When the decision was made to replace Kennedy Arena, the city considered a number of potential locations for an expanded hockey center. In the end, significant consideration was given to two sites: the site of the former Living Bridge in downtown Rome and a waterfront location on the Erie Canal, possibly at the confluence of the Mohawk River.

The first site, the former Living Bridge, is a prominent location, in the heart of the government center with structured parking available nearby. Its location along Erie Boulevard, near one of the city's main gateways, would provide great visibility for the facility. But the site is constrained with regard to size and, while it would accommodate two sheets of ice, it would be limited in the number of related amenities that could be provided (soccer facilities, multiple locker rooms, community space, sports shop, etc.) In addition, members of the community expressed concern that accessibility and parking at the facility were not adequate, feeling that although the parking structures were available they were not close enough to be considered a real amenity.

After initial evaluation, the Comprehensive Plan consultant team and many members of the community felt that the downtown site was so prominent and important that it should be retained for a higher tax-generating use such as a hotel, theater, conference facility, related tourism infrastructure amenity or cultural asset that would build on the nearby location of Fort Stanwix and the Capitol Theater.

Participants at the November 2002 workshop emphasized the need for a large site for the campus. Many were concerned that the traffic and parking impacts of other recreation facilities in the city were negatively impacting neighborhood quality of life. Similar concerns were also identified by the city in its 2001-2015 Parks Master Plan. In evaluating sites for the hockey facility, the residents, city staff and consultants agreed that it would be better to locate the facility at a larger site that could accommodate adequate parking and potentially enable the relocation of some incompatible uses from neighborhood parks into a single recreation campus.

Another theme that emerged in planning for the recreation campus was the need to maximize the city's waterfront as a recreation amenity and visitor attraction. The city's waterfront currently lacks all but the most basic boating facilities. Large stretches of the waterfront are inaccessible, and there is no easy way to launch a small craft or otherwise gain access to the Erie Canal or Mohawk River. The city's plans to develop the East Rome Business Park also needed to be considered in developing a waterfront vision. As the analysis was completed, it became apparent to the planners and citizens that developing a state-of-the-art recreation campus along the waterfront would have the most significant positive impact.

The business park is Rome's largest brownfield development effort. It focuses on the cleanup and redevelopment of the nearly 200 acre site which is located along the highly visible East Dominick Street commercial corridor. The park is considered a gateway into the city. It is part of the Empire Zone and adjacent to the Erie Canal. The redevelopment project will result in removal of collapsed structures, stabilization of historically significant structures and development of shovel-ready sites for new construction. The project will return the site to productive use and will also create



more open space near the Canal, creating a positive impact on the environment and adjacent land values.

### **Advantages of a Waterfront Location**

A waterfront location offers enough land and geographic diversity to design a mixed-use campus that will serve as an amenity for youth sports activities that attracts families, citizens of all ages and abilities, and workers from the nearby business park and commercial locations.

- Development of the campus will enhance the efforts underway by the East Rome Family Merchants Association to implement a strategic plan for the revitalization of East Dominick Street. Increasing activity along the waterfront will expand the base of customers for East Dominick Street's merchants, restaurants and services, drawing residents, workers and visitors to the area on a daily basis and enabling the commercial district to capture the economic spin-off from planned tournament play.
- The proposal complements the merchants' plan by linking the commercial "main street" to waterfront and recreation amenities. It creates a series of linked greenspaces that will connect the neighborhood to the waterfront and its promenades and trails. Trees and landscaping that are compatible with the local environment will create buffers and enhance the pedestrian and visual experience.
- The campus will create a strong anchor for new waterfront development and provide locations for water-related and dependent uses such as a community boat house, crew facilities, small craft boat launch, enhanced boater amenities, a waterfront restaurant, and visitor amenities including restrooms and a concession area. In addition, the campus will be an important amenity to support the East Rome Business Park, providing immediate access to programmed and unprogrammed recreation for the workers who will be employed at the business park. Amenities that are of particular interest to workers include a health club, walking and running trails, exercise circuit, basketball courts and fields for a variety of indoor and outdoor recreation.

The scope and size of the anchor project for the waterfront campus, the Rome Family Recreation Center, is also important. This hockey/indoor soccer facility (described in detail below) will enable the community to host regional tournaments and garner the considerable economic spin-off that such events generate. In addition, the focus on youth athletics builds on existing activities directed toward young people including Drums Along the Mohawk, a variety of sports clinics, track and field competitions, a fishing derby, an Easter egg roll, and annual Arbor and Earth Day celebrations.

### **Description of the Planned Campus**

- The proposed recreation campus would occupy all of the land south of East Dominick Street along the Erie Canal and The Mohawk River. The site is bounded on the east by Mill Street. The plan calls for a carefully planned and designed mixed use area that can meet the needs of all community residents, especially youth athletes, workers and visitors to the community. To the northwest of the

site, the new development area that would be created by the realignment of the 46/69/46 intersection will be planned to provide a hotel, parking and bus staging area for Fort Stanwix. New town home development is planned on the western shore of the Mohawk River, overlooking the recreation campus.

- The proposed Rome Family Recreation Campus will be a multi-purpose, flexible-use facility that can provide a full range of services including programmed and unprogrammed recreation uses, classes, personal training, individual and group activities and passive and active recreation. The mix and density of uses is essential if the campus is to meet the broadest array of citizen needs.
- The campus is anchored by a new hockey/soccer center that includes two sheets of ice, two indoor soccer fields and community event and meeting space. Other elements reflected on the plan drawing include two full-size outdoor soccer fields, a picnic pavilion, basketball courts, passive open space, a playground, a tot lot, multi-use trail with fitness stations, a riverside amphitheater with clock tower, a themed restaurant and a potential location for a health club.
- The plan provides for an innovative system of parking that enables specially designed greenspace to serve as overflow parking for soccer or hockey tournaments. All parking is located on the north and east boundaries of the campus with no vehicle circulation beyond the parking area. This approach significantly reduces conflicts between pedestrians and traffic.
- The waterfront campus does not address the city's need for baseball and softball fields. The city will develop these facilities at another site. It is actively seeking a location that will meet youth and adult play needs and alleviate the neighborhood conflicts caused by the current playing fields.

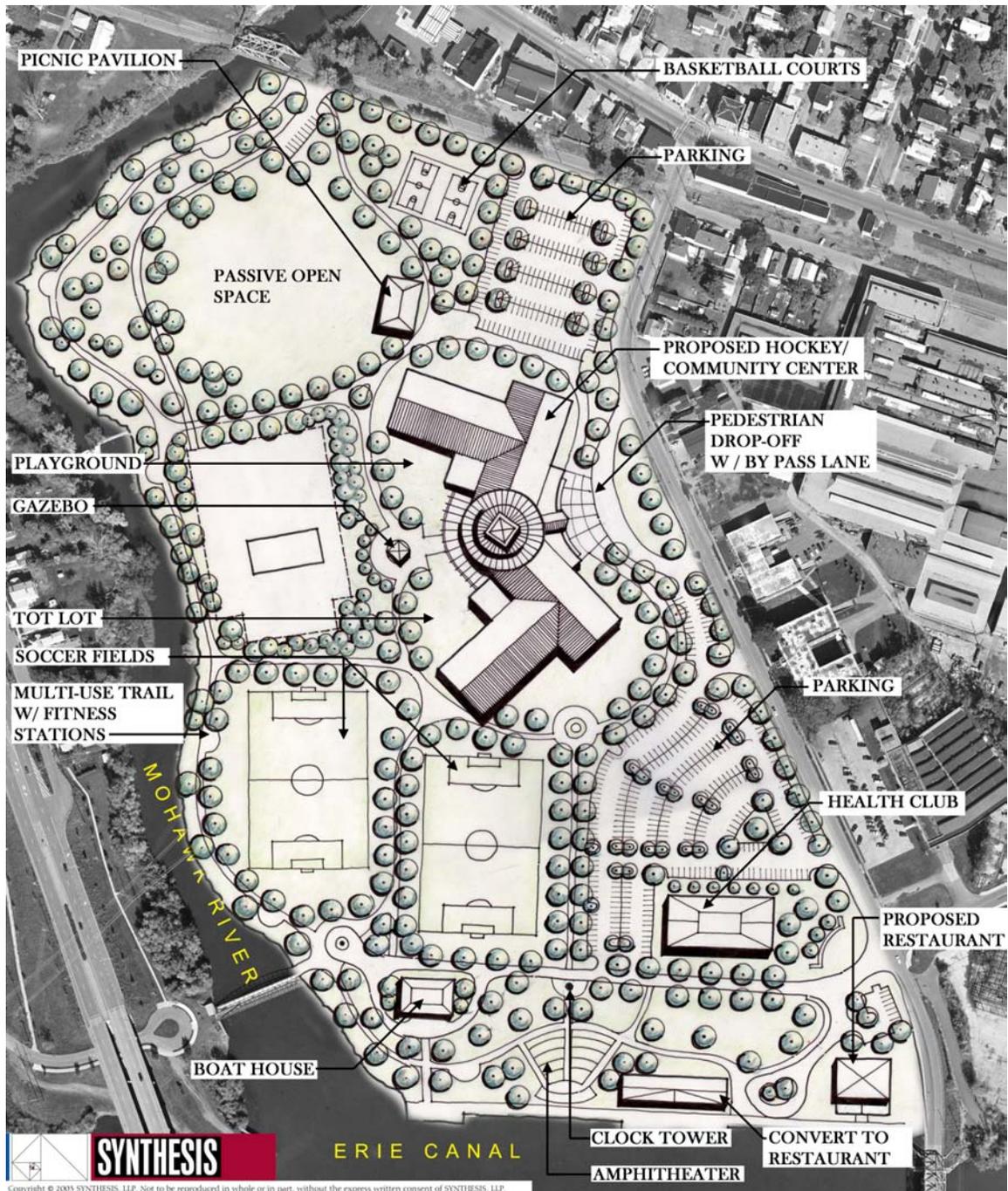
Each element of the waterfront recreation campus is described in detail below:

### **Recreation Center**

The major building complex in the recreation campus is the new hockey/soccer center (each element described below). In addition to the rinks and fields, it will include program rooms, an arcade, a climbing facility, snack bar/café, and sports shop. Some areas of the recreation center are designed for specific activities such as locker rooms, while other areas are being designed for multiple purposes. This accommodates the changing recreational and leisure requirements of the community from year to year.

The flexibility inherent in the design also enables the campus to change over time as age profiles shift, new demographic trends emerge or new recreation interests are identified for youth or adults. Combining the various elements in one location creates a synergistic effect in which recreational opportunities exist for entire families and individuals of all ages. For example, the families and siblings of youth soccer players involved in tournament play can take advantage of tot lot and playground areas, pro shop, café and restaurant facilities not commonly available at tournament sites.

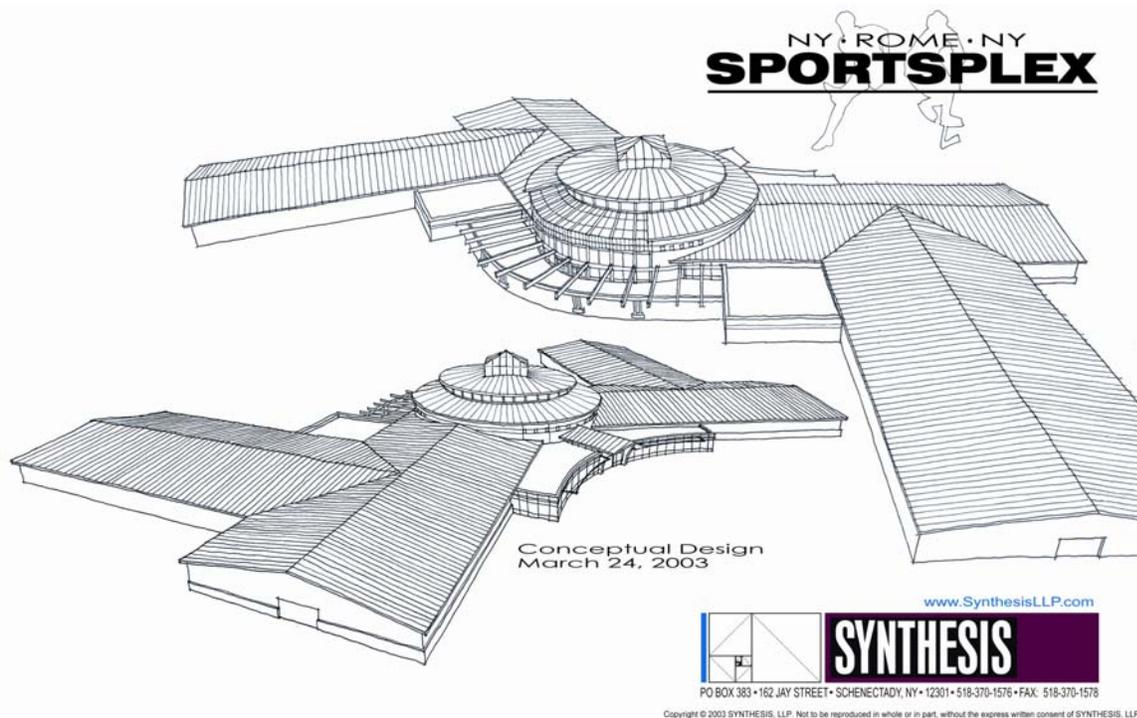




Plan view of proposed Rome Family Recreation Campus

The facility will also bring together workers, residents, parents, youth athletes and their families, forging bonds across generations around the common interest in an active and healthy lifestyle. It will create a youth sports destination that established local organizations can market and program to enhance the level of play and lessen the travel required by the parents of Rome's youth athletes. Emphasizing a healthy lifestyle for all residents also reinforces the Mayor's Youth Fitness Challenge and takes advantage of the best practices of healthy communities across the nation.

It is anticipated that the recreation campus will be built in multiple phases and later elements will be constructed based upon initial response to identified demand. The recreation center, including the indoor hockey and soccer facilities will be the first project constructed. Potential future elements include health, fitness, and wellness spaces, a cafe, senior center, preschool, dance and aerobics facility, auxiliary gym, kayak rental kiosk, and multi-use spaces. The goal is to create a state of the art facility that will be used daily by the general public, constantly by youth athletes and frequently for tournament play in both soccer and hockey. In addition, the facility will increase the space and ability for large scale community meetings and events.



## **The Hockey Center**

While the new facility will replace the well-used Kennedy Arena, it will carry forward some of the best elements of the Arena, specifically seating on both sides of the rink and the intimate atmosphere of the facility. The new hockey center will provide two sheets of ice (90' x 200' ice surfaces), one of which could be used for indoor lacrosse, inline hockey or other activities out of hockey season. Each sheet of ice will have four locker rooms to increase flexibility for tournament play. This facility will also offer practice time, skating classes, and free skating. At this time it is assumed that



one sheet of ice will seat 1,300 people, while the second sheet would accommodate approximately 600 people.

### ***The Indoor Soccer Center***

The indoor soccer facility will provide two indoor full-size soccer fields (in addition to two full-size outdoor fields) that will position Rome to effectively host regional competition through high school. The indoor facility will have access to locker rooms and all of the amenities described for the hockey center above. The fields will have grass-like playing surfaces with artificial blades of grass filled with a rubber sand mixture to simulate an outdoor style of play. Each field will be regulation size, with touch lines and adequate clearance to accommodate corner kicks, and throw-ins without dasher boards. The facility will accommodate skill training clinics, spring and fall league play, and indoor winter session play, as well as year-round and tournament activity.

### ***Park and Paved Trail with Fitness Stations***

Surrounding the perimeter of the campus and at other interior locations the city will design and construct a hard-surface trail to accommodate walkers, joggers, runners and in-line skaters.

The trail design will create a positive walking experience at all times of the day. Planned improvements will make sidewalks, the riverfront trail, crosswalks, bridges, stairs and ramps continuous, safe and pleasant. Many of the streets in the campus area will be enhanced by tree planting and lighting, sidewalk widening, redesigning cross-walks and intersections and transit stops.

The new waterfront park surrounding the recreation campus will add to and complement the city-wide park network, placing a specific emphasis on preservation of natural landscapes, wildlife, cultural landscapes and historic structures. Users of the new greenspace facilities will include local workers, visitors, families, children, youth, seniors and the disabled. The park and recreation amenities will be closely integrated with improved pedestrian safety and access to multiple modes of transportation.

In finalizing plans for the waterfront trail and other trails through the recreation campus, the city will plan for and construct the NYS Canalway Trail Segment through Rome. This trail section fills the existing gap which starts south of the Canal at Stanwix to the east and continues to Erie Canal Village to the west. Two potential routes are being considered. The first goes along the original portage route of the Great Carry, through the city to Wood Creek and then to Erie Canal Village along Erie Boulevard. The second route follows the north side of the Rome Boat Launch, cuts across the Fort Bull Wetlands, an environmentally sensitive area, and continues to Erie Canal Village along the canal tow path.

### ***A Multi-focused Play Area***

An activity area will be constructed between the Hockey/Soccer Center and the outdoor soccer fields. The play area will include play equipment to occupy younger children when older siblings are involved in organized sports and at other times. The facilities in this area will also include a picnic pavilion and an outdoor concession.

## ***Waterfront Amenities and Riverfront Promenade***

The recreation campus is consistent with the city's goals to develop the waterfront by stimulating a more diverse mix of uses, increasing public access, providing harbor park management and visitor amenities, making connections to other areas of the city and implementing a habitat restoration program. In 1998 the city began construction of Bellamy Harbor Park, its first canal-related project. The park was conceived as an access point to the city for boaters and travelers on the Canal, a city park giving residents and land travelers access to the canal, and a park to serve adjacent low and moderate income neighborhood. Planned future services for boaters include wayfinding signage, visitor center, public access to the waterway and water-related programming for residents and visitors.

Rome is also interested in developing a non-motorized water sports park including a rowing sports facility as part of the recreation campus. In partnership with the Erie Canal Rowing Club, the city is planning to develop a rowing sports facility along the Erie Canal/Mohawk River junction. The existing Canal Corporation building is proposed to be redeveloped as a themed riverfront restaurant.

## ***Passive Recreation Space***

The campus also sets aside a significant amount of acreage for passive recreation and open space including land along the Mohawk River where families can gather to play, exercise the family dog or throw a frisbee. Basketball courts are proposed to the east of this open space.

## **Community Benefits**

The economic impact of youth sports activities will be considerable. The Rome Family Recreation Center will host youth hockey tournaments, figure skating competitions, and ice shows as well as bring tourist dollars to local businesses and sales and hotel tax revenues to the city. Tournaments can involve as many as 500 players. It is not uncommon for a tournament to bring over 1,500 visitors including teams, players, coaches, parents, grandparents and siblings. It is typical that each tournament player is accompanied by three family members and friends. Those spending the night will each spend about \$120 on lodging, food, gasoline and retail purchases every day they are in Rome.

It is estimated that 55,000 people will visit the recreation campus each year. These numbers will build as the facility develops and as tournaments and events grow in number and popularity. The facility will be used by local sporting associations for their invitational tournaments and league games. Of the estimated 55,000 visitors, many will travel from out of town to attend tournaments, training camps, community events, or come to watch family and friends participate.

Other direct economic benefits to the community include the economic impact of development and construction that will be felt by local businesses whose services are contracted. In addition, the city will see positive effects of increased spending by local residents and workers coming to the waterfront and to East Dominick Street to use the facility daily. The recreation campus will also take in revenue annually in entry fees, concession sales and souvenir sales. The center will also provide employment for a number of full and part-time workers.



This facility not only boosts the local Rome economy, but it adds to the desirability of the community. Quality and quantity of recreational facilities are part of the criteria used by many businesses and individuals when deciding where to locate. By providing quality sports facilities, the city also supports fair play, high self-esteem, good citizenship, self-discipline, respect, and cooperative behavior. These are values that are important to a healthy and safe community, one with lower crime rates, and a heightened sense of community pride.

Sports tournaments also provide Rome with the opportunity to showcase the area's attractions and amenities to visitors. This approach is consistent with the city's overall strategy to seek innovative and creative ways to bring visitors into the community.

### **Financing the Waterfront Recreation Campus**

It is anticipated that the campus will be built with a combination of tax dollars (tax rate increases, revenue, general obligation, or alternate revenue source bonds) and user fees. Revenue streams from facility rentals, multiple programs, and tournament play will also contribute to a financially stable future for the new Rome Family Recreation Campus. In addition the city will pursue grants, donations, and fundraising.

It is also possible that partners could be identified who could help finance the facility and the city should facilitate discussions in this regard with adjacent municipalities, Hamilton College, the school district, hospital, and local corporations. In many communities, corporations are providing revenue sources in exchange for advertisements, and hospitals are paying the equivalent of rental fees for operating wellness centers within the recreation center. These "win-win" focused efforts allow centers to fund more options that customers deserve and want now.

A new trend gaining favor, which the city should evaluate, is the short-term public/private investor agreement, such as when a private investor/owner builds to suit for a public entity/operator who operates the facility for a set period of time for a fixed fee back to the investors. The operator keeps the net proceeds or losses. The public entity may have the option to buy the facility from the private investor at a set date.

### **Next Steps**

Key tasks in advancing the development of the recreation campus include the following:

- Refine preliminary land use schematic and program element plan and present to existing youth sports organizations in a design workshop to refine the concept.
- Bring the refined concept to a community workshop for review and discussion. This should include publication of the concept plan in the newspaper and a work session with the Common Council to keep them informed about the plan's development.
- Pursue funding through the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation and/or the New York State Department of State Division of Coastal Resources for Environmental Protection Fund grants to complete final

design and construction documents for the recreation facility and finalize conceptual plans for the rest of the campus

- Assess the reuse potential of the city yard facilities for soccer or other recreation element and determine relocation strategy for the city yard uses.
- Develop capital budget requirements and fundraising plan.



### ***Catalyst Project: Central Business District Improvements***

This catalyst project seeks to define and create a strong central business district by strengthening its role as a government and cultural center through a range of physical improvements. Today Rome's central business district is characterized by poor visibility, confusing traffic patterns, limited pedestrian access, considerable underutilized space and no strong visual "anchor." Romans also need more opportunities to come to, and stay in, the central business district. Although the downtown core has many opportunities, it is challenged by commercial competition from suburban malls, existing land use policies, economics and physical design. As a special attraction, Fort Stanwix is an important draw but it does not attract residents on a daily basis. There is no critical mass of interrelated uses that identify the downtown core as a regular destination for residents or visitors.

Rome's downtown has a checkered history thanks to urban renewal, but throughout the planning process residents argued that this asset needs to become a strong government, senior housing, cultural, and civic place in the community. At the same time, residents recognized that the city's primary commercial corridors along James Street, Erie Boulevard, Black River Boulevard, and Dominick Street will continue to function as the retail and service-oriented core for the city.

Through this catalyst project, Rome's goal is to create a central business district that boasts a strong business environment, attractive gateways, and effective connections to the Erie, James, Black River and Dominick corridors. It does not plan to reposition the CBD as a traditional retail center; rather its approach is to make the area an effective government center, cultural cluster and senior housing hub. This will be accomplished by implementing physical enhancements to create a more attractive business location, including development of an updated parking strategy.

To complement the CBD revitalization, the city will organize main street programs in each of the three traditional retail corridors extending from the CBD and form a downtown alliance with representation from each corridor. This activity will include development of an urban design plan and enhanced façade and streetscape improvement program. These elements are described in the Main Street Corridor Catalyst Project description.

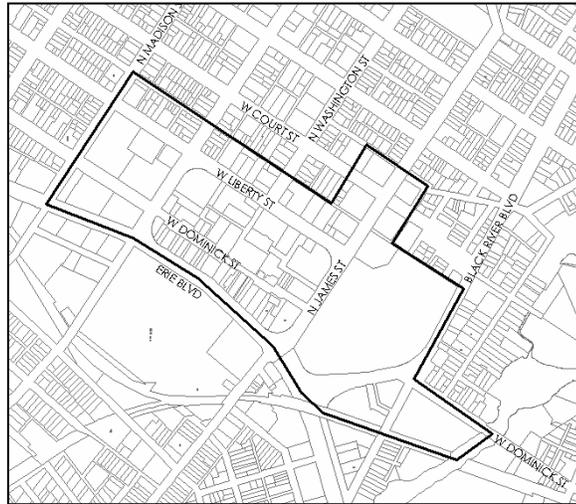
#### **Introduction**

Downtown development has been identified by the city as a critical aspect of overall revitalization and an avenue for creating jobs and private sector investment. Given the level of disconnection and deterioration that has occurred in Rome's CBD since urban renewal, the approach to revitalization must be multi-faceted, encompassing tourism, government operations, housing and gateway redevelopment.

In defining the downtown revitalization strategy the Comprehensive Plan focuses on the central business district shown on the map below.

The distinctive elements in the central business district include the following:

- The “superblock” including City Hall, Liberty Plaza, the Neighborhood Center, the Capitol Theater and buildings adjacent to it, the parking structures, and the Rome Savings Bank
- Erie Boulevard
- Fort Stanwix
- The intersection of Routes 46,49 and 69 (known as Spaghetti Junction) and the land around it
- Other government or non-profit facilities including the Oneida County Court House, the former city hall, and a former post office that now houses the historical society



Central Business District Boundaries

## **Background**

In the early 1970's much of Rome's original downtown business district was demolished under urban renewal plans aimed at modernizing. Old landmarks were razed and new parking garages, modern commercial buildings, offices and senior housing towers were built in their place, including a new City Hall. At the same time, Fort Stanwix National Monument was developed in the center of the city. The Fort's massive scale and central location changed the existing urban fabric of the once compact downtown by creating three distinct downtown corridors: James Street, West Dominick Street and East Dominick Street. Unfortunately, the underlying concept of an expanded downtown with a major tourism attraction at its core as an economic development tool proved to be flawed. As Americans shifted their shopping patterns to suburban malls, what developed in the CBD instead, were three disrupted and disconnected corridors, which soon lost their vitality and momentum to outlying shopping districts and the suburbs.

Downtown's troubles started with urban renewal and nationwide changes in retail activity, deepened when the region's industrial base began a steep decline, and hit bottom when Griffiss Air Base closed in 1995. Today, vacant storefronts and underutilized commercial space are still highly visible reminders of the problems each corridor has in attracting and keeping businesses that appeal to residents, tourists, workers and investors. However, Fort Stanwix National Monument's importance as a regional tourist destination, part of a growing statewide tourism campaign, has reinforced the necessity of reestablishing the link between tourism and downtown renewal to build diversification in the local economy and to strengthen the city's character.

## **Consultation with the National Trust for Historic Preservation Main Street Program**

In the summer of 2002 the city of Rome participated in a Main Street Assessment by staff and consultants from the National Trust for Historic Preservation's Main Street Program. The assessment outlined many issues and provided a wide range of



recommendations, some of which are reflected in this action plan. In framing this approach to downtown development, Rome will learn from its past and follow the advice provided as part of the 2002 assessment that concluded that “individual development projects, even if well conceived, cannot revitalize downtown if they are scattershot and lack connection in their planning. It takes sustained and coordinated effort.” Embracing the National Trust for Historic Preservation’s recommendations, the city’s downtown strategy focuses on the National Main Street *Four Point Approach*<sup>TM</sup>:

- **Design:** Make the place physically attractive to residents, shoppers and investors by improving buildings, streetscapes and merchandising, stressing the importance of design quality
- **Promotion:** Market the place, polishing its image and creating reasons and events for people to come regularly throughout the year and attracting investors, developers and new businesses
- **Economic Restructuring:** Retain and expand existing businesses to provide a balanced commercial mix and convert vacant or underutilized space into productive property to attract businesses the market can support
- **Organization:** Form partnerships to develop the human and financial resources for a sustained revitalization effort

In its assessment, the National Trust’s Main Street consultants identified three corridors or districts as making up “downtown.” These were: East Dominick Street, North and South James Streets and West Dominick/Liberty Streets. The Comprehensive Plan addresses the National Trust’s recommendations and other relevant “main street” issues in this catalyst project and under the Main Street Corridor Catalyst Project.

### **Downtown Revitalization Activities**

The city has identified a range of core activities that are critical to downtown revitalization as a result of this planning and consultation. They are:

#### **Coordination with the Overall Land Use Plan**

The central business district plan will be closely coordinated with other actions, specifically the main street corridor development plan and recreation campus design and construction. The city will integrate existing and future neighborhood plans with the city’s development policies as reflected in the new zoning ordinance. The city will guide redevelopment with appropriate land use policies and design guidelines that will influence the character and identity of the CBD without placing undue financial burden on property owners and developers.

#### **Facilitate Development of the Marinus Willett Collections Management and Education Center**

This facility, to be operated by the National Park Service, will open in 2004-2005 as the western gateway of the Mohawk Valley Heritage Corridor. The center will welcome visitors and provide exhibits; a theater and audiovisual presentations; multi-purpose rooms for meetings and educational programs; a bookstore and climate controlled museum collection storage area for the 400,000 artifacts held by

Fort Stanwix and the National Park Service. The center will meet the varied needs of the Fort's 75,000 visitors each year.

The successful development of the Willett Center by the National Park Service will provide a critical anchor for cultural and historic resources. The city will encourage development of new visual anchors at this important intersection. Recognizing the importance of the location, Rome Savings Bank recently purchased the site across South James Street for potential expansion of its operations.

The city will support the Willett Center investment with improved pedestrian connections from Fort Stanwix and the Willett Center to the rest of the central business district. The pedestrian facilities will include improved crosswalks across North James Street, Erie Boulevard and Black River Boulevard in several locations to provide safer pedestrian access to East Dominick Street and the proposed waterfront recreation campus.

Reconstruction of the 46/49/69 intersection as described in detail below will provide a new development site that could be used to provide facilities and services to enhance both the city's tax base and Fort Stanwix as a tourism destination. Proposals for the site include a hotel and conference center, retail shops and staging areas for tour and school buses bringing visitors to the Fort. Street trees, landscaping and improved pedestrian crossings will create a convenient, attractive connection to Fort Stanwix and the Willett Center.

### **Park Improvements**

The city will make repairs, landscaping and lighting improvements to Gansevoort and Bellamy Parks. Gansevoort and Bellamy Parks form the northern gateway to Rome's central business district. The three-quarter acre parks form a civic plaza surrounded by major public buildings including the Oneida County Courthouse, a former post office that is now the Rome Historical Society, Saint Peter's Roman Catholic Church, the former city hall, the First Presbyterian Church and the Rome Justice Building. The parks convey the city's 19<sup>th</sup> century history and development to visitors.

### **Transportation Improvements**

#### **▪ Central Business District Gateway**

Transportation and land use are intrinsically linked. Because of this, the CBD strategy needs to ensure that planned improvements enhance the commercial area rather than enable it to become further dominated by infrastructure and automobiles. The planned improvements for an at-grade intersection at "spaghetti junction" will help in this effort and at the same time create a new development site adjacent to Fort Stanwix and the East Dominick Street commercial cluster. Streetscape programs, including reconstruction of a portion of Erie Boulevard will help to make existing streets easier to travel by all modes of transportation.

The downtown gateway improvements are anchored by the reconstruction of the intersection of highways 46/49/69. The plan proposes that the current system of over and underpasses be reconstructed as an at-grade intersection. Initial discussions with NYS Department of Transportation officials indicate that this facility is nearing the end of its useful life. By 2005, the state plans to begin design work to repair or

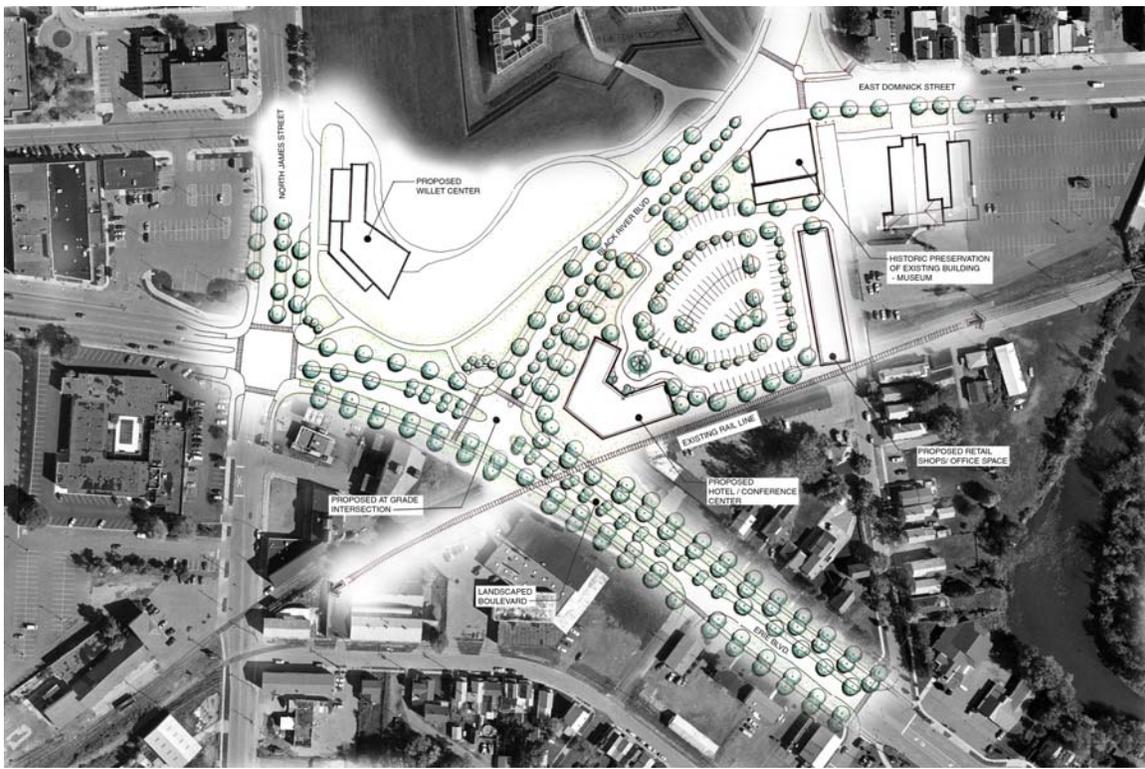


reconstruct the intersection. The current and projected traffic volumes for the facility do not require the capacity provided by a grade separated intersection. Given this, and the expense associated with building and maintaining the grade separated facility, NYSDOT has indicated that it would consider reconstructing the facility at grade.

Reconstruction of the intersection would provide an attractive gateway to Rome's central business district, with improved visibility for Fort Stanwix, the Willett Center and municipal structures. It would provide easier access to James Street and East Dominick Street, enhancing their value as retail and business locations. Street trees, a low maintenance planted median and safer pedestrian crossings will make a more accessible and attractive central business district.

The reconstruction provides the opportunity to create a new central business district development site that would further enhance this gateway, providing facilities and services that would enhance the central business district as a cultural and tourism destination, enhance the connection of Fort Stanwix and the central business district to East Dominick Street and enhance the city's tax base with new private sector development.

As shown on the drawing below, the site could include a hotel and conference center that would support the central business district and tournament play at the proposed recreation campus. Office and/or retail uses would complement both the CBD and development along East Dominick Street.

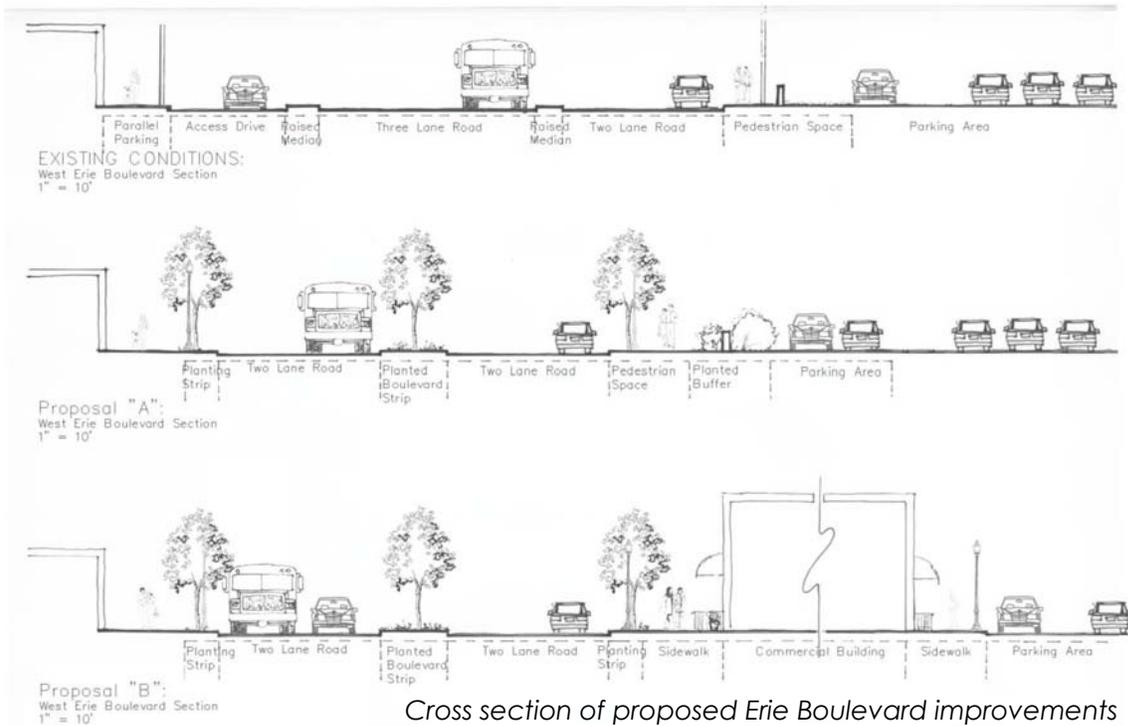


*Plan view of proposed CBD gateway project*

▪ **West Erie Boulevard Improvements**

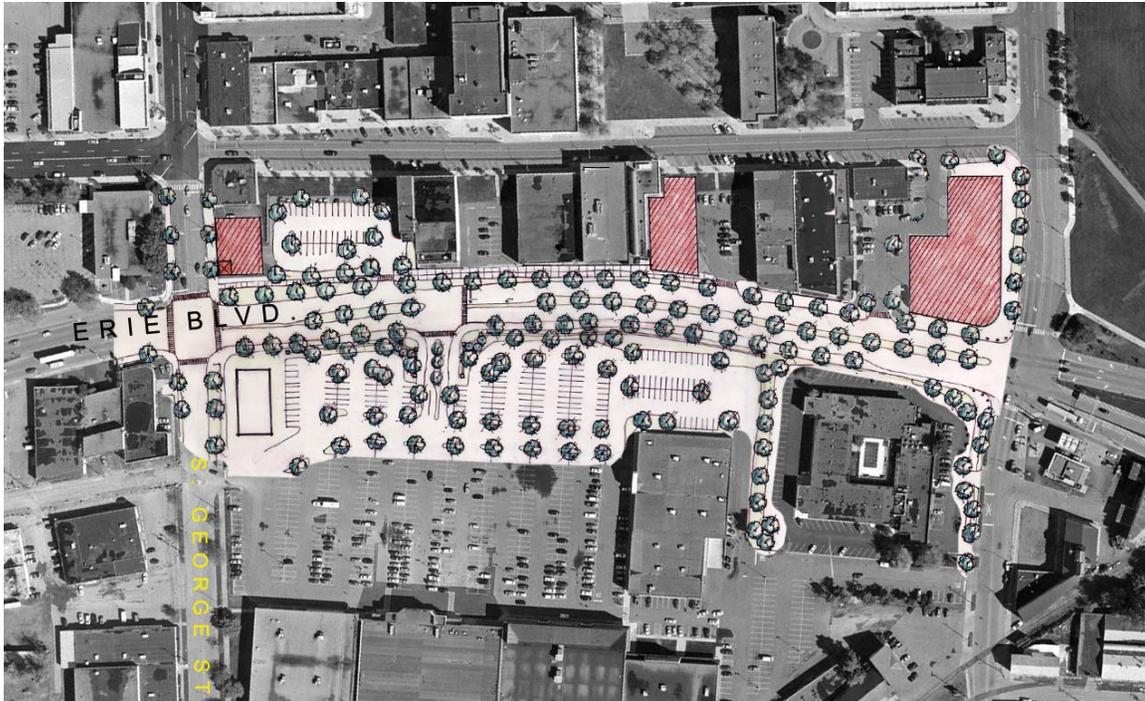
The gateway improvements described above will extend down West Erie Boulevard through the CBD. Specific street improvements will include elimination of the access lane on the north side of the street to provide adequate width for sidewalks on both sides of the street, additional parking on and off street, and a median planted with low-maintenance trees and vegetation. These improvements will extend the aesthetic appeal of the gateway into the central business district, simplify traffic patterns and improve vehicular and pedestrian access to the buildings on the north side of West Erie.

