

CITY OF AMSTERDAM COMPREHENSIVE PLAN 2003

*ADOPTED BY THE
AMSTERDAM COMMON COUNCIL
ON
JANUARY 21, 2003*

PREPARED BY
THE SARATOGA ASSOCIATES
■
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS, ARCHITECTS, ENGINEERS, AND PLANNERS, P.C.
AND
THE MONTGOMERY COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND
DEVELOPMENT

City of Amsterdam *2003 Comprehensive Plan*

Acknowledgements

Hon. John M. Duchessi, Jr., Mayor

Amsterdam Common Council

Joseph Emanuele III

Anthony Pallotta

Vincenzo Nicosia

William Wills

James Martuscello

Comprehensive Plan Committee

Michael Chiara, Chairperson

Bob Fetterly, Vice Chairperson

Marco Zumbolo

Bob DiCaprio

Anthony Duchessi

Doug Nadler

Mike Palmer

Joseph Emanuele

Fr. James Gulley

Dr. Ronald Marsh

Walt Curran

Diane Hatzenbuhler

Todd Fabozzi

City Staff

Amsterdam Urban Renewal Agency

Karl Gustafson, Director

Lynette M. DuRose

Alicia Cowles

Consultant Team

The Saratoga Associates

and

The Montgomery County Department of Planning and Development

City of Amsterdam *2003 Comprehensive Plan*

Executive Summary

The City of Amsterdam is at a crossroads as it begins the 21st Century. The City, like many former mill towns in Upstate New York and elsewhere, finds its economic base, neighborhoods and commercial areas in transition. The City's population has been in decline since the 1930's, the downtown and the neighborhoods around it have suffered from the legacy of Urban Renewal and highway construction, and new commercial development has occurred mostly outside of the city limits in recent years. The City leadership has chosen to undertake a comprehensive planning process to respond to the on-going economic, social, and cultural changes that are shaping the community. It has been about 40 years since the City last completed a citywide Master Plan.

There is no simple solution to the range of issues that the City of Amsterdam currently faces. For Amsterdam to succeed in implementing the new vision for its future outlined in this comprehensive plan, all parties must agree to work in a long-term, sustained effort toward this vision. Each person and organization brings its own interests and strengths to the table. But the comprehensive plan should channel the energy of the community's many actors and stakeholders toward a common set of goals. Building on the dedication of community leaders and volunteers, recent accomplishments along the waterfront and downtown, successful economic development initiatives, and existing strengths such as the city's wonderful neighborhoods, Amsterdam's future should be viewed with optimism.

The City of Amsterdam established the Comprehensive Plan Committee in the summer of 2001. The committee included a cross-section of residents who have been involved in local government and community activities, plus City staff. The committee met approximately monthly at City Hall. All of the committee meetings were open to the public, and a portion of the agenda at each was devoted to public comment. In addition, a series of Neighborhood Meetings were held around the City in October 2001, and Focus Group Workshops were organized around Economic Development, Senior Issues, and Youth Issues later in the fall and early winter. A Community Survey was conducted in March 2002. The comprehensive planning process in Amsterdam has been exemplary in its efforts to involve a broad range of participants, and to incorporate their concerns. The ideas contained in this document reflect the community's input.

Overall, the City of Amsterdam seeks to strengthen its role as a livable city; a great place to live, work, and visit in the Capital Region. To achieve this vision, the Comprehensive Plan recommends a series of actions organized around the following seven goals:

➤ **Improve Amsterdam’s Image and Identity in the Region**

Market Amsterdam effectively to the Capital District region and beyond. Overcome negative perceptions and emphasize the community’s positive attributes, such as: nice neighborhoods, cultural diversity, beautiful parks, great-tasting and abundant water, excellent golf course, and its location as a gateway to the Adirondacks, Saratoga, and other regional destinations, etc. Align the City more closely with the Capital Region.

➤ **Rebuild Amsterdam’s Economic Foundation**

Assist existing manufacturers in applying new technologies to their manufacturing processes, provide incentives to lure new industry to Amsterdam, and diversify the City’s economic base beyond manufacturing. Ultimately the goal is to create employment opportunities and wealth in the community. Utilize existing efforts and organizations such as the Amsterdam Industrial Development Agency (AIDA) and the Empire Zone, but improve local and regional coordination with the goal of creating “one-stop shopping” for economic development. Also recognize that the other goals described here are necessary and complimentary to the City’s economic development efforts. Today, a high quality of life (in the City this should be understood as a high quality urban environment) is recognized as a critical ingredient for successful efforts to attract and retain businesses and skilled workers.

➤ **Reestablish Downtown as the Community Center**

Return to the community a vibrant central place for people to meet, shop, live, work, and visit. Engage the coordinated efforts of City government, state agencies, and downtown stakeholders toward a common vision for downtown. Recognize this as a long-term, evolutionary process.

➤ **Stabilize and Strengthen Neighborhoods**

Amsterdam’s greatest asset is its neighborhoods. The goal is