Landscaping improvements and new pedestrian facilities will tie the CBD to the Freedom Plaza retail center on the south side of West Erie. Infill development including the site at the corner of North James and West Erie now owned by Rome Savings Bank, the site of the former Living Bridge and the corner of South George and West Erie will provide opportunities for tax base development and create a more coherent, attractive streetscape. The infill development will be complemented by the creation of a second set of "front facades" on the rear of Dominick Street buildings that back onto West Erie. The new facades will provide a primary entrance for these buildings on Erie Boulevard, appealing to a more retail- and service-oriented market than this segment of Dominick Street.



*Cross section of proposed Erie Boulevard improvements*





*Plan view of proposed Erie Boulevard improvements*

### **Refine Parking Management to Enhance Downtown as a Business Location**

As a part of the Urban Renewal Plan, the city of Rome provides most of the required parking spaces in the central business district. By providing and managing the downtown parking supply, the city can control its impact on urban form, minimizing land use impacts with parking structures and offer a development incentive to potential downtown developers, who are relieved of the financial burdens of constructing and maintaining parking for their buildings. Rome's CBD has an adequate parking supply to meet current demand and capacity to meet the needs of up to 120,000 gross square feet of future development.

In order to provide maximum benefit as a development incentive, the city should consider some changes in its parking management strategy. Two critical needs were identified in the planning process:

- Parking to support "main street" retail and service environments on James and Dominick Streets
- Better integration of the parking garages into the short and medium term parking supply

Metered parking is a useful tool in well-established retail districts, but it can hinder emerging markets. At least as an interim measure, parking meters should be removed from all retail streets outside of the downtown superblock. Metered parking should be replaced with two-hour parking that is strictly enforced. The city should consider a small increase in meter and/or short-term garage parking fees or increased parking fines to cover the additional cost of enforcement.

The parking garages are underutilized by drivers making trips longer than two hours to the central business district. Many will park at a two-hour meter, either risking a ticket or returning to the car to "feed the meter" during the day. As a general rule,

parking structures are perceived as being more difficult to use than street or surface lot parking, which encourages people to park on the street. The city should provide better signage for the garages, indicating the location of the structures and the facilities served.

The city should also consider restructuring parking rates and fines to make it less expensive to park in a garage than on the street or a surface parking lot and to increase penalties for drivers who overstay their meter time. Currently, meter and garage rates are both based on 50 cents per hour, but garage rates max out after 5 hours with a \$4.00 fee, more than the \$2.50 that a driver would pay at a meter for the same amount of time. With a parking fine of just \$10.00 for an overtime meter, many users will risk a \$10.00 fine rather than pay a certain \$4.00 in the garage. Meter rates of \$1.00 per hour are not uncommon in downtowns of similarly-sized cities. Such an increase would serve a dual purpose of encouraging some drivers to park in the garages and increasing meter revenues to offset the decreased meter revenues and increased enforcement costs in retail areas outside of the superblock.

Finally, the garages should be open later in the evening. The current 7:30 closing time puts drivers at risk of having their cars locked in the garage overnight. Extended hours (perhaps 24-hour operation) would allow permit holders more flexibility and increase the garages' attractiveness to occasional users. In order to limit operational expenses of extended garage hours, many operators rely on a drop-off box or mail-in payment for cars left in the garage after closing. The garage attendant notes license plate numbers of cars still in the garage and marks the fee owed on an envelope that is left on the car windshield. Drivers can drop off the fee in a box when leaving the garage or mail the fee later.

### **Neighborhood Quality, Commerce and Linkages**

Another important element in the CBD strategy is strengthening the physical connections between the CBD and the neighborhoods. Getting to Rome's CBD should be easy and safe, whether one is on a bicycle, walking or driving. The car traffic along Erie Boulevard, and to a lesser degree along other primary corridors, has been identified as a constraint to pedestrian movement. The downtown area has limited trail systems that will be improved to access the adjacent neighborhoods. Today, the primary commercial corridors offer inconsistent streetscape, long stretches of underutilized properties and automobile dependent uses which frustrate pedestrian activity. The city will address these issues with the transportation and traffic calming improvements described elsewhere in this catalyst project.

### **Organizational Actions in Support of CBD and Main Street Development**

Recognizing that the long term success of the city's downtown revitalization effort depends upon community involvement and commitment, the city's Planning Department has developed an initiative called "Project Synergy," an effort through which city departments work closely with residents, organizations and agencies to address the problems and opportunities of the downtown with renewed confidence. The idea behind this initiative is to identify existing downtown centers of activity and to organize individuals who can work together to create new



opportunities for an appealing, clean and safe downtown, a visually distinctive focal point for the community.

In July 2002, as part of this initiative, the city assembled a group of economic and business professionals, downtown business owners and residents to work with the National Trust for Historic Preservation to conduct a National Main Street Center Assessment of downtown. The goal was to help identify distinct needs and opportunities in each of Rome's three downtown corridors.

To help implement the recommendations of the assessment, the city worked with representatives from the three identified commercial corridor groups to form a "Rome Main Street Alliance." The Main Street Alliance is a volunteer organization that will guide the reinvestment in the city's main street corridors. It includes residents, business and economic development professionals and organizations. Fort Stanwix National Monument, Rome Area Chamber of Commerce, SUNY Small Business Development Center, Rome Industrial Development Corporation and Rome Capitol Theater are included as active participants.

The city, in partnership with the Rome Main Street Alliance, is now poised to work with the National Main Street Center to develop an urban design plan that will provide visual depictions of cohesive and complementary design elements including façade, sign and streetscape improvements. The level of assistance, appropriate timing for and type of training that will be delivered to the corridors will correspond to their particular needs, follow the recommendations of the assessment, and the ability of the city and each corridor to raise funds for implementation.

### **Funding the CBD Improvements**

It is likely that some of the recommended improvements will require creative funding solutions that may be able to utilize federal and state funds, while other strategies may need to help business owners organize their resources and implement a shared vision. The opportunity to establish a business improvement district or support existing merchant organizing efforts will be evaluated based on the relationship to overall goals, programmatic needs and revenue potential.

It is anticipated that the central business district revitalization proposed in this catalyst project will be completed with a combination of tax dollars including tax revenue, general obligation bonding, or alternate revenue source bonds and grant programs available at the state and federal levels. At the state level it is assumed that the city will gain significant support for the proposed transportation and streetscape improvements from a variety of initiatives offered by the New York State Department of Transportation, Quality Communities Program, and Empire State Development Corporation. At the federal level the city will approach the Federal Highway Administration, Department of Transportation and Department of Housing and Urban Renewal to access appropriate programs. In addition the city has requested a legislative appropriation for the Main Street Corridor Initiative and future appropriations could be requested to facilitate downtown revitalization.

It is also possible that a neighborhood special assessment district or tax increment financing district could be formed in the future once momentum is gained and the major physical infrastructure investments have been committed. Such approaches

could be facilitated directly through city departments or in partnership with a newly formed Industrial Development Agency or urban redevelopment organization.

### **Next Steps**

Key tasks in developing of the central business district revitalization plan include:

- Refine preliminary scope of work for central business district improvements and conduct a public orientation workshop for review and discussion. This should include publication of concept plan in the newspaper and a work session with the Common Council to keep them informed about the plan's development.
- Pursue funding through the New York State Department of Transportation for design and planning of all transportation improvements and streetscaping elements. This grant will enable the city to complete draft and final design and construction documents for the planned amenities and finalize conceptual plans detailing the relationship of the central business district to the recreation campus and planned improvements along East Dominick Street and North James Street.
- Conduct a detailed market assessment for the new development site to be created as a result of road realignment and arrive at conceptual land use strategy for this new parcel. Market assessment should examine, at a minimum, the need for parking to support Fort Stanwix, a new hotel and restaurant complex and related retail that would complement development along the East Dominick Street corridor and throughout the downtown.
- Develop capital budget requirements and fundraising plan.



## **Catalyst Project: Main Street Corridors**

### **Introduction**

This catalyst project outlines standards for pedestrian-friendly improvements in the neighborhood commercial districts of the city of Rome. During the planning process the city participated in a Main Street Assessment by staff and consultants from the National Trust for Historic Preservation's Main Street Program. The assessment's key findings are briefly summarized in the Central Business District Catalyst Project. The assessment identified three corridors that could potentially serve the role of main streets in the city, which along with the CBD, could make up a new "downtown" for the city of Rome. The corridors are East Dominick Street, North and South James Street and West Dominick/Liberty Streets.

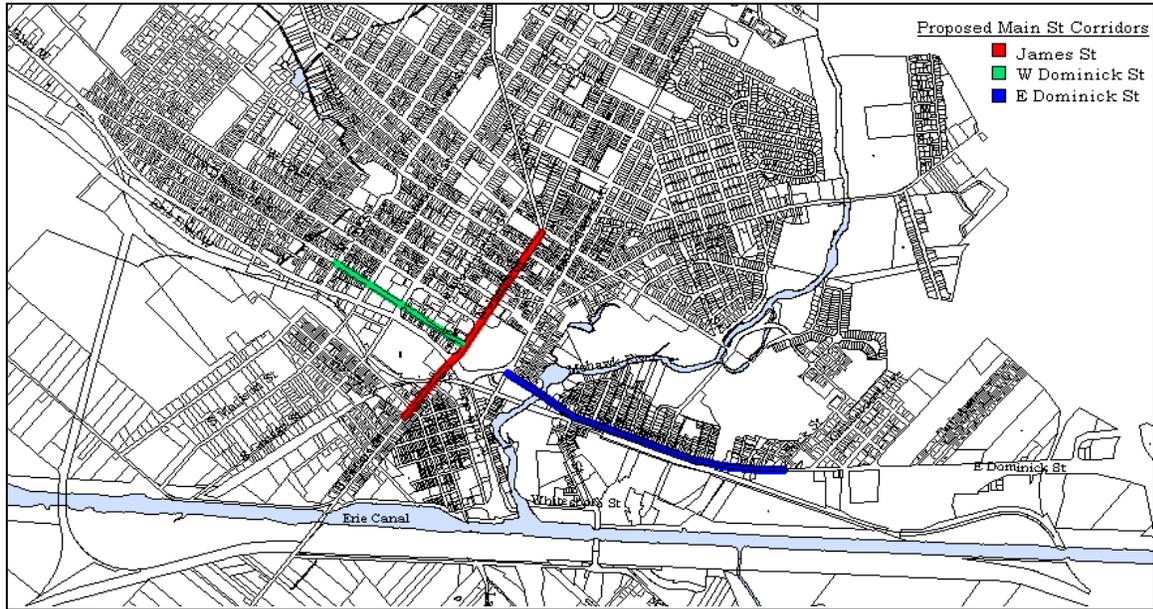
The catalyst project description below focuses on improvements needed along East Dominick Street and North James Street to transform these burgeoning retail centers into full-fledged "main street" commercial districts.

A key goal of the city's comprehensive plan and zoning ordinance is the identification of priority commercial development corridors and sites. The city will focus public investment in these areas, and develop tax policies, land use regulations and financial incentives to encourage development in these priority corridors. The main street corridors will radiate out of downtown to provide convenient access to retail, commercial and community services to residents, workers and visitors to the city.

Currently, commercial development in Rome is scattered, often not achieving the critical mass necessary for high-quality commercial environments. Many retail and commercial operations are tucked into residential neighborhoods. Some serve local neighborhood residents while others draw a broader audience and would be more appropriately located on one of the city's commercial streets. Meanwhile, vacant and underutilized sites and buildings that are appropriate for commercial redevelopment are spread throughout the city's neighborhoods, with significant negative impacts on their visual appeal.

As a part of the implementation effort, the city of Rome will apply to New York State to be a pilot project to demonstrate the National Trust for Historic Preservation's Main Street program. New York State is one of only seven states that do not participate in the National Main Street Program.

The city has identified several existing commercial corridors as focus areas for future commercial development. Some, like Erie Boulevard from downtown to the Wal-Mart Plaza and Black River Boulevard from Fort Stanwix to Wright Settlement Road, have been identified as auto-oriented commercial districts. North James from Court Street to Turin Street; South James from Erie Boulevard to Henry Street; West Dominick from Doxtator Street to North James Street; and East Dominick from Fort Stanwix to Nock Street have been identified as main street corridors. See map below. The city will initially focus its revitalization efforts along North James Street and East Dominick Street which appear to offer the greatest opportunities for early success.



The East Dominick Street corridor has been the subject of intensive study and planning by the East Rome Family Merchants Association over the past year which has resulted in the detailed implementation program summarized below. In addition, in the spring of 2003 the city of Rome prepared a request for Federal Legislative Appropriation targeting main street development projects along North James Street.

Zoning regulations currently in development will clearly delineate where commercial uses are encouraged and acceptable and provide a straightforward process for obtaining development approval. For each commercial area, the city will consider the specific types and density of commercial development it is seeking to attract and target its land management policies and programs toward making it as simple and as cost effective as possible for commercial development to locate on those sites.

The central goal of the main street corridor project is to promote a long-term, coordinated program of public and private investment in the streetscape environment that will enhance the area's role as a lively neighborhood commercial activity center. Other goals of the streetscape project include:

- Fostering a unified, distinctive, and aesthetically pleasing character that provides a sense of vitality for the targeted corridors and businesses located along them
- Promoting safe, healthy, and attractive public spaces to encourage use by residents, workers and visitors
- Coordinating street and sidewalk improvements and encouraging changes to the public right-of-way that are consistent with the streetscape strategy identified in the city's Comprehensive Plan

- Promoting complementary physical improvements to private property adjacent to the public right-of-way, including redevelopment of substandard and blighting residential uses

### **Role of the Main Street Corridors**

For many years, James and Dominick Streets have generally functioned as "main streets" for the city of Rome. Like main streets in other communities, these corridors have both a residential and commercial character, including neighborhood and community shopping areas, apartments, community facilities, and religious institutions. In their early development, commercial buildings along the corridor were constructed close to the street with entries and display windows for shops on the ground floor, reflecting the importance of pedestrian access. However, much of the newer commercial construction completed from the 1970s to the present has been freestanding buildings located behind parking lots, convenience stores, and other auto-oriented facilities. The image of the city's main streets is changing into a mish-mash of traditional main street commercial and auto-oriented, suburban strip commercial with a random assortment of retail, office and residential uses.



Through this catalyst project, the city of Rome intends to transform the corridors, beginning with North James Street and East Dominick Street, into more traditional main street environment. Preservation, revitalization, and new development will work together to create a walkable neighborhood districts in which people can live, work, play, shop and socialize. The elements that have contributed to making traditional main streets successful and that can be expected to develop along the corridors as a result of this project include:

- Mixed-use development districts (retail, office, residential, cultural)
- Street frontage at a pedestrian scale with articulated ground-floor retail and services
- Buildings oriented to the street and placed at the sidewalk edge
- Buildings constructed close together forming a continuous urban "street wall"
- Additional parking through diagonal parking on the street and additional parking to the rear of buildings
- Appropriate transitions to residential neighborhoods
- Enhanced public transportation and pedestrian amenities
- Enhanced streetscape



*Proposed North James St. improvements looking towards downtown*

## **Principles Underlying the Streetscape Plan**

The proposed approach outlines effective streetscape strategies and advances important urban design principles that will improve the corridors with regard to:

- **Aesthetics:** The target areas along North James Street and East Dominick Street are comprised of a mixture of development types including both pedestrian- and auto-oriented commercial development, vacant lots, residential structures (many converted to commercial uses) a gas station, and other types of buildings. The design of the commercial sites is influenced by use, age, and site constraints. The streetscape development project will develop a basic aesthetic consistency and compatibility through selection of colors, exterior surface materials, street configuration, landscape materials, and sign programs.
- **Safety:** Public safety is critical to the success of the Main Street commercial districts. In this case, public safety refers not only to the absence of criminal activity and public nuisances, but also to creating a “defensible” environment where pedestrian and automobile traffic can safely coexist.
- **Maintenance/Durability:** The streetscape improvements will be clean, simple and well maintained. The strategic use of public signage, unobstructed views of storefronts and open sidewalks will establish a long term benefit for the community and support the city's healthy community initiatives. Streetscape elements will be designed to serve the many pedestrians of the community, walkers of all ages, parents pushing strollers and children walking to school or activities. The improvements will be structurally sound, easy to maintain and constructed of long lasting building materials for each streetscape element.

### **East Rome Family Merchants Association Revitalization Plan**

During 2002 and 2003 the East Rome Family Merchants Association developed a revitalization plan for the East Rome/Kingsley Avenue District that contains the proposed main street corridor along East Dominick Street. The resulting physical development plan views the area as containing a number of distinct development districts including:

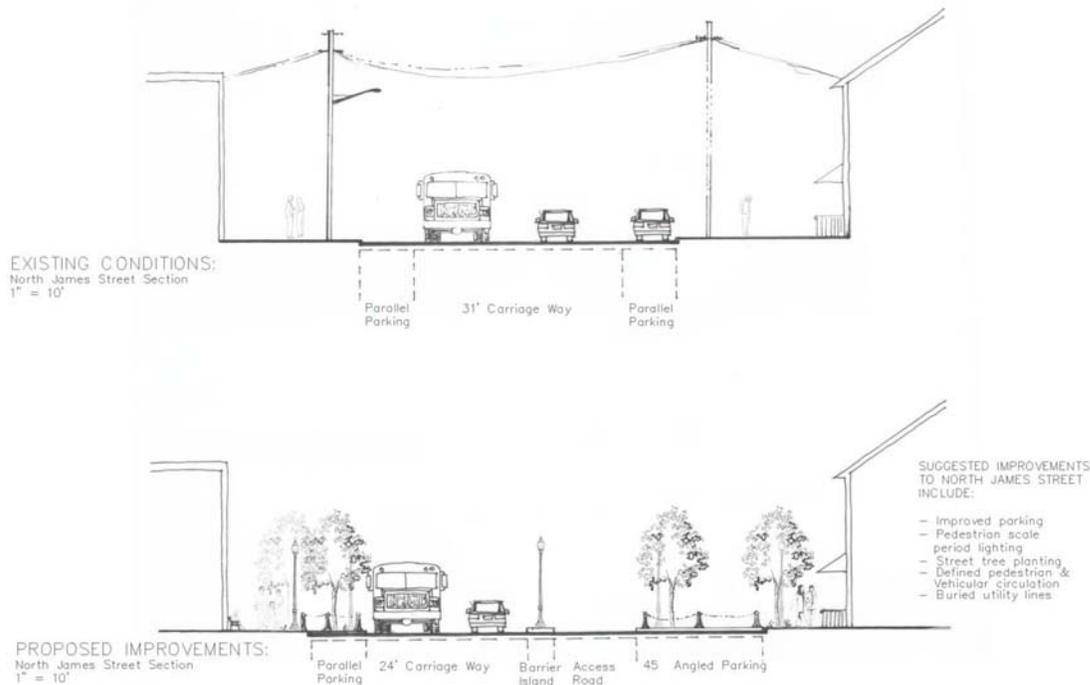
- **East Side Village Retail District and commercial nodes along East Dominick Street:** This area forms the eastern gateway to the East Dominick Street corridor. The plan calls for a significantly enhanced entrance link to Fort Stanwix including open view corridors along East Dominick Street along with high quality design of streetscape, pedestrian and architectural environments. The land uses in the area focus on creating a high quality regional retail destination, perhaps incorporating an Italian heritage theme. The design of new buildings should be consistent with the existing elements which provide ground floor retail with office and/or residential uses above. A variety of specific retail uses including prepared food, food for the home, entertainment, convenience retail, and specialty have been identified.
- **Mixed Use Commercial cluster adjacent to East Rome Business Park:** The plan calls for the revitalization of the Nash Metalware site and calls for development of a central piazza surrounded by commercial buildings with a defining feature, such as a fountain. The uses proposed for this district include specialty retail, prepared food, offices, entertainment and upper story housing.
- **East Side Village Residential Neighborhood:** The neighborhood surrounding the corridor and other development districts will be maintained and improved as a small scale urban/ethnic neighborhood through direction of community development funding. The plan enhances connections to East Dominick Street using sidewalk enhancements, street trees and lighting. The approach retains Pinti Field as a neighborhood park and creates a trail network along the Mohawk River linking Bellamy Park with Pinti Field.
- **East Rome Business Park:** Plans outline development standards for construction in the park calling for consistent high quality design that harmonizes with the character of the East Side village neighborhood. The land uses in the business park should include back office, distribution and warehouse, light manufacturing and recreational trails.
- **Regional Recreation and Entertainment District:** (including the waterfront recreation campus) This area has been identified as the primary gateway to the corridor and the city from the south. It is highly visible and must be redeveloped to make a powerful positive first impression on residents, workers and visitors. The plan calls for reprogramming this area to cater to the entire city and the region by providing a waterfront recreation and entertainment campus. A high quality design approach is proposed including enhancements to Mill Street, new street trees, banners, lights, screened parking and sidewalks. The land uses targeted for the area include everything proposed in the waterfront recreation campus in addition to entertainment uses such as an arcade, outdoor dining, sports-themed restaurant, and event and festival space. The area could also support

specialty retail including bike shop, sporting goods, and a card shop or toy store.

**Key Project Tasks**

***North James Street Improvements***

Today James Street is fifty feet wide from curb to curb, wider than is needed to carry traffic in the corridor. The demonstration project will reduce lane width to 12 feet with an additional eight feet wide parallel parking lane on one side of the street and provide space for protected angle parking, on the other side. The right of way is not wide enough to allow for angled parking on both sides of the street, so the angled parking alternates halfway through the corridor, providing a slight curve that will slow traffic along the street. The angled parking is separated from the roadway with a four feet wide granite cobble-paved barrier island that allows drivers to safely enter and exit parking spaces out of the flow of traffic. The parking separation also improves traffic flow in the area as drivers are not required to wait for other drivers to park.



The city will install sidewalk bulb-outs at each corner. The bulb-outs will slow turning vehicles and improve pedestrian safety by shortening the street crossing distance and reducing curb radii to discourage fast turning vehicles. They also serve to protect the angled parking from the flow of traffic.

Sidewalk pavement treatments will be used to contribute to the unique identity of the James Street Corridor. Sidewalks will be paved with sturdy decorative materials such as stamped concrete. Crosswalks will be constructed with textured concrete pavers to make them more visible and slow down crossing traffic. Landscaping will include a continuous canopy of street trees with shrubs and seasonal flowers at street corners. Street lighting will further contribute to the character of the corridor,



with pedestrian-scaled fixtures that are styled to enhance the traditional main street commercial environment.

### **East Dominick Street Corridor Enhancements**

Streetscape improvements along East Dominick Street will include pedestrian amenities, street furniture and trash receptacles, burying overhead utilities, historic lighting, installation of public art, beautification of parking lots, improved crosswalks, gateway enhancements and signage along NYS Route 49 and at Bellamy Park. The city will work with the New York State Department of Transportation and the National Park Service to create a highly visible connection to Fort Stanwix from the corridor using visible crosswalks and vertical elements such as an archway. Stronger connections should also be made between Bellamy Park and the Erie Canal including a natural pathway along the Mohawk River and streetscape enhancements along Mill Street.

Along East Dominick Street, development and design standards are proposed to address site organization, site design, public space and architectural design. The approach to site organization along the corridor addresses building and parking lot placement and calls for parking behind buildings with shared entrances at the edge of the sidewalk and a landscaping buffer separating additional on-street parking.

### **Parking**

The city will create additional on-street parking along North James Street by changing parallel parking to angle parking and by creating new parking lots to the rear of properties along East Dominick Street as development commences. Wherever possible the city will create additional on-street parking that supports the development of retail and other commercial uses. Each additional on-street parking space translates into increased gross retail sales for nearby shops. In addition, the configuration of the new on-street spaces will slow down traffic by narrowing road width. The slower traffic means that the surrounding area becomes more pedestrian and bicycle friendly, encouraging people to spend more time and money in the area.

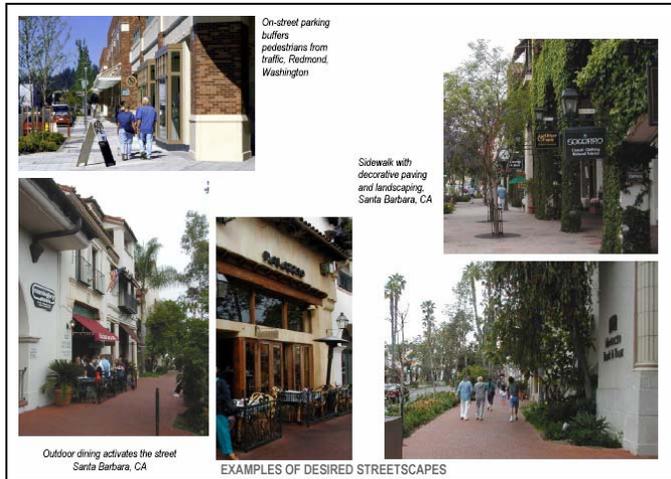
The city also plans to acquire and demolish blighted structures located to the rear of buildings along the corridors in order to create a rear alley and parking lots to support local businesses. On North James Street, this site assembly will require the acquisition and demolition of up to 31 structures, the majority of which are substandard rental housing that are currently creating a blighting condition on the neighborhood.

### **Pedestrian Improvements**

The city will develop sidewalks that are interesting, safe and comfortable places for pedestrians. Throughout the corridors, the city will use brick paving for sidewalks that are attractive and fully comply with Americans with Disabilities Act requirements. Along North James Street, the city will construct sidewalks along the corridor with a minimum of 8 feet wide clear walking area, and an additional 4 feet wide landscaping strip. This is considerably narrower than the current 20 to 22 feet wide sidewalks, but ample to meet the pedestrian circulation needs of the commercial district. The James Street sidewalk widths were reduced to accommodate angled parking, traffic calming and landscaping elements of the plan. In selected locations

the city will identify areas that are wide enough (approximately 20 feet from building façade to curb) to accommodate sidewalk cafes, clear walking zones and landscaping strips. The city will provide ADA standard curb ramps in the direction of sidewalk travel at every intersection.

New crosswalks will provide for ease of pedestrian movement throughout the corridors, contribute to a secure pedestrian environment, and promote a human scale. Bulb-outs and enhanced crosswalks will offer a dedicated zone for pedestrian crossing, provide warning to motorists approaching crosswalks and add to the aesthetic appeal of the area. Crosswalks will be constructed with textured concrete pavers. All of the bulb-outs will receive special pavement and landscaping treatments, and those adjacent to the angle parking will be large enough to become community gathering spaces. One bulb-out at the center of the corridors will include a “town clock” as an icon for the commercial district.



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Plan view of improvements to corridors: infill development is in red and street trees in green

**Street Trees & Landscaping**

The city will use landscaping to create a comfortable sense of place throughout the corridors, creating a clean, natural and visually appealing streetscape that will support an economically viable commercial area. Street trees will improve the attractiveness of the environment and provide a barrier between pedestrians and street traffic. Similarly, planters will be used to provide landscape elements and add variety and visual interest at street corners and other locations to enhance storefront design, buffer parking areas, or complement street furniture such as benches or bus shelters.

The city will plant trees in straight rows approximately 25 feet apart and three feet from the curb, providing adequate room for root and branch growth while still providing a continuous canopy. The city will use the same type of tree on each side of the street and will provide grates and guards to protect trees. Trees will be located a sufficient distance from street intersections to provide clear viewing distances for cars. Provisions will be made for seasonal lights in street trees.

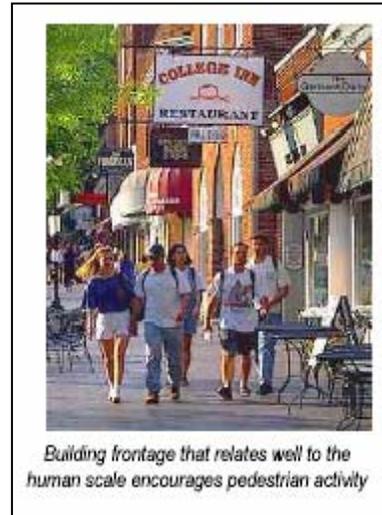


### **Façade Improvements**

The city will target façade improvement funding to North James Street and East Dominick Street. The program will offer free design assistance (provided by planning department staff or local architects under contract with the city of Rome), design guidelines and project review by planning department staff, the planning board, or a newly formed historic preservation or architectural review commission. The façade program will be actively marketed and promoted to property and business owners in targeted areas.

### **Infill Development**

The city's Real Property Program provides funding for selective demolition of vacant and deteriorated structures that the city has gained title to through tax delinquency. This program has allowed the city to reduce residential densities and clear some sites for future development. The city will expand this program to facilitate blight removal and return contributing properties to the tax rolls. In addition the city will consider the selective acquisition of properties necessary to assemble a key development site along the North James Street Corridor. The city's new Zoning Ordinance will outline specific design requirements for new development along the corridor.



Over time, the infill development plan will encourage new construction along the street edge, placing parking at the rear of the buildings and on the street. Use of rich materials, texture, articulation, and corner features will be encouraged. Infill development will also be encouraged to enhance corridor aesthetics by addressing building orientation, entries, display windows, street frontage, awnings, roof forms or architectural features. New residential development will incorporate front entries and stoops oriented toward the street.

Existing commercial buildings with side or rear walls or loading docks facing the street will be encouraged to provide fences and landscape buffers toward the street to screen activities from adjacent development. For existing buildings set back from the street, the city will encourage the development of appropriate outdoor activities such as dining to bring the building to the corner. For buildings separated from the street by parking lots, the city will encourage development of defined pedestrian pathways to the building entrance from the sidewalk.

### **Street Lighting**

The city will create a sense of security and safety for pedestrians through its approach to lighting along the corridors. Period street light fixtures will be no more than 14 feet tall to provide adequate lighting at a pedestrian scale. The city will continue use of a historic standard light fixture that has sufficient detail to create scale for the pedestrian and complement the emerging character of the district. The



lights will be spaced 60-80 feet apart to minimize glare and allow for street trees and traffic lights.

**Underground Utilities**

Ultimately the streetscape project will provide for the undergrounding of utility poles and traffic signals and related visual clutter. Installation of fiber optic cable "backbone" for voice, data and video communication to increase speed and capability, reliability and expansion capacity will also be a priority.

**Street Furniture/Accessories**



The city will provide for a unified system of seating, trash receptacles, bicycle racks, kiosks and bus shelters. Where possible and appropriate, the streetscape will incorporate elements that are unique to Rome's history and culture by using historic photographs as references. The city will encourage the use of awnings on the first level of buildings to provide shade and protection for pedestrians as well as the use of signs that project from buildings and are oriented toward pedestrians. In addition, the city will provide public art at strategic locations and encourage private developers to set aside a percentage of site development costs for public art.

The city will install street furniture that is decorative, durable and easy to maintain including benches, trash receptacles, recycling bins, tree grates, tree guards and bollards. The goal is to create a comfortable and convenient environment for shoppers and visitors to the main street corridors.

**Signage**

The streetscape projects will encourage consistent signage throughout the corridors. Temporary commercial or promotional signage such as flags or banners on light standards, banners strung between light standards, and signs placed on news racks or newspaper vending machines will be encouraged. Banners will be installed on streetlight poles, with the design(s) to be decided at a future date.

**Marketing and Merchandising**

Merchandising techniques will be developed in consultation with new and existing merchants to create a unified marketing message for each corridor. The corridors will also be enhanced by attractive display windows to catch and hold the attention of residents, workers and visitors alike. The windows should be continuously changing and lit throughout the evening.

The approach to business recruitment along the corridors should be focused on attracting place-based new businesses using quality independent stores to lead national chains. Initial target businesses include mid-price restaurants, entertainment, ethnic markets, coffee houses, antique shops, bike or athletic equipment stores and toy stores.



The approach to working with the real estate community includes providing commercial realtors with copies of the revitalization strategy, conducting meetings, and providing guided tours to prospective businesses. Professionally designed recruitment materials should include a letter, summary of market analysis and anticipated physical enhancements, a listing of available technical assistance and information about specific properties. Other marketing approaches might include a web site or presence at an existing site, distribution of a business directory, special events, or a newsletter

Maximizing the effectiveness of the East Rome Family Merchants' Association to unite public and private sector interests, coordinate and leverage activities, and lead the revitalization effort along that corridor is important. Recommended actions include an ongoing meeting schedule, hiring a part-time coordinator, and considering reorganization as a business improvement district.

### **Funding For Main Street Corridor Initiative**

It is anticipated that the main street corridor initiative will be financed with a combination of tax dollars, general obligation bonding, or alternate revenue source bonds, private sector investment, grants and loan funds. Revenue streams from parking, special assessment districts or tax increment financing districts will also contribute to a financially stable retail environment along targeted development corridors.

The East Rome Family Merchants' Association revitalization strategy for East Rome/Kingsley Avenue suggested that the group reorganize as a business improvement district. If the organization decides to follow this approach and is successful it will create a special assessment district that will generate an annual operating fund to pay for improvements planned along that specific corridor.

### **Next Steps**

Key tasks in advancing the development of the main street corridor initiative:

- Refine preliminary land use schematics and program element plan and present to existing merchants along both of the corridors programmed for initial attention to refine the concept.
- Bring the refined concept to a community workshop for review and discussion. This should include publication of concept approach in the newspaper and a work session with the Common Council to keep it informed about the plan's development.
- The city has already requested funding from its federal legislative delegation to pilot the program along the James Street corridor. Continued advocacy for this funding is important because it will enable the city to complete preliminary and final design and construction documents for the streetscape project.
- It is anticipated that the city, in association with the East Rome Family Merchants' Association will apply for a number of state initiatives including historic preservation grants available from the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, (OPRHP) Environmental Protection Fund Grants available from OPRHP and the Department of State, and HOME grants available

through the Division of Housing and Community Renewal. These grant sources, combined with private sector investment and city funds will be important to begin implementation of the East Dominick Street Improvements

- Develop capital budget requirements and fundraising plan for ongoing streetscape planning on South James Street and West Dominick Street.



### **Goal One: Stable, balanced and productive tax base**

***The city of Rome will enjoy a stable, balanced and productive tax base with expanded contributions from commercial, employment and industrial sectors.***

From the citizen's perspective, tax burden influences where people buy homes, whether they reinvest in property and where they develop or expand businesses. From the perspective of municipal staff, a community's tax base drives its ability to invest in amenities and provide professional services that residents expect. The existing and future real estate of the city provides opportunities and constraints for maintaining and attracting homeowners, businesses and jobs.

Today, the city of Rome's tax base relies heavily on residential property tax with nearly seventy cents of every dollar entering the tax pool coming from a residential use. The significant amount of undevelopable or vacant land, wetlands or non-taxable land places a greater share of the tax burden on a limited number of acres. In Rome, economic stability or growth depends upon optimizing the tax base by making every acre of land as productive as it can be without compromising community vitality or natural resources.

Rome has a somewhat unique economic base in that unlike most cities in New York State, it has two distinct taxing districts. The Inside District comprises most of the urbanized area of the city. The district houses most of Rome's population and comprises most of the city's commercial and industrial uses as well as public and community services. The Outside District is largely rural. Vacant land and Agricultural uses comprise 54% of the acreage in the Outside District. An additional 15% of the acreage comes from rural residential use on 10 acres or more. The Inside District is well served by public infrastructure and traditional public services such as police and fire protection and trash pick-up. Properties in the Outside District have more limited services particularly public water and sewer.

Given these distinct characteristics, the rate of property taxation is higher in the Inside District, \$18.20 versus \$12.08 in the Outside District. Property values are significantly higher in the Inside District as well. Property tax revenues from the Inside District account for over 80% of the total property taxes collected. This suggests in general that an expansion of revenues in the Inside District will expand the city's tax base. Currently, an acre of land in the Outside District generates an average of \$64 in property tax revenues. An acre in the Inside District produces property tax revenues of \$1,569 on average. This disparity is not surprising considering the characteristics of each district described above.

The disparity is even more pronounced when individual land use categories are examined. Residential and commercial uses generate the highest return to the city accounting for 91% of the Rome's property tax revenues. On average, a residential acre in the Inside District produces \$3,980 while residential property in the Outside District generates only \$192 per acre, less than 5% of the revenue generated by an acre of residential land in the Inside District. Similarly, commercial uses in the Inside District generate \$3,551 per acre in property tax revenues as opposed to only \$870 per acre for commercial uses in the Outside District, making commercial development in the Inside District about four times more productive from a tax base perspective. To provide some additional perspective, vacant land in the Inside

District is generating current revenues per acre of \$142, nearly as much as residential properties in the Outside District (\$192). While some of this difference is due to the tax rate variation between the districts, lower land values in the Outside District have a much greater impact on revenue generation than the tax rate difference.

Without considering other factors, it is clear that the most efficient way for Rome to grow its tax base is to convert vacant or similar unproductive land in the Inside District into commercial or residential uses. Another effective tool to expand the tax base would be to increase the land area of the Inside District, though this strategy would generally involve the additional costs of extending public infrastructure and providing annual services to areas added to the Inside District.

The city's long-term tax base enhancement strategy requires establishing long term tax base goals, including approaches described below and in the other tasks outlined in this action plan. The city's efforts will focus on:

- Redeveloping vacant and underutilized commercial and industrial sites in the Inside District
- Increasing the productivity of the commercial and industrial sectors through incentives and programs that facilitate growth, establish new development sites, and help property owners to reinvest
- Reducing burden on residential property owners by redistributing it to other sectors, by rewarding reinvestment and by creating new residential development to carry some of the burden
- Evaluating the inventory of vacant land and rezoning some developable acres for new tax generating uses in a manner that does not disrupt environmental quality
- Evaluating the development of land that is currently zoned agricultural for new residential or recreational development

**Action 1.1    *Focus high value new development in the city's Inside District to reflect vitality and diversity of the central business district and along preferred commercial development corridors***

The city of Rome will use land use regulations, infrastructure investments and taxing policies to direct new development to Inside District locations, limiting Outside District development to specifically-targeted areas. Any new development in the Outside District should be analyzed in terms of its impact on the environmental resources and its impact on potential development in the Inside District. The city should in no way compete with itself, but should instead try to achieve a balance between the Inner and Outside Districts.

Targeting most new development to the Inside District will encourage the redevelopment of the city's core, enabling new development to utilize existing infrastructure and revitalize the city while protecting and enhancing key environmental and agricultural resources in the Outside District. Today, commercial development within the Inside District of Rome is scattered, often not achieving a critical mass needed to create a high-quality commercial environment. Many retail and commercial operations are tucked into residential neighborhoods. Some serve local neighborhood residents while others would be more appropriately located on



one of the city's commercial streets. Meanwhile, vacant sites and buildings and underutilized lots that are appropriate for commercial redevelopment are spread throughout the city, with significant negative impacts to the city's visual appeal.

The city of Rome will direct new commercial development to appropriate locations throughout the city including identified commercial corridors such as:

- Along Erie Boulevard starting at James Street in downtown and extending west to the WalMart Plaza just beyond the Inside District boundary
- Along Black River Boulevard from Fort Stanwix to Wright Settlement Road
- Along West Dominick Street from Doxtator Street to James Street
- Along East Dominick Street from Fort Stanwix to Wright Drive
- Along North James Street from Court Street to Turin Street
- Along South James Street from Erie Boulevard to Henry Street

Land use regulations will clearly delineate where commercial uses are encouraged and acceptable and provide a straightforward process for obtaining development approval. For each commercial area, the city will consider the specific types and density of commercial development it is seeking to attract and target its land management policies and programs toward making it as simple and cost effective as possible for commercial development to locate on those sites. Some small-scale neighborhood commercial development could also be allowed within residential neighborhoods.

The city will use its new zoning ordinance to focus new development in the Inside District while allowing some limited urban uses in the Outside District. In addition to land use regulations, the city's taxing and infrastructure extension policies will reflect the desired land use patterns. This would include limiting Empire Zone expansions and infrastructure extensions in the Outside District to locations that have been specifically targeted for more intense development.

Despite the city's efforts to focus future development in the Inside District, some new development will occur in the Outside District. The new zoning ordinance will identify the land uses that are feasible and desirable in the Outside District. Many areas in the Outside District, corresponding roughly to the areas zoned R-20 today are suitable for low density single-family housing with lot sizes of an acre or more, or for cluster development that would allow for retention of open space and protection of natural resources.

<b>Time frame:</b>	Short to medium term
<b>Potential stakeholders/partners:</b>	City of Rome
<b>Estimated costs:</b>	Included in zoning update
<b>Potential funding sources:</b>	City of Rome

**Action 1.2    *Target tax and other business assistance incentives to relocate incompatible uses to areas where they can grow and be more successful***

Over the years, Rome has changed in its land use composition and its expectations of what defines geographically compatible uses. As a result, adjacent

incompatible uses are a major issue throughout the city. An incompatible use is defined as a use that does not reflect the prevailing land use of the area in which it is located or does not directly benefit nearby businesses or residents by its location. An example of a common incompatibility in the city would be residential development located immediately adjacent to heavy industrial uses. As opportunities arise, the city will help incompatible uses relocate to more appropriate sites within the city.

One-hundred years ago, it was a standard land use practice to locate a major industrial use adjacent to a residential neighborhood. Worker housing was within walking distance of the business, allowing employees to travel to work in the days before widespread automobile use. Today, however, the intensity of industrial land uses contrasts with the performance expectations of residential uses. The city no longer needs to locate industry in such prime locations. Today, industry should be located primarily along efficient transportation routes to facilitate shipping and receiving of products and materials and to allow for an easy commute for employees. The city will work with industrial businesses located in residential neighborhoods to understand their site needs. Where requested, it will work with these businesses to facilitate relocation.

In some neighborhoods, a similar situation exists between some commercial uses and residential uses. While some commercial uses support the vitality of neighborhoods, such as small restaurants, general stores, and offices, other commercial uses that are not regularly patronized by the neighborhood are incompatible with the expectations of a residential neighborhood.

The city will utilize tax incentives, gap financing, relocation assistance services and other incentives available to assist with these relocations.

<b>Time frame:</b>	Short term
<b>Potential stakeholders/partners:</b>	City of Rome
<b>Estimated costs:</b>	Varies based upon scale of relocation and number of businesses assisted
<b>Potential funding sources:</b>	City of Rome, Empire State Development Corporation, US HUD and EDA Loan Fund Programs

**Action 1.3     *Create new industry-specific development incentives to encourage growth of retail, manufacturing, technology and other commercial and employment uses***

The city will develop new incentives targeted to stimulate investment in the retail and industrial sectors through tax abatement, access to working capital, facilities development or equipment loans.

The city will create a tax abatement program in accordance with retail businesses located along identified commercial corridors that are making interior and exterior improvements (in accordance with established design guidelines) to have the value of improvements phased in over a specific time frame (such as five or ten years). The incentive will ensure that the quality and nature of the improvements complement ongoing streetscaping and infrastructure investments by the public sector.



Manufacturing and industrial development incentives will target retention and recruitment. The cost of retaining and encouraging the expansion of an existing business is almost always more cost and time effective than efforts to recruit new companies. The city will meet individually and confidentially with each major employer to determine its upcoming business needs. Specific growth plans will be developed that identify the enhancements the company plans to make and the ways in which the city can contribute. This approach recognizes that every business is different and that one development incentive, such as reduced power cost, will not affect business viability equally for all companies.

When specific growth plans are identified, the city will target specific business assistance grants, loans or ancillary infrastructure development in the most appropriate manner using a range of funding available at the state and federal level. Direct business assistance in the form of working capital, access to specialized financing or loans for new equipment will be provided.

<b>Time frame:</b>	Long term
<b>Potential stakeholders/partners:</b>	City of Rome, RIDC, Mohawk Valley EDGE
<b>Estimated costs:</b>	Varies with specific projects proposed
<b>Potential funding sources:</b>	City of Rome, Empire State Development Corporation, US HUD and EDA Loan Fund Programs

**Action 1.4    *Consider development of a new organization, such as a city industrial development agency or urban redevelopment authority to employ creative tax and development tools, and unique skills and capacities to facilitate planned economic development***

The development of a city industrial development authority (IDA) or a state-chartered redevelopment agency will provide an opportunity for new bonding authority that does not count against the city's bond cap or add to its indebtedness. This bonding capacity would enable an IDA to enter into a range of creative financing strategies including sale/lease-back arrangements that can significantly affect the cost of doing business for technology and traditional manufacturing companies.

Other communities, such as the city of Schenectady, have worked with New York State to develop agencies such as the Metroplex Development Authority, which receives much of its funding from a dedicated one-half of one percent sales and use tax. The dedicated tax revenues generate approximately \$6 million annually, or 70% of the Metroplex budget. Metroplex facilitates the issuance of bond offerings in support of various redevelopment initiatives focused on facilitating redevelopment of the city's central core and stimulating development in the surrounding suburban communities.

For Rome, the development of well-funded and staffed development entity that could bring unique talent and competencies to the region would make it possible to pursue complex financing strategies and partnerships in support of economic development. One example would be utilization of tax increment financing (TIF) for improvements along commercial corridors. Tax increment financing is a way to pay

for improvements to existing structures and land, build and repair roads and infrastructure, and clean up brownfields while returning properties to the tax rolls. Tax increment financing could be utilized to implement planned improvements along East Dominick Street, redevelop brownfield sites, construct the proposed recreation campus, redevelop waterfront sites and support the realignment of 46/49/69 intersection.

Under a tax increment financing strategy the city would designate a given area as a TIF district for a certain period of time. The district's tax revenues to the city's general fund are frozen from the day of designation to the end date of the district's designation. The city would then use the expected increase in property values resulting from the planned improvements to guarantee bonds to fund the needed improvements and pay off the bonds using the increased (or "incremental") real estate tax revenues.

Establishment of a TIF does not reduce property tax revenues available to the overlapping taxing bodies, such as the county or school district. Property taxes collected on properties included in the TIF at the time of its designation continue to be distributed to the school districts, county, community college and all other taxing districts in the same manner as if the TIF did not exist. Only property taxes generated by the incremental increase in the value of these properties after that time are available for use by the TIF to subsidize the cost of improvements, infrastructure and related amenities.

<b>Time frame:</b>	Medium term
<b>Potential stakeholders/partners:</b>	City of Rome, RIDC Mohawk Valley EDGE
<b>Estimated costs:</b>	\$10,000 for a study to evaluate options
<b>Potential funding sources:</b>	City of Rome, Empire State Development Corporation

***Action 1.5 Expand the tax base through careful assessment, zoning and land management practices; and focus infrastructure and amenity investment to balance land use contributions and increase the productivity of all land use sectors***

Land and the improvements built upon it are the basis for the municipal taxation system currently in place in the city of Rome and across New York State. The productivity of Rome's tax base is influenced by how effectively land is used, properties are built and maintained, uses are buffered, and the level of reinvestment by the public and private sectors.

The first challenge facing the city is to make every acre of land that can contribute to the tax base do so. The city will pursue multiple approaches to increase the tax base productivity of each land use sector:

- **Residential Uses:** A tax base is generally considered out of balance when residential property contributes more than fifty or fifty-five percent. The city of Rome's residential contribution is sixty-eight percent. The city will protect the current level of residential contribution until such time as other sectors can become more productive by addressing a range of issues including amenity development, code enforcement, and demolition of blighted property. In



addition, the feasibility of new residential development that could expand the base of residential tax payers will be a tool to shift some burden within the residential category.

- **Tax Exempt Land:** Nearly one-third of property in the city is exempt from taxation and an additional thirty-four percent of land is vacant and contributes very little tax revenue. This distribution increases the burden on the other properties to generate the necessary revenue to support city services and public infrastructure. The city will evaluate opportunities to co-locate tax exempt users in fewer buildings and redevelop vacated sites for compatible new development opportunities.
- **Vacant Land and Underutilized Properties:** The city will inventory vacant land, including all classified and unclassified wetlands and other environmentally sensitive areas such as the Rome Sand Plains. Following this assessment, land suitable for development would be rezoned for appropriate uses. In addition, the city will inventory deteriorated or functionally obsolete buildings and blighted areas where concentrated demolition, clearance and new planned development would improve property values and add higher value residential properties to the tax base.
- **Commercial Land:** The city's amenity development, economic development and infrastructure policy will enhance the environment for existing commercial users and enhance the market for new commercial development along designated corridors to ensure that their contribution to the tax base remains stable.
- **The Urban Core:** While comprising less than fifteen percent of the acreage in the city, the Inside District accounts for nearly three-quarters of the city's taxable assessment base and generates over eighty percent of its property tax revenues. The city will protect the productivity of Inside District land by targeting new amenity development for both residential and commercial uses.

<b>Time frame:</b>	Long term
<b>Potential stakeholders/partners:</b>	City of Rome
<b>Estimated costs:</b>	Specific efforts and costs are addressed and included in other action item budgets
<b>Potential funding sources:</b>	City of Rome, New York State Planning Federation, US HUD Community Development Block Grants, EDA loan programs

### **Action 1.6    *Explore the feasibility of implementing a land value taxation method in the city of Rome***

The city of Rome will explore whether use of the land valuation method would create an investment incentive for new commercial and residential development in the city and identify the process for demonstrating such an approach on a pilot basis in New York State.

More than a dozen cities across the nation have adopted taxation strategies that reduce or eliminate taxation on buildings and shift it to land. In two cities that have

adopted this taxation policy, Harrisburg and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, construction subsequently boomed and rental housing supplies increased. In Pittsburgh, the land tax is five to six times the tax on buildings and improvements. The practical experience in this city, despite the devastating decline of the steel industry, has been a significant increase in the amount of development and construction occurring in its downtown – more than is occurring in its suburbs and exceeding that of many similar neighboring cities.

The “land value taxation” approach taxes land rather than the improvements put on it. The approach impacts a basic inequity in traditional land valuation that taxes vacant land at a lower rate than other land. By taxing vacant land at lower rates, the traditional approach enables owners and speculators to hold land off the market with low carrying costs and makes the development of the land in poor economic times less likely. By taxing improved land at a high rate (and high-quality buildings at an even higher rate) the current approach creates a disincentive for developers to build or design quality structures, and encourages a pattern of sprawl.

The approach makes inner city properties with amenities (road and infrastructure) that occupy less land more valuable and would help to focus development in Rome’s inner core. It discourages speculation and encourages land owners to take advantage of the current market opportunities rather than hoping for brighter futures. This method simplifies the act of assessment since it is less important that an assessor examine every building improvement.

Land value taxation is an incentive for historic preservation since traditional historic districts are densely built and land is a smaller percentage of development area. Building value is also less important and taxation related to building improvements happens at a lower rate. The land valuation approach typically makes an exception for prime agricultural land in active use and mitigates a potential hardship for farmers who usually have limited improvements but significant acreage. A similar exemption could be put in place for land classified as recreation areas, undevelopable, wetlands or a critical environmental area.

<b>Time frame:</b>	Medium term
<b>Potential stakeholders/partners:</b>	City of Rome
<b>Estimated costs:</b>	\$50,000 for research and impact assessment
<b>Potential funding sources:</b>	City of Rome, Empire State Development Corporation, Rome Legislative Delegation, private foundations, university research programs



## **Goal Two: Most Business-Friendly Community in New York State**

***The city of Rome will become known as the most business-friendly city in New York State through creative partnerships and by achieving a technology-oriented economic development strategy***

The city has established the goal of becoming the most business friendly community in New York State through a combination of regulation streamlining, development incentives and marketing. The city's focus on economic development is appropriate given the significant job and population losses it has faced during the past decade.

The attraction of well-paid jobs through business development in the city's core, along designated corridors and at the Griffiss Business and Technology Park is of paramount concern. The community's focus on "new economy" businesses also demands that attention be paid to quality of life and related amenities that "knowledge workers" and their families have come to expect. Rome has put in place most of the organizations and incentives available to spur economic development, but greater coordination and marketing is required for these efforts to be successful.

**Action 2.1 Continue to provide effective economic and business development services and increase coordination between existing entities and programs to create a unified marketing message and simplify access to resources**

The city of Rome has many agencies and programs to assist with business attraction and expansion. The city's economic development arm, the Rome Industrial Development Corporation, works with other local and regional entities such as Griffiss Local Development Corporation, Mohawk Valley EDGE, Oneida County and the Rome Area Chamber of Commerce to promote the many programs and opportunities available in Rome.

The sheer number of entities involved can create confusion and challenges for those unfamiliar with the system. For example Mohawk Valley EDGE, which also staffs the Griffiss Local Development Corporation (GLDC), works with companies of all sizes interested at locating at Griffiss, but does not facilitate retail development. The Rome Industrial Development Corporation (RIDC) works with any size firm, from start up to multi-nationals, but does not work as project lead for firms seeking to locate at Griffiss.

The economic development agencies have made considerable progress in coordinating their efforts and see Rome's economic development programs as "having multiple points of entry" rather than competing with each other. Agencies meet quarterly to share information on business prospects and develop a strategy for approaching potential clients so that one agency visits and provides relevant information rather than multiple agencies bombarding a single prospect. The economic development agencies have coordinated their funding and assistance application processes so that the same application can be used to apply for assistance at multiple organizations.

Even with these and other efforts, more needs to be done to create a clear coordinated message of the benefits of doing business in Rome. The city will work

with the economic development agencies to create outreach materials and activities that clearly describe the locational assets Rome offers and the extensive financial incentives and technical assistance packages available through local and regional economic development agencies.

The centerpiece of this effort will be a graphically interesting, concise and easy to navigate web site that will provide descriptions and access information for all business support and economic development efforts offered in the city. These will include everything from the city's façade improvement program, the SUNY Institute of Technology Utica/Rome Small Business Development Center, Empire Zone benefits, to the plethora of services offered by RIDC, GLDC, Mohawk Valley EDGE, the county and Chamber of Commerce. This site should describe how well various organizations work together, clarify roles and responsibilities, link to other sites and simply explain the process for site selection in the city of Rome. Other marketing tools will include brochures and display materials that Mohawk Valley EDGE and others can use in their marketing efforts.

The city and its economic development partners should also make efforts to streamline business site location by developing a GIS data base with parcel information, and make this information and maps available through the cooperative web site described above. Further, the city will promote its other assets such as access to transportation routes, community services (including the school system), recreational and cultural assets and other attributes. By marketing the city as a whole, a prospective business will be aware of *all* of the benefits of locating in Rome.

<b>Time frame:</b>	Short term
<b>Potential stakeholders/partners:</b>	City of Rome, Rome Industrial Development Corporation, Rome Area Chamber of Commerce, Oneida County, Griffiss Local Development Corporation, Mohawk Valley EDGE, recreational venues, cultural attractions
<b>Estimated costs:</b>	\$20,000 (city share)
<b>Potential funding sources:</b>	City of Rome, Oneida County, Rome Industrial Development Corporation, Rome Area Chamber of Commerce, Griffiss Local Development Corporation, Mohawk Valley EDGE

**Action 2.2    *Enhance small business support and retention programs, including the creation of a small business technical assistance center based at RIDC or the Chamber of Commerce***

The SUNY Institute of Technology at Utica/Rome (SUNY-IT) operates a small business development center for Oneida and Herkimer Counties. The center provides management and technical assistance to start-up and existing small businesses, specializing in provision of one-to-one counseling on business problems, and classroom educational programs targeted to the needs and interests of small business owners. Educational programs range from two-hour informational sessions to five or six-week class sessions.



## Goal Two: Business Friendly City

SUNY-IT works with the RIDC and Mohawk Valley Community College to provide business services in Rome, though Rome clients can also visit the main office in Marcy. Small Business Development Center staff members are available at RIDC offices for counseling services and the MVCC campus in Rome is one of several sites in the region used for classes and seminars offered by the center.

The RIDC supplements technical assistance with a number of loan programs including its Community Reinvestment Fund that uses Community Development Block Grant resources to provide loans to companies that create jobs for low and moderate income people. Proceeds can be used for most business purposes including working capital. A portion of the fund is set aside for very small businesses, providing loans of up to \$9,000 to microenterprises.

To improve and expand on the services provided to small businesses, the city will establish a single point of contact for all information about small business assistance. This will include an office at the RIDC or Rome Chamber of Commerce with a staff contact that understands the services available and will take primary responsibility for outreach and marketing of these services. The small business development services will be included on the city's economic development website, and the RIDC will develop a promotional brochure explaining the program and benefits. The brochure will be distributed to local banks and other likely small business service providers.

<b>Time frame:</b>	Short term
<b>Potential stakeholders/partners:</b>	City of Rome, RIDC, SUNY-IT Small Business Development Center
<b>Estimated costs:</b>	\$5,000 plus staff time
<b>Potential funding sources:</b>	US HUD Community Development Block Grant, US Small Business Administration, Empire State Development

**Action 2.3     *Expand tourism marketing efforts and increase coordination between various tourism interests for the city and region, creating a cohesive marketing message that builds on the historic, recreational, cultural and natural resources of the community***



The city of Rome has three significant heritage-oriented tourism attractions – the Erie Canal Village, Oriskany Battlefield and Fort Stanwix. These attractions, along with Rome's other recreational, cultural and natural resources, create an important opportunity to enhance the image and economy of the city.

Heritage tourism is one of the most popular and fast growing sectors of the travel industry. A Travel Industry Association of America (TIA)

survey<sup>1</sup> indicates that visiting historical and cultural sites and museums is one of the leading activities enjoyed by families and adult travelers. According to the TIA, travelers seeking cultural and historical attractions spend more, stay in hotels more often and longer, visit more destinations and are twice as likely to travel for entertainment purposes as other travelers, making heritage tourism a viable economic development strategy.

The city will work with its partners to establish a heritage tourism plan focused on turning Rome into an overnight or multi-night destination with expanded and improved hotel infrastructure and significantly expanded dining and entertainment opportunities. The plan will build on the goals and strategies identified in the various heritage tourism and corridor management plans, focusing on the ways Rome can add value to the corridor. The plan should inventory the activities and attractions to be promoted, tourism partners and stakeholders, current deficiencies within the community for serving visitors, and opportunities and constraints to enhancing Rome's tourism industry.

The heritage tourism plan should identify the historic, cultural, natural and man-made attractions that give the city its identity and establish appropriate protection and/or enhancement strategies for them. Rome will promote the preservation of existing historic architecture and neighborhood character. The city will plan for streetscape improvements, landscaping, and beautification programs that will create an aesthetically pleasing atmosphere for visitors. With tourism partners, the city will identify deficiencies in tourism facilities such as a restaurants, lodging, shops, parking, and related amenities. It will work with the Chamber of Commerce, Rome Industrial Development Corporation, Oneida County and others to attract new businesses that will meet tourism infrastructure needs.

The federal and state governments are sponsoring many initiatives that would support heritage tourism and other tourism efforts in Rome. Key initiatives include the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development's Canal Corridor Initiative; continuing enhancement of the Mohawk Valley Heritage Corridor; creation of the Erie Canalway National Heritage Area; and similar efforts are currently underway to expand heritage tourism capacity in the Northern Frontier as well as federal and state scenic byways programs.

**Time frame:** Short term  
**Potential stakeholders/partners:** City of Rome, Chamber of Commerce, Oneida County Tourism, RIDC, the National Park Service, U.S. Department of Interior, NYS Canal Corporation, NYS OPRHP, Mohawk Valley Heritage Corridor, other heritage are organizations  
**Estimated costs:** \$15,000, city share

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<sup>1</sup>Travel Industry Association of America "Fast Facts About the Travel and Tourism Industry"  
WWW.TIA.ORG



### **Potential funding sources:**

City of Rome, NYS OPRHP, I Love New York Tourism Office, Oneida County Tourism, NYS Canal Corporation, US HUD, U.S. Department of the Interior

### **Action 2.4 Cleanup identified brownfield properties to return sites to productive use**

The city of Rome's long industrial history has resulted in a number of sites that have, or are perceived to have, environmental contamination. Some sites are still in active industrial use, while others are vacant or significantly underutilized. The city of Rome and its partners have made considerable progress in identifying potential brownfield sites and the investigation and clean-up steps necessary to make these sites available for redevelopment.

Two key sites, the East Rome Business Park and the Griffiss Business and Technology Park, have undergone considerable investigation and remediation. The city is also reviewing tax delinquent properties for redevelopable brownfield sites, including former industrial plants, dry cleaners and gas stations.



The city will use a variety of tools to continue assessing and remediating lands in public ownership and will work with property owners to determine the best tools for other site remediation.

- **NYS Voluntary Clean up Program:** Provides a framework for property owners to work with the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation and the NYS Department of Health to remediate a site and receive a release from liability for private-sector initiated clean-ups.
- **New York State Brownfields Program:** Provides Clean Water/Clean Air Bond Act funds to municipally-owned sites, enabling public funds to be used for the clean-up, reducing the costs of the private property owner.
- **USHUD Brownfield Economic Development Initiative (BEDI):** Provides flexible funding that can be used for many different elements of brownfield redevelopment. A request for new CDBG Section 108 loan guarantee authority must accompany each BEDI application. Examples of BEDI fund usage include land write downs, site remediation costs, funding reserves, over-collateralizing the Section 108 loan, direct enhancement of the security of the Section 108

loan, and provisions of financing to for-profit businesses at below-market interest rates.

In order to advance waterfront redevelopment, the city will work to understand remedial action plans for the Niagara Mohawk Power Corporation site and determine land use limitations that will be placed on future use of the site. As appropriate, the city will evaluate the desirability of contracting with a preferred developer who specializes in brownfield redevelopment as build out of these properties continues.

- Time frame:** Short term
- Potential stakeholders/partners:** City of Rome, private owners, Niagara Mohawk, NYS DEC, Empire State Development, US HUD, US EPA
- Estimated costs:** \$500,000 for tax delinquent property program, see below for East Rome
- Potential funding sources:** Empire Opportunity Funds, US EPA Brownfield Pilot Program, US HUD Brownfield Economic Development Initiative, US HUD Section 108 loan funds, NYS DEC Brownfield Program, New Markets Tax Credits, private developers

**Action 2.5 Continue the development and preparation of the East Rome Business Park to create “shovel ready” sites including development of a technology manufacturing incubator with flexible space**

The East Rome Business Park is Rome's priority business and industrial redevelopment opportunity. The city has been working with private property owners, the Rome Industrial Development Corporation and state and federal agencies since 1996 to redevelop this former General Cable site. The 200-acre site is located between the Erie Canal and East Dominick Street, an important gateway into the city. The currently vacant and dilapidated site has been a source of blight and a major concern of neighborhood residents and businesses.

The park's successful revitalization, including environmental remediation, selective demolition and reconstruction is crucial to Rome's economic development efforts and an integral part of the East Dominick Street revitalization plan. The site has been targeted for new commercial and light industrial development and will also play an important role in tourism development given its location on the canal and adjacent to a retail/restaurant/ commercial district and the proposed recreation campus.

The city and its partners have completed a five-phase redevelopment strategy for the 18-acre core redevelopment area. The first three phases involved environmental site assessments conducted under the US EPA Brownfield Pilot Demonstration Program; environmental remediation; building demolition; construction of Harbor Way, a new city street extending from Railroad to Mill Streets; and property acquisition. Phase 4 included acquisition, remediation and site preparation at the last remaining privately owned parcel, giving the city ownership of the entire 18-acre core redevelopment area. Phase 5 included asbestos abatement, demolition and site grading on a 7.5 acre parcel donated to the city by



## Goal Two: Business Friendly City

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a private property owner. These efforts have provided the city with a clean site to be marketed for redevelopment and returned to the tax rolls.

Future efforts will include acquisition, remediation and site preparation of additional acreage from the remaining 182 acres not included in the core redevelopment area and will focus on the preservation of a former Revere Copper and Brass manufacturing building that visibly represents the identity of the East Dominick Street neighborhood and Rome's industrial history. The cost estimates below include acquisition, environmental site assessment and a reuse study for the former Revere Copper and Brass building, but not site preparation or remediation for this facility.

The planned business and technology park will offer businesses the potential to cluster with similar and complementary activities, while providing for supportive neighborhood commercial and service establishments. In creating an environment for new technology users, the city will employ development standards and focus on attracting high-quality development. While lower standards in the redevelopment district could accelerate reuse, a high standard of development can be expected to support the best possible mix of uses and users and generate the highest tax base return in the longer term.

The East Rome Business Park marketing information should be a two-part package. The first will be a high quality promotional package that sells Rome and the benefits and opportunities afforded by locating in the city. The second will be much more detailed and intended to specifically address the needs of prospects after they have been pre-qualified, either by a commercial/industrial realtor or by the city or county. One possible approach to marketing the Business Park would be to reach out to commercial realtors in both the Rome and Oneida/Syracuse areas. The city will also consider providing broker incentives for real estate agents such as normal commissions plus a bonus structure that further encourages agents in the region and elsewhere to think of the city of Rome's business locations first.

When preliminary planning and clean-up is complete, the city should also consider contracting with a preferred broker who can market assembled sites for both the city and the county. As the plans for the business park mature, the city should evaluate the market feasibility of developing a technology manufacturing incubator. It is increasingly common for start-up technology companies to share manufacturing space or use contract manufacturers to bring a product to market without the costly investment in buildings or production equipment. If such a contract manufacturer could be recruited to the business park it would encourage clustering of technology companies nearby. Many technology companies will be attracted to the Griffiss Business and Technology Park for their primary business location, but the city's core may be able to house the manufacturing partners needed to support them.

<b>Time frame:</b>	Short term																
<b>Potential stakeholders/partners:</b>	City of Rome, private owners, Niagara Mohawk, NYS DEC, Empire State Development, US HUD, US EPA																
<b>Estimated costs:</b>	<table> <tr> <td>Plans/Engineering Fees:</td> <td>\$50,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Remediation:</td> <td>\$240,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Demolition &amp; site grading:</td> <td>\$700,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Acquisition:</td> <td>\$350,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Site Assessment:</td> <td>\$200,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Redevelopment Study:</td> <td>\$100,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Spec Incubator:</td> <td><u>\$500,000</u></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>\$2,140,000</td> </tr> </table>	Plans/Engineering Fees:	\$50,000	Remediation:	\$240,000	Demolition & site grading:	\$700,000	Acquisition:	\$350,000	Site Assessment:	\$200,000	Redevelopment Study:	\$100,000	Spec Incubator:	<u>\$500,000</u>		\$2,140,000
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Site Assessment:	\$200,000																
Redevelopment Study:	\$100,000																
Spec Incubator:	<u>\$500,000</u>																
	\$2,140,000																
<b>Potential funding sources:</b>	Empire Opportunity Funds, US EPA Brownfield Pilot Program, US HUD Brownfield Economic Development Initiative, US HUD Section 108 loan funds, NYS DEC Brownfield Program, New Markets Tax Credits, private developers																

**Action 2.6 Target technology companies as tenants for city business parks and develop a Technology Facilities Loan Fund**

Rome will focus on nurturing existing small high technology ventures in the community and ensuring that they have the support and services needed to stay in Rome as they grow. In addition, the city will focus on attracting small ventures that are at an early stage of development in which the locational decision lies with the entrepreneur-owner and lifestyle is a key factor in the decision.

In developing a targeted technology loan fund, the city will provide capital, technical assistance and tax increment financing assistance to technology companies in stable and growing sectors. The sectors will be defined jointly with Griffiss Local Development Corporation (GLDC) but are expected to include nanotechnology, biotechnology, medical devices and services, food technology and pharmaceuticals.

<b>Time frame:</b>	Medium term
<b>Potential stakeholders/partners:</b>	City of Rome, private owners, Niagara Mohawk, NYS DEC, Empire State Development, US HUD, US EPA
<b>Estimated costs:</b>	\$5,000,000
<b>Potential funding sources:</b>	Empire Opportunity Funds, New Markets Tax Credits, private developers

**Action 2.7 Refine building code and zoning regulations to make them simple to understand and cost effective for new businesses to build high quality facilities using practical standards**

The city's approach to rezoning is focused on streamlining and simplifying zoning requirements to reduce regulatory burden and stimulate new investment. The new approach encourages concentration of commercial development at key nodes, creating focus points and a high-quality sense of place. It includes changes to make



it easier to reinvest in and strengthen existing residential neighborhoods, clarifies development requirements, and creates tools to maintain and enhance property values, community character and environmental resources. The goal is to streamline the development process by setting out development standards that allow for flexibility but provide clear guidance to property owners, developers and neighbors about expected quality of development.

Streamlined review procedures provide for a shorter time frame and more predictable outcomes during the review process, reducing risk for investors and developers. Streamlined reviews are to be balanced with the application and enforcement of appropriate development and performance standards.

<b>Time frame:</b>	Short term
<b>Potential stakeholders/partners:</b>	City of Rome
<b>Estimated costs:</b>	Included in the zoning ordinance update
<b>Potential funding sources:</b>	City of Rome, Empire State Development Corporation

**Action 2.8    *Identify commercial infill sites, assemble land, and/or landbank the sites until an appropriate developers can be located or development projects are proposed***

The city of Rome will use infill incentives to promote the development of vacant land, or rehabilitation of existing structures in the Inside District where infrastructure and services are in place. Prime locations for infill development include the central business district, main street corridors and locations near the proposed employment, shopping, recreational and cultural amenities.

The city will designate specific districts as priorities for infill development and grant incentives for projects located in those districts. Through infill incentives the city of Rome can make redevelopment of urban core parcels more attractive and affordable to developers by addressing common barriers to infill development such as inadequate infrastructure, obsolete zoning provisions, and difficult parcel assembly.

<b>Time frame:</b>	Medium term
<b>Potential stakeholders/partners:</b>	City of Rome
<b>Estimated costs:</b>	\$175,000
<b>Potential funding sources:</b>	Empire State Development Corporation, Community Development Block Grant

**Action 2.9    *Implement a Buy-Local Campaign***

The city of Rome is committed to the growth and prosperity of its city, and a commitment to using local labor whenever possible is one way to encourage and support local businesses. This commitment can be publicly illustrated by placing orders for the supply of goods, services or contracts with local businesses. This idea originated from local business people during the Comprehensive Plan public outreach process.

Rome will develop affirmative procurement and contracting standards and develop a system for ranking proposals and bids received that give preference to

companies with an established track record in the community and significant awareness of local conditions. Rome will review its purchasing and determine what percentage of the goods and services it currently procures are provided by local suppliers. The city will set a goal to increase that percentage within a certain period of time.

In defining the campaign, the city will develop a scale that enables selection of a local contractor over a non-local contractor so long as it is within a certain percentage of the lowest qualified bid. Rome will also consider the amount of local sales tax impact a contractor will contribute as a result of the contract in calculating the overall cost to the community. The city will create a preferred suppliers list and an application process that evaluates the quality of services/products on the front end, and then gives preference to bids from contractors on that list.

The city will also encourage major businesses and nonprofit organizations (such as the hospital, library and schools) to adopt the same approach. If the school district, hospital, Griffiss Business and Technology Park, the school for the Deaf, the city, the county and other companies all made a pledge to increase their local buying and contracting by ten percent it would result in millions of dollars of new local spending and sales tax revenue and good public relations with little financial impact on the organization.

<b>Time frame:</b>	Short term
<b>Potential stakeholders/partners:</b>	City of Rome
<b>Estimated costs:</b>	\$5,000 for coordination effort and design/ printing of brochure
<b>Potential funding sources:</b>	City of Rome, local labor organizations and contractor groups, US HUD Community Development Block Grants



### **Goal Three: Modern Workforce & "Rome Is Working" Initiative**

***The city of Rome will pursue a forward-looking workforce development strategy focused on expanding the percentage of residents employed in 21<sup>st</sup> century industries and occupations***

A strong workforce is described by many as the most important ingredient for a stable and energetic local economy. The recruitment and retention of talented men and women not only positively impact business, but also schools, churches, civic groups and government. Richard Florida of Carnegie Mellon University notes that the greatest transformation at the end of the 20th century wasn't the dawning of the information age but the shift from a company-centered economy to an idea or people-centered one. This concept is referred to by many as the emergence of the "creative class" or the entrepreneurial society.

When large corporate needs and culture no longer dictate location, the role of "place" becomes critically important. The modern labor force is rarely tied to particular geography. Instead they are free to move and relocate into communities that seem the most attractive. Researchers argue that if a community develops a high quality of life and provides an accommodating business climate, entrepreneurs and intellectuals will come, and business growth will follow. These highly motivated citizens will create their own companies, and attract new domestic and foreign investment.

**Action 3.1      *Work with economic development partners to encourage the development a labor force plan for the city that is coordinated with regional plans and targets growth areas in 21<sup>st</sup> century occupations***

In order to position itself to take advantage of modern workforce and business needs, Rome will work with its economic development partners to devise a detailed recruitment plan targeting "creative class" employees from within the region and from elsewhere in the country. The city will continue to market the excellence of its local schools and support for quality of life programs and other traditional workforce development issues.

**Time frame:** Medium term  
**Potential stakeholders/partners:** Rome Industrial Development Corporation, Griffiss Local Development Corporation, Mohawk Valley Edge, Oneida County Workforce Development Department, city of Rome  
**Estimated costs:** Staff time to participate more actively and establish a city presence among workforce development organizations  
**Potential funding sources:** US HUD Community Development Block Grant

**Action 3.2      *Continue to provide services which support and enable employment including childcare and public transportation***

The city will consult with the regional child care coordinating agency and key child care providers in the city to determine unmet need for child care. The city will develop an objective plan to invest resources strategically to meet these needs

through subsidies and development of new facilities to meet emerging needs. The city and its VIP transit service will also consult with the regional public transportation providers evaluate the potential for a transportation and reverse- commuting plan to maximize access to jobs for Rome residents and a corresponding strategy to invest the city's financial resources to meet these needs.

<b>Time frame:</b>	Long term
<b>Potential stakeholders/partners:</b>	City of Rome
<b>Estimated costs:</b>	\$15,000
<b>Potential funding sources:</b>	US Department of Transportation, US HUD Community Development Block Grant and other HUD and Health and Human Services childcare initiatives

**Action 3.3      *Ensure that a well-defined and efficient school-to-work transition program is in place, and take advantage of the state of the art high school***

The city will support efforts by the school district to ensure that the public schools are a path to success for Rome's existing residents and an important recruitment tool for new families. The city will continue to support programs that strengthen the continuum of quality learning opportunities that stretch from the preschool years through preparation for higher education and the work force. Pre-kindergarten, followed by increased academic achievement in the school system and higher education attainment, can greatly increase income and life opportunities for city residents of all racial backgrounds and income levels.

The quality of the education system is a critical part of improving the city of Rome's business climate. Today there is increasing demand for skilled labor. As the school district adjusts to new standards, the city will support and augment programs that enable students to leave school ready for success in a high skill, information-based economy. By establishing a more formal partnership with the school districts, the city will encourage all partners to focus on the following strategies.

The city will work to encourage a focus on technology/business preparation Regent's college entrance course of study by:

- Supporting development of community-driven school enhancement strategies (arts enrichment, sports enrichment, tutoring, after-school programming) that result in sustainable increases in academic achievement for students
- Continuing to support community-based and school based programs that expand the student's base of learning
- Encouraging closer partnerships between the school districts and the business and college communities in creating school based programs
- Facilitating strategic partnerships between the school districts and economic development organizations to better prepare children and youth for the world of work



## Goal Three: Modern Workforce

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Rome must recognize that its state-of-the-art high school is an economic development and workforce recruitment and retention tool. Improvements in other educational facilities must also be a priority.

<b>Time frame:</b>	Short term
<b>Potential stakeholders/partners:</b>	City of Rome, School District
<b>Estimated costs:</b>	Staff time to be more engaged in education issues and \$5,000 in funds to assist in paying for grant application for 21 <sup>st</sup> Century Learning Center from the United State Department of Education
<b>Potential funding sources:</b>	City of Rome, Rome City School District, NYS Education Department, US Department of Education



### **Goal Four: Housing of Choice**

***The city of Rome will enjoy and offer unparalleled housing choice and quality to residents of all ages and backgrounds by rewarding reinvestment and assertively enforcing city codes***

Rome will promote vibrant neighborhoods city-wide by encouraging reinvestment in existing homes and accommodating a wide range of housing development options for residents of all income groups. The city will stimulate the development of new market rate housing, improve the quality of rental housing and facilitate density reduction in targeted neighborhoods.

The city must understand that maintaining a high quality of life in residential neighborhoods is critical to attracting the niche companies the city and its economic development partners are seeking. Demolishing blighted properties, making improvements to historic structures, making land available to abutting property owners and creating pocket parks or off street parking areas should be considered. Rome's built environment accommodated a peak population considerably higher than that of today. Population loss has occurred at a much faster pace than building and structure loss.

No community that loses twenty percent of its population can be expected to avoid a housing crisis. In Rome's case that crisis is reflected in a high vacancy rate, limited new housing development, deferred maintenance, neighborhood blight, and loss of historic character. As the city's population has become increasingly income stratified, with a greater percentage of low and moderate income families, some neighborhoods have seen rapidly shrinking rates of home ownership and significant conversion activity to create more multi-family rental units.

#### **Action 4.1 Create sites for new high quality residential development through land use policies, land banking, demolition of former base housing and other appropriate tools**

The closure of Griffiss Air Base resulted in significant vacant housing stock, including city-wide vacancy rates of 15% for rental units; 3% for owner-occupied units and a 30% decrease in home values. While vacancy rates are high, particularly for rental units, Rome has few high-quality "mid-market" options suitable for the employees of high tech firms its economic development partners are working to attract.

Local economic development professionals have identified the absence of high-quality rental property in the middle and upper income categories as a core challenge in attracting new businesses. The quality of rental property is identified as an obstacle by many corporate leaders and workers considering Rome as a business location. As the city expands its array of technology companies, the lack of product mix will also be a problem for newly recruited knowledge workers who use rental property, especially townhomes and condominiums, on a transitional basis until they purchase their first home in the community.

To maximize the potential benefits of economic growth, Rome needs to attract not only firms, but their employees and families as residents. The city's zoning and land use policies will support the development of new high-quality single- and multi-family

housing sites. The new zoning ordinance will create opportunities for new housing development and provides for the development of attached single family (townhome) development as of right or under a Planned Development District in any of the city's residential neighborhoods.

The former Woodhaven base housing provides an ideal opportunity to meet mid-market housing needs. Since the base closure in 1995, these vacant structures have not been maintained or stabilized, and many have deteriorated beyond repair. Demolition of the entire development would provide a significant 73+ acre housing development area that would meet the needs of a market that Rome currently does not serve. Assuming a development density of 2-3 units per acre, and loss of approximately 30% of land area for infrastructure, this area could accommodate approximately 100 to 150 new residential structures.

<b>Time Frame:</b>	Medium to long term
<b>Stakeholders/partners:</b>	City of Rome, private housing developers
<b>Estimated costs:</b>	Demolition: \$3.5 million (\$13,000/unit) Development: \$10,000,000 - \$15,000,000 (\$100,000 per unit)
<b>Potential funding sources:</b>	Federal Home Loan Banks' Affordable Housing Program, the Affordable Housing Partnerships' Affordable Home Ownership Development Program and the Community Investment Program, the NYS Division of Housing and Community Renewals' HOME Program, and the US HUD Community Development Block Grant

## **Action 4.2 Enhance tax and other financial incentives for reinvestment in rental and owner-occupied residential units**

Increased investment in existing residential properties is critical to the health of the city's neighborhoods and tax base. Many neighborhoods, particularly those with a high proportion of rental properties, are suffering from blight and decay. One tool to address this issue is the city's Neighborhood Improvement Program. This program provides funding to rehabilitate substandard housing and bring units into compliance with New York State Building Codes.

The program primarily targets neighborhoods in which more than half of residents are low income. Only owner-occupied structures are eligible for assistance. The HomeOwnership Center, a non-profit organization serving Oneida and Herkimer Counties, also provides rehabilitation assistance to low-income homeowners in Rome by providing low-interest home improvement loans. These efforts have contributed to the rehabilitation of over 1,500 units since their inception.

To address substandard housing conditions, the city's existing Neighborhood Improvement Program will be augmented. Specific neighborhoods will be targeted for assistance each year to maximize the impact of the city's investment. Where appropriate, the city will target the same neighborhood for both the Real Property and Neighborhood Improvement Programs in the same year to encourage significant improvement in a single area. To supplement these efforts, Rome will investigate funding sources to develop a rehabilitation program for rental units.



## Goal Four: Housing of Choice

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The city will work to reduce vacancy rates and oversupply of units through recruitment of new residents, conversion of multi-unit structures and selective demolition of dilapidated units. Rome will work to reduce the percentage of absentee owners of investment property through conversion to homeownership, concentrated code enforcement, neighborhood organization pressure, and incentives for local residents to own investment property.

In addition to assistance programs, Rome offers tax incentives to property owners to encourage investment in residential properties. The city has implemented the New York State 421(f) tax relief program. This tax incentive program provides an exemption for the increase in value resulting from a capital improvement that costs \$3,000 or more and increases a property's value by at least \$5,000. The incentive can be used for buildings that are at least five years old and is limited to the first \$80,000 increase in value. Upon application to the assessor, the property owner may receive a 100% exemption on the increased assessed value of the property resulting from the improvement for the first year. The exemption decreases by 12.5% every year for seven years.

Rome has also adopted the NYS Real Property Tax Law 485(b) tax credit program and the historic building rehabilitation tax incentive.<sup>2</sup> This program allows the city to give a property owner a 50% tax exemption on the increase in assessed valuation in the first year after an improvement has been made, decreasing at 5% per year for a period of ten years.

The city offers these tax incentive programs, but they are not widely advertised. The city will prepare a simple brochure targeted to property owners considering home improvements. The brochure will describe the program benefits and other benefits of property improvements and resulting neighborhood enhancement. The brochure will be mailed to property owners throughout the city, be made available locally at hardware and home improvement stores, home improvement contractors and other appropriate locations. The city codes office will give the brochure to individuals applying for permits for residential improvement projects.

<b>Time Frame:</b>	Short term and ongoing
<b>Stakeholders/partners:</b>	City of Rome, Rome Clean and Green, Mohawk Valley Community Action Agency, Property Owners, Residents
<b>Estimated costs:</b>	\$400,000
<b>Potential funding sources:</b>	US HUD Community Development Block Grant, NYS Division of Housing and Community Renewal's HOME Program, Housing Development Fund program, and Residential Emergency Services to Offer (Home) Repairs to the Elderly (RESTORE), the UD Department of Agriculture's (New York Rural Development Rural Housing Services) Homeownership Loans, Rural Rental Housing Loans, Home Improvement and Repair Loans and Grants, and Housing Preservation Grant Program

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<sup>2</sup> This tax incentive is technically an amendment to the New York State Real Property Tax Law.

**Action 4.3    *Encourage the formation of a non-profit housing organization as a tool to expand housing development capacity***

The Neighborhood Improvement and HOME Programs have created significant results, but more is needed to reverse the decline of Rome's neighborhoods, and the city does not have the resources or capacity to complete this effort alone. The city recognizes the complexity of widespread neighborhood revitalization efforts and the need to partner with grassroots organizations and neighborhoods to correctly identify needs, investigate resources, and take specific actions to recapture pride and preserve the city's unique identity.

The city has identified the need for a non-profit organization to address its specific housing and neighborhood preservation issues. Rome is working to support local efforts to create a Neighborhood Preservation Company. Rome Clean and Green, a local volunteer organization that has shown considerable capacity and a growing record of successful community renewal efforts, submitted an application to New York State Division of Housing and Community Renewal to become a Neighborhood Preservation Company. The city assisted with application preparation and provided letters of support.

If funded, the Neighborhood Preservation Company will focus on Rome's downtown and central city neighborhoods, working to eliminate blight and decay and stimulate reinvestment and community pride. It will work with the city and other existing organizations such as Utica Neighborhood Housing Service and Mohawk Valley Community Action.

The approach will target specific blocks of neighborhood and commercial areas to rehabilitate, one house or structure at a time, building on the efforts of the city's Neighborhood Improvement and Real Property Programs. The organization seeks to leverage funding and manage partnerships between elected officials and business and civic leaders to return some of the 140+ properties that the city now owns to productive use and to encourage property donations from private owners for rehabilitation and sale. Special funding programs and lending rates will enable the organization to remodel and sell the buildings at competitive prices to residents and businesses to get them back on the tax rolls.

Once formed, the Neighborhood Preservation Company should work to develop a local collaboration of banking and other lending entities to offer discounted fees and downpayment requirements. It should also be considered as the operating agency for the "Houses to Homes" initiative described in action 4.4.

The city will work closely with the newly formed housing organization to complete a formal market assessment to determine optimum product for affordable and market rate housing including use of manufactured home products. Part of this effort should focus on identifying strategies that enable people to age in place in the community, and the development of market rate or mixed income senior housing. It is possible that such housing for seniors could be developed in surplus elementary schools or the former Rome Free Academy building and site.

**Time Frame:** Short term  
**Stakeholders/partners:** City of Rome, Rome Clean and Green, Local Banks, Local Realtors



**Estimated costs:** \$65,000 annually for administration  
**Potential funding sources:** NYS Division of Housing and Community Renewal, Federal Home Loan Bank's Affordable Housing Program, the Affordable Housing Partnerships' Affordable Home Ownership Development Program and the Community Investment Program, NYS Division of Housing and Community Renewal's HOME Program, and US HUD Community Development Block Grant

**Action 4.4 Support the efforts of a non-profit housing organization to develop and implement a "Houses to Homes" initiative to maximize the rate of homeownership**

This initiative will promote homeownership and a high level of accountable local ownership of investment property as critical variables in the stabilization of neighborhoods. The city will work to maximize the rate of homeownership by providing ongoing financial support to capitalize and operate the owner-occupied housing rehabilitation loan fund and provide direct assistance to qualified homebuyers.

The housing organization will explore development of employer-sponsored homeownership incentives with the school district, hospital and other major employers. City staff will participate in a series of community conversations with these institutions about their interest and ability to offer financial and other support for employees to purchase and rehabilitate a home near their workplace. An appropriate action plan to implement these programs will be developed or refined.

The program will encourage homeownership by supporting existing homebuyer incentive programs and homeownership education programs. Mohawk Valley Community Action operates Rome's HOME Program, a low-income homebuyer program, with funding from the city. This program provides assistance to help offset the cost of purchasing a home in the city. Homebuyer incentive programs provide financial assistance to residents for down payment and closing costs, making home prices more affordable. Homeowner education programs provide prospective buyers with information about a wide range of housing issues including home buying, home maintenance financing and budgeting. The city will actively promote the efforts of the HOME Program.

**Time Frame:** Short term  
**Stakeholders/partners:** City of Rome, Mohawk Valley Community Action Agency, local banks, local realtors  
**Estimated costs:** \$400,000 Homeownership Assistance  
\$300,000 for incentive grants  
**Potential funding sources:** Federal Home Loan Banks Affordable Housing Program, the Affordable Housing Partnerships' Affordable Home Ownership Development Program and the Community Investment Program, NYS Division of Housing and Community Renewals HOME Program, US HUD Community Development Block Grant

**Action 4.5 Facilitate location of professional offices, live/work space and artist studio space in the predominantly residential neighborhood immediately north of downtown**

The residential neighborhood immediately north of Rome's central business district consists mostly of large older homes, many of which have been converted into apartments, retail space and offices. During the planning process, this area was identified by many residents as "the Heart of Rome," an area that until recently was a healthy, strong neighborhood that exemplified what was good about living in Rome. Since the base closure, the neighborhood has experienced high vacancy rates resulting in spot blight and a perception of safety problems due to an increase in nuisance issues such as noise and garbage.

This neighborhood includes the Bellamy-Gansevoort Historic District, which has numerous historically significant buildings. Preservation of this neighborhood is critical to preserving the historic character of Rome, and the current housing market cannot support all of the units in this area. The city will create a new zoning district to allow a mix of residential and professional/arts uses in this neighborhood. The goals of this strategy will be to increase investment in the area, reduce the inventory of housing units and provide space for small businesses, professionals and artists in close proximity to downtown.

In the future, additional properties in the district that are acquired by the city through tax foreclosure may be converted into suitable space and sold to artisans or owner occupants with an artist/loft rental.

**Time Frame:** Short term  
**Stakeholders/partners:** City of Rome  
**Estimated costs:** Included in the zoning update  
**Potential funding sources:** City of Rome

**Action 4.6 Encourage Residential Reuse of Historic Structures**

The city and its historic preservation partners will provide historic preservation-related technical assistance to both existing and prospective property owners in Rome. Services for existing and prospective property owners would include information about:

- The range of existing incentive programs for property rehabilitation (paint programs, facade programs, etc.)
- Information about negotiating the city's planning and zoning permit and review processes
- Status reports on new or pending incentive programs (such as the state and federal historic homeowner tax credits)
- Where property owners can get design assistance and replacement parts for missing historic building elements
- Hiring an architect or contractor
- What it means to be in a historic district (National or State Register listed and local)



- Marketing older and historic homes for sale
- Researching your historic house
- Building conservation techniques

Additional services for prospective property owners (and realtors working in Rome's historic neighborhoods) could include distribution of materials about the history of Rome, its neighborhoods and buildings; amenities and services in various neighborhoods of Rome (churches, community groups and services, restaurants, schools; stores, public transportation etc.).

<b>Time frame:</b>	Short term
<b>Potential stakeholders/partners:</b>	City of Rome, historic preservation organizations, NYS Preservation League, National Trust for Historic Preservation
<b>Estimated costs:</b>	\$5,000 for outreach materials and staff time to coordinate the effort
<b>Potential funding sources:</b>	NYS Preservation League, National Trust for Historic Preservation

**Action 4.7    *Implement zoning changes to prohibit conversions of residential property from single family to multi-tenant and regulate the development or expansion of accessory uses***

The city of Rome has a significant over-supply of housing, particularly rental housing. With nearly a 15% rental vacancy rate, the market would not support the creation of additional rental units. Past practices have allowed for converting single- and two-family residential properties into apartments, thereby increasing the number of units in the city without increasing the population or demand for such units.

The community has identified these converted homes as contributing to the deterioration of Rome's housing stock and values. While the city would prefer homes to be owner-occupied, it also recognizes the need for affordable housing options and does not intend to limit those options. However, the city also recognizes the need to stabilize housing values and reduce oversupply of housing units in Rome today.

The city will establish zoning policies that discourage the conversion of single- and two-family homes into multi-family residences. New zoning policies, coupled with housing programs that promote owner-occupancy and maintenance of single family homes (see housing-related actions) will provide Rome with several tools for stabilizing the housing market.

<b>Time frame:</b>	Short term
<b>Potential stakeholders/partners:</b>	City of Rome
<b>Estimated costs:</b>	Included in the zoning update
<b>Potential funding sources:</b>	City of Rome



## Goal Five: 21<sup>st</sup> Century Infrastructure

**The city of Rome will maintain and expand a 21<sup>st</sup> century municipal infrastructure that is an incentive for housing and economic development goals**

The city's public infrastructure is generally in good condition and keeping it that way will be important for future community stability. Most of the plan recommendations focus on transportation enhancements that restore pedestrian routes, add multi-modal elements and address capacity issues. In addition the city will explore the development of alternative energy supplies including wind and fuel cell technologies that cut the cost of operation for commercial partners and for city facilities such as the planned recreation campus.

### **Action 5.1 Develop a multimodal transportation center at the Rome Train Station**

In August 2001, the city of Rome began an initiative to create a multimodal transportation center at the Rome Train Station, an underused but historically significant building with a special place in the hearts of Rome residents. The station requires extensive rehabilitation and restoration. The city has implemented the initial rehabilitation efforts, which included safety improvements and alterations needed to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Future efforts include interior restoration and the integration of other transportation modes into the facility.



The city will develop the train station as a multi-modal transportation center that will better connect the waterfront and the train station to downtown and nearby commercial districts, Fort Stanwix, Griffiss Business and Technology Park and regional draws such as Turning Stone Casino. The transportation center will be served by rail, transit, intercity coach and taxi. Trail and water access facilities will create recreational access to the station. In order to ensure a daytime presence at the station, the city will move its VIP transit headquarters to the train station. VIP's current facilities are too small for its operation, so the move will not only protect and enhance investments now being made in the station but provide for improved operations for the city's transit agency.

**Time frame:**

Medium term

**Potential stakeholders/partners:**

City of Rome, NYS Department of Transportation, recreational venues, cultural attractions

**Estimated costs:** \$3.8 million  
**Potential funding sources:** City of Rome, US Department of Transportation

**Action 5.2    *Develop a street classification and truck route system***

The city of Rome does not currently have a formal street classification strategy. Level of use of streets, along with condition, currently drives investment in street improvements, rather than a conscious policy to steer traffic onto specific streets and away from others. A street classification system would help the city determine appropriate roadway investments, prioritize street improvements, guide the installation and operational parameters of traffic control devices and address residents' concerns of truck and through traffic in neighborhoods. For example, in most communities, many traffic calming strategies (measures implemented to discourage non-local traffic) are limited to local streets and are not used for collectors or arterials, which are intended to carry higher volumes of traffic. Conversely, a traffic signal would be considered only at intersections that include a collector or an arterial because traffic lights are tools to increase the carrying capacity of a roadway.

The city of Rome will review its street system to determine the current function of its roadways, classifying each as an arterial, collector/distributor or local street. It will then consider what the desired function of the streets is, given surrounding land uses, access needs of commercial, employment, educational and residential uses and availability of alternative routes. In order to change the function of certain streets, the city would make policy and network operational changes to the street system that would move a higher percentage of traffic off designated local streets and onto arterials and collector/distributors.

Residents of several neighborhoods described the need to remove truck traffic from residential streets. Rome will develop a designated truck route system and prohibit all non-local truck traffic from local residential streets. Due to their heavy weights, trucks are responsible for a very high percentage of wear and tear on streets, so limiting truck access will decrease the maintenance needs on non-truck routes. The city will limit trucks weighing more than 10,000 pounds to truck routes except as needed to reach local destinations. Trucks will be required to take the shortest route from the designated truck route to the end destination. Residential streets will be off limits to these vehicles, unless their origin/destination is on that street or an adjacent street. Violators will be subject to traffic penalties.

**Time frame:** Short term  
**Potential stakeholders/partners:** City of Rome  
**Estimated costs:** \$5,000 for signage, staff time  
**Potential funding sources:** City of Rome

**Action 5.3    *Encourage the relocation of the Oneida County Airport to Griffiss***

The city of Rome will continue to work with Oneida County, Mohawk Valley EDGE and neighboring jurisdictions to pursue relocation of the Oneida County Airport to the Griffiss Business and Technology Park's airport facilities. Though the Griffiss site does not include a passenger terminal, it includes a superior runway and hangar facilities and is more centrally located to the urban areas of the county. The current



facility in Whitestown is used only for general aviation after scheduled passenger service was ended in June 2002 due to low patronage.

In November 2002, Oneida County committed to further explore the long-standing proposal to move the airport by passing legislation to advance county sponsorship of the Oneida County Airport at the Griffiss Business and Technology Park (the former site of the air base). The sponsorship designation was important to the future use of Griffiss because it allows the county to seek funding through the federal Military Airport Program, which provides financial assistance to the civilian sponsor of military airfields in the process of conversion to civilian or joint-use airfields.

The recruitment of Empire Air as a major anchor tenant for the airport operation will facilitate the relocation of the county airport. Griffiss will likely be more expensive to operate than the current facility in Whitestown, and Empire Air operations defray should some or all of this increased cost and strengthen the facility's market position to attract new development to the airport and business park.

<b>Time frame:</b>	Medium term
<b>Potential stakeholders/partners:</b>	City of Rome, Mohawk Valley EDGE, Oneida County, city of Utica
<b>Estimated costs:</b>	Staff time for city share
<b>Potential funding sources:</b>	U.S. Military Airport Program

### **Action 5.4 Investigate the feasibility of the development of the West Rome Connector**



A number of documents including the December 1996 Traffic Circulation Plan for Redevelopment of Griffiss Business and Technology Park have called for the development of a new “western connector” to would provide a direct link between northwest and southwest Rome. The proposal calls for a new roadway that would extend from Turin Street at Potter Road to Route 69. The

roadway would intersect West Thomas Street just west of its intersection with Gifford Road and Jervis Avenue. It would then parallel Gifford Road to an intersection with Route 69.

Rome has experienced significant population and employment decreases since this facility was initially proposed, which will impact the demand for the proposed connector. Despite these changes, local residents and businesses have indicated that the facility is still needed. The next step in the process is completion of an updated alternatives analysis and preliminary environmental assessment that would

consider the former plans for the connector and the changes in population and employment since then to determine the current need and desired capacity for such a facility. The analysis would include traffic counts/patterns, expected land use impacts and environmental considerations of construction as the portion of the proposed alignment between West Thomas and Route 69 crosses a Type I wetland.

**Time frame:** Medium term  
**Potential stakeholders/partners:** City of Rome, NYS Department of Transportation  
**Estimated costs:** \$50,000 for the feasibility analysis  
**Potential funding sources:** City of Rome, US Department of Transportation

**Action 5.5    *Develop a fire protection facility plan***

Fire response time, particularly for the Outside District is a key safety concern for the city of Rome. The city operates three fire stations, the Central Station at 158 Black River Boulevard, another facility at 1004 Laurel Street and a third at Griffiss Business and Technology Park. The Black River and Laurel stations are staffed with professional fire fighters 24 hours per day and the Griffiss Station is staffed for eight hours per day. The Laurel Street Station is poorly located, several blocks from major streets, increasing response time.

The city will develop a comprehensive fire protection facility plan to determine appropriate future locations and staffing needs to serve the 72.5 square mile protection area. The plan is expected to consider the impacts of closing the Laurel Street facility and creating two new single-pump satellite stations to better serve West and North Rome. The plan will also address a long term staffing strategy, including the operating needs for the Griffiss Station. As development at Griffiss Business and Technology Park increases, particularly aviation uses including the potential relocation of the county airport to Griffiss, the city may need to increase staff coverage from the current eight hours.

The plan will evaluate capital and operating costs as well as potential funding sources. Operating costs for the proposed satellite stations are not expected to be significantly higher than for the existing Laurel Street Station. The city anticipates that some funding for construction of the satellites could be recouped by selling the Laurel Street Station after it is closed.

**Time frame:** Short term  
**Potential stakeholders/partners:** City of Rome, Griffiss Local Development Corporation  
**Estimated costs:** \$20,000  
**Potential funding sources:** Federal Emergency Management Agency, legislative member item, Community Development Block Grants, city of Rome

**Action 5.6    *Evaluate need for water and sewer extensions in the Outside District***

For areas determined suitable for new development in the Outside District, the city will proceed with water and sewer studies. The studies will determine service needs, capacity of the existing systems to supply those needs, costs, benefits, and funding



## Goal Five: 21<sup>st</sup> Century Infrastructure

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and financing issues. Potential funding mechanisms for infrastructure for the business park include the NYS DOT Industrial Access Program. The Empire State Development Corporation may be able to provide assistance in development of the business park, based on its stated economic development priorities.

<b>Time frame:</b>	Short term
<b>Potential stakeholders/partners:</b>	City of Rome
<b>Estimated costs:</b>	Incorporated in current budgets for responsible departments
<b>Potential funding sources:</b>	City of Rome



### **Goal Six: Healthy Community & Environment**

***The city of Rome will become a model “healthy community” providing quality recreation, health care, arts and cultural organizations for a community of life-long learners. It will rehabilitate, protect and utilize scenic and natural features to create a pristine physical environment through stewardship and resource protection***

Parks and open spaces are fundamental features of livable and enjoyable communities. They act as neighborhood meeting places, recreational activity centers, passive recreation areas and lunch time picnic spots. Because their function is primarily “public activity,” they are most appropriately located central to residential or core areas. Parks should reinforce retail and residential areas by creating places suitable for informal gatherings or public events.

City residents are rightfully proud of their recreation and community resources. These amenities are critically important in attracting new technology companies, encouraging youth and building neighborhood and community cohesiveness. In a city the size of Rome, however, it is challenging and expensive to maintain state-of-the-art facilities in each neighborhood. Centralization of services, including development of a recreation campus, may help to sustain these facilities in the future.

Although Rome is a very large land area, it must be concerned about preserving open space and protecting prime agricultural lands and critical environmental areas including the Rome Sand Plains and other wetlands. The potential for typical sprawl development to occur in the Outside District is great and could further erode the viability of the inner city. Careful designation of developable land in the Outside District and judicious development of public infrastructure in support of it will be an important element of this plan. There are unique opportunities for carefully located and designed development adjacent to environmentally sensitive land that can use these resources more fully for recreation or environmental interpretation.

**Action 6.1    *Implement the adopted Parks Master Plan and evaluate the function of current recreation resources and identify those that conflict with neighborhood quality of life***

The city of Rome recently completed a Parks Master Plan (2001-2015) that inventoried existing parks and recreational facilities and identified priorities for future growth. The purpose of the Plan is to guide the future development, rehabilitation and growth of the city’s parks and recreation system. The Parks Master Plan assessed park and recreation facility needs based on National Recreation and Park Association (NPRA) standards and citizen input through park user surveys, public meetings and annual attendance figures and reports. The city is now working to implement the Parks Master Plan.

In addition, the city will review its inventory of municipally-owned lands to identify parcels such as road ends and vacant lots that can be integrated into the open space network. Pocket park or mini-park amenities may include children’s play equipment, natural habitat areas and formal gardens. As appropriate and desirable, the city will designate small parcels of land within residential blocks for tot

playgrounds, although there is concern that the limited function and high maintenance costs of these facilities could present a deterrent to their upkeep unless voluntary community maintenance partnerships can be formed.

<b>Time Frame:</b>	Ongoing
<b>Stakeholders/partners:</b>	City of Rome
<b>Estimated costs:</b>	\$378,000
<b>Potential funding sources:</b>	NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation's Environmental Protection Fund, US Department of Transportation's Transportation Enhancements Program, National Recreational Trails Program, Municipal Budget, The Conservation Fund's American Greenway Grants

**Action 6.2    *Extend the NYS Canalway Trail through Rome - Define Process to select preferred alignment for the extension of the NYS Canalway trail***

The Parks Master Plan identifies the need for linear parks/open space/trails based on National Recreation and Park Association guidelines and assessed needs. The Mohawk River and Erie Canal offer considerable potential for dramatic trails or linear parks that would create considerable recreational amenities for city residents of all ages.

The starting point for the city's trail development efforts will be an extension of the NYS Canalway Trail through the city. The New York State Canalway Trail System is a network of approximately 230 miles of multi-use trails across upstate New York. Major segments are adjacent to the



New York State Canal System or follow parallel portions of the original canals of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This network was created through cooperative initiatives between the New York State Canal Corporation, volunteers, local governments, the New York Parks and Conservation Association and federal and state agencies. When complete, the trail will extend over 500 miles from Buffalo to Albany, New York.

The gap in the trail at Rome is an important one because Rome has tremendous historical significance as the starting point for construction of the original Erie Canal. Two potential alignments are currently under consideration by the city and its trail partners. One alignment would follow the path of the original portage route or "Great Carry," connecting trail users to Fort Stanwix, East Dominick Street and the



## Goal Six: Healthy Community & Environment

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Rome central business district, proceeding to Wood Creek, and then continuing to the Erie Canal Village via Erie Boulevard. This alignment would provide users with additional insights into the historic importance of the canal and the role of the city of Rome in our nation's history.

The other proposed alignment would follow the shoreline of the present-day Erie Canal to the Muck Road Boat Launch and cut across the Fort Bull Wetlands along an existing rail bed before continuing to Erie Canal Village. This alignment provides a more traditional trail environment without a deviation onto city streets. Either extension would begin in Stanwix where the trail currently ends, cross the Erie Canal on the Mill Street Bridge, follow the north shore of the canal through the proposed recreation campus and cross the Mohawk River at the pedestrian bridge in Bellamy Harbor Park.

The short term strategy for completing the trail will be to complete the connection along the Great Carry. Because much of this trail will be on existing city streets and sidewalks, construction costs will be lower, requiring only signage, (not trail construction) over much of the route. The city has already secured state funding for the trail connection between Stanwix and Bellamy Harbor Park. The long term strategy will be to construct a waterfront/Fort Bull Wetlands extension of the trail providing a recreational trail separate from city streets that will improve access to the city's natural resources.

The city will continue to work with the New York State Canal Corporation, the Canalway Trails Association of New York and state and federal agencies to refine the final trail alignment and secure funding for construction.

<b>Time Frame:</b>	Medium term
<b>Stakeholders/partners:</b>	City of Rome, New York State Canal Corporation, Canalway Trails Association of New York
<b>Estimated costs:</b>	\$1.5 million
<b>Potential funding sources:</b>	NYS Canal Corporation, NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation's Environmental Protection Fund, US Department of Transportation's Transportation Enhancements Program, National Recreational Trails Program, Municipal Budget, The Conservation Fund's American Greenway Grants

### **Action 6.3 Environmental Design Standards**

Rome will adopt environmentally-friendly park maintenance and development practices including the retention of natural and unique features, such as trees and vegetation and provision of seasonal interest through choice of plant material or amenities. The city will work with neighborhood associations to select materials, textures, colors, site furniture and public art that reflect the neighborhood's history, current status and future. The city will provide appropriate signage to locate and identify park spaces and otherwise enhance safety and a sense of security through appropriate park design.

<b>Time frame:</b>	Short term
<b>Potential stakeholders/partners:</b>	City of Rome

**Estimated costs:** Staff time dedicated to the effort  
**Potential funding sources:** No additional cost

**Action 6.4 Encourage the development of a permanent entertainment venue in Oneida County**

Periodically Griffiss has been used to host events and concerts, ranging in scope from meetings of model airplane enthusiasts to Woodstock '99, which attracted 250,000 people to the city. The city considers these events an important part of its strategy to attract visitors to Rome and the broader region. The long-term availability of Griffiss for such events is uncertain; however, the city and its public partners including Oneida County and GLDC have identified the need for a permanent venue to support local and regional events including concerts, auto shows and festivals.

The city will work cooperatively with Oneida County, GLDC and private partners such as Vernon Downs Race Track and Turning Stone Casino to establish a permanent entertainment venue in Oneida County.

**Time Frame:** Medium term  
**Stakeholders/partners:** City of Rome, Mohawk Valley Edge, Oneida County, Turning Stone Casino, Vernon Downs Race Track  
**Estimated costs:** Staff time (city share)  
**Potential funding sources:** City of Rome

**Action 6.5 Protect critical areas from damage through stewardship and resource protection. Implement agricultural, open space and natural resource protections in the Outside District**

The city of Rome has a wealth of natural resources including agricultural lands, the Rome Sand Plains, and many wetlands in the Outside District. The current trend in New York State is a loss of farmland/agricultural land to development. While open space in Rome may appear attractive to development, it includes critical environmental areas and serves as the open space that makes Rome “a city in the country,” an important asset identified by many people during the planning process.

Protecting the natural and agricultural resources in the Outside District will protect the integrity of the Rome Sand Plains and the quality of the wetlands in the Outside District. Limiting the amount of land in the Outside District that is available for development will enable the city to focus on redeveloping its inner core, an area that already has significant land available for commercial and industrial development. Key benefits of this approach are reduced cost to serve new development (infrastructure is already in place); redevelopment of blighted sites to improve the appearance of the city; and enhanced tax base expansion due to higher property values and tax rates in the Inside District.

The city of Rome will implement agricultural and environmental protections through its zoning laws and infrastructure extension policies. The city's new Zoning Ordinance should include both an agricultural zone and an environmental



## Goal Six: Healthy Community & Environment

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protection zone. At a minimum the environmental protection zone should cover all of the Rome Sand Plains, Type I and Type II wetlands and 100-year floodplains in the Outside District. Agricultural zones should cover flat, high-quality soil types suitable for farmland.

<b>Time frame:</b>	Short term
<b>Potential stakeholders/partners:</b>	City of Rome, American Farmland Trust, NYS DEC
<b>Estimated costs:</b>	Included in the zoning update
<b>Potential funding sources:</b>	City of Rome

### **Action 6.6    *Implement the Urban Forestry Plan***

The city of Rome has established an Urban Forestry Master Plan. The plan concludes that the majority of the city's trees are in fair to good condition, but it is evident that a significant portion are in decline. Only a small percentage fall into the excellent category, while a significant number fall into the poor category. With 80% of the city's urban forest classified as mature it is important that new trees be planted now so that the tree cover does not to dwindle as older trees die or are removed. The priorities identified in the Forestry Plan, which are summarized below, should be implemented:

- Determine target areas focusing on the downtown, commercial districts, gateways and high profile areas. Areas specifically targeted include North James Street from Turin to Liberty; Fort Stanwix Park; City Hall Plaza; and South James Street
- Nurture community involvement and stewardship
- Implement an aggressive tree planting campaign
- Orchestrate forestry efforts between departments
- Complete a city-wide tree inventory
- Develop a viable maintenance strategy and budget
- Initiate an outreach program
- Incorporate horticulture and beautification responsibilities into key positions
- Become a "Tree-City USA"

The city will evaluate feasibility of developing a community garden initiative and transfer city-owned property to the neighborhood groups or nonprofit organizations responsible for coordinating the community garden initiative. The city will work with these organizations to implement a beautification campaign and coordinate the comprehensive planting and maintenance of street trees.

<b>Time frame:</b>	Short term
<b>Potential stakeholders/partners:</b>	City of Rome, Environmental Protection Fund, NYS DEC
<b>Estimated costs:</b>	Included in budget for city tree planting
<b>Potential funding sources:</b>	City of Rome, Environmental Protection Fund, Clean Water/Clean Air Bond Act, Federal Farmland Protection Program

**Action 6.7    Redevelop the city's waterfront along the Erie Canal and Mohawk River for use by residents, workers and visitors.**

The city of Rome is currently in the process of developing a Local Waterfront Revitalization Program with funding from the New York State Department of State Division of Coastal Resources. In partnership with NYSDOS, the city is beginning to develop community consensus regarding the future of its waterfront and evaluating the best approach to refine State waterfront policies to reflect local conditions and circumstances. Once approved by the New York Secretary of State, the LWRP will serve to coordinate state and federal actions needed to achieve the city's waterfront goals.

Throughout the planning process the city and its residents have viewed the Erie Canal and the Mohawk River as underutilized resources and an essential part of bringing new life and energy to the community. The approaches to waterfront development in Rome are diverse and ultimately will address the creation of new economic activity, redevelopment of historic and abandoned structures, improved waterfront recreation, and restored and protected natural resources. Initial steps in the LWRP process include inventorying the city's waterfront assets and developing a strategy to increase public access, recreational facilities, boating opportunities, scenic views and waterfront development sites.

A key focus of this plan has been the expansion of recreational uses. Recreation improvements include trails, marinas, facilities for non-motorized boats, a hockey/soccer facility, and overall development of the waterfront recreation campus. Clearly, development of the Rome Family Recreation Campus (described above) is the catalyst for waterfront redevelopment. The campus will bring residents, workers and visitors to the riverfront on a daily basis throughout the year.

Successful development of the campus will be an important springboard for other waterfront development including an expanded system of trails, boat launches, recreational boating amenities, and small craft storage facilities. Development of a community boat house with facilities for crew shells, canoes and kayaks will be an important waterfront asset. In the short term the city will finalize evaluation of potential sites and begin forming partnerships with local groups and educational associations to encourage development of the facility. Improvements to the existing boat ramp on Muck Road will also receive short-term attention.

The city will work to increase amenities and facilities to attract and serve waterfront visitors. Today the city lacks a strong base of attractions, stores, restaurants, and events to attract tourists and boaters to the area. Rome will work to significantly expand waterfront amenities to provide a comprehensive set of natural, commercial, and cultural opportunities that will draw visitors to the waterfront throughout the year and expand the amount of time spent in each visit.

In planning for the waterfront, the city is committed to providing comprehensive public access to the Erie Canal and Mohawk River waterfronts. Rome will evaluate opportunities to develop a waterfront trail network that links other parts of the city to the Riverfront resources. The trail system would provide pedestrian and bicycle access. The city's long shoreline along the Erie Canal and Mohawk River is also an important part of its history and heritage which can be more effectively interpreted



## Goal Six: Healthy Community & Environment

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and promoted by Fort Stanwix and by the Erie Canal Village as part of the tourism marketing elements included in this action plan.

Across New York State, communities are establishing a strong market for residential living along the waterfront. In the long term, there are opportunities for Rome to transition waterfront properties to higher value uses potentially including redevelopment of mobile home parks and other declining neighborhoods for new residential development, including market rate townhomes or condominiums. As sites become available for new development along the waterfront, Rome will implement view corridor protections and access point provisions to ensure that new development encourages access to the water.

<b>Time frame:</b>	Short to Long Term
<b>Potential stakeholders/partners:</b>	City of Rome, Hudson Mohawk Heritage Corridor, Erie Canal Museum, US Army Corps of Engineers, Canal Corporation
<b>Estimated costs:</b>	Varies based upon projects pursued. Cost of LWRP Preparation is estimated at \$60,000
<b>Potential funding sources:</b>	US Army Corps of Engineers, Environmental Protection Funds, Empire State Development, Transportation Enhancement Program, private foundations



### **Goal Seven: Rich Urban Amenities**

***The city of Rome will be distinguished by amenity development, beautification and reinvestment that drive and sustain rising property values by focusing on quality of place and the built environment***

Rome must continue to improve the quality of its built and natural environment including its parks, riverfront, schools, and museums. The quality of residential neighborhoods and commercial districts has a direct impact on the city's competitiveness. Places that celebrate creativity and innovation in many fields including the arts have been shown to succeed in retaining and attracting modern industry and workforce. "Quality of place" is a critical factor in determining where people, particularly knowledge workers, choose to locate and invest.

New residents will increasingly demand a rich array of urban amenities including recreation, trails, attractive streetscapes, adequate parking, arts and cultural establishments, shopping and a wide variety of eating and drinking establishments. They will expect safe, vibrant and aesthetically interesting neighborhoods with strong schools.

The city has a wide array of programs and incentives to protect community character, but during the planning process residents and other stakeholders were not aware of the programs. Like community services, the preservation and enhancement of community character is an important value in contemporary economic development. Loss of visual appeal and building fabric, especially in the city's historic district would be an irreplaceable loss. The plan seeks to preserve and enhance the city's historic and cultural resources, recognizing them as critical assets and identifying qualities to attract new residents and development to the city.

#### **Action 7.1 Enhance the city's façade improvement programs**

Creating and maintaining a positive appearance in residential neighborhoods and commercial areas is critical to attracting new residents, businesses and investment. Rome will coordinate a comprehensive program of public investments and establish mechanisms to protect these public investments through revised zoning, an updated historic preservation ordinance and nuisance abatement laws.

While the city of Rome has already made some of these investments and has a functioning façade improvement program, the program needs to be re-evaluated and refocused, with an infusion of additional funding. The city will target façade improvement efforts to portions of East and West Dominick Street, North and South James Street, and the downtown. Façade funds will be available for both commercial and residential projects. The program should include free design assistance (provided by planning department staff or local architects under contract with the city of Rome), design guidelines and project review by planning department staff, the planning board, or a preservation or architectural review commission. The façade program will be actively marketed and promoted to property and business owners in targeted areas. The program could provide rebates for various facade rehabilitation activities, including:

- complete facade renovation
- exterior lighting
- new signs
- graphics
- windows
- doors
- window displays and awnings

As with the Neighborhood Improvement Program, the façade program will focus on a well-defined geographic area each year to maximize the visual impact. Increasing the physical attractiveness and marketability of Rome's industrial and commercial areas through financial and technical assistance for business property renovation should be an additional focus of this initiative.

**Time Frame:** Ongoing  
**Partners/Stakeholders:** City of Rome Planning Department, architecture firms, property owners.  
**Preliminary Budget Estimate:** \$100,000 annually  
**Potential Funding Sources:** Municipal budget, US HUD Community Development Block Grant, local banks

**Action 7.2 Create attractive gateways at the major entrances to the city**

The city of Rome will work with the New York State Department of Transportation to improve traffic circulation and develop distinctive and welcoming gateways into the city along key transportation corridors. Improvement and development of these areas will strengthen and support commercial and economic development in Rome.

Key “gateways,” (entrances and intersections) include East Dominick Street, NYS Routes 69/49/26, Black River Boulevard, Turin Street and South James Street. Poorly maintained or abandoned buildings, weed choked and otherwise untidy lots, a competing variety of signage, and unsafe pedestrian conditions at some city gateways form a poor image of the community and discourage potential investment by prospective business and property owners.

The city will partner with appropriate agencies to initiate a series of improvements, including building rehabilitation, façade improvement and/or painting, streetscape improvements, enhancement of entrances, exits and parking areas around businesses, well-designed and placed signage and overall beautification.

As described in the Central Business District Catalyst Project, the city will work with NYS DOT to return the 69/49/46 intersection to grade and establish safer conditions for pedestrians at major intersections and traffic corridors throughout the city. (The budget for this project is not included in the estimate below.)

**Time Frame:** Medium term  
**Partners/Stakeholders:** City of Rome Department of Public Works, NYS Department of Transportation, NYS



**Preliminary Budget Estimate:**

Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation.

\$125,000

**Potential Funding Sources:**

Municipal Budget, US Department of Transportation, NYS Department of Transportation

**Action 7.3 Focus the city's Real Property Program to selectively demolish vacant and deteriorated residential and commercial structures in targeted improvement areas**

Image is important to the city and its residents. Residents have a great sense of pride in the history of their city, and are concerned about the current appearance of Rome. With a staggering population decrease in the last decade, the nature of commercial business has changed, and the city has a considerable oversupply of housing. In some neighborhoods, older homes have become tax delinquent and neglected.

The city's Real Property Program provides a structure and funding for rehabilitation or selective demolition of vacant and deteriorated residential and commercial structures that the city owns through tax delinquency. This program has allowed the city to reduce residential densities and clear some sites for future development. The city will expand this program to facilitate their clearance and return to the tax rolls as contributing properties.

The city will seek additional funding to expand this program and will identify a priority neighborhood for program implementation each year. City staff will work with neighborhood representatives, business groups and non-profit organizations to aggressively market the program in the priority neighborhood. The purpose of this effort is to focus a limited financial resource in a relatively small geographic area each year to create a noticeable improvement. Selection of the priority neighborhood will be based upon need as identified in the city's building inventory, number of buildings controlled by the city, neighborhood interest and funding availability.

When a building is demolished, the city will continue its practice of selling it to a private investor or deeding the vacant site to adjacent property owners to use for driveways and expanded yards. Expanded outreach, technical, and financial assistance to property owners will ensure that the vacant site is well-maintained before and after the adjacent property owner takes title to the property. The city will require a site rehabilitation agreement and a scope of work and schedule for site improvements from the adjacent property owner before the structure is demolished.

**Time frame:**

Ongoing

**Potential stakeholders/partners:**

City of Rome

**Estimated costs:**

Build to \$450,000 annually

**Potential funding sources:**

City of Rome, Community Development Block Grant

**Action 7.4 Enhance the city's vacant/building lot maintenance efforts and implement a charge-back system to pass costs of stabilization efforts on to the property owner**

To return vacant buildings and lots to more productive use and reduce their blighting influence on neighborhoods, the city will initiate an aggressive and proactive program to ensure the continuing maintenance of vacant buildings and lots.

Program elements will include enforcement of the existing property maintenance law (and strengthening of that law if necessary); development of a vacant building registry to track vacant buildings in the city; evaluation of vacant lots in terms of redevelopment potential; and coordination with existing and new neighborhood associations and other non-profit organizations to facilitate volunteer cleanup and maintenance efforts.

**Time frame:** Short term and ongoing  
**Potential stakeholders/partners:** City of Rome  
**Estimated costs:** \$5,000 annually, plus staff time  
**Potential funding sources:** US HUD Community Development Block Grant Program, city of Rome, NYS EPF/Bond Act grants

**Action 7.5 Enhance code enforcement by placing emphasis on nuisance abatement**

During community meetings, residents consistently expressed frustration with building conditions in neighborhoods and commercial districts throughout Rome. The condition of older homes near downtown, conversions of single- and two-family dwellings to multi-family structures and business facades along the main commercial strips were raised as particular concerns. There is a clear consensus among residents that code enforcement needs to be increased with particular emphasis on nuisance abatement.

The city already has a provision in its code to address public nuisance abatement (§26-90—26-105). The city will increase its efforts to address those nuisance properties and promote the reporting of nuisance properties to the city by its residents. Rome will consider additional staff resources to increase code enforcement efforts, enabling it to proactively and consistently apply codes throughout the city rather than responding to crisis situations. In addition, the city will evaluate the need for code changes to standardize penalties for various violations, reducing the ability of the courts to lessen penalties on nuisance cases. Through zoning changes, the city will implement laws to limit actions which may be leading to declining neighborhood conditions.

**Time frame:** Short term and ongoing  
**Potential stakeholders/partners:** City of Rome  
**Estimated costs:** \$50,000 annually (if a new code enforcement officer is hired)  
**Potential funding sources:** City of Rome, Community Development Block Grant



**Action 7.6 *Preserve and enhance the city's historic and cultural resources, recognizing them as critical assets to attract new residents and development to the city***

The city of Rome's existing historic preservation regulations have become confusing, controversial and somewhat difficult to use. In order to put the city on more secure legal footing and incorporate appropriate historic preservation strategies into the city's economic development efforts, a number of steps will be taken.

The city will continue to work with preservation organizations to improve understanding of what is considered "historic" in Rome. This includes understanding of what other areas of the city may be eligible for listing in National and State Registers and improved understanding of when a property owner must submit an application for a certificate of approval (COA). The city will also evaluate the need to adopt a new historic preservation ordinance based on New York State's model historic preservation ordinance.

Rome will also consider the development of historic preservation incentives that typically include low-interest revolving loan programs, 100% or matching grants, paint programs, design assistance, zoning incentives and tax abatements, to encourage property owners to rehabilitate and appropriately maintain their older and historic buildings. Local historic building tax incentives will allow owners of eligible historic buildings to defer tax increases.

Under state legislation, both residential and commercial properties are eligible for tax incentives, but a building must be in a locally designated historic landmark or lie within a local historic district. In addition, planned rehabilitation work must be approved by the local landmark commission – and completed by the owner – before the tax incentive is granted. In addition to these local tax incentives, historic homeowner tax credit legislation is pending at the State and Federal levels.

The Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentive is available to income-producing properties that are listed or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. Income producing properties include both commercial and industrial properties as well as some residential rental property such as multi-family housing. In order to qualify for these tax credits, rehabilitation work must be formally certified by the National Park Service following submission of a formal application. A twenty percent federal tax credit is available for the certified rehabilitation of historic structures, and a ten percent federal tax credit is available for the rehabilitation of non-historic, non-residential buildings built before 1936.

The city will also consider formal designation as a Certified Local Government (CLG). To become a CLG, a municipality must adopt a local historic preservation ordinance conforming to New York State's model historic preservation ordinance and have historic preservation commission with at least five members who have education or professional experience in historic preservation or related areas such as architecture, history, real estate, engineering, and law.

Following designation as a CLG, the city will be eligible for technical assistance and for grant funding that can be used to finance local preservation projects and

activities including historic resource surveys, complete rehabilitation projects, brochures and exhibits, and educational programs.

<b>Time Frame:</b>	Medium term
<b>Partners/Stakeholders:</b>	City planning and zoning officials and staff; Preservation League of NYS, Preservation Association of Central New York, local architects, realtors, landscape architects, owners of historic property, other property owners, engineers, historians/historical society, arts organizations
<b>Preliminary Budget Estimate:</b>	\$100,000 for all recommended actions.
<b>Potential Funding Sources:</b>	Municipal budget, Preservation League of NYS, New York Planning Federation, NYS Council on the Arts

## **Action 7.7 Identify demolition policy related to historic structures**

Throughout the planning process, it was clear to the city that many stakeholders are enthusiastic about the city's architectural and industrial heritage and would like to see these resources preserved and enhanced. The city will adopt and publicize a demolition policy for historic structures. The policy will apply to the Real Property Program as well as private efforts. The proposed criteria described below establish a basic level of protection for the city's architectural and industrial resources until more formal protections are adopted. The city determined that demolition should be avoided when a:

- Building is listed individually or as part of a historic district in the National and/or State Registers of Historic Places (NRHP/SRHP)
- Building is eligible for listing in the NRHP or SRHP and has been identified as historic by existing studies and reports, such as John G. Waite's Industrial Archeology of Rome, Robert Vogel's HAER study, historic listing blue form survey data and others
- Building has been designated a National Historic Landmark or is part of an NHL designation
- Building is a locally designated landmark or in a locally designated historic district
- Building is part of an intact block in which the existing character would be negatively if demolition took place
- Building or resource contributes to a local or regional historic resource interpretation plan, and can reasonably be considered a contributor or potential contributor to interpretive programming
- Demolition of the building, particularly if no approved redevelopment plan is in place, would impair the existing architectural integrity and character of the neighborhood

Most stakeholders recognized that building demolition is often a prerequisite to development and agreed that selective demolition could be appropriate when:



- A building represents a threat to public health and safety
- The cost of brownfield mitigation and rehabilitation is more than can be reasonably recovered through the sale of the property
- A building or site is a blight on the surrounding neighborhood
- Demolition and redevelopment will result in measurable public benefit, and produce results approved by neighborhood residents

It was also clear that stakeholders value the city's architectural and industrial heritage and want the city to avoid demolition without a well-thought out and financed redevelopment plan. The following criteria were developed to protect city historic resources from ill-considered demolition:

- The building or site must have, or be part of, a redevelopment plan that has been formally approved by the Common Council and Planning Commission (including an appropriate public participation process).
- The project must have an approved site plan and financing for infill construction or have an approved and realistic financing plan in place.
- Demolition must be coordinated with key stakeholders to allow for appropriate documentation of buildings, archeological excavation, and salvage of historic building elements.
- The project must comply with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and other federal, state and local laws governing historic and archeological resources.

<b>Time frame:</b>	Short term and ongoing
<b>Potential stakeholders/partners:</b>	City of Rome
<b>Estimated costs:</b>	Staff time
<b>Potential funding sources:</b>	Governor's Office for Small Cities Community Development Block Grant Program, city of Rome, NYS EPF/Bond Act grants

***Action 7.8 Encourage partnerships between local non-profit arts, cultural and entertainment organizations to maximize Rome's arts, cultural, historic and heritage resources***

Rome benefits from the presence of a considerable number of arts, cultural and historic organizations including Jervis Public Library, Capitol Theater, Rome Art and Community Center, Rome Military Museum, Erie Canal Village and others. It is also part of the Mohawk Valley Heritage Area, the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, and the potential Northern Frontier Heritage Area, which is currently being studied.

Limited resources and coordination have constrained what these organizations can do and frustrated their boards. Effective partnering could maximize the resources available and through coordination provide additional benefits to the residents of Rome and the organizations themselves.

Although some collaborative efforts have occurred, additional efforts are needed to enable Rome to take advantage of its important arts, cultural, natural and

recreational resources. It is recommended that Rome organizations follow the recent example of National Park Service personnel at Fort Stanwix, who collaborated this year with twenty other historical, community and tourism organizations that joined together to promote numerous events in the Mohawk, Hudson and Champlain Valleys to commemorate the 225<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Revolutionary War. This initiative was known as "The Northern Campaign – Three Valleys to Freedom – Relive America's Victories of 1777."

Other examples of collaboration exist in Glens Falls, where the Lower Adirondack Regional Arts Council coordinates a wide range of programming, events, and marketing for numerous arts, culture, education, and youth organizations in the region.

Since the National Park Service identified the need for better collaboration, coordination and joint marketing to better capitalize on the area's heritage tourism potential, it would be logical for the city of Rome to work with Fort Stanwix National Parks Service staff to develop an arts and culture task force. The task force should include representatives from as many local and regional arts, culture, education, youth etc. organizations (and related businesses) as possible, with the express purpose of facilitating information exchange and collaborative planning, promotion and events. The task force should meet on a monthly basis.

<b>Time frame:</b>	Short to mid-term
<b>Stakeholders/partners:</b>	National Park Service (Fort Stanwix), Mohawk Valley Heritage Corridor, Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, Northern Frontier Heritage Area, Jervis Public Library, Capitol Theater for the Performing Arts, Rome Community Theater, Rome Art and Community Center, Rome Military Museum, Erie Canal Village, representatives from state wildlife management areas and parks, etc.
<b>Estimated costs:</b>	Staff time
<b>Potential funding sources:</b>	New York State Council on the Arts, New York State Council on the Humanities, National Endowment for the Humanities, National Endowment for the Arts

**Action 7.9 Create a virtual city**

The city of Rome will work to make more municipal functions available on the internet. Downloadable forms and applications will be available. Codes, procedures and program guidelines will be available and planning documents would be summarized and available for review and download. This is not only a convenience for users, but a clear demonstration of the city's technical capacity and understanding of the importance of technology in the modern economy.

<b>Time frame:</b>	Short to mid-term
<b>Stakeholders/partners:</b>	City of Rome
<b>Estimated costs:</b>	\$50,000
<b>Potential funding sources:</b>	City of Rome, New York State Records Administration grants



**Appendix A: Community Profile**



**Appendix B: Tax Base Analysis**



**Appendix C: Action Plan Matrix**

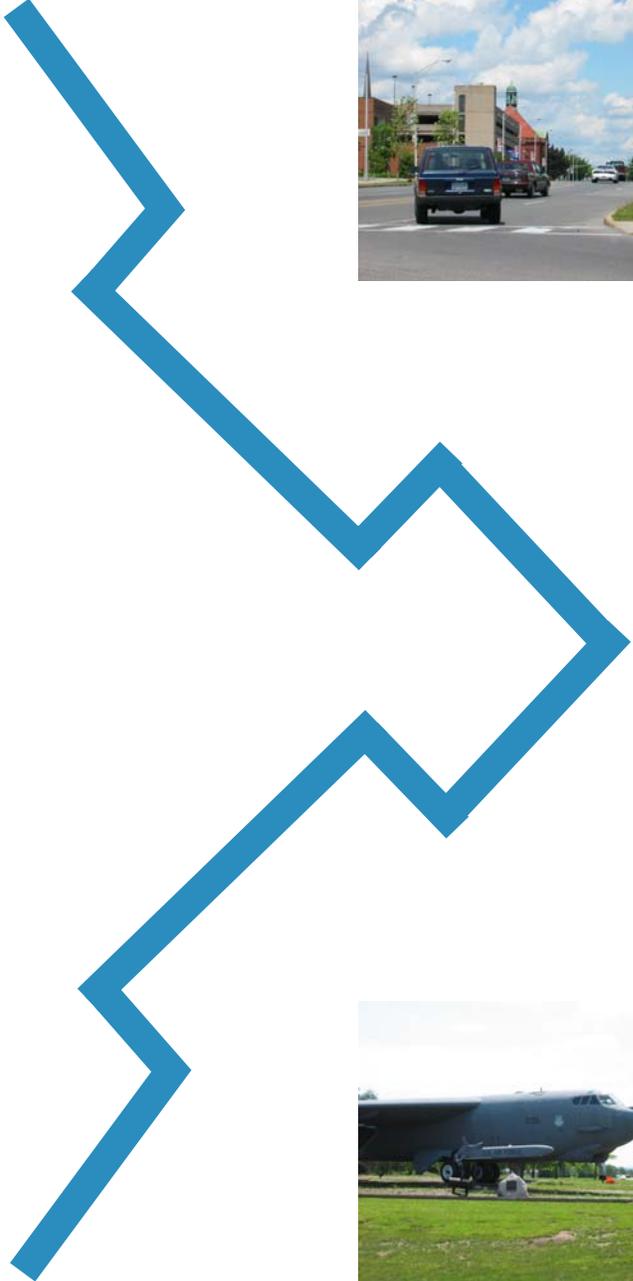


***Appendix D: Historic Preservation Memo***



**Appendix E: Truck Route Memo**





# City of Rome Comprehensive Plan

## Community Profile





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## Overview and Development History

The City of Rome is located in Oneida County at the geographic center of New York State. The 2000 Census reported a population of 34,950 people, a significant decrease from 44,350 in 1990. Rome enjoys excellent transportation access by water, road, and rail. The Erie Canal, Mohawk River and freight and passenger rail lines run through the City. Recent improvements to the City's train station have upgraded passenger facilities. The New York State Thruway is located just south of Rome providing excellent vehicular access to the City.

The City of Rome encompasses over 72 square miles, making it one of the largest land areas of any city in the nation. The City is divided into an Inner and Outside District, largely for the purposes of municipal services offered and property taxes levied, though in recent years, the lines between services offered in each district have blurred with the extension of police (although the department is only obligated to serve the Inside District) and fire protection as well as water and sewer infrastructure in some areas.



City of Rome and surrounding areas.

The Inner/Outer distinction also addresses the unique environmental conditions of the Outside District with zoning regulations in place to protect these natural resources. To a great extent, the Inside District has maintained a traditional neighborhood design with most streets and blocks planned in a grid pattern and some mixed use neighborhoods. Most construction in the Outside District has been compatible with the rural character of the district.

The City's origin is steeped in history. The Mohawk River and Wood Creek played a major role in the early development of the region, serving as the main transportation routes by canoe to the east and the west. Rome was essentially the land area between the two bodies of water, where it was necessary to portage boats. The Oneida Indians, the first people to live in the area, called it Deo-Wain-Sta or the Great Carry. Given the portage, early European settlers determined the area a crucial location for defensive purposes. These settlers constructed Fort Stanwix near the portage. Fort Stanwix ultimately played a pivotal role in the American victory at Saratoga during the Revolutionary War and is also recognized as the first place where the American flag was flown in battle. This fortress was reconstructed in 1976 at the end of Rome's urban renewal period as a part of the nation's bicentennial celebration and is now located in the City's central business district.

Initially a market town to supply local farmers, Rome incorporated as a village in 1819, adopting the name Rome, which followed a trend of the time of naming settlements after

## Rome Comprehensive Plan

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classical places. The Village of Rome later incorporated as a city in 1870. It was at the time of the City's incorporation that Rome became the size it is today. In order to meet the population requirements of incorporation the Village of Rome incorporated with the Town of Rome to become the City of Rome. Transportation has continued to play a critical role in the growth and development of the City. Construction of the Erie Canal began in Rome, the mid-point of the canal, on July 4, 1817. Unfortunately for Rome, the canal ran half a mile south of the village through swampland and so it did not reap many of the canal's benefits. In 1851 the Black River Canal opened linking Lyons Falls in the north with Rome and the Erie Canal, making the nation's major markets accessible to area farmers. It was not until 1839 with the coming of the railroad through Rome and 1844 with the relocation of the Erie Canal through the center of town that the City truly began to prosper.

Good transportation access made Rome a strong location for new industry including knitting mills, canning factories, soap manufacturers, a locomotive works, iron works, and later copper mills and cable and wire manufacturers. Like many other communities in the northeast, Rome was hit with the migration of the manufacturing sector to the south in the 1950s through the 1970s. Today there are only remnants of many of the formerly important industries with such companies as Rome Cable, a much smaller Revere Copper factory and the Rome-Turney Radiator Company, which are still in operation. Recently, the City has been successful in working with government agencies and private property owners to secure the resources needed to clean-up and redevelop several former industrial sites.

In February, 1942, another critical economic force for the City came when the Rome Air Depot opened as an aircraft supply, repair and training base for World War II. At its peak during the war it employed over 9,000 civilians. Following World War II, like other wartime bases, Rome Air Depot downsized dramatically and became a storage facility. Scheduled to close in 1948, it received a reprieve when it was decided to move Watson Laboratories to Rome from New Jersey.

Renamed Rome Air Development Center (RADC), it became one of the major research facilities of the U.S. Air Force. With the establishment of the Air Force as a separate military entity in the National Security Act of 1947 that also established the National Military Establishment (renamed in 1949 to the Department of Defense), the base was renamed Griffiss Air Force Base. During the Cold War, Griffiss hosted many different missions and units including research & development, air defense, maintenance of a retaliatory bomber force and electronics and communication. With the end of the Cold War, Griffiss became one of the bases that were realigned in September of 1995. Almost 5,000 military personnel were lost, significantly impacting the economy and demographic composition of the City.



**A decommissioned airplane on display at Griffiss today.**

Other significant changes in the City have also had significant impacts on the City to this day. In the 1970's most of Rome's original downtown business district was demolished under an urban renewal plan. A component of the plan was to re-create Fort Stanwix as a National Monument operated by the National Park Service. A "superblock" of pedestrian



retail space replaced the downtown retail areas. The original idea was to create two shopping mall-style “superblocks” adjacent to Fort Stanwix connected to each other by a pedestrian bridge. But changes in the way Americans shop were taking place and, instead of becoming a major retail center, Rome’s downtown slowly lost its small retail stores to outlying shopping districts and suburban malls

Today Rome has focused on economic diversification using the new Griffiss Business & Technology Park, with several military units at its core including Rome Labs (Air Force), the Northeast Air Defense Sector (NEADS) and the Defense Finance and Accounting Services (DFAS). The Griffiss Local Development Corporation, the local agency charged with redeveloping the former air base has worked to attract a number of private companies to the site including BAE Engineering Services, TRW Corporation and others. The new Rome Free Academy High School was constructed at Griffiss. This state-of-the-art educational facility provides a significant new amenity to attract new businesses and residents.

The City of Rome has been through dramatic changes in the last 10 years. Its plan for the future must build on its considerable assets including location, ample infrastructure that is in good condition, historic assets, natural resources, good schools and others to create the tools to encourage new growth and development.



## Demographic Overview

### *Issues, Opportunities, and Challenges*

- The City of Rome’s population decreased by 21.2% between 1990 and 2000, due to many factors including the closure of Griffiss Air Force Base
- Rome’s population is growing older considerably faster than other communities. The median age increased from 30.9 in 1990 to 38.2 years in 2000. The statewide median age is 35.9 years.
- Rome has a significant number of low and moderate income households, with a high proportion of very low income households (those earning 50% or less of the MSA median family income).
- Approximately 74.0% of Rome residents over the age of 25 have a high school diploma. Further, 15.7% of residents have a bachelor’s degree or higher compared to 18.3% in Oneida County.

### *Population*

The City of Rome is located in the center of Oneida County and encompasses 72 square miles. According to the 1990 Census, a total of 44,350 persons lived in the City. In 2000, the City’s population fell by about 21% to 34,950 due to the closure of Griffiss Air Force Base. Oneida County’s population also decreased between 1990 and 2000, but at a much lower rate (-6.1%). The City of Rome’s population loss accounted for just over 60% of the county’s total population loss. Rome accounted for 14.8% of the County’s overall population base in 2000, compared to 17.7% in 1990.

<b>Year</b>	<b>City of Rome</b>	<b>% change</b>	<b>Oneida County</b>	<b>% change</b>
1990	44,350	n/a	250,836	n/a
2000	34,950	-21.2%	235,469	-6.1%

Source: US Census Bureau (1990 and 2000) SF1.

### *Households*

Reflecting the general trend toward smaller families and the increasing prevalence of single parent single person households, the average household size in Rome has decreased steadily, dropping to 2.30 persons per households in 2000 from 2.56 in 1990. The 2000 Census reports that there were 13,653 households in Rome, a decrease of 12.9% since 1990. In comparison, households declined 1.9% in Oneida County.

<b>Year</b>	<b>City of Rome</b>	<b>% change</b>	<b>Oneida County</b>	<b>% change</b>
1990	15,754	n/a	92,562	n/a
2000	13,653	-13.3%	90,496	-2.2%

Source: US Census Bureau (1990 and 2000) SF1.

## Race

One of the most notable format changes of the 2000 Census was on the question addressing race. Each respondent was asked if they were Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino. The Census also asked individuals to report the race or races they considered themselves to be. The Census reports that the 2000 data on race are not directly comparable with data from the 1990 Census or earlier censuses and that caution must be used when interpreting changes in the racial composition of the US population over time.

According to the 2000 Census, there are 4,246 minorities in the City of Rome comprising 12.1% of the population, nearly identical to the 12.5% reported in 1990. All ethnic groups experienced decreases in total population, with the exception of persons identified as “other race.” The largest minority group is the Black or African American population, which comprises nearly one-third of all minorities and 7.6% of the City-wide population. Only 2.0% of Rome residents reported that they were of two or more races.

	<b>1990 Number</b>	<b>1990 Percent</b>	<b>2000 Number</b>	<b>2000 Percent</b>	<b>% Change 1990-2000</b>
White	39,657	89.4%	30,704	87.9%	-22.6%
Black	3,526	8.0%	2,650	7.6%	-24.8%
American Indian	107	0.2%	93	>1.0%	-33.6%
Asian or Pacific Islander	565	1.3%	315	>1.0%	-33.5%
Other Race	495	1.1%	473	1.4%	-4.4%
Two or More Races	n/a	n/a	715	2.0%	n/a
<b>City of Rome</b>	<b>44,350</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>34,950</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>-21.2%</b>
Hispanic Origin	1,714	3.9%	1,648	4.7%	>-1.0%

Source: US Census Bureau (1990 and 2000) SF1.

## Age

Between 1990 and 2000, all age groups experienced declines in population. Pre-school children under 5 experienced the greatest loss at 40.8%, while individuals over age 65 declined by only 1.5%. Adults (20–64), whom account for 58.4% of the City’s overall population, declined 22.1% between 1990 and 2000. School-age children experienced a loss at 24.6%. The percentage of seniors in the City’s overall population increased from 13.7% to 17.2%. This change will impact the City’s service needs and workforce composition.

<b>City of Rome</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>%</b>	<b># change</b>	<b>% change</b>
Pre-School (0-4)	3,455	7.8%	2,045	5.9%	-1,408	-40.8%
School (5-19)	8,673	19.6%	6,502	18.6%	-2,120	-25.0%
Adult (20-64)	26,134	58.9%	20,407	58.4%	-5,782	-21.9%
Senior (65+)	6,088	13.7%	5,996	17.2%	-90	-1.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>44,350</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>34,950</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>-9,400</b>	<b>-21.2%</b>

Source: US Census Bureau (1990 and 2000) SF1.



The median age of City residents increased dramatically between the 1990 and 2000 Censuses. According to the 2000 Census, the median age of City residents is 38.2 years. This compares to 30.9 in 1990, showing an aging of Rome’s population of 7.3 years in ten years’ time (Table 5). In comparison, the median population age for New York State as a whole increased from 33.8 to 35.9 between 1990 and 2000. Thus, the City’s population base appears to be aging much faster than the state as a whole. This rapid change is likely the result of the Griffiss Base closure, as military personnel and many base support workers and their families left Rome, while many retirees chose to stay.

<b>Table 5: Age Distribution</b>	
	<b>Median Age</b>
<b>Rome City</b>	
1990	30.9
2000	38.2
<b>Oneida County</b>	
1990	33.8
2000	38.2
<b>New York State</b>	
1990	33.8
2000	35.9
<b>MSA</b>	
1990	
2000	38.4

*Source: Bureau of the Census, 1990 & 2000*

***Educational Attainment***

Data on educational attainment levels in Rome reveal that 74.0% of residents over the age of 25 have a high school diploma. Oneida County has a slightly higher percentage of high school graduates (79.0%). Additionally, 15.7% of City residents have a bachelor’s degree or higher. New York State as a whole has a significantly higher percentage of persons with a bachelor’s degree or higher (27.4%). According to the New York State Department of Education, the Rome City School District had a high school dropout rate of 2.6% during the 2000-01 academic year. The statewide dropout rate was 3.8%. Rome’s drop out rate is about one-third lower than the statewide average

	No High School Diploma		High School Diploma or higher		Bachelor's Degree or higher	
	1990	2000	1990	2000	1990	2000
	City of Rome	25.7%	26.0%	74.3%	74.0%	15.4%
Oneida county	24.9%	21.0%	75.1%	79.0%	16.7%	18.3%
Utica-Rome MSA	25.4%	20.9%	74.6%	79.1%	15.9%	17.7%
New York State	25.2%	20.9%	74.8%	79.1%	23.1%	27.4%

Source: US Census Bureau (1990).

### **Income Levels**

According to the 1990 Census, the median household income for the City of Rome was \$24,234 and per capita income was \$11,171. Oneida County had a slightly higher median household income of \$26,710 and per capita income of \$12,227 in 1990. Further, 4,840 or 12.1% of City residents are living below poverty level, according to the 1990 Census. This figure is marginally higher than that of Oneida County (11.9%) and significantly higher than that of upstate New York as a whole (8.7%).

Median household income for Rome was reported as \$33,643 in the 2000 Census. Per capita income was \$18,604. Oneida County's median household income and per capita income were \$35,909 and \$18,516 respectively. Additionally, a total of 4,728 individuals live below the poverty level. Although the number of individuals living below poverty has declined between 1990 and 2000, a greater percentage of Rome's population lives below the poverty level (15.0%) than in 1990.

Income data collected from the census reflects the income levels of the previous complete year in which the census is taken. In order to directly compare changes in income between the censuses taken in 1990 and 2000, 1990 (based on 1989 income) Census income data was converted to 1999 dollars using the consumer price indices of 1989 and 1999 as calculated by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics to calculate an inflation rate of 31.8% over the 10 year period.

	City of Rome (1989)	Adjusted* City of Rome (1999)	City of Rome (1999)	Oneida County (1989)	Adjusted* Oneida County (1989)	Oneida County (1999)
Median Household Income	\$24,234	\$31,940	\$33,643	\$26,710	\$35,204	\$35,909
Median Family Income	\$28,821	\$37,986	\$42,928	\$32,557	\$42,910	\$45,341
Per Capita Income	\$11,171	\$14,723	\$18,604	\$12,227	\$16,115	\$18,516
Individuals Below Poverty Level	12.1%	n/a	15.0%	11.9%	n/a	13.0%
Families Below Poverty Level	9.7%	n/a	12.0%	8.8%	n/a	9.8%

Source: US Census Bureau (1990 and 2000).

\*For purposes of comparison, 1989 dollars have been adjusted for inflation to 1999 dollars.

As Table 7 indicates, when year 1989 incomes in the City of Rome were adjusted for inflation, median household income increased 5.3% from 1989 to 1999 and median family



income increased (13.0%). Per capita income increased by 26.4%. In comparison, Oneida County's median household income increased slightly by 2.0%. Median family income increased by 5.7% and per capita income de/increased by 14.9%.

Rome contains a significant proportion of low and moderate income households. Census figures indicate that approximately 52.0% of households in the City in 2000 were considered low and moderate income households (i.e., households with income less than 80 percent of the Utica-Rome MSA median as reported by the Census) as defined by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Further, 32.8% of households in the City are very low income, earning 50% or less of the MSA median family income.



## Economic Profile

### *Issues, Opportunities and Challenges*

- The closure of Griffiss Air Force Base in 1995 resulted in the loss of nearly 5,000 jobs and dramatically reduced the economic base of the City.
- The City and its partners are aggressively pursuing strategies to expand and diversify the City's economic base using the former air base and other former industrial sites throughout the City.
- Two New York State Empire Zones exist in Rome, providing significant economic incentives for businesses to locate or expand in the Zones.
- The City is supported by several economic development organizations including the Rome Industrial Development Corporation, Mohawk Valley EDGE and the Griffiss Local Development Corporation.
- The Griffiss Business and Technology Park has been successful in recruiting new businesses to Rome.
- The City's retail establishments appear to be drawing shoppers from the County and MSA as they are performing better than expected given the city's demographics.
- Agriculture is still a significant economic generator for Oneida County and the City of Rome

### *Griffiss Air Force Base Closure*

The economic and demographic structure of the City of Rome changed dramatically in 1995 when Griffiss Air Force Base closed in response to military downsizing. Employment at the Air Force Base had represented 30% of the City's economy, and as a result of the closing, the City experienced an acute loss of population (nearly 5,000 people) and the economy went into a tail spin. Faced with the need to stem the population losses and create new job opportunities, the City has taken several steps towards diversifying its economy using the former air force base as an opportunity for attracting new industries.

*Griffiss Local Development Corporation (GLDC)* was formed by the City in 1994 as a development partnership with Oneida County. GLDC is a public corporation created for master planning, implementation and long-term management of the former Air Base. GLDC is charged with implementing the *Master Reuse Strategy for Griffiss Air Force Base* produced in 1995 which called for:



- Creation of new jobs to replace or exceed the jobs lost with equal or better wages
- Realistic and long-term implementation strategies
- Promotion of land reuse that is compatible with Rome Lab and other Department of Defense uses
- Minimization of fiscal and economic burden on local jurisdictions
- Compliance with community development needs, consistent with local planning policy

## Rome Comprehensive Plan

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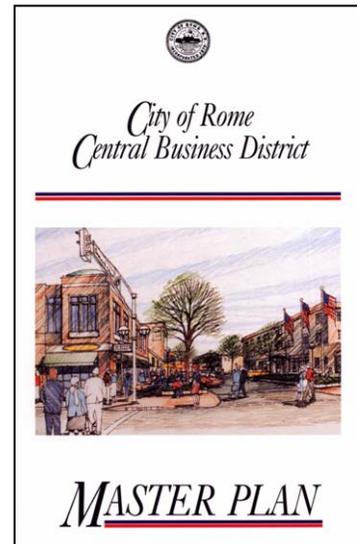
The result of the Master Reuse Strategy is the *Griffiss Business and Technology Park*. Griffiss Business and Technology Park encompasses 3,500 acres of the former air force base that is owned by GLDC and operated by *Mohawk Valley EDGE* (Economic Development Growth Enterprises). Much of the Park is within an Empire Zone. The New York State sponsored Empire Zone program provides tax credits and utility rate reductions to businesses that choose to locate in a designated Empire Zone.

The Park is divided into seven distinct development sites. Each site has been developed with its own identity catering to a specific type of use including commercial, technology, heavy industry, defense, office, aviation, education, recreation and open space.

The Park is currently anchored by established tenants such as the Air Force Research Laboratory and the New York State Technology Enterprise Corporation. Over \$15 million in capital improvements have modernized the Park infrastructure; however, the responsibility for infrastructure maintenance is currently in negotiation between the City and GLDC.

### **Rome CBD Master Plan**

The City of Rome's Comprehensive Planning Program developed the *Central Business District Master Plan* in 1996 as a strategy to revitalize downtown Rome. The City's *2000 Consolidated Plan* describes the urban renewal program in the 1970's stating that "during the 1970's a large part of Rome's original central business district was razed to accommodate the re-creation of Fort Stanwix National Monument by the National Park Service. Concurrent with, and partly in response to this significant change in the structure of its urban core, the City undertook to redesign its CBD using the Urban Renewal programs of the time. Downtown was replaced by a retail pedestrian superblock. The original idea was to create two shopping mall-type "superblocks" adjacent to Fort Stanwix connected by a pedestrian bridge. But, in the same period, sweeping changes in the way Americans shop were taking place and, instead of becoming a major retail center, Rome's CBD slowly lost its small retail stores to outlying shopping districts and suburban malls."



The Plan goes on to say that twenty years later, most of the old retail structures had been torn down, leaving an urban core with gaps and holes, detours and barriers. By 1995, the failure of the original idea was obvious to all, as was the impossibility of regaining what was lost. But, having languished for 20 years, a new identity for "downtown" was just beginning to take root. Instead of an urban shopping mall, the Plaza had emerged as a financial, business and government center. A major revitalization strategy was needed to stabilize existing businesses and to attract new ones. The 1996 Master Plan for the central business district addressed those issues. The City completed Phase I in 1997, which addressed traffic and circulation issues and plans to begin implementation of Phase II in the near future.



### ***East Rome Business Park***

The East Rome Business Park is a 200-acre site that was once the site of the General Cable Company complex. According to the City of Rome's *2000 Consolidated Plan*, "early in the City's history, because of its proximity to the Mohawk River and the Erie Canal, the east Rome area was composed largely of metal and other heavy industries, together with the residences of the people who worked there. However, the technological and transportation improvements of the past two centuries, coupled with the difficult economic times of the past few decades, caused much of the industry that once thrived in this area to move. Abandoned and neglected factories and warehouses are all that is left behind, a sorry sight for the people who once were employed within these buildings and still live in the neighborhoods."

In order to revitalize this area, the City has developed and is in the process of implementing a plan to create a small business center, the East Rome Business Park, at the General Cable Company site. So far, a new access road has been constructed, a Phase I environmental assessment has been conducted for the entire site and a 17-acre target area has undergone Phase II assessments. Environmental remediation, selective demolition and reconstruction are now taking place. Remediation has been completed on a portion of the site that includes the Right-of-Way.

### ***Important Economic Development Organizations and Programs***

The *Rome Industrial Development Corporation (RIDC)* acts as an economic development arm of the City of Rome. RIDC is a not-for-profit, public-private partnership that receives 50% of its operating budget from private sources. The RIDC provides a wide range of services to small businesses in the City of Rome, manages the City's Empire Zone and owns several properties in the City for redevelopment purposes. The RIDC has been charged with redeveloping parcels targeted for redevelopment as part of the City's *Central Business District Master Plan (1996)*. The programs administered by the RIDC include:

- *Rome Empire Zone benefits* -- The NYS sponsored Empire Zone program offers incentives to businesses relocating from out of state or expanding in Rome in the form of exemptions from real property taxes and state sales taxes, wage tax credits, investment tax credits, sales tax exemption credits, real property tax credits, tax reduction credits, utility rate reductions and capital credits.
- *Local Loan Funds* – Local Loan Funds provide low interest loans to companies creating new jobs for low and moderate income persons. The program includes loans to very small businesses. Funding for the program comes primarily from the federal Community Development Block Grant Fund. Projects that don't qualify for the federal program can be funded through private funding sources. There is also a *Commercial District Loan Fund* that targets businesses in certain parts of the City and provides working capital loans. RIDC has also partnered with the New York State Business Development Corporation to provide business loans from \$25,000 to \$100,000 at market rates.
- *State Assistance* – RIDC also acts as a conduit for businesses seeking assistance from the state in the form of training assistance, low cost financing, infrastructure loans and grants and other programs.

## Rome Comprehensive Plan

*Mohawk Valley EDGE (Economic Development Growth Enterprises)* is an economic development corporation that provides planning and economic development services for Oneida and Herkimer County communities and businesses. EDGE provides research and planning studies, feasibility studies, GIS support and other technical support to communities and prospective businesses and developers. EDGE manages real estate development projects and other aspects of business development to attract and retain business in Oneida and Herkimer County.

### Industry Mix

The mix of private and public sector employers located in the City of Rome have shifted since the closing of Griffiss Air Force Base in 1995. As the discussion above indicates, since the Base closure, the City has been focused on expanding and diversifying its employer base to include large and small employers across all industries. The following is a list of the current major public and private sector employers in the City of Rome.

**Table 8: City of Rome Major Employers**

Employer Name	Approx. # Employed	Type of Industry
Rome Hospital	1,000	Health Care services
AFRL-Rome Research Site (aka Rome Lab)	850	Government - Dept. of Defense
Rome City School District	780	Public - Education
Rite Aid Distribution Center	547	Distribution
Rome Cable	500	Various Insulated Cable
Revere Copper Products	450	Primary Copper Producer
Defense Finance and Accounting Service (aka DFAS)	366	Government - Back-Office for DoD
Northeast Air Defense Sector (aka NEADS)	360	Monitoring Air Space
TRW	205	Precision engineered, machined parts
Rome Strip Steel	175	Cold Rolled Steel
Cathedral Corporation	100	Printing and IT solutions
BAE	100	Engineering
City of Rome	not released	Public Administration
Correctional Facilities	not released	Public - Correctional Facilities

*Source: Mohawk Valley EDGE*

The analysis below reviews Rome's industry mix in 1995 and 1999 (2000 data is not yet available) and compares the local trends to trends in Oneida County, New York State and the nation. This analysis provides some insight into whether the trends Rome is experiencing are occurring elsewhere, or if they are unique to Rome.

The most recent data available on industry mix in the city of Rome is 1999 data from *Zip Code and County Business Patterns*<sup>1</sup>. This US Census report provides zip code-level information including number of establishments and employees but not revenue or wages.

<sup>1</sup> *Zip Code or County Business Patterns*, a product of the U.S. Census Bureau, is an annual series that provides economic data by industry on a "place-of-work" basis. Although it covers most economic activity, it excludes data on self-employed individuals, employees of private households, railroad employees, agricultural production employees, and most government employees.



In the analysis below, the “Rome Area” is defined as the 13440 zip code. This zip code includes the City of Rome with the exception of the far western “Plains” area. It also includes small portions of the following adjacent towns: Verona, Westmoreland, Floyd, Lee and Western. Griffiss is located within the 13441 zip code.

The most significant impact on Rome’s recent economy was the closure of Griffiss Air Force Base. *Zip Code and County Business Patterns* excludes government employment, so this analysis cannot show the direct employment impact of the base closure. However, the secondary impacts on local businesses are reflected.

	<b>1995</b>	<b>1999</b>
Forestry, fishing, hunting, ag support	4	0
Mining	1	1
Construction	58	59
Manufacturing	41	44
Wholesale Trade	34	21
Retail Trade	255	256
Transportation/utilities	27	14
FIRE	64	85
Services	299	307
Unclassified	2	9
Totals	785	796

*Source: Zip Code Business Patterns*

As the table to the left indicates, there were 796 business establishments in the Rome Area in 1999 –1.4% greater than 1995. Most of the businesses were in the retail and service sectors. There were also a significant number of finance, insurance and real estate (FIRE), construction and manufacturing businesses. Since 1995, Rome lost the remainder of its forestry, fishing, hunting and agricultural support businesses and a substantial number of its wholesale trade businesses (13). Over the past four years Rome gained the most businesses in the FIRE sector (21) as

well as eight new service sector businesses and three manufacturing businesses.

The table on the following page illustrates industry trends from 1995 to 1999 for the Rome Area, compared to the county, state and nation. Overall, the industry mix in the Rome Area is similar to 1995, shifting away from wholesale trade and some of the transportation, warehousing, utilities sectors toward more real estate, finance and insurance businesses. The Rome Area still has more service sector establishments than any other industry, followed closely by retail trade establishments. These same sectors dominate the industry mix of the county, state and nation.

In most cases the trends in the Rome Area were similar to those at the county, state and national levels. However there are several notable exceptions: The number of finance, insurance and real estate (FIRE) sector businesses in the Rome Area increased by 32.8%, far more than in the county (loss of 8%), state (gain of 2.8%) or nation (gain of 15.2%). According to the Zip Code Business Patterns, Rome has gained seven banks and credit unions and nine real estate-related businesses that appear to be in the business of commercial leasing. Rome gained manufacturing businesses while the county, state and nation have seen a significant decrease in manufacturing industries. While wholesale trade industries have declined at all levels, Rome and Oneida County have seen greater losses than the state or nation.

	% Change (1995-2000*)			
	Rome Area**	Oneida Co.	NYS State	Nation
Forestry, fish., hunt., ag sup.	-100.0%	-75.5%	-88.4%	-75.9%
Mining	0.0%	16.7%	-8.5%	-13.2%
Construction	1.7%	-7.6%	10.1%	11.9%
Manufacturing	7.3%	-7.6%	-14.4%	-9.1%
Wholesale Trade	-38.2%	-31.9%	-13.5%	-13.8%
Retail Trade	0.4%	-5.3%	2.1%	5.6%
Transportation/utilities	-48.1%	-44.6%	-38.9%	-27.2%
FIRE	32.8%	-8.0%	2.8%	15.2%
Services	2.7%	8.1%	20.3%	18.4%
Unclassified	350.0%	140.0%	144.9%	43.6%
Totals	1.4%	-4.3%	5.3%	6.9%

\*For Rome Area, the data collected was 1999. 2000 is not yet available.  
 \*\*Rome Area includes all geographical areas located in the 13440 postal zip code.

The discrepancies between Rome and the county, state and nation may be the result of the base closure and subsequent economic development efforts. New manufacturing businesses in Rome may well be the result of the efforts of the City and its partners to attract new industry. Wholesale trade differences could have resulted from decreased business opportunities resulting from the base closure, as the increase in FIRE sector business could be explained by former civilian base professionals setting up new businesses in an effort to remain in Rome.

The retail trade sector has remained flat among all four geographical areas. The service sector has gained very few businesses in the Rome area, likely due to the acute loss of population in Rome during this time and therefore fewer customers to serve, while the county, state and nation gained a significant number of service businesses. It should be noted, however, that in the Rome area, service sector businesses were a larger portion of the industry mix (38%) than in the County (35.5%), State (36%) or Nation (36%) in 1995.

**Retail Trends (1992-1997)**

The most recent sales data available for the City of Rome is from the US Bureau of Census in the 1997 *Economic Census*. The following analysis reviews Rome’s retail trade industry between 1992 and 1997 and provides a detailed analysis of the performance of the mix of stores. It also provides a regional comparison of Rome to Oneida County and the Utica-Rome MSA.

For purposes of this analysis, “retail-related” refers to all types of retail included in the *Economic Census of Retail Trade* as well as eating and drinking establishments which the US Census Bureau no longer includes in the Census of Retail Trade, and instead includes in the Census of Accommodations and Foodservices. In 1997, retail-related sales in the Utica-Rome MSA amounted to approximately \$2,349 billion. Of this, \$2,001 billion, or 85.2%, originated in Oneida County. Approximately \$347.7 million originated in the City of Rome, comprising 17.4% of the County’s sales and 14.8% of Utica-Rome MSA sales.



## Establishments

There were 245 retail establishments in the City of Rome in 1997. The most common type of retail-related business was eating and drinking establishments comprising a third of all retail in the City. There were also 27 motor vehicle and parts stores, 19 health and personal care stores, 19 gas stations and 20 food and beverage stores. The table below provides a more detailed breakdown of the types of retail found in the City.

	<b>Stores</b>	<b>Sales (000s)</b>	<b>Employed</b>
Motor Vehicle and parts	27	\$ 82,931	244
Furniture and home furnishings	7	n/a*	b
Electronics and appliances	12	\$ 14,553	58
Building materials, garden equip., supplies	12	\$ 12,351	73
Food and beverage stores	20	\$ 55,062	391
Health and personal care stores	19	\$ 29,621	306
Gasoline stations	19	\$ 18,964	128
Clothing and accessories	10	\$ 8,292	112
Sporting goods, hobby, book, music	9	n/a*	b
Department Stores	7	\$ 77,356	650
Miscellaneous Stores	17	n/a*	b
Nonstore Retailers	5	\$ 6,160	66
Eating/Drinking Places	81	\$ 26,111	912
<b>Total</b>	<b>245</b>	<b>\$ 347,702</b>	<b>3,089</b>

Source: 1997 Economic Census of Retail Trade, Accommodations and Foodservices

\* - information is kept confidential due to small number of stores

b - 20 to 99 employees

## Retail Change Over Time

The number of retail establishments in the City of Rome dropped 11.2% from 1992 to 1997. This is a greater percentage than the county and MSA and may be in part due to the closure of Griffiss Air Force Base. In 1997, the City had 16.8% of Oneida County's retail establishments and 13% of the Utica-Rome MSA retail. This is just a slight decrease from 1992 when the City had 17.3% of all retail in the County and 13.9% of the MSA's retail industry. The table below provides detailed information on changes in the retail mix between 1992 and 1997

**Table 12: City of Rome  
Retail Store Count and Sales Trends (1992-1997)**

	City		County		MSA	
	Stores	Sales	Stores	Sales	Stores	Sales
<i>Motor vehicle &amp; parts</i>	22.7%	-2.5%	30.4%	15.6%	21.4%	17.0%
<i>Furniture &amp; home furnishings</i>	-68.2%	n/a	n/a	n/a	-60.4%	-54.4%
<i>Bldg materials, garden equip., supplies</i>	-7.7%	-11.4%	16.5%	27.2%	26.2%	14.1%
<i>Food &amp; beverage</i>	-37.5%	-28.0%	-36.5%	-21.3%	-34.4%	-21.9%
<i>Health &amp; personal care</i>	90.0%	17.1%	72.2%	32.3%	58.6%	24.7%
<i>Gasoline stations</i>	0.0%	-26.4%	11.1%	-6.1%	12.6%	-2.8%
<i>Clothing and accessories</i>	0.0%	-6.3%	-14.5%	-19.0%	-29.5%	-28.3%
<i>General merchandise</i>	0.0%	108.3%	-12.5%	n/a	-5.3%	43.8%
<i>Eating &amp; drinking</i>	-6.9%	-8.1%	-6.0%	-15.0%	-5.1%	-13.6%
<i>Total</i>	-11.2%	14.7%	-8.4%	3.8%	-7.5%	3.0%

### Employment

In 1997, the 3,089 people employed by retailers in the City of Rome represented 17.2% of those employed in retail county-wide and 14.5% of those employed in retail in the MSA. Employment figures were not available on the City level in 1992.

### Sales

Retail-related businesses in the City of Rome generated \$347,702,000 in sales in 1997. This is a 14.7% increase in the sales generated in 1992 when 1992 dollar amounts are adjusted to 1997 dollars to reflect inflation.<sup>2</sup> The large increase in total retail sales versus the significant loss of total establishments may be due to a stronger mix of remaining and new businesses in Rome since 1995. Some retail sectors may have been saturated in 1995 and businesses were therefore diluting each others success. Another reason might be that businesses that could no longer compete due to changing consumer needs in the region may have closed, leaving behind or replaced by those businesses that address consumer needs.

In 1997, retail trade businesses in the City generated 17% of Oneida County's retail sales compared to having 17.7% of the County's population in 1990 and 14.8% of the County's population in 2000. The City also generated 14.8% of the Utica-Rome MSA retail sales in 1997. The City generated approximately the same share of the County and MSA retail sales in 1992 as in 1997.

The fact that the City was able to maintain its share of County and MSA sales between 1992 and 1997 despite the base closure is a positive sign, however, the relatively small share of retail establishments and sales generated by retailers in the City of Rome as a part of the County and MSA is of concern.

<sup>2</sup> To compare sales in 1997 constant dollars, sales figures were adjusted to reflect the change in the consumer price index (CPI) as published by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. For example, to calculate 1992's sales figures into 1997 constant dollars, the following formula was used:

$$1997 \text{ Price} = 1992 \text{ Price} \times \left( \frac{1997 \text{ CPI}}{1992 \text{ CPI}} \right)$$



### ***Retail Sales***

In 1997, the average retail store in Rome generated \$1.566 million in gross revenue, more than stores county-wide (\$1.514 million) and throughout the MSA (\$1.406 million). The retail businesses generating the most revenue per establishment in the City of Rome included department stores (\$12,194,000), motor vehicle and parts stores (\$3,389,000) and food/beverage stores (\$3,038,000). The businesses generating the least amount of revenue per store are eating and drinking establishments. This is typical for eating and drinking places county-wide and throughout the MSA as well.

An analysis of per capita sales for retail establishments provides a good comparison of local sales generated by establishments in Rome, the county and MSA. This analysis estimates retail sales data for the year 2001 assuming that the retail trade market was similar in 2001 to that of 1997, by taking 1997 US Economic Census of Retail and Accommodations and Food Services data and adjusting the sales data to 2001 constant dollars. These annual sales were then divided by 2000 Census populations to derive estimated per capita sales.

In the City of Rome, total per capita sales for retail-related establishments is estimated to have been \$10,978 compared with \$9,378 in Oneida County and \$8,642 in the MSA. That per capita sales were higher in the City than the county or region suggests that the City may be exporting goods to other parts of the region. A closer examination of the data reveals that retailers in the City of Rome of all major store types, except clothing and accessory stores and “miscellaneous stores,” sell more per capita than their County and MSA counterparts.

### ***Per Capita Demand***

To shed more light on the effectiveness of Rome’s current retail, an analysis of resident consumer spending was undertaken based on year 2001 estimates from Claritas, Inc. This analysis examines the spending behaviors of the people who live in the City, while the Retail Sales analysis above examines the performance of the retail establishments in the City.

Data from Claritas on expenditures in selected retail stores shows that the City of Rome is a weak market compared to the nation. Resident spending in all categories of stores ranked well below the US average with most stores ranking between 50-70 on an index in which the US average is 100. Oneida County and the Utica-Rome MSA were considered to have slightly better markets than the City with expenditures ranking from 60-80 but spending was still estimated to be below the US average in every store type. The following table shows estimated per capita consumer expenditures per selected store types for Rome, the county and the MSA.

<b>Table 13: City of Rome Consumer Expenditure Estimates (2001)</b>			
<b>Store Type</b>	<b>Per Capita City</b>	<b>Per Capita County</b>	<b>Per Capita MSA</b>
<i>Building Materials and Supply</i>	\$ 181.11	\$ 214.55	\$ 211.07
<i>Hardware Stores</i>	\$ 13.10	\$ 15.37	\$ 15.02
<i>Nursery/Lawn/Garden Supply</i>	\$ 64.88	\$ 76.12	\$ 75.41
<i>Home Centers</i>	\$ 41.03	\$ 48.71	\$ 47.75
<i>Convenience</i>	\$ 466.61	\$ 504.76	\$ 509.64
<i>Convenience</i>	\$ 208.75	\$ 231.24	\$ 233.84
<i>Grocery Stores</i>	\$1,714.96	\$ 1,816.79	\$ 1,817.54
<i>Health and Personal Care</i>	\$ 312.69	\$ 339.86	\$ 336.95
<i>Dept. Stores</i>	\$ 774.81	\$ 869.04	\$ 846.78
<i>Accessories</i>	\$ 396.05	\$ 449.23	\$ 434.48
<i>Shoe Stores</i>	\$ 61.82	\$ 69.17	\$ 67.33
<i>Furniture Stores</i>	\$ 145.10	\$ 165.74	\$ 159.97
<i>Other Home Furnishing Stores</i>	\$ 104.05	\$ 122.12	\$ 117.74
<i>Household Appliances Stores</i>	\$ 46.85	\$ 52.80	\$ 51.49
<i>Stores</i>	\$ 99.85	\$ 112.56	\$ 108.67
<i>Computer &amp; Software Stores</i>	\$ 33.21	\$ 38.64	\$ 36.92
<i>Electronic Shopping &amp; Mail Order</i>	\$ 205.44	\$ 231.92	\$ 225.48
<i>Eating Places</i>	\$ 812.70	\$ 882.58	\$ 869.03
<i>Drinking Places</i>	\$ 57.00	\$ 64.17	\$ 61.98
<i>Total Retail Expenditures</i>	\$5,740.01	\$ 6,305.36	\$ 6,227.09
<i>Source: Claritas, Inc. and River Street Planning &amp; Development, LLC</i>			

According to Claritas, residents of the City of Rome are projected to spend less in all selected retail stores than residents in Oneida County and the Utica-Rome MSA. This is not surprising given that wealth of the City of Rome is considered to be below that of the County and the MSA. What is surprising is that retailers in Rome actual perform better per store and per capita than the county or MSA, (see retail sales above) given the lower wealth of the City. This further suggests that Rome retailers attract customers from outside of the City and that the City is exporting retail goods.

## **Agriculture**

Information regarding the agricultural industry specific to the City of Rome is scarce, however, the City’s real property database indicates that nearly 7,000 acres of land in the City are classified as agricultural.

Agriculture is one of the leading industries across Oneida County. According to the 1997 Census of Agriculture, the most recent agricultural census produced by the United States Department of Agriculture, there were 216,094 acres of farmland in Oneida County with 928 farms, 592 of which were full-time. Most of the farms are family farms, with 12.5% operating as partnerships or corporations. Oneida County’s agricultural industry ranked thirteenth in New York State in terms of total value of agricultural products sold. The top five agricultural commodities sold were dairy products (ranking ninth in the State), cattle and calves (ranked eight in the State), nursery and greenhouse crops, corn for grain and vegetables, sweet corn and melons.



## Housing

### *Issues, Opportunities, and Challenges*

- The closure of Griffiss Air Force Base resulted in significant vacant housing stock, including a 14.3% vacancy rate for rental units and a 30% decrease in home values.
- Since the base closure in 1995, vacant structures have not been maintained or stabilized. Many have deteriorated beyond repair.
- The City’s homeowner assistance programs have rehabilitated a significant number of units since their inception 20 years ago, but have been overwhelmed by recent demands.
- Rome’s housing stock is older with nearly 40% built before 1940.
- Approximately 11.3% of Rome’s housing units are subsidized.
- The City’s 2000 Consolidated Plan identified housing rehabilitation, low income homeownership and neighborhood stabilization as priority housing needs.
- The City’s 2000 Consolidated Plan identified down payment requirements and high property taxes as the most significant barriers to affordable housing.
- The City’s Neighborhood Improvement Program and HOME Program provide assistance to Rome’s low income residents.

### *General Housing Characteristics*

According to the 2000 Census, there are 16,272 housing units in the City. Of the total housing units counted in the Census, 13,653 were occupied. Owners make up 57.1% of the occupied housing in the City and renters 42.9%. The 2000 Census also reports that the vacancy rate of for-sale housing in the City was about 3.3% and the vacancy rate for rental housing was 14.6%. The high vacancy rates can be attributed to the closure of Griffiss Air Force Base in 1995.

	1990		2000		% change 1990-2000
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	
Total Housing Units	16,661	100.0%	16,272	100.0%	-2.3%
Total Occupied Units	15,754	94.6%	13,653	83.9%	-13.3%
Total Owner Occupied Units (% of occupied)	8,413	53.4%	7,792	57.1%	-7.4%
Total Renter Occupied Units (% of occupied)	7,341	46.6%	5,861	42.9%	-20.2%
Vacant Units	907	5.4%	2,619	16.1%	188.8%
Vacant For-Sale	61	0.7%	270	3.3%	342.6%
Vacant For-Rent	477	6.1%	999	14.6%	109.4%

Source: US Census Bureau (1990 and 2000).

Based on the 2000 census, single-family detached structures are the predominant housing type in the City of Rome, making up 49.0% of the market. Two, three- and four-family buildings comprise 28.2% of the housing stock in the City. Apartment buildings of ten or more units account for 1,608 units, 9.9% of the market. The 2000 Census reports that a significant portion of the City’s housing units (35.6%) were constructed before 1940. Since

1990, a total of 466 units were constructed in Rome. Most of these units were built between 1990 and 1994.

### ***Characteristics of Rental Housing***

Rental housing accounts for 42.9% of occupied housing in the City of Rome according to 2000 Census figures. The average household size of renter occupied units is 2.11 persons. The majority of occupied rental units are one- and two-bedroom, followed by three-bedroom units (22.0%). Nearly one-half of rental units are in two, three, and four family structures.

The median gross rent in Rome was \$393 in 1990. Adjusting the 1990 median rent for inflation to 2000 dollars results in a median rent of \$518. The 2000 Census reports that the City of Rome has a median gross rent of \$462. Rental costs have actually decreased 10.8% in comparison to 1990 figures when adjusted for inflation.

As part of the housing analysis, a survey of recent rental listings in the *Sunday Sentinel* was conducted from the June 16, 2002 listings. There were 25 apartments listed for rent. Most of the apartments available in the City of Rome were for one- and two- bedroom units. Rents were generally in the \$300-\$400 range, with some apartments including utilities. The mean asking price for a one-bedroom unit was \$334.83. The mean asking price for two bedroom units was \$430.50 and \$545 for three-bedroom units.

One factor in assessing general housing needs within a community is the availability of housing choice. A healthy housing market should provide sufficient opportunities to its residents to secure good quality units that address their needs in terms of number of bedrooms, location and other considerations. The generally accepted standards for measuring availability in a healthy housing market are vacancy rates of about 5% for rental units and 1% for purchase housing. The City-wide vacancy rate for rental housing (2000) was much higher at 14.6%.



The needs of lower income households can best be understood by examining the numbers of cost burdened households in the City of Rome by income range and tenure. Cost burden is defined as the extent to which gross housing costs exceeds 30% of gross income, based on data published by the Census Bureau. According to the 2000 Census, 2,223 households in Rome reported rental housing costs in excess of 30% of income. This represented 40.0% of all reported renter households. Not surprisingly, the extent of cost burden was significantly greater on lower income households. Households with annual incomes under \$20,000 accounted for 1,993 or 89.7%, of the households determined to be cost burdened.

### ***Assisted Housing***

A small portion of the rental housing within the City of Rome is provided through subsidized funding sources such as the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).



According to the HUD housing inventory, there are approximately 1,833 subsidized housing units in Rome, of which 24% are occupied by the City's elderly population.

The Rome Housing Authority provides 477 units in four subsidized housing projects. Liberty Gardens is the largest facility with 180 units. The Housing Authority maintains a waiting list for these subsidized units. The Housing Authority is also the primary administrator of the Section 8 Program in the City.

**Table 15: City of Rome  
Subsidized Housing Inventory**

Facility	Total						Subtotal Elderly	Subtotal Non- Elderly	Subtotal Special Needs
	Units	0BR	1BR	2BR	3BR	4+BR			
Rome Mall	45	0	45	0	0	0	45	0	0
Wright Park I*	200	0	56	102	30	12	4	196	0
Wright Park II*	99	0	0	30	59	10	4	95	0
Rome Towers	123	0	60	63	0	0	0	123	0
Park Drive Manor I	102	0	28	48	26	0	11	91	0
Madison Plaza	126	29	48	49	0	0	0	126	0
Shelto, Inc.	5	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	5
Chronic Mentally Ill	5	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	5
Section 8 units	404	0	87	161	131	25	0	404	0
Park Drive Manor II	167	0	0	84	67	16	0	167	0
Liberty Gardens	180	0	16	116	48	0	0	180	0
Colonial 1	98	39	55	4	0	0	98	0	0
Colonial 2	100	0	100	0	0	0	100	0	0
Valentine apts.	99	0	99	0	0	0	99	0	0
Georgian Arms	80	0	80	0	0	0	80	0	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>1833</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>684</b>	<b>657</b>	<b>361</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>441</b>	<b>1382</b>	<b>10</b>

\* - to be demolished

***Characteristics of Owner Occupied Housing***

There are 7,792 owner-occupied units in the City of Rome, comprising 57.1% of occupied housing in the City. The average household size of owner-occupied units is 2.45 persons. One-half of the City's owner-occupied units have three-bedrooms. Approximately 41.4% of owner-units are in two- and four-bedroom units. A total of 6,530 units or 83.8% of owner-occupied units are in single-family detached structures. According to 2000 Census figures, the vacancy rate of for-sale housing is 3.3%. Since 1990, the vacancy rate of for-sale housing has sky-rocketed 342.6%.

The median value of owner-occupied homes in Rome as reported in the 1990 Census was \$68,500. Adjusting the 1990 median value for inflation to 2000 dollars results in a median value of \$90,250. According to the 2000 Census, median value of owner-occupied units is \$64,800. As reported by home owners in Census data, housing in Rome is losing value. Additional information on sale prices was obtained from the New York State Association of Realtors, which has data on the county level. According to the Association of Realtors, in

## Rome Comprehensive Plan

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June 2000, the median sales price of homes in Oneida County was \$67,900. In June 2002, the median sales price was \$70,000. These prices are similar to the reported median value of owner occupied units in Rome as reported in the Census.

A listing of homes for sale was obtained through the March 1-7, 2002 *Rome Observer*. There were 25 single-family homes and five two-family homes listed for sale. The majority of single-family homes were three-bedroom units (17 total). The average asking price of a three-bedroom is \$57,041 with prices ranging from \$34,900 to \$94,500. There were five four-bedroom units listed ranging in price from \$39,995 to \$99,900, with an average asking price of \$62,519. One home listed had five-bedrooms and was priced at \$170,000. Two two-bedroom homes were listed with an average price of \$37,950. The five two-family homes that were listed ranged in price from \$24,900 to 49,500. The average asking price was \$39,960.

The 2000 Census reports that 1,113 or 17.9% of homeowners are cost burdened. Cost burden is defined as the extent to which gross housing costs exceeds 30% of gross income, based on data published by the Census Bureau. Households with annual incomes under \$20,000 accounted for 529 or 47.5% of the households determined to be cost burdened.

### ***Housing Assistance Programs***

The City offers two housing programs. The Neighborhood Improvement Program rehabilitates substandard housing and brings units into compliance with New York State Building Codes. The program primarily targets neighborhoods in which more than 50% of residents are low income. Only owner-occupied structures are eligible for assistance. Rome's HOME Program is a low income homebuyer program. This program provides assistance to help offset the cost of purchasing a home in the City.

### ***Consolidated Plan 2000***

The City of Rome updated its HUD Consolidated Plan in 2000. The Consolidated Plan evaluates housing needs, including homelessness and special needs populations, and community development needs, including public facilities, public services and economic development. The Consolidated Plan reported that since 1995 total Rome population has decreased by approximately 10%, housing prices have dropped 30% and school enrollment has decreased by about 18%, necessitating redistricting and closure of some neighborhood schools.

The Consolidated Plan reports that overall the City's housing stock was in very sound condition in 1990. The Census found only about 9% to be substandard. This very positive situation existed in part because of the stability of market demand. City Programs contributed to high-quality housing stock with a comprehensive policy of promoting new housing construction and of using CDBG programs to help low and moderate income homeowners in older city neighborhoods to maintain their homes. The City's Neighborhood Improvement Program has rehabilitated over 1,520 units of housing since its inception over 20 years ago.

According to the Consolidated Plan, Rome has lost approximately 4,558 in total population since the base closure. This loss has led to a dramatic decrease in the cost of housing and a concurrent increase in the vacancy rate. Almost every block in the City has at least one



vacant home. Some of these houses are not being stabilized or maintained and have deteriorated beyond repair, while others are at risk. The presence of vacant deteriorating housing is a major factor in the destabilization of neighborhoods and of a decrease in the quality of life provided by a City.

The Consolidated Plan identifies priority housing needs that focus on mitigating the economic and social stresses resulting from the realignment of Griffiss Air Force Base. It recommends focusing on neighborhood stabilization and revitalization, for both owner and renter occupied housing, with an emphasis on helping low and very low income households. The plan sets an overall goal to ensure decent housing and neighborhoods, and a suitable living environment and recommends City-operated housing rehabilitation, low-income homebuyer programs and selective demolition of dilapidated vacant buildings as the primary tools for achieving these goals. Other needs identified are vacant property maintenance programs and tools to avoid abandonment. The key housing affordability issues identified were down payment requirements and high property taxes.

While stabilization has become a critical issue, new housing has become less of a priority as the City struggles to lower its vacancy rate in existing housing. 400 units of rental housing were constructed from 1980 to 1990. These additional units helped to satisfy a steadily increasing demand for sound rental housing from the City's two largest employers, Griffiss Air Force Base and the New York State Department of Corrections. But, the loss of Griffiss Air Force Base has now reversed that trend. The sharp drop in population has resulted in a glut of housing, plummeting prices and vacant deteriorating buildings. These current conditions have obliterated any need for new rental housing. Rome must now work to maintain the housing it has in order to keep its neighborhoods from deteriorating into blight and decay. The plan identified three priority objectives to meet the City's overall housing needs. These include rehabilitating 150 units of substandard housing through the Neighborhood Improvement Program; assisting 25 low and moderate income households in buying homes; and demolishing 15 vacant and dilapidated buildings.



## Land Use Analysis

### *Issues, Opportunities and Challenges*

- Outside of Griffiss Business and Technology Park, nearly 90% of the City's land is in residential use.
- Nearly 16% of the City's residential properties are vacant.
- With 3,506 acres of land, Griffiss Business and Technology Park offers considerable capacity for new commercial and industrial development. Beyond the Park, there are about 740 acres of industrial uses across 59 parcels and 950 acres of commercial uses across 743 parcels. There are also 25 vacant industrial parcels over about 385 acres and 170 vacant commercial parcels over about 230 acres.
- Approximately 22% of the City's existing commercial land is vacant or underutilized. These parcels are scattered throughout the City.
- The current zoning ordinance, as it relates to existing land uses, is out of date and functionally obsolete. The City will review and update its zoning ordinance to reflect the City's current state, its potential future development, and different techniques related to zoning.

The City of Rome is made up of approximately 41,200 acres of classified land uses across 13,302 parcels of land.<sup>3</sup> More than 57% of the properties in Rome are classified as single-family residential, making up about 68% of the total acreage or about 28,350 acres. Griffiss Business and Technology Park is not included in the City's database but is approximately 3,506 acres in size (the base also has an addition 71 acres in the Town of Floyd). The Park is a mix of uses that includes ball fields, a golf course, light industry such as research and development, health care, office space, and the new Rome Free Academy. The runway still exists through the center of the site, a remnant of the Park's former role as an Air Force Base. Also remaining at the Park are two small neighborhoods that were once inhabited by members of the Air Force and their families.

Other forms of residential use also add to the predominately residential composition of the entire City of Rome. Together, general residential uses, both occupied and vacant according to the City's Real Property Database, account for almost 35,850 acres or 87% of the City's acreage and 11,439 properties or almost 86% of all properties in Rome. Vacant residential uses account for 1,794 properties and 4002 acres.

Commercial uses are the second most common uses and account for about 7% of the City's land area and 913 properties, 170 (approximately 645 acres) of which are listed as vacant. The following table (Table 16) shows the break down of different land uses, associated acres, and number of parcels throughout the City.

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<sup>3</sup> Figure does not include the former Griffiss Air Force Base as it is not included in the Real Property Data GIS provided by Oneida County.

<b>Table 16 Land Use</b>		<b>Total Parcels</b>	<b>Total Acres</b>
0	<b>Unclassified</b>	0	0
210	<b>Single Family Residential</b>	7606	28354.4
220	<b>Two Family Residential</b>	1372	1944.57
250	<b>Estate Residential</b>	0	0
695	<b>Cemeteries</b>	21	66.96
100-190	<b>Agricultural</b>	183	380.89
200, 260, 270, 283	<b>Residential</b>	30	8.85
230, 271, 280, 281, 411	<b>Multi-Family Residential</b>	509	1174.67
240, 241, 242	<b>Rural Residential</b>	128	358.54
300, 350, 380	<b>Vacant</b>	39	10.89
310-316	<b>Vacant Residential</b>	1794	4002.12
320-323	<b>Vacant Rural</b>	201	531.6
330-331	<b>Vacant Commercial</b>	170	644.77
340-341	<b>Vacant Industrial</b>	63	198.95
400, 410, 414-455, 470-475, 486	<b>Commercial</b>	295	1397.07
460-465	<b>Professional Offices &amp; Banks</b>	38	80.69
480-485	<b>Mixed Use Commercial</b>	410	856.18
500-583	<b>Recreation &amp; Entertainment</b>	22	8.51
590-593, 960-963	<b>Parks</b>	25	153.86
600-642, 680-694	<b>Community Services</b>	129	289.26
650-670	<b>Government &amp; Protection</b>	22	45.28
700-749	<b>Industrial</b>	59	59.37
800-885	<b>Public Services</b>	109	412.66
900-950, 970-994	<b>Conservation Lands &amp; Preserves</b>	77	192.09

### ***Inside District***

The Inside District is predominately two-family and multi family homes, single family homes, vacant residential properties, scattered commercial properties, and community services. The greatest mix of these uses is seen in the west of the Inside District. In the north, the pattern becomes more residential and more single-family residential.

There are some distinct development and land use patterns that emerge in Rome evident by actual field examination of the area. Downtown, the area roughly bound by Liberty Street to the north, South James and Fort Stanwix to the east, Freedom Plaza to the south, and Jay Street to the west, is predominately large commercial buildings built during the urban



renewal period and up to the present. A number of older buildings remain in this area on the periphery including old City Hall, the Capitol Theater, and the Court House.

*East Dominick*, roughly the area east of Erie Boulevard and west of the Skyline Entrance, between the Mohawk River and Erie Canal, is a mix of residential streets north of East Dominick, the Revere site along the Mohawk, and the East Rome Business Park site. The homes are single-family detached homes and two family flats situated on small lots. The commercial development along East Dominick ranges from older commercial and mixed-use structures built to the sidewalk in the western portion near downtown to strip commercial development in newer, automobile-oriented buildings in the eastern portion.

*Vogel Park* is defined roughly by the area south of Chestnut Street, west of Black River Boulevard, east of Turin Street, and north of the Turin/Black River intersection. The area is predominantly made up of medium to large single family homes. Commercial uses are limited to along Black River Road and Turin Street to the extreme north and south of those roads in the neighborhood.



*East Chestnut* is the corridor along East Chestnut Street. Most of the uses are commercial along this major road into the Griffiss Business and Technology Park. Most of the sites are developed as strip malls or roadside convenience uses.

*Ridge Mills*, the area north of West Chestnut between Turin Street and Black River Road, is mostly medium-sized homes, developed after the 1940s. Most of these homes are single story ranch-style homes on larger lots than those closer to the City's center.

*Indian Creek*, north of Erie Boulevard, west of Jay Street to the Inside District boundary, and south of Thomas Street, is mostly small to mid-sized one and two family homes.

*Bellamy-Gansevoort*, the area made up of the historic district by the same name, east of Route 46/Black River Road in the vicinity of the courthouse. The area is predominantly mid-size and large single family homes dating from the mid 1800's to the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. A number of these homes, however, have been converted into apartments and office uses.

*Rome Center* is the area along Erie Boulevard between Route 46 and Madison Street. This area, commercial in nature, is also the area of Rome's past urban renewal efforts where older buildings were replaced by newer buildings, such as the Freedom Plaza, the former Living Bridge, City Hall, and other large commercial structures.

*Transfiguration* is the area west and south of Erie Blvd in the area of the Transfiguration parish. This area is characteristic of an older, working class neighborhood from the early to mid 1900's. The area is mostly small single and two-family units on small lots with homes close to one another.

### ***Outside District***

The Outside District is dominantly large single-family residential properties. In the south, there is an increased mix of large vacant, commercial, and rural properties.

In the northeast, there are some suburban residential developments characterized by non-grid patterned streets and cul-de-sacs.

The *Delta Lake* area can be categorized as mostly small vacation cottages, with some infill development of newer and larger homes.

*Griffiss Business and Technology Park* is a former Air Force Base in the east of Rome that has been converted into a business and technology park. It is dominated by the large runway that still sits in the center of the site. Today, the site is becoming a location for multiples uses. The Mohawk Glen Golf Course is situated on the western periphery of the site. The Rome City School District is completing the construction of its new high school just south of the Campus Green area of the park. The hangars and inner buildings are being inhabited by public and private uses (the air force still operates some functions in the park). There are also two small neighborhoods of abandoned base housing along the south of the park. These homes are a mix of single family detached and duplex homes built on slab foundations. These homes were used for the military personal assigned to Griffiss when the base was active. The homes now site abandoned, vandalized, and exposed to the elements.



*South Rome* is mostly large lot residential with small to midsize single family homes and quad housing. There is also some commercial mixed in along the major roads. The Mohawk and Oneida Correctional Facilities are also located here.

*West Rome* is mostly large lot residential with less commercial activity along major roads in comparison to South Rome.

## Appendix A – Community Profile

September 17, 2003

To: John Sorbello

From: Anne Savage  
John Holehan  
Marian Hull

Subject: Real Estate Tax Base Analysis

### Introduction

From the perspective of municipal staff, a community's tax base drives its ability to invest in amenities and provide professional services that residents expect. From the citizens' perspective, tax burden influences where people buy homes, whether they reinvest in property and where they develop businesses. The city's ability to raise revenue to provide infrastructure and services to the community is affected by its tax base. These investments in infrastructure can provide opportunities and constraints for maintaining and attracting homeowners, businesses and jobs.

In many communities the key to economic growth is to optimize tax base by making every acre of land as productive as it can be without compromising community vitality or natural resources. This analysis of Rome's tax base reviews assessment trends, land uses, supply and condition of inventory to provide a market view and economic framework for evaluating various development strategies for the future. Regional trends and comparable city comparisons were also analyzed. Today, there are many tools available to cities to enhance, diversify and optimize tax base. This analysis provides the basis for identifying those actions.

The following section presents a preliminary analysis of the general characteristics of Rome's tax base by major use categories as classified for assessment purposes. These include residential, vacant or undeveloped land, commercial, industrial, recreation and entertainment, community services, public services and conservation uses based on the property type classification codes established by the New York State Board of Equalization and Assessment and displayed in the City Assessor's database. The system of classification consists of numeric codes in nine general categories. Divisions and subdivisions of specific uses further delineate each category. For the purpose of this initial analysis, we have relied primarily on the general category codes.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>**Residential** (200 series) - includes single family; two family; three-family and mobile homes but not multi-family; mobile home parks or other residential/mixed use, which are classified in the commercial category. **Vacant land** (300) - includes property not in use or in temporary use or lacks permanent improvement; **Commercial** (400) -

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River Street obtained the most recent available data in the assessment database and shape file. This analysis is based primarily on the assessment database. However, property acreage is found only in the shape file, while land use codes are found only in the assessment file. In order to produce analysis of acreage by land use code the data in the two files had to be combined. This is done by 'matching' the files based on property SBL/PIN. While the files matched well, there was not a complete match. All acreage by land use code figures were based on only on records that 'matched' in both files.<sup>2</sup>

Unlike most cities in New York State, Rome has two distinct taxing districts. The Inside District comprises most of the urbanized area of the city. The district houses most of Rome's population and most of the city's commercial and industrial uses as well as public and community services. The Outside District is largely rural. Vacant land and Agricultural uses comprise 54% of the acreage in the Outside District. An additional 15% of the acreage comes from rural residential use on 10 acres or more. The Inside District is well served by public infrastructure and traditional public services such as police and fire protection, trash pick-up, etc. The Outside District receives municipal fire protection but other municipal services are limited or not currently available. There is no municipal trash pick-up and while the city provides water and sewer to limited areas, the vast majority of the Outside District is not served by municipal water and sewer systems. The city has a system in place to extend water and sewer lines to properties in the Outside District, but the end users pay for these extensions.

Given these distinct characteristics in the level of public services and infrastructure provided to properties within each district, the rate of property taxation is higher in the Inside District (\$18.20 per \$1,000 assessed value) than in the Outside District (\$12.08 per \$1,000 assessed value). Property tax revenues from the Inside District account for almost 80% of the total property taxes collected. While the difference in tax rates account for some of this

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includes property used for sale of goods and services and residential uses noted above; **Recreation & Entertainment** (500) - includes property used by groups for recreation, amusement or entertainment; **Community services** (600) - Property used for the well being of the community; **Industrial** (700) - includes property used for the production of durable and non-durable goods; **Public services** (800) - Property used to provide services to the general public; **Conservation** (900) - Wild, Forested, Conservation lands and public parks.

<sup>2</sup> Over 8,000 acres of the city's 48,000 acres of land appeared in the shape file, but could not be matched to the assessment database to determine land use information. These 8,000 acres were examined using GIS software and were identified as approximately 900 acres representing water elements, 1115 acres representing roads, 4,000 acres representing Griffiss Air Force Base, 2000 acres of potentially taxable land in the Outside District and 100 acres of potentially taxable land in the Inside District. The total "potentially taxable" acreage in the city is thus 46,144 (48,159 less 2,015 acres of roads and water).

Using manual inspection of the assessment database we were able to identify seven parcels that represent Griffiss. SBLs for these seven properties are 224.000-0001-001, 243.000-0001-001.001, 243.000-0001-001.002, 243.000-0001-001.003, 243.000-0001-001.006, 243.000-0001-001.008, 243.000-0001-001.009)



disparity, the primary cause is the vast difference in taxable value between the Districts. An average acre of property in the Inside District has a taxable value of \$97,342 and generates revenue of \$1,772 per annum. An acre in the Outside District has a taxable value of \$6,279 and produces property tax revenues of only \$76 per annum. So while the tax rate in the Inside District is only 1.5 times greater than the Outside District rate, taxable values are over 15.5 times greater in the Inside District. This suggests in general that an expansion of the Inside District will expand the city's tax base.

**Land Use Characteristics**

The land area of the city of Rome is extensive and totals 48,162 acres or about 75 square miles. The Inside District (excluding Griffiss Business and Technology Park) comprises 5,915 acres or a little less than 13% of the total acreage, the base alone accounts for almost 9% of the city's acreage.

Overall, vacant land is the predominant land use in the city comprising nearly one-third (29.3%) of the total acreage. Another significant portion of land is classified as public and community services (29.1%). Most of this is land located in the Griffiss Business and Technology Park. The remaining land is predominantly residential (22.0%), followed by Agricultural (15.5%), Commercial properties (2.4%) and Industrial uses (1.6%) make up a very small part of the city's total acreage.

<b>City of Rome Land Use by Category and District</b>								
	<b>Inside</b>		<b>Outside</b>		<b>Base</b>		<b>Total</b>	
	<b>Acres</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Acres</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Acres</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Acres</b>	<b>%</b>
Agricultural	506	8.7%	6,339	18.5%			6,845	15.5%
Residential	1,569	27.0%	8,100	23.7%			9,669	22.0%
Commercial	591	10.2%	484	1.4%			1,074	2.4%
Vacant	815	14.0%	12,100	35.4%			12,915	29.3%
Industrial	308	5.3%	415	1.2%			723	1.6%
Public Services	2,026	34.8%	6,791	19.8%	4,000	100%	12,817	29.1%
<b>Total Known</b>	<b>5,815</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>34,229</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>4,000</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>44,044</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
Property Class Unknown	100		2,000				2,100	
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,915</b>		<b>36,229</b>		<b>4,000</b>		<b>46,144</b>	

*Includes all records from the shape file, excluding roads and water. "Property Class Unknown" indicates records which could not be matched to the assessment file. See Footnote 2.*

The Inner and Outside Districts of Rome are markedly different in the mix of land uses and tax base characteristics. Residential use is the predominant land use in the Inside District comprising more than one quarter (27.0%) of the total acreage. Public service properties account for 34.8% of the total acreage, followed by Vacant land (14.0%), Commercial uses (10.2%), Agricultural land uses (8.7%) and Industrial uses (5.3%).

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In contrast, Vacant land is the predominant land use in the Outside District comprising more than one-third (35.4%) of the total acreage. Residential properties account for 23.7% of the total acreage, followed by Agricultural uses (18.5%).

### Taxable Assessment Base

As indicated in the assessor's database, the city of Rome has a total taxable assessment base of \$780 million and the total assessed value of all property in the city is \$1,321 million. Approximately 40.9% of Rome's assessed value is not taxable (including a substantial portion of the Griffiss Business and Technology Park).

City of Rome Tax Revenue by Category and District						
	Inside		Outside		Total	
	Revenue \$	%	Revenue \$	%	Revenue \$	%
Agricultural	7,137	0.1%	62,317	2%	69,454	0.5%
Residential	6,567,904	63.8%	1,665,800	64%	8,233,703	63.8%
Commercial	2,378,312	23.1%	428,302	16%	2,806,615	21.8%
Vacant	125,980	1.2%	86,314	3%	212,294	1.6%
Industrial	320,248	3.1%	23,746	1%	343,994	2.7%
Public Services	902,764	8.8%	329,782	13%	1,232,546	9.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>10,302,345</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>2,596,261</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>12,898,606</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

*Includes all records from the assessment database. See Footnote 2.*

An analysis of tax revenue by general land use indicates that residential land uses contributes 63.8% of real estate taxes to the city. In other words, 64 cents of every property tax dollar coming into city coffers comes from a residential use. Yet residential uses comprise only 22.0% of the total acreage in the city. Similarly, Commercial uses make up only 2.4% of the land but generate 21.8% of the property tax revenues. The other land use category that generates positive tax revenues city-wide is Industrial, which includes 1.6% of the acreage yet generates 2.7% of the property tax revenues.



## Appendix B – Tax Base Analysis

### City of Rome Summary by Property Class

Property Class	# Parcels	Acres	Taxable Assessment	% Acreage	% Assessment	Revenue Per Acre
100 - Agricultural Properties	188	6,845	5,550,874	15.5%	0.7%	10
210 - One Family Year-Round Residence	7,547	3,693	418,235,416	8.4%	53.6%	1,763
220 - Two Family Year-Round Residence	1,306	325	58,512,295	0.7%	7.5%	3,034
230 - Three Family Year-Round Residence	176	37	8,676,567	0.1%	1.1%	3,599
240 - Rural Residence with Acreage	131	5,341	9,197,887	12.1%	1.2%	20
260 - Seasonal Residences	2	0	106,800	0.0%	0.0%	4,344
270 - Mobile Home	25	55	337,816	0.1%	0.0%	73
271 - Multiple Mobile Homes	1	0	29,600	0.0%	0.0%	4,276
280 - Residential - Multi Purpose/Multi-Structure	47	209	3,554,782	0.5%	0.5%	256
283 - Residence with Incidental Commercial Use	1	10	120,000	0.0%	0.0%	149
300 - Vacant Land	2,249	12,915	14,067,149	29.3%	1.8%	15
400 - Commercial Properties	726	933	137,504,215	2.1%	17.6%	2,257
411 - Apartments	280	141	28,627,777	0.3%	3.7%	3,009
500 - Recreation and Entertainment Properties	48	1,515	5,073,400	3.4%	0.6%	42
600 - Community Service Properties	177	5,318	14,914,567	12.1%	1.9%	187
700 - Industrial Properties	59	723	19,561,768	1.6%	2.5%	414
800 - Public Service Properties	116	1,560	56,812,369	3.5%	7.3%	84
900 - Public Parks, Wild, Forested and Conservation Properties	67	4,424	101,900	10.0%	0.0%	0
<b>Total Known Property Class</b>	<b>13,146</b>	<b>44,044</b>	<b>780,985,182</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	
Property Class Unknown (No match to Assessment Database)		2,100				
<b>Total</b>	<b>13,146</b>	<b>46,144</b>	<b>780,985,182</b>			<b>280</b>
Inside	9,671	5,915	566,062,934	12.8%	72.5%	1,742
Outside	3,468	36,229	214,922,248	78.5%	27.5%	72
Base	7	4,000	-	8.7%	0.0%	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>13,146</b>	<b>46,144</b>	<b>780,985,182</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>280</b>

Acres from shape file, parcel counts and taxable assessment from assessment file, revenue per acre including only parcels that matched between the two files. See Footnote 2.

As might be expected, Vacant Lands contribute only 1.8% of the property tax revenues while occupying 29.3% of the city's total land acreage. Similarly, Community Services, Public Services and Conservation uses (which generally include primarily tax-exempt uses) combined generate only 9.2% of property tax revenues but comprise a significant 25.6% of the land acreage in the city. Over one third of this area (4,000 acres) is the Griffiss Business and Technology Park which is identified as "Community Service" in the assessment database.<sup>3</sup> Industrial land contributes 2.5% of the real estate taxes and takes up about 1.6% of the total acreage. Lands in Agricultural use account for 15.5% of the acreage but less than 1% of the tax revenues.

As noted above, there are significant differences between the taxing districts regarding assessed value and tax revenues generated. The Inside District while comprising only 12.8% of the acreage in the city accounts for 72.5% of the city's taxable assessment base.

Residential land uses in the Inside District contribute 63.8% of the municipal taxable assessment/real estate taxes generated within the Inside District. Yet residential uses comprise only 27.0% of the total Inside District acreage. Similarly, Commercial uses while making up only 10.2% of the land generate

<sup>3</sup> One of the seven Griffiss Parcels is coded as "Industrial" in the assessment database. Throughout this analysis we have attributed the entire base to code 600 "Community Services"

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23.1% of the property tax revenues within the district. No other land use category generates positive tax revenues within the Inside District.

	Inside		Outside		Total	
	Taxable \$	%	Taxable \$	%	Taxable \$	%
Agricultural	392,141	0.1%	5,158,733	2.4%	5,550,874	0.7%
Residential	360,873,824	63.8%	137,897,339	64.2%	498,771,163	63.9%
Commercial	130,676,506	23.1%	35,455,486	16.5%	166,131,992	21.3%
Vacant	6,921,990	1.2%	7,145,159	3.3%	14,067,149	1.8%
Industrial	17,596,032	3.1%	1,965,736	0.9%	19,561,768	2.5%
Public Services	49,602,441	8.8%	27,299,795	12.7%	76,902,236	9.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>566,062,934</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>214,922,248</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>780,985,182</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

*Includes all records from the assessment database. See Footnote 2.*

Residential and Commercial uses are also the only positive tax generators in the Outside District. Residential uses contribute 64.2% of the tax revenues generated within the Outside District while comprising only 23.7% of the total acreage. Likewise, Commercial uses while making up only 1.4% of the land generate 16.5% of the property tax revenues within the district.

As mentioned above, the difference in tax rates and assessed valuation between the two taxing Districts has a profound effect on the city's tax base. An average acre of property in the Inside District has a taxable value of \$97,342 and generates revenue of \$1,772 per annum. That same acre in the Outside District has a taxable value of \$6,279 and produces property tax revenues of only \$76 per annum.

The disparity is equally pronounced when individual land use categories are examined. Residential and Commercial uses generate the highest return to the city accounting for 84% of the Rome's property tax revenues (see table above). On average, a residential acre in the Inside District produces \$3,980 while residential property in the Outside District generates only \$192 per acre (see table below). Similarly, Commercial uses in the Inside District generate \$3,550 per acre in property tax revenues as opposed to only \$870 per acre for commercial uses in the Outside District. To provide some additional perspective, Vacant land in the Inside District is generating current revenues per acre (\$142) nearly as much as Residential properties in the Outside District (\$192).



	<b>City of Rome Assessed Value and Revenue per Acre by Category and District</b>					
	<b>Inside</b>		<b>Outside</b>		<b>Total</b>	
	<b>Tax/Acre</b>	<b>Rev/Acre</b>	<b>Tax/Acre</b>	<b>Rev/Acre</b>	<b>Tax/Acre</b>	<b>Rev/Acre</b>
Agricultural	750	14	778	9	776	10
Residential	218,689	3,980	15,917	192	48,855	808
Commercial	195,113	3,550	72,011	870	10,068	166
Vacant	7,819	142	532	6	12,342	149
Industrial	49,637	903	4,252	51	23,570	414
Public Services	9,862	179	958	12	13,466	2,885
<b>Total</b>	<b>97,342</b>	<b>1,772</b>	<b>6,279</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>17,732</b>	<b>293</b>

*Property Code breakdown includes only parcels which successfully matched between the shape and assessment databases. Total line includes all parcels from assessment database, regardless of match. See Footnote 2*

### **Comparable Cities Tax Base Analysis**

In order to provide some perspective on the city of Rome’s tax base characteristics, we have compared these statistics to other cities in New York State of similar population. Since Rome is the largest (by far) city in New York State by land area, there is little opportunity to compare Rome with other cities in this regard. The city’s budget and financial condition was reviewed against other cities in New York State using the State Comptroller’s *Special Report on Municipal Affairs 2000* as a guide<sup>4</sup>.

Rome is ranked 14<sup>th</sup> of 61 cities in New York State (excluding New York City) in terms of population. At 74.9 square miles, the city is also the largest in land area, approximately twice the size (in land area) of Buffalo and Rochester, the State’s two most populous cities outside of New York City. The table below provides general demographic data on Rome and the eight cities in closest population size to Rome. Because the city’s land area is so large, there is little comparison between Rome’s overall population density (467 persons per square mile) and the comparable cities (average density 5,823 persons per square mile). However, it should be noted that most of Rome’s population lives in a small inner core of the city (9.1 square miles) which is nearly identical to the average size of the comparison cities (9.2 square miles). Estimating the population within the Inside District from census tract data yields a density figure of 2,488 persons per square mile, still only 43% of the average of the comparison cities.

<sup>4</sup> The FY 2000 Comptroller’s Report was the most recent available at the time of this analysis.

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### NYS Cities - 2000 Demographic Comparison

City	County	2000 Census Population	Rank	Land Area (sq. mi.)	Density (per sq. mi.)
Binghamton	Broome	47,380	13	10.5	4,512
Elmira	Chemung	30,940	18	7.3	4,238
Jamestown	Chautauqua	31,730	17	8.9	3,565
Long Beach	Nassau	35,462	14	2.1	16,887
Niagara Falls	Niagara	55,593	10	14.1	3,943
North Tonawanda	Niagara	33,262	16	10.1	3,293
<b>Rome</b>	<b>Oneida</b>	<b>34,950</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>74.9</b>	<b>467</b>
Troy	Rensselaer	49,170	12	10.4	4,728
White Plains	Westchester	53,077	11	9.8	5,416
<i>Average 8 Comparison cities</i>		42,077		9.2	5,823

As shown in the Tax Base Comparison table below, the city of Rome generally does not compare favorably with other cities in the State with respect to its tax base. The taxable full valuation per acre for the city of Rome is only about 4% of the average per acre value of the eight comparison cities. Even when comparing to Rome's Inside District, the taxable full valuation per acre is still only 22% of the average value for the comparison cities. In terms of city tax rates, the city of Rome had one of the highest equalized tax rates of all the comparison cities. The equalized tax rate in Rome was 23% higher than the average rate in the eight comparison cities.

With regard to municipal debt, the city's debt per capita (\$1,116) was about 15% lower than the average of the eight comparison cities and the city is at 69% of its debt limit, quite healthy when compared to the 78.1% average of the eight comparison cities. Rome compares even better when the downstate cities are excluded (White Plains & Long Beach), which results in a 96.5% average.

### NYS Cities - Tax Base Comparison

City	County	Full Value per acre	Debt per capita	% Debt Limit	Equalized Tax Rate
Binghamton	Broome	\$152,068	\$1,336	81.70%	\$16.07
Elmira	Chemung	\$112,194	\$1,227	106.00%	\$13.35
Jamestown	Chautauqua	\$107,123	\$1,777	133.80%	\$14.54
Long Beach	Nassau	\$1,628,807	\$1,137	29.50%	\$9.09
Niagara Falls	Niagara	\$135,073	\$2,002	124.90%	\$18.52
North Tonawanda	Niagara	\$145,094	\$538	26.30%	\$9.99
<b>Rome</b>	<b>Oneida</b>	<b>\$16,154</b>	<b>\$1,116</b>	<b>69.00%</b>	<b>\$15.80</b>
Troy	Rensselaer	\$149,314	\$1,612	106.40%	\$14.72
White Plains	Westchester	\$676,436	\$837	16.00%	\$6.64
<i>Average 8 Comparison cities</i>		\$388,264	\$1,308	78.08%	\$12.87



## Appendix B – Tax Base Analysis

Cities rely on a number of sources to generate revenues to support municipal operations. These include real estate taxes, non property taxes, State, Federal or other governmental aid, interest earnings and fees for services such as water and sewer. The two revenue sources directly related to land use characteristics and development are the real property tax and the sales tax.

Real property taxes are dependent on such factors as the value of assessed property, the percent of tax-exempt parcels and the tax rate. Sales tax revenues depend primarily on the quantity and quality of retail development impacting the community. The table below analyzes the performance of real property and sales taxes in Rome and the eight comparison cities.

<b>NYS Cities - Budget by Source of Revenue</b>							
<b>City</b>	<b>Real Property Taxes</b>		<b>Sales Tax</b>		<b>Other Revenues</b>		<b>Total</b>
Binghamton	\$16,162,445	31.70%	\$8,106,632	15.90%	\$26,718,090	52.40%	\$50,987,167
Elmira	\$7,315,210	20.30%	\$5,309,982	14.70%	\$23,450,272	65.00%	\$36,075,464
Jamestown	\$8,859,375	14.70%	\$4,742,797	7.90%	\$46,680,990	77.40%	\$60,283,162
Long Beach	\$20,400,225	43.00%	\$1,189,317	2.50%	\$25,811,559	54.50%	\$47,401,101
Niagara Falls	\$20,163,055	22.70%	\$7,730,639	8.70%	\$60,878,326	68.60%	\$88,772,020
North Tonawanda	\$9,407,770	25.50%	\$6,140,790	16.60%	\$21,344,941	57.90%	\$36,893,501
<b>Rome</b>	<b>\$12,116,667</b>	<b>28.80%</b>	<b>\$7,149,593</b>	<b>17.00%</b>	<b>\$22,805,394</b>	<b>54.20%</b>	<b>\$42,071,654</b>
Troy	\$13,487,047	21.70%	\$9,906,951	15.90%	\$38,796,459	62.40%	\$62,190,457
White Plains	\$27,426,986	25.70%	\$34,267,100	32.20%	\$44,879,111	42.10%	\$106,573,197
<i>Average 8 comps</i>	\$15,402,764	25.20%	\$9,674,276	15.80%	\$36,069,969	59.00%	\$61,147,009
<i>Rome % of comps</i>	<i>78.70%</i>	<i>114.30%</i>	<i>73.90%</i>	<i>107.40%</i>	<i>63.20%</i>	<i>91.90%</i>	<i>68.80%</i>

Overall, Rome's budget has a slightly higher reliance on real property and sales tax revenues than the other comparison cities. In FY2000, property taxes in Rome accounted for 28.8% of total revenues. The comparison cities averaged 25.2% although there was a wide range of numbers from 14.7% to 43%. Sales taxes provided an additional 17% of Rome's total revenues compared to the other cities that averaged 15.8%. Again these percentages ranged widely from a low of 2.5% to a high of 32.2%.

In terms of overall revenues generated, Rome lagged significantly behind all but two of the comparison cities with total revenues only 68.8% of the average for the other eight cities. Rome fared somewhat better in terms of per capita revenues totaling \$1,204 compared to \$1,432 for the comparison cities.

### Budget Expenditures Comparison

The NYS Comptroller's Report also provides detailed information regarding budget expenditures in two different formats: by object and by function. Object describes what revenues are spent on such items as salaries and payroll, health insurance, equipment, debt service payment etc. Function

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describes the expenditures by category of services provided, for example general government, public safety, public works, utilities, economic development, etc. Total expenditures by object includes total expenditures by function and debt service payments.

The distribution of expenditures by object for Rome and the eight comparison cities is shown in the table below.

NYS Cities - Budget Expenditures by Object							
City	County	Current Operations			Equip. & Cap. Outlay	Debt Service	Total
		Personal Services	Employee Benefits	Contractual Expenditure			
Binghamton	Broome	\$23,691,413	\$7,141,161	\$12,531,459	\$14,439,801	\$3,760,886	\$61,564,720
Elmira	Chemung	\$14,402,794	\$5,116,513	\$10,427,116	\$10,917,328	\$2,375,404	\$43,239,155
Jamestown	Chautauqua	\$13,850,901	\$4,650,390	\$31,108,727	\$2,598,867	\$4,322,184	\$56,531,069
Long Beach	Nassau	\$24,224,082	\$6,515,446	\$8,769,300	\$5,885,400	\$5,052,386	\$50,446,614
Niagara Falls	Niagara	\$36,367,872	\$13,561,252	\$29,222,319	\$8,765,425	\$16,101,694	\$104,018,562
North Tonawanda	Niagara	\$15,249,144	\$3,636,373	\$7,640,550	\$9,978,125	\$3,801,733	\$40,305,925
<b>Rome</b>	<b>Oneida</b>	<b>\$14,297,209</b>	<b>\$6,058,862</b>	<b>\$11,778,377</b>	<b>\$7,802,321</b>	<b>\$5,692,202</b>	<b>\$45,628,971</b>
Troy	Rensselaer	\$22,428,354	\$7,754,675	\$13,669,487	\$15,650,936	\$6,013,961	\$65,517,413
White Plains	Westchester	\$54,240,834	\$13,531,082	\$27,006,642	\$6,722,143	\$6,046,559	\$107,547,260
<i>Average 8 Comparison cities</i>		\$25,556,924	\$7,738,362	\$17,546,950	\$9,369,753	\$5,934,351	\$66,146,340

For Rome, current operations (FY 2000) accounted for 70.4% of annual expenditures. Comparison cities averaged 76.9% for current operations. Equipment and Capital outlay made up 17.1% of all Rome expenditures with the remaining 12.5% of budget expense for principal and interest payments on debt service. Average figures for the comparison cities were 14.2% and 9.0% respectively.

On a per capita basis, the following statistics were noted. Per capita expenditures for Current Operations in Rome were \$919.44 compared to the average of \$1,208.32 per capita for the eight comparison cities. Total expenditures per capita in Rome (FY2000) were \$1,305.55. The average for the eight comparison cities was \$1,572.04. Rome is spending considerably less per capita than the comparison Cities indicating conservative fiscal management and budgeting.

### Tax Base Expansion Goals and Strategies

This analysis of Rome's tax base provides an overview of the city's land use characteristics, their relative contributions in tax revenues and the impact of the Inner and Outer taxing districts.

By their nature, some land uses have the potential to contribute significant revenues to the tax base while others are limited or non-existent. Residential and commercial uses tend to generate tax revenues proportionately greater than the land area that they occupy. Vacant or agricultural lands provide only limited revenues because land is valued at a much lower rate than



improvements upon the land. Still other land use categories like Community services, Public services or Parks and Conservation lands often have full or partial tax-exemptions that severely limit the amount of actual revenues that they contribute to the tax base.

Through Rome's comprehensive planning process and an understanding of its tax base, the city can set goals and develop strategies for expanding its economic base. The goal is to create a more balanced, efficient and productive use of land in the community.

In setting targets for future uses of land, we need to be mindful of two key factors: a 1% change in land use represents 460 acres in Rome and a 1% change in tax revenues amounts to \$128,986 based on the city's FY2000 tax base.

The best way for Rome to grow its tax base in the long term is to develop land in the Griffiss Business and Technology Park as taxable property and ensure that taxes are correctly assessed on new development. Attracting new businesses to the Griffiss Business and Technology Park is a long and complex process, but Rome is well served in this effort by the Griffiss Local Development Corporation (GLDC) and the Oneida County IDA (OCIDA). These agencies work to market Griffiss and to attract businesses to the new Industrial Park. One of the tools they use to attract businesses is a ten-year property tax exemption. The city must work with GLDC and OC IDA to ensure that the city is familiar with the details of all tax exemptions granted and when and under what conditions the exemption expires. The city should implement a process to ensure that taxes are correctly assessed as exemptions expire.

All lands on Griffiss are currently tax-exempt and generate no revenue to the city. The city assessment database indicates that the current assessed value of Griffiss is \$186.8 million. If simply converted to a taxable purpose with no enhancement in value, and taxed at the Inside District rate of \$18.20 per thousand, this land would generate \$3.4 million in city tax revenue each year (an increase of 28% over current property tax revenues). Consultation with city staff suggests that the actual assessed value of Griffiss could be considerably higher. If the 4,000 acres of Griffiss could be developed to the same value as the current Inside District (\$97,342/acre), the result would be \$389.4 million in increased assessed value, or \$7.1million in increase annual property tax revenue (an increase of 58% over current property tax revenues).

While taxable development of Griffiss property to is clearly the best long-term strategy for increasing the tax base, conversion of vacant or other

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unproductive land in the Inside District should be a shorter term goal. Vacant land and Agricultural uses comprise about 1,300 acres in the Inside District. While some of this acreage is not readily developable or is being productively used for agriculture, we have assumed conservatively that 500 acres (less than 40% of this acreage) could be developed for commercial or residential use.

The average revenue generated by residential/commercial uses in the Inside District is \$3,858 per acre while the average revenue produced by Vacant land/agricultural use is \$142 per acre. At a net difference of \$3,716 per acre, the development of 500 acres of new residential/commercial development would yield an additional \$1.86 million per year in additional revenues. That would be a 15% increase over current revenues.

Industrial uses generate revenues at the rate of only \$414 per acre citywide - \$903 per acre for industrial land in the Inside District and \$51 per acre in the Outside District. Like many older cities in the Northeast, Rome has a mostly aged, heavy industrial base that does not generate high property values. However, targeting high technology and eco-friendly industries to new or redeveloped business parks would provide the means to revitalize former and underutilized industrial sites to generate property tax revenues comparable to commercial and residential properties.

Another way that the city can increase revenues is by converting land that is currently vacant or underutilized in the Outside District to developed Inside District land. An average acre of property in the Inside District generates \$1,700 more in revenue than a similar acre in the Outside District. This is primarily because land in the Inside District has a much higher taxable value per acre, due to the urban intensity of development in the Inside District. (The difference in tax rates between the two districts accounts for only a small portion (just 2.27%) of the difference in revenue.)

The city can attempt to induce higher intensity development by re-zoning the land for urban intensity development and providing city water and sewer services. Expanding the Inside District, including associated re-zoning and infrastructure improvements, is one way the City can induce higher intensity development and the resulting increase in tax revenues. This approach requires investment to extend public infrastructure and provide annual services to areas newly included in the Inside District.

If the city could expand the Inside District, with the related zoning and infrastructure changes, by 500 acres in the next 20 years (25 acres per year), it could generate an additional \$846,000 in property tax revenues per year (roughly 6.5% of existing revenues). Assuming that the city would logically



target higher return development (Commercial, Industrial, Residential), the average acre would likely generate an additional \$3,400 per acre, increasing total revenues by \$1.7 million per year, a 13% increase over current annual revenues.

### **Summary Recommendations**

#### **Residential Goals & Strategies**

- C Modestly reduce the percentage of property tax burden required from residential property owners by encouraging more productive use of vacant and undeveloped lands for commercial and industrial use
- C Use tax and other financial incentives to relocate incompatible uses from residential neighborhoods
- C Maintain and improve existing housing in stable residential neighborhoods
- C Develop new housing as needed and the market dictates
- C Selectively remove deteriorated housing from market and redevelop sites for most appropriate reuse
- C Plan and implement amenity development that can enhance property values

#### **Commercial Goals & Strategies**

- C Expand commercial growth in the city in designated corridors and sites in a manner that enhances the surrounding uses
- C Support GLDC and OCIDA in converting Griffiss Business and Technology Park properties to taxable commercial properties. Carefully track tax incentives and others to ensure that taxes are correctly levied as incentives time-out.
- C Identify priority commercial development corridors and sites and develop tax policies, land use regulations and financial incentives to encourage the desired development.
- C Target high-end commercial development with significant improvement in value of land and buildings.

#### **Industrial Goals & Strategies**

- C Expedite brownfield clean up and redevelopment of other appropriate areas to provide shovel ready sites
- C Target new development to the high tech manufacturing and pharmaceutical industry and other identified markets
- C Develop a set of industry specific development incentives which encourage growth of high tech manufacturing and other target industries

#### **Vacant Land Goals & Strategies**

- C Redevelop approximately 2,000 acres of existing vacant land for other tax generating uses (Commercial, Industrial, Residential)

## **Rome Comprehensive Plan**

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C Plan and implement park and recreation development on vacant land around wetlands (or land otherwise not conducive to development) for cross country running or skiing in an effort to generate non-property tax revenue through development of a ski touring center

### ***Public and Community services Goals & Strategies***

C Facilitate (where appropriate) the consolidation of service providers to reduce the number of buildings and acres of land that is currently tax exempt

C Redevelop former institutional land and buildings for tax generating uses, including adaptive reuse of vacated school building

C Examine whether some existing nonprofit uses can be developed as for-profit uses with assistance (Erie Canal Village, for example)

### ***Agriculture Goals & Strategies***

C With the gradual erosion and conversion of agricultural lands throughout the country, it is assumed that some land currently being used for farming will be sold for residential, commercial or recreation development, reducing the overall percentage of agricultural acreage

C Target assistance to remaining viable farmers under economic development strategy



# City of Rome Comprehensive Plan Action Plan Matrix

Project	Activity	Time Frame	Potential Stakeholders/Partners	Budget Estimate	Potential Funding Sources
<b>Goal One: Create a stable, balanced and productive tax base</b>					
Action 1.1	Focus high value new development in the city's Inside District	Short to Medium	City of Rome	Included in zoning update	City of Rome
Action 1.2	Target tax and other business assistance incentives to relocate incompatible uses	Short Term	City of Rome	\$1.35 million	City of Rome, Empire State Development Corporation, HUD and EDA Loan Fund Programs
Action 1.3	Create new industry-specific development incentives to encourage growth of retail, manufacturing, technology and other commercial and employment uses	Long Term	City of Rome	\$1.5 million	City of Rome, Rome IDA, Mohawk Valley EDGE
Action 1.4	Consider development of a new organization, such as a city industrial development agency or urban redevelopment	Long Term	City of Rome	\$10,000 for study	City of Rome, Rome IDA, Mohawk Valley EDGE
Action 1.5	Expand the tax base through careful assessment, zoning and land management	Long Term	City of Rome	Costs are addressed in other action items	City of Rome, New York State Planning Federation, Governor's Office for Small Cities Community Development Block Grants
Action 1.6	Explore the feasibility of implementing a land value taxation method in the city of Rome	Long Term	City of Rome	\$50,000	City of Rome, Empire State Development Corporation, Rome Legislative Delegation

<b>Project</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Time Frame</b>	<b>Potential Stakeholders/Partners</b>	<b>Budget Estimate</b>	<b>Potential Funding Sources</b>
<b>Goal Two: Most Business-Friendly Community in New York State</b>					
Action 2.1	Continue to provide effective economic and business development services and increase coordination between existing entities and programs to create a unified marketing message and simplify access to resources	Short Term	City of Rome, Rome Industrial Development Corp, Rome Area Chamber of Commerce, Oneida County, Griffiss Local Development Corp, Mohawk Valley EDGE, recreational venues, cultural attractions	\$25,000 (city share)	City of Rome, Oneida County, Rome Industrial Development Corp, Rome Area Chamber of Commerce, Griffiss Local Development Corp, Mohawk Valley EDGE
Action 2.2	Enhance small business support and retention programs, including the creation of a small business technical assistance center based at RIDC or the Chamber of Commerce.	Short Term	City of Rome, RIDC, SUNY-IT Small Business Development Center	\$5,000 plus staff time	Governor's Office of Small Cities Community Development Block Grant, US Small Business Administration, Empire State Development
Action 2.3	Expand tourism marketing efforts and increase coordination between various tourism interests for the city and region, creating a cohesive marketing message that builds on the historic, recreational, cultural and natural resources of the community.	Short Term	City of Rome, Chamber of Commerce, Oneida County Tourism, RIDC, the National Park Service, US Dept of Interior, NYS Canal Corp, NYS OPRHP, Mohawk Valley Heritage Corridor, other heritage organizations	\$15,000 (city share)	City of Rome, NYS OPRHP, I Love New York Tourism Office, Oneida County Tourism, NYS Canal Corp, USHUD, US Dept of the Interior
Action 2.4	Aggressively cleanup identified brownfield properties to return sites to productive use	Short Term	City of Rome, private owners, Niagara Mohawk, NYSDEC, Empire State Development, USHUD, USEPA	\$530,000 for tax delinquent property program	Empire Opportunity Funds, USEPA Brownfield Pilot Program, USHUD Brownfield Economic Development Initiative, USHUD Section 108 loan funds, NYSDEC Brownfield Program, New Markets Tax Credits, private developers

<b>Project</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Time Frame</b>	<b>Potential Stakeholders/Partners</b>	<b>Budget Estimate</b>	<b>Potential Funding Sources</b>
Action 2.5	Continue the development and preparation of the East Rome Business Park to create “shovel ready” sites including development of a technology manufacturing incubator with flexible space	Short Term	City of Rome, private owners, Niagara Mohawk, NYS DEC, Empire State Development, USHUD, US EPA	\$2.14 million	Empire Opportunity Funds, USEPA Brownfield Pilot Program, USHUD Brownfield Economic Development Initiative, USHUD Section 108 loan funds, NYSDEC Brownfield Program, New Markets Tax Credits, private developers
Action 2.6	Target technology companies as tenants for city business parks and develop a Technology Facilities Loan Fund	Short Term	City of Rome, private owners, Niagara Mohawk, NYS DEC, Empire State Development, US Department of Housing and Urban Development, US Environmental Protection Agency	\$5 million to capitalize loan fund	Empire Opportunity Funds, USEPA Brownfield Pilot Program, USHUD Brownfield Economic Development Initiative, USHUD Section 108 loan funds, NYSDEC Brownfield Program, New Markets Tax Credits, private developers
Action 2.7	Refine building code and zoning regulations to make them simple to understand and cost effective for new businesses to build high quality facilities	Short Term	City of Rome	Staff time	Empire State Development Corporation
Action 2.8	Identify commercial infill sites, assemble land, and/or land bank sites until an appropriate development project is proposed	Short Term	City of Rome	\$175,000	Empire State Development Corporation
Action 2.9	Implement a Buy-Local Campaign	Short Term	City of Rome	\$5,000 for coordination effort and design/printing of brochure	City of Rome, local labor organizations and contractor groups, Governor’s Office for Small Cities Community Development Block Grants

<b>Project</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Time Frame</b>	<b>Potential Stakeholders/Partners</b>	<b>Budget Estimate</b>	<b>Potential Funding Sources</b>
<b>Goal Three: Modern Workforce &amp; "Rome Is Working" Initiative</b>					
Action 3.1	Work with economic development partners to encourage the development of a labor force plan for the city	Medium Term	Rome Industrial Development Corp, Mohawk Valley EDGE, Oneida County Workforce Development Department, City of Rome	Staff time	HUD Community Development Block Grant
Action 3.2	Continue to provide services which support and enable employment including childcare and public transportation	Short Term	City of Rome	\$15,000	HUD Community Development Block Grant and other HUD and Health and Human Services (HHS) childcare initiatives
Action 3.3	Ensure that a well defined and efficient school-to-work transition program is in effect	Short Term	City of Rome, School District	\$5,000 in funds to assist in grant application plus staff time	City of Rome, School District, State Education Department, United States Department of Education
<b>Goal Four: Housing of Choice</b>					
Action 4.1	Create sites for new high quality residential development through land use policies, land banking, demolition of former base housing and other appropriate tools	Medium to Long Term	City of Rome, private housing developers	Demolition: \$3.5 million (\$13,000/unit)  Development: \$10,000,000 - \$15,000,000 (\$100,000 per unit)	Federal Home Loan Banks' Affordable Housing Program, the Affordable Housing Partnerships' Program and the Community Investment Program, the New York State Division of Housing and Community Renewals' HOME Program, and the Governor's Office for Small Cities CDBG

<b>Project</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Time Frame</b>	<b>Potential Stakeholders/Partners</b>	<b>Budget Estimate</b>	<b>Potential Funding Sources</b>
Action 4.2	Enhance tax and other financial incentives for reinvestment in rental and owner-occupied residential units	Short Term and Ongoing	City of Rome, Rome Clean and Green, Mohawk Valley Community Action Agency, Property Owners, Residents	\$400,000	Governor's Office for Small Cities CDBG Small Cities program, NYS DHCR HOME Program, Housing Development Fund program, and Residential Emergency Services to Offer (HOME) Repairs to the Elderly (RESTORE), the US Dept of Agriculture's (New York Rural Development Rural Housing Services) Homeownership Loans, Rural Rental Housing Loans, Home Improvement and Repair Loans and Grants, and Housing Preservation Grant Program
Action 4.3	Encourage the formation of a non-profit housing organization as a tool to expand housing development capacity	Short Term	City of Rome, Rome Clean and Green, Local Banks, Local Realtors	\$72,000 annually for administration	NYS Division of Housing and Community Renewal, Federal Home Loan Bank's Affordable Housing Program, the affordable Housing Partnerships' Affordable Home Ownership Development Program and the Community Investment Program, the NYS Division of Housing and Community Renewal's HOME Program, and the Governor's Office for Small Cities' CDBG – Small Cities program

<b>Project</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Time Frame</b>	<b>Potential Stakeholders/Partners</b>	<b>Budget Estimate</b>	<b>Potential Funding Sources</b>
Action 4.4	Support the efforts of a non-profit housing organization to develop and implement a "Houses to Homes" initiative to maximize the rate of homeownership	Short Term	City of Rome, Mohawk Valley Community Action Agency, Local Banks, Local Realtors	\$400,000 Homeownership Assistance  \$300,000 for incentive grants	Federal Home Loan Banks Affordable Housing Program, the Affordable Housing Partnerships' Affordable Home Ownership Development Program and the Community Investment Program, the NYS Division of Housing and Community Renewals HOME Program, and the Governor's Office for Small Cities' CDBG
Action 4.5	Facilitate location of profession offices, live/work space and artist studio space in the predominantly residential neighborhood immediately north of downtown	Short Term	City of Rome	Included in the zoning update	City of Rome
Action 4.6	Encourage Residential Reuse of Historic Structures	Short Term	City of Rome, historic preservation organizations, NYS Preservation League, National Trust for Historic Preservation	\$5,000 for outreach materials and staff time to coordinate the effort	NYS Preservation League, National Trust for Historic Preservation
Action 4.7	Implement zoning changes to prohibit conversions of residential property from single family to multi-tenant and regulate the development or expansion of accessory uses	Short Term	City of Rome	Included in the zoning update	City of Rome

<b>Project</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Time Frame</b>	<b>Potential Stakeholders/Partners</b>	<b>Budget Estimate</b>	<b>Potential Funding Sources</b>
<b>Goal Five: 21<sup>st</sup> Century Infrastructure</b>					
Action 5.1	Develop a multi-modal transportation center at the Rome Train Station	Medium Term	City of Rome, NYS Dept of Transportation, recreational venues, cultural attractions	\$3.8 million	City of Rome, US Department of Transportation
Action 5.2	Develop a street classification and truck route system	Short Term	City of Rome	\$10,000 for signage, staff time	City of Rome
Action 5.3	Encourage the relocation of the Oneida County Airport to Griffiss	Medium Term	City of Rome, Mohawk Valley EDGE, Oneida County, City of Utica	Staff time for city share	US Military Airport Program
Action 5.4	Investigate the feasibility of the development of the West Rome Connector	Medium Term	City of Rome, NYS Department of Transportation	\$50,000 for the feasibility analysis	City of Rome, US Department of Transportation
Action 5.5	Evaluate need for water and sewer extensions in the Outside District	Short Term	City of Rome	Incorporated in current budgets for responsible departments	City of Rome
<b>Goal Six: Healthy Community &amp; Environment</b>					
Action 6.1	Implement the adopted Parks Master Plan and evaluate the function of current recreation resources and identify those that conflict with neighborhood quality of life	Ongoing	City of Rome	\$378,000	New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation's Environmental Protection Fund, Transportation Enhancements Program, Transportation Enhancements Program, National Recreational Trails Program, Municipal Budget, The Conservation Fund's American Greenway Grants

<b>Project</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Time Frame</b>	<b>Potential Stakeholders/Partners</b>	<b>Budget Estimate</b>	<b>Potential Funding Sources</b>
Action 6.2	Extend the NYS Canalway Trail through Rome – Define Process to select preferred alignment for the extension of the NYS Canalway trail	Medium Term	City of Rome, NYS Canal Corporation, Canalway Trails Association of New York	\$1.5 million	NYS Canal Corporation, NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation's Environmental Protection Fund, Transportation Enhancements Program, National Recreational Trails Program, Municipal Budget, The Conservation Fund's American Greenway Grants
Action 6.3	Environmental Design Standards	Short Term	City of Rome	Staff time	No additional cost
Action 6.4	Encourage the development of a permanent entertainment venue at Griffiss Business Park or another location in Oneida County	Medium Term	City of Rome, Mohawk Valley EDGE, Oneida County, Turning Stone Casino, Vernon Downs Race Track	Staff time (city share)	City of Rome
Action 6.5	Protect critical areas from damage through stewardship and resource protection. Implement agricultural, open space and natural resource protections in the Outside District	Short Term	City of Rome, American Farmland Trust, NYS DEC	Included in the zoning update	City of Rome, Environmental Protection Fund, Clean Water/Clean Air Bond Act, Federal Farmland Protection Program
Action 6.6	Implement the Urban Forestry Plan	Short Term	City of Rome, Environmental Protection Fund, NYS DEC	Included in budget for city tree planting	City of Rome, Environmental Protection Fund, Clean Water/Clean Air Bond Act, Federal Farmland Protection Program
Action 6.7	Redevelop the City's waterfront along the Erie Canal and Mohawk River for use by residents, workers and visitors	Short to Long Term	City of Rome, Hudson Mohawk Heritage Corridor, Erie Canal Museum, US Army Corps of Engineers, Canal Corporation	Varies based upon projects pursued. Cost of LWRP Preparation is estimated at \$60,000	US Army Corps of Engineers, Environmental Protection Funds, Empire State Development, Transportation Enhancement Program, private foundations

<b>Project</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Time Frame</b>	<b>Potential Stakeholders/Partners</b>	<b>Budget Estimate</b>	<b>Potential Funding Sources</b>
<b>Goal Seven: Rich Urban Amenities</b>					
Action 7.1	Enhance the city's façade improvement programs	Ongoing	City of Rome Planning Department, architecture firms, property owners	\$100,000 annually	Municipal budget, Governor's Office for Small Cities' Community Development Block Grant, local banks
Action 7.2	Create attractive gateways at the major entrances to the city	Medium Term	City of Rome Department of Public Works, NYS Department of Transportation, NYS Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation	\$125,000	Municipal Budget, UP Department of Transportation, NYS Department of Transportation
Action 7.3	Focus the city's Real Property Program to selectively demolish vacant and deteriorated residential and commercial structures in targeted improvement areas	Ongoing	City of Rome	\$375,000 annually	City of Rome, Community Development Block Grant
Action 7.4	Enhance the city's vacant/building lot maintenance efforts and implement a charge-back system to pass costs of stabilization efforts on to the property owner	Short Term and Ongoing	City of Rome	\$5,000 annually	Governor's Office for Small Cities Community Development Block Grant Program, City of Rome, NYS EPF/Bond Act grants
Action 7.5	Enhance code enforcement by placing emphasis on nuisance abatement	Short Term and Ongoing	City of Rome	\$50,000 annually (if a new code enforcement officer is hired)	City of Rome, Community Development Block Grant
Action 7.6	Preserve and enhance the city's historic and cultural resources, recognizing them as critical assets to attract new residents and development to the city	Medium Term	City Planning and Zoning officials and staff, Preservation League of NYS, Preservation Association of Central New York, local architects, realtors, landscape architects, owners of historic property, other property owners, engineers, historians/historical society, arts organizations	\$100,000 for all recommended actions	Municipal budget, Preservation League of NYS, New York Planning Federation, New York State Council on the Arts

<b>Project</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Time Frame</b>	<b>Potential Stakeholders/Partners</b>	<b>Budget Estimate</b>	<b>Potential Funding Sources</b>
Action 7.7	Identify demolition policy related to historic structures	Short Term and Ongoing	City of Rome	Staff time	Governor's Office for Small Cities Community Development Block Grant Program, City of Rome, NYS EPF/Bond Act grants
Action 7.8	Encourage partnerships between local non-profit arts, cultural and entertainment organizations to maximize Rome's arts, cultural, historic and heritage resources	Short to Medium Term	National Park Service (Fort Stanwix), Mohawk Valley Heritage Corridor, Erie Canalway National heritage Corridor, Northern Frontier Heritage Area, Jervis Public Library, Capital Theater for the Performing Arts, Rome Community Theater, Rome Art and Community Center, Rome Military Museum, Erie Canal Village, representatives from state wildlife management areas and parks, etc	Staff time	New York State Council on the Arts, New York State Council on the Humanities, National Endowment for the Humanities, National Endowment for the Arts
Action 7.9	Create a virtual city	Short to Medium Term	City of Rome	\$50,000	City of Rome, New York State Records Administration grants



## Appendix D – Historic Preservation Technical Memorandum

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August 29, 2003

To: John Sorbello  
From: Amy Facca  
Marian Hull  
Subject: Historic Preservation Recommendations

### Introduction

The purpose of this memo is to describe issues facing the city's current historic preservation efforts, describe the economic benefits of effective historic preservation and outline a set of strategies for the city to undertake to enhance its historic preservation efforts.

Initially adopted in November, 1967 and subsequently amended on at least five occasions,<sup>1</sup> the city of Rome's existing historic preservation regulations have become confusing, controversial and somewhat difficult to use. As a result, although historic preservation has been an important city policy for more than 30 years, and is still identified as an important community value in resident surveys and community meetings, current regulations and practices prevent historic preservation tools from being a strong contributor to the city's overall economic development efforts.

The current confusion helps make historic preservation regulations controversial and potentially exposes the city to legal challenges based on review and appeal decisions. Efforts are also needed to educate elected officials, staff, and residents about the economic benefits of historic preservation, including impact and benefits in low-income neighborhoods.

### Economic Benefits of Historic Preservation

A growing body of evidence confirms the success of historic preservation strategies in communities across the nation, including statistics compiled by the National Trust for Historic Preservation and statewide Main Street programs,<sup>2</sup> state-level tourism and economic impact studies,<sup>3</sup> local and regional economic impact studies, and studies that have analyzed the impact of specific actions such as historic designation, tax credits, and revolving loan funds.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Historic and Scenic Preservation Commission Regulations initially adopted as Ordinance No. 3359, effective November, 1967, and subsequently modified by Ordinances 4375, 4931, 6124, and Local Law #7 of 1994. These regulations are codified in the City's Code, Appendix A, Zoning, Article XII "Historic and Scenic Preservation Commission Regulations."

<sup>2</sup> See National Trust for Historic Preservation's Main Street web site at [www.mainst.org](http://www.mainst.org). Of particular note are results from the annual retail survey.

<sup>3</sup> State level economic impact studies have been completed by New York (see [www.preservenys.org](http://www.preservenys.org), Profiting Through Preservation); Texas; Florida; New Jersey; West Virginia; South Carolina; and other states.

<sup>4</sup> See National Trust for Historic Preservation's Dollars & Sense publications. They are available at [www.nthp.org](http://www.nthp.org).

## Rome Comprehensive Plan

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However, in spite of increasing evidence, many communities are reluctant to use historic preservation tools because elected officials, municipal staff, and property owners fear that preservation will impose cost burdens on owners, restrict property owners' ability to alter or improve their buildings; discourage private investment, and/or increase building improvement costs.

The documented benefits of preserving historic buildings and downtowns are numerous and include<sup>5</sup>:

- *Strengthening and enhancing the existing tax base by encouraging and investing in building maintenance and improvement:* Architecturally compatible building improvements increase the economic value of property and therefore increase the tax base. In addition, investment by one property owner, or improvements made to one property, often stimulate additional investment as other property owners seek to improve their buildings.
- *Increasing sales and returning revenues to the community:* A recent study included in the National Trust for Historic Preservation's "Dollars & Sense" series found that commercial building improvements resulted in an increase in sales the year after improvements; that sales improvements were sustained for several years; and that sales increases exceeded increases in local tax revenues. In all cases, commercial building improvements included three key elements: storefront improvements, business sign(s) or awnings, and interior improvements such as better fixtures and/or finishes.<sup>6</sup>
- *Creating a positive community image:* As noted by historic real estate economist Donovan Rypkema, downtown is the historic center of most communities, and a healthy downtown is vital for a community's economic well-being. He further notes that downtown most clearly reflects a community's evolution, history, diversity, and differentiation from anywhere else and the community's built environment is the most telling expression of those qualities.
- *Creating visually appealing and economically viable downtown buildings:* Downtown is home to the community's institutional leadership; the appearance of economic health downtown is perceived as a direct reflection of the quality of that institutional leadership. Because of this and similar factors, creating an appealing and positive community image is critical to attracting new residents, businesses, industries, consumers, visitors and investors.
- *Protection and enhancement of historic resources is an effective way to make a community more competitive in a global economy and differentiate the community from all others:* Economic development is extremely

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<sup>5</sup> See Donovan Rypkema's *The Economics of Historic Preservation: A Community Leader's Guide*. Additional information on the economic benefits of historic preservation can be found in the Historic Resources section of the Rome Community Profile that preceded preparation of this Action Plan.

<sup>6</sup> See Brenda R. Spencer, "An Analysis of the Economic Impact of Physical Improvements on Retail Sales," [National Trust for Historic Preservation's] *Dollars & Sense of Historic Preservation*, No. 012.



## Appendix D – Historic Preservation Technical Memorandum

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competitive, with communities endeavoring to attract new businesses and industries with a wide range of incentives. But just as soon as one community offers an attractive incentive package, another community quickly improves on the incentives offered. This is especially true in an increasingly competitive global economic environment. But, using a community's historic resources is a strategy unique to that community and allows the community to build upon existing but finite resources.

- *The appreciation rates for historic buildings often outperform the real estate market as a whole:* The market often undervalues unrestored historic properties, sometimes to the extent of razing buildings and using the land for parking. However, when these same buildings are restored, they often gain favor with buyers who are willing to pay a premium to own them. The more the public sector recognizes this incremental value – manifested through historic district protections accompanied by development incentives for preservation – the greater the private sector recognition will be.
- *Attracting additional tourists:* Cultural tourism – focusing on the arts, museums, and authentically historic environments such as historic downtown, commercial districts, residential areas and historic landscapes, is an international growth industry. Tourism is the second fastest growing economic sector in New York State. Rypkema notes that “state revenues, generated from tourism are many and include: gasoline tax, sales tax, airport boarding fees, room tax, park admission fees, liquor and cigarette taxes, food and beverage taxes, amusement tax, and others. Many of these revenues, and a wide range of other revenue sources related to tourism, also apply to local governments. Additionally, cultural tourists generally stay in a location longer than other tourists and spend more money.
- *Creating new jobs:* Historic building rehabilitation is labor intensive and requires the expertise of a broad range of professionals such as architects, engineers, and planners, as well as construction trades. Many economic studies have shown that, dollar for dollar, historic preservation is one of the highest job-generating economic development options available. Historic preservation creates more jobs than does the same amount of new construction. In addition, historic preservation has significant and ongoing economic impact beyond the project itself, including new businesses formed, private investment stimulated, tourism stimulated, increased property values, enhanced quality of life, sense of neighborhood and community pride, new jobs created, compatible land use patterns, increased property and sales taxes, pockets of deterioration and poverty diluted, and prevention of sprawl. Preservation, as opposed to new construction, also results in a greater dollar for dollar increase in direct local purchases from local retailer and wholesalers. Finally, preservation consistently creates more jobs than the leading industrial sector in many states, outperforming the manufacture of cars in Michigan, coal mining in West Virginia, pumping oil in Oklahoma, timber in Oregon, processing steel in Pennsylvania, manufacturing electronic equipment in California, growing agricultural products in South Dakota, and manufacturing textiles in South Carolina.

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Examples of communities that effectively and aggressively protect community character and use historic preservation as part of their comprehensive economic development strategies include Charleston, South Carolina; Savannah, Georgia; Denver, Colorado; Alexandria, Virginia; San Antonio, Texas; New Orleans, Louisiana; as well as Saratoga Springs, Ithaca, Corning, Rochester, and Syracuse, New York. In addition, numerous state, county and local Main Street programs build on their community's key assets – historic buildings – through design, promotion, economic restructuring, and organizing.<sup>7</sup>

### Steps to Success

Communities that have successfully used historic preservation as part of their comprehensive economic development strategies generally have the following things in common:

- They have identified historic buildings, sites and districts through a formal, comprehensive (i.e. city-wide) survey process. Some communities have done city-wide surveys; others have surveyed the entire municipality by neighborhoods to spread out survey costs and staff time out over a period of several years.
- They have listed identified buildings, sites and districts in National and State Registers of Historic Places, providing a basic level of protection from federal and state actions that may negatively impact these resources and making income-producing buildings within historic districts eligible for historic preservation tax credits and grant and loan programs at the local, state and national levels.
- They have adopted local historic preservation ordinances establishing local historic districts as well as clear protections, regulatory procedures, economic hardship provisions, review or design guidelines, minimum maintenance standards, and enforcement procedures and penalties that are administered by qualified historic district review commissions (or architectural review boards).
- They have established a local organization, with local staff, to promote and oversee preservation, revitalization, and marketing efforts, as well as stewardship of endangered buildings through easements, real estate options, and other mechanisms that ensure protection of historic resources.
- They have established a wide variety of incentive programs such as revolving loan programs, grants, paint programs, and tax abatements, to encourage

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<sup>7</sup> For more information about Main Street programs, visit the National Trust for Historic Preservation's Main Street program web site at [www.mainst.org](http://www.mainst.org). All but two states have state-level Main Street programs, and many states are developing county-wide Main Street programs to facilitate economic development in smaller cities, villages and hamlets. In New York State, Sullivan County has established a Main Street program to focus on downtown/commercial revitalization in rural villages and hamlets. Several large cities, including Boston and Baltimore, have established city-wide Main Street programs to implement commercial revitalization in key commercial districts.



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property owners to rehabilitate and appropriately maintain their older and historic buildings.

- They have utilized design, organization, promotion and economic restructuring to guide revitalization efforts.
- They have used neighborhood conservation districts as a way of protecting vulnerable neighborhoods and as a first step towards historic district designation in neighborhoods that have suffered a loss of historic character. Conservation zoning is a less restrictive type of zoning than historic districts, and only provides guidance and regulation of demolition, new construction and additions to buildings.
- They have active public education programs to increase awareness regarding the importance of historic resources, other key community assets and available incentive programs.
- They have effectively deployed municipal resources to complete infrastructure improvements, facade and streetscape improvements, beautification projects, marketing, and development of incentive programs (such as revolving loan programs).
- They have established a Main Street program, business improvement district or some other comprehensive approach to facilitate protection and promotion of central business districts.

### Implementation Steps for Rome

To put the city of Rome on more secure legal footing, incorporate appropriate historic preservation strategies into the city's economic development efforts, provide better guidance for owners of historic properties, and assist the city to better promote itself as a heritage tourism destination, the following actions are recommended:

- Increased Public Education and Outreach
- Adoption of a New Historic Preservation Ordinance (including creation of a historic preservation commission in some form)
- Development of Incentives to Encourage Preservation and Compliance with the Local Preservation Ordinance.
- Training for Historic Preservation Commission, Common Council, Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals, Planning Department Staff
- Consideration of Future Actions (Design Guidelines, Certified Local Government designation)

### Public Education and Outreach

To facilitate public dialog regarding the value of historic resources to the community, raise awareness of the city's historic resources, and familiarize all stakeholders with the economic benefits of historic preservation, additional education and outreach are needed to reestablish public dialog and discussion

## Rome Comprehensive Plan

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regarding the value of historic resources to the community. This should begin with existing municipal staff and elected and appointed officials, and should eventually extend to the public. Education efforts should include (among other things):

- Improved understanding of what is considered “historic” in Rome (e.g. definition of historic, National/State Registers of Historic Places, preservation, restoration, rehabilitation, and local historic preservation regulations).
- Understanding of what other areas of the city that may be eligible for National, State and local historic district designations or listing.
- Improved understanding of what National/State Register protections are vs. local historic district protection.
- Improved understanding of when a property owner must submit an application for a certificate of approval (COA) and what criteria will be used to evaluate and make decisions on the COA application, including the potential role of design guidelines in the decision-making process.
- Improved understanding of the role of a historic preservation law.
- Improved understanding of the potential economic benefits of historic preservation, especially in relation to lower income neighborhoods.
- Ways in which communities use historic preservation as an economic development strategy.
- Roles and responsibilities of historic preservation commissions.

Historic preservation outreach and education, as well as related research, can be provided by consultants, the Preservation League of New York State (which has a formal training program and technical assistance programs for historic preservation commissions), and the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, particularly Certified Local Government staff. It is recommended that the Mayor work with the Common Council, Planning Department staff and others to appoint a historic preservation committee to facilitate delivery of outreach, education, development of a new local historic preservation ordinance, and other activities outlined below.

Public education and outreach, along with adoption of a less idiosyncratic preservation ordinance is needed to ensure that everyone understands “the rules” of the historic preservation process. Understanding of “the rules” and creation of a preservation commission, review criteria and/or design guidelines, will establish a more equitable forum for making historic preservation decisions in Rome and should help reduce controversy. It can also be implemented in ways that will allow streamlining of the review process, with historic preservation commission members providing early technical assistance and education to property owners seeking certificates of approval.

### **Adoption of a New Historic Preservation Ordinance**

The new ordinance should be a single-purpose law included in the city’s municipal code. It should be based on New York State’s model historic preservation



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ordinance, which is available from the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation and the Preservation League of New York State. To be most effective, rational and fair to the public interest and private property owners, the new historic preservation ordinance should have the elements described below:

- **Title, Authority and Purpose:** This article identifies the state enabling provision that empowers the city with the authority to adopt a local historic preservation law, and spells out the community's reasons for adopting the ordinance. The statement of purpose links the rules and regulations listed in the ordinance to the community's values and goals. This provision is essential if the city wishes to withstand legal challenges questioning intent.

*NOTE: The title of the city of Rome's historic preservation law is Article XII -- Historic and Scenic Preservation Commission Regulations. It does not include a statement of authority. The purpose is set forth in Article XII, Section 72.*

- **Definitions:** Like the purpose clause, this article of the local preservation law helps to establish the intent of the historic preservation commission (or other permit reviewing body), and often plays a vital role in legal challenges.

*NOTE: Rome's current Article XII does not include a section with definitions. Definitions are not provided elsewhere in the municipal code or zoning law. Terms typically defined in local historic preservation ordinances include, for example, "preservation," "restoration," "rehabilitation," "alteration," "demolition," "demolition by neglect," "Commission," "historic building," "historic site," "historic resource," "hardship," "certificate of appropriateness."*

- **Districts, Landmarks and Boundaries:** This article formally identifies the historic resources regulated by the local law. Such resources may include National and State Register-listed buildings and districts as well as locally listed or designated buildings. The local law usually specifies district boundaries (or refers to an official map) and/or street addresses or tax map parcel information for designated buildings.

*NOTE: The city has several maps showing the boundaries of historic districts and, in some instances, the location of landmark structures. It also maintains a database that includes information on each historic property. This information should be included in the local historic preservation law, including narrative boundary descriptions and/or the street addresses or tax parcel information for each property. A map should also be included and adopted in concert with the local law.*

**Administration:** This article establishes a historic preservation commission (which can also be a designated existing entity such as a community's planning board) and administrative procedures related to project review (see below). The administration section includes number of commissioners; qualifications of commissioners (education, training, and experience or residency requirements); terms of office; and operating procedures and powers. This article may also include information on the roles and responsibilities of commission members and the administrative relationship/jurisdiction of the historic preservation commission and other

entities such as the planning board, zoning board of appeals, common council, etc.

Formation of a historic preservation commission (HPC) that acts independently of municipal planning and zoning boards, common council and staff is critically important to the successful use of historic preservation as an economic development strategy. The HPC can be an independent reviewing body with powers separate from those of the planning and zoning boards or can be created as a formally appointed advisory body that reviews applications for a certificate of approval and advises the planning board or planning department.

In addition to its permit review responsibilities (whether actual or advisory) the HPC is often responsible for surveying and designating historic buildings and districts, conducting activities to increase public awareness of historic resources, and numerous related activities. Members of HPC's, unlike – in most cases – members of other entities such as a planning board, are required to have experience or education in historic preservation, architecture, history, real estate, construction or other professions. Representatives of these professions should be balanced by property owners, neighborhood residents, business owners, etc. to give the broadest possible representation to the commission. The inclusion of professionals enables the HPC to carry out historic preservation actions, to educate and inform others about historic preservation, etc.

*NOTE: Article XII regulates the Historic and Scenic Preservation Commission, but that commission no longer exists; functions that would normally be assigned to such a commission are divided among the city's Planning Department, Planning Board, and Common Council. The city's Planning Department staff currently review, approve or disapprove all applications for certificates of approval with appeals handled by the Planning Board in the case of less significant buildings in historic districts and by the Planning Board, Historic Preservation Committee of the Common Council and specially-formed ad hoc committee in the case of historic buildings determined as contributing to historic districts. Appeal process is determined by classification of buildings from A – E, with A buildings retaining a higher level of historic architectural character and E buildings retaining a lower level.*

- **Designation Process and Criteria:** This article provides the standards for determining which buildings are landmarks and which are not. The standards should be well-defined so that if a designation is ever challenged, a court will have a set of standards against which to measure the designation.

*NOTE: Article XII, Sections 73.1(b), 73.2 and 76 address property designation but do not set forth evaluation criteria. Section 73.2 establishes a classification system, ranking buildings A, B, C, D, or E based on historic significance. Property designation is the responsibility of the Planning Board.*

- **Permit Process and Review Criteria.** This section should spell out the commission's powers in reviewing changes to designated properties and should include the types of changes requiring review. Review criteria can be



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as basic as the Secretary of Interior's Standards or formal design guidelines specifically prepared for Rome and its neighborhoods.

*NOTE: The permit process requires application for a certificate of approval (COA). The process is outlined in Article XII, Section 75, with review criteria set forth in Section 76. COA reviews, approvals, and denials are carried out by the city's Planning Department (appeals process described generally above – see Administration.*

*Formal, community-specific design review guidelines educate building owners and residents about local historic resources and architectural styles; provide rehabilitation guidelines to ensure new construction, additions, and alterations are compatible with historic buildings; and educate building owners and developers about the importance of historic preservation. They typically include standards for signage, building rehabilitation, new construction and demolition, as well as for the determination of economic hardship and other issues. The guidelines should ultimately be in a graphic and instructive format, using photographs and drawings of typical existing conditions and appropriate rehabilitation treatments.*

- **Hardship Clause.** This article sets forth the procedure and standards for determining whether a proposed project imposes economic hardship on a property owner. The burden of proof is with the owner. Hardship is typically defined as inability to earn a reasonable return (commercial properties) or inability to pursue charitable purpose (not-for-profits).

*NOTE: The city's hardship criteria and application procedures are outlined in Article XII, Section 77.1 and 77.2. Hardship regulations are consistent with those set forth in the NYS model historic preservation law.*

- **Demolition Delay Clause.** This article usually provides a mechanism for minimizing the impact of demolition and supports community revitalization goals. It typically provides for a delay period (30 - 90 days and sometimes more) to allow the historic preservation commission to explore alternatives to demolition, such as purchase by a sympathetic owner, building relocation, etc.

*NOTE: Article XII does not include any protection from demolition except for the hardship clause. Demolition delay regulations generally establish set time periods during which solutions for preventing demolition can be identified (such as purchase and relocation of the building) or standards are put in place to protect the public's interest and good related to demolition (e.g. no building can be demolished without an approved plan and proof of financing for property reuse or redevelopment).*

- **Maintenance Requirement.** This article helps a municipality prevent "demolition by neglect" and reinforces local nuisance abatement and property maintenance laws.

*NOTE: The city of Rome's maintenance and repair requirements are set forth in Article XII, Section 79.*

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- **Enforcement Clause.** This article establishes a process for enforcing the provisions of the local law and usually includes penalties such as fines (which accumulate daily) and imprisonment for continued violation.

*NOTE: The city of Rome's enforcement procedures outline a process involving periodic inspection by the code enforcement officer, who can issue a stop work order for inappropriate work. It does not include any penalties to discourage noncompliance.*

### Adoption of Historic Preservation Incentives

Communities that have successfully used historic preservation as part of their community and economic development strategies have also developed a wide range of incentive programs to encourage historic rehabilitation and building improvement. While these programs do not always involve large dollar amounts, they are generally very successful in stimulating investment in targeted neighborhoods and in encouraging property owners to improve their buildings in ways sympathetic to the original architectural character of those buildings. Incentives typically include low-interest revolving loan programs, 100% or matching grants, paint programs, design assistance, zoning incentives and tax abatements, to encourage property owners to rehabilitate and appropriately maintain their older and historic buildings.

There are at least five major purposes for creating historic preservation incentive programs, including to:

- Provide a contract of sorts between the property owner and the public that says, "If you take care of this property, the public will give you some public money."
- Counter government forces or land-use policies that inadvertently threaten historic resources.
- Generate systematic rehabilitation of historic buildings.
- Provide a level playing field for rehabilitation projects to compete with new construction or abandonment.
- Compensate owners who may be significantly burdened by historic preservation laws.<sup>8</sup>

As explained in the following paragraphs, the city of Rome may want to consider tax incentives among the first of the new incentives it established to encourage reinvestment by property owners.

Because nearly 40% of the city's housing units were constructed before 1940, much of Rome's building stock is in need of repair and maintenance. However, many property owners are reluctant to invest in, or otherwise improve, their properties, owing to concerns that their property taxes will increase, or that they won't own the property long enough to reclaim their investment when they sell. As a result,

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<sup>8</sup> See Marya Morris, *Innovative Tools for Historic Preservation*.



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maintenance tasks are often neglected or delayed. Buildings slowly deteriorate and neighborhoods become less and less appealing to potential property owners, tenants, investors, and others.

To reverse this trend, Rome should take advantage of recent and pending legislation enabling municipalities to create tax incentives for private residential and commercial property owners for building rehabilitation.

One such tax incentive allows owners of eligible historic buildings to defer tax increases for five years.<sup>9</sup> After this initial deferment period, the tax increase is spread over an additional five years. For example: a historic property has an assessed value of \$100,000. After rehabilitation work, the value increases to \$125,000. Under the tax incentive, the owner of the property will pay taxes based on the original assessment of \$100,000 for five years. Over the next five years (years 6 - 10), the taxes on \$25,000 will be phased in at the rate of 20% a year. Therefore, in year 6, taxes will be based on a value of \$105,000; in year 7 on a value of \$110,000; and so on, until year 10, when taxes will be paid on \$125,000, the full value of the building.

Under the state legislation, both residential and commercial properties are eligible for the tax incentive, but a building must be in a locally designated historic landmark or lie within a local historic district. In addition, planned rehabilitation work must be approved by the local landmark commission -- and completed by the owner -- before the tax incentive is granted.

In 1997, the city of Ithaca became the first local government to adopt real property tax incentives for historic properties.<sup>10</sup> As of January 2000, approximately twelve NYS communities had established similar tax incentives.

To encourage enhancement of Rome's residential neighborhoods, the city should also consider adoption of a NYS Real Property Tax Law 485(b) program. This program is authorized by New York State but a municipal resolution is required for a community to adopt it. The 485(b) program will allow the city to give a property owner a 50% tax exemption on the increase in assessed valuation in the first year after an improvement has been made, decreasing at 5% per year for a period of

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<sup>9</sup>See "A Long-Awaited Tax Break for Owners of Historic Properties," News, Preservation League of New York State, Volume 5, Number 2 (Fall 1997). This tax credit is technically created as an amendment to the New York State Real Property Tax Law.

<sup>10</sup>See A Proposal for the Use of a Local Property Tax Incentive to Encourage Historic Preservation in the City of Ithaca, a report prepared by Lynn Cunningham, Director of Preservation Services, Historic Ithaca, Inc., June 1994, updated February 1995. The legislative intent of Ithaca's local enabling legislation, which has become a model for other communities, is to increase incentives for property owners in historic districts to invest in the upkeep and rehabilitation of properties; provide an incentive for the restoration and rehabilitation of commercial structures that qualify as landmarks in order to provide financial advantages, not available elsewhere in the country, which may help attract and retain businesses in the City of Ithaca; assist homeowners who are interested in restoring their own properties, but may not be able to afford to do so when faced with potential increases in taxation as the result of alterations that would qualify for this exemption; provide financial incentives for investment in low income residential neighborhoods that may contain landmarked buildings or districts designated within the area; and provide a concrete benefit for restoring or improving historically significant properties that are subject to the regulations of the City's Local Landmarks Ordinance.

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ten years (i.e. a 45% exemption in year two, 40% in year three etc.). The program will be complemented by a public outreach effort to make property owners aware of what types of improvements may result in an increase in assessed valuation.

The following table reveals the impact on city and local school taxes resulting from creation of the 485(b) and historic rehabilitation tax credits. With no tax incentives available to property owners, the owner completing building improvements would pay \$1,202.50 in combined full taxes annually, of which \$460.25 would go to the city (for Inside District property owners), \$560.25 to the school district and \$182.00 to the county; the property owner would pay \$12,025.00 in taxes on building improvements over 10 years. Over the same 10-year period, a property owner taking advantage of the 485(b) program would experience gradual tax increases ranging from \$601.25 in year one to the full \$1,202.50 in year 10, realizing a total savings of \$3,307.00 over the ten year period. Similarly, a property owner certified under the building rehabilitation tax credit in the same 10-year period would pay no taxes on improvements for the first five years. In years 6 – 10, property taxes would increase from \$240.50 to the full \$1,202.50, allowing a property tax savings of \$8,417.50 over the ten year period.

<b>City of Rome (Inside District) Tax Incentive Program Impact</b>					
Property Tax Rate		\$48.10 per \$1,000 Combined City, County, School			
City Tax Rate		\$18.41 per \$1,000 City Inside District only			
Equalization Rate		100.0%			
<b>Year</b>	<b>Taxable Assessment</b>	<b>Combined Full Taxes</b>	<b>City Tax Portion (Inside District Only)</b>	<b>Taxes with 485(b)</b>	<b>Historic Rehab. Taxes</b>
1	\$25,000	\$1,202.50	\$460.25	\$601.25	\$0.00
2	\$25,000	\$1,202.50	\$460.25	\$661.37	\$0.00
3	\$25,000	\$1,202.50	\$460.25	\$721.50	\$0.00
4	\$25,000	\$1,202.50	\$460.25	\$781.62	\$0.00
5	\$25,000	\$1,202.50	\$460.25	\$841.75	\$0.00
6	\$25,000	\$1,202.50	\$460.25	\$901.87	\$240.50
7	\$25,000	\$1,202.50	\$460.25	\$962.00	\$481.00
8	\$25,000	\$1,202.50	\$460.25	\$1,022.12	\$721.50
9	\$25,000	\$1,202.50	\$460.25	\$1,082.25	\$962.00
10	\$25,000	\$1,202.50	\$460.25	\$1,142.37	\$1,202.50
<b>Totals</b>		\$12,025.00	\$4,602.50	\$8,718.00	\$3,607.50
<b>Savings</b>				\$3,307.00	\$8,417.50

A program of local tax incentives could stimulate reinvestment that might not otherwise occur. There is ample evidence of disinvestment and deferred maintenance particularly in rental properties in several city neighborhoods. Property tax incentives combined with a citywide housing rehabilitation and code enforcement program would go a long way to stabilize and revitalize some of the city's rundown residential neighborhoods.



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In addition to these local tax incentives, historic homeowner tax credit legislation is pending at the State and Federal levels. Like the incentives above, these tax credits will be targeted to historic districts (probably National Register-listed historic districts) and will be designed to encourage the rehabilitation of historic residential buildings.

One final tax incentive is the Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentive, which is available to income-producing properties that are listed in, or eligible for listing in, the National Register of Historic Places. Income producing properties include both commercial and industrial properties as well as some residential rental property such as multi-family housing. In order to qualify for these tax credits, rehabilitation work must be formally certified by the National Park Service following submission of a formal application (technical assistance is available from the State Historic Preservation Office). A 20% federal tax credit is available for the certified rehabilitation of certified historic structures, and a 10% federal tax credit is available for the rehabilitation of non-historic, non-residential buildings built before 1936.<sup>11</sup>

### **Historic Preservation Commission Training**

When the city adopts a new historic preservation ordinance including the elements outlined above, it should seek training and technical assistance from consultants, the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, the Preservation League of New York State, and the National Alliance of Preservation Commissions. Historic preservation commission training should initially be made available to members of any new historic preservation commission, as well as the Mayor and members of the common council, planning board, zoning board of appeals, planning department staff, and code enforcement officer. This will help ensure that a wide range of people understand, and can clearly articulate, the benefits and procedures of the local preservation ordinance and related actions and programs.

### **Future Actions**

Two additional actions that would help the city better incorporate historic preservation into its overall community and economic development efforts are development of formal design guidelines and formal designation as a Certified Local Government (CLG). Both of these actions would help ensure better understanding of historic preservation and design, would make review decisions more rational for everyone involved, and would help educate property owners and reinforce their understanding and ability to comply over time.

### **Design Guidelines<sup>12</sup>**

Although every historic preservation commission uses some type of guidelines as part of the historic district review process, they may simply be the accumulated policy shared verbally by long-time board members. They may also be the Secretary of Interior's Standards for Building Rehabilitation in an abbreviated form,

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<sup>11</sup> For more information on the Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentives, see [www2.cr.nps.gov/tps/tax/brochure2.htm#intro](http://www2.cr.nps.gov/tps/tax/brochure2.htm#intro).

<sup>12</sup> See David J. Brown & Al Cox, *Handbook on Historic District Zoning*, Preservation Alliance of Virginia, 1991.

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open to interpretation by board members (as all guidelines inevitably are). While these guidelines are useful, written, community-specific guidelines help promote objective and consistent decisions, providing a rational framework for design within historic districts. Graphics and text indicate what the community values about its built environment and history, and ensure that the commission, the applicant, and/or the architect or contractor is speaking the same design language. Design guidelines vary from community to community, with some places using simple, concise single sheet formats with annotated photographs, and others developing detailed volumes providing a wide range of information.

Design guidelines can:

- Give more detailed guidance to property owners contemplating changes or additions to their building or lot.
- Result in more appropriate changes that reinforce the character of the character of the districts.
- Help identify and resolve specific design concerns that are frequently raised in the districts.
- Assist the entire local building industry – including architects, contractors, and suppliers – and city officials such as building inspectors and public works officials in understanding the nature of the districts and how to reinforce their distinctive character;
- Improve the design quality of future developments and growth within the districts.
- Protect property values and public investment in the districts by discouraging poorly designed and inappropriate projects.
- Increase overall public awareness of the unique character of the unique character of the districts.

### **Certified Local Government**

A certified local government is designated following formal designation by the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation and the National Park Service. There are currently more than 30 CLGs in New York, ranging from small villages like Beacon, Canandaigua and Skaneateles to large cities such as New York City, Syracuse and Buffalo.

To become a CLG, a municipality must adopt a local historic preservation ordinance conforming to New York State's model historic preservation ordinance. The ordinance should have the sections described above. The municipality must also have a functioning historic preservation commission with at least five members. Members must have education or professional experience in historic preservation or related areas such as architecture, history, real estate, engineering, and law. Following designation as a CLG, the municipality is eligible for technical assistance from the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation. It is also eligible, on a competitive basis, for grant funding that can be used to finance local preservation projects and activities. Other communities have used CLG grant



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funds to complete additional historic resource surveys, complete rehabilitation projects, develop brochures and exhibits, and conduct educational programs.

August 28, 2003

To: John Sorbello

From: Marian Hull

Subject: Truck Route and Street Classification Recommendations

### **Introduction**

The city has expressed an interest in developing a designated truck route system. Due to their heavy weights, trucks are responsible for a very high percentage of wear and tear on streets, so limiting truck access will decrease the maintenance needs of non-truck routes. Trucks also cause high levels of noise and vibration, making them incompatible with residential uses. River Street Planning and Transportation Concepts have reviewed the city's initial proposals for a truck route system and generally agree with the city's approach; however, we would suggest adding South James Street to the network.

### **Street Classification Recommendations**

We recommend that the city go a step further and develop a street classification system that would address a variety of traffic volume and control issues for the city in addition to truck traffic.

Currently, traffic volumes, along with street condition, drive investment in street improvements in the city, rather than a conscious policy to steer traffic onto specific streets and away from others. This memo recommends a truck route system for the city and lays out the steps needed to implement a street classification system that could help the city determine appropriate roadway investments, prioritize street improvements, guide the installation and operational parameters of traffic control devices and address residents' concerns of truck and through traffic in neighborhoods.

A street network performs most efficiently and safely from a traffic operations perspective if roads are designated and operated to serve their intended purpose. Local roads serve primarily to provide access to properties and serve a relatively minor role in the wider city context for carrying traffic. Consequently, traffic volumes and speeds on these roads should be low. Conversely, arterials carry high volumes of traffic at relatively high speeds. Collector streets serve to collect and distribute traffic between local streets and arterials. Arterial roads provide the major corridors for traffic movement.

Street classification systems are an effective tool to guide investments in street improvements and guide policies for streetscape amenities and traffic control devices. For example, in most communities, traffic calming strategies (measures implemented to discourage non-local traffic) are limited to local streets and are not used for collectors or arterials, which are intended to carry higher volumes of traffic. Conversely, a traffic signal would only be considered at intersections that include a collector or an arterial because traffic lights are tools to increase the carrying capacity of a roadway.

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Determining a street classification system will entail evaluating the current function of roadways, and then considering what the desired function of each street is, given surrounding land uses, access needs of commercial, employment, educational and residential uses and the availability of alternative routes. Each street can then be classified as an arterial, collector/distributor or local street. The city could then use this classification system to change the function of certain streets by making policy and network operational changes to the street system that would move traffic off of designated local streets and onto arterials and collector/distributors.

### Truck Route Recommendations

The proposed truck route system is designated on the map on the following page. It includes all designated state highways (except Turin Road south of Chestnut), East Dominick Street, Chestnut Street, Mohawk Drive and Wright Drive.

We recommend that the city adopt a single-purpose law into the municipal code that will designate truck routes and regulate truck access in Rome. The ordinance should have the elements outlined in the sample ordinance language below:

- **Section 1 Definitions; generally**

(A) When used in this chapter, the words and phrases deemed shall, for the purposes of this chapter, have the meanings respectively ascribed to them in Section 2.

(B) Whenever any words and phrases used in this chapter are not defined herein, but are defined in the state laws regulating the operation of vehicles, any such definition therein shall be deemed to apply to such words and phrases used in this chapter.

- **Section 2 Definitions**

(A) Available route means a street, road, or highway dedicated for and open to public motor vehicle travel.

(B) Axle load means the total load transmitted by all wheels on a single or tandem axle extending across the full width of the vehicle.

(C) City means the City Rome, New York.

(D) Gross weight of vehicle means the sum of all axle loads of a vehicle, including any trailer or trailers connected to a vehicle.

(E) High pressure and low pressure pneumatic tires. Every pneumatic tire designed for use and used when inflated with air to less than 100 pounds of pressure shall be deemed a low pressure pneumatic tire, and every pneumatic tire inflated to 100 pounds pressure or more shall be deemed a high pressure pneumatic tire.

(F) Person means any person, firm, partnership, association, corporation, company, or organization of any kind.



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(G) Single axle means all wheels whose centers are included within two parallel transverse vertical planes not more than forty inches apart, extending across the full width of the vehicle.

(H) Tandem axle means two or more consecutive axles, the centers of which may be included between parallel vertical planes spaced more than forty inches and not more than ninety-six inches apart, extending across the full width of the vehicle. Axles which are forty inches or less apart shall be considered to be single axles.

(I) Truck means any motor vehicle, except privately owned recreational motor vehicles and mass transportation motor vehicles, whose gross vehicle weight exceeds 10,000 pounds.

(J) Truck route means a highway which is part of the National System of Interstate and Defense Highways; a state highway; or a highway, street, or road designated in Section 4 and posted as provided in Section 8, over and along which trucks may operate.

- **Section 3 Permit required**

No person shall operate within the city a vehicle which is in excess of the weight limitations for truck routes or the size limitations set forth in this chapter unless such person shall have first obtained a permit from the state department of transportation for such operation.

- **Section 4 Truck routes established**

There are established the following truck routes within the city. The axle load of trucks operated on these routes shall not exceed ten tons.

The truck route system is designated on the Truck Route Map and shall include all designated state highways (except Turin Road south of Chestnut), East Dominick Street, Chestnut Street, Mohawk Drive and Wright Drive.

- **Section 5 Trucks with origin and destination outside city**

(A) All trucks entering the city for destination points outside the city shall be operated only on truck routes.

(B) Any person who violates this section shall be punished by a fine as follows:

(1) First offense, \$100.00;

(2) Second offense within any twelve consecutive months, \$200.00;

(3) Third or subsequent offense within any twelve consecutive months, \$300.00.

- **Section 6 Truck traffic within the city**

(A) Except as provided in subsection (B), every truck operated within the city shall proceed over a truck route, shall deviate from that route only at the intersection which is nearest to a destination point, and shall proceed to the destination point by the shortest available route. Upon leaving a destination

point, a truck shall return to a truck route by a shortest available route, unless the shortest available route to the nearest truck route is longer than the shortest available route to the next destination point within the city. Upon leaving its last destination point within the city, a truck shall return to a truck route by the shortest available route.

(B) Construction traffic within the city shall proceed over a truck route, and shall deviate therefrom only on such routes as are designated by council at the time development is approved. A construction traffic routing plan must be provided to the city along with any required traffic report at the time approval for development is sought. The requirement of providing a construction route shall apply retroactively to all developments already approved but which are incomplete on the effective date of the initial ordinance codified herein.

(C) Any person who violates this section shall be punished by a fine as follows:

- (1) First offense, \$100.00;
- (2) Second offense within any twelve consecutive months, \$200.00;
- (3) Third or subsequent offense within any twelve consecutive months, \$300.00.

### ▪ **Section 7 Exceptions**

Sections 4, 5, and 6 shall not prohibit:

(A) The operation of emergency vehicles upon any street in the city;

(B) The operation of trucks owned or operated by the state, county, or a municipality, a public utility, trash removal company licensed to operate within the city or a contractor engaged in the repair, maintenance, or construction of streets, street improvements, or utilities in the city;

(C) The operation of trucks on any street which has been designated by the city as a detour from a designated truck route.

### ▪ **Section 8 Posting of signs**

The public works director shall cause all truck routes except highways which are part of the National System of Interstate and Defense Highways and state highways to be posted with signs identifying them as truck routes. Signs designating a truck route shall specify the maximum axle weight permitted on the truck route and, by means of an arrow, shall specify the exact course of the truck route. A street, road, or highway is not a truck route, or a part thereof, unless posted as such, or unless the highway is a state highway or a part of the National System of Interstate and Defense Highways. The size of said signs and their manner of posting shall be in accordance with the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices, 1978 edition, as amended. State highways and highways which are part of the National System of Interstate and Defense Highways are truck routes, but need not be posted as such.



- **Section 9 Evidence of points of origin and destination**

Any person operating a truck upon a street, road, highway, or portion thereof which is not a truck route shall have in his or her possession a log book, delivery slip or other evidence of his or her points of origin and destination to justify the presence of his or her truck upon such street, road, or highway. Failure to produce such evidence upon the request of a police officer shall be a Class 3 traffic offense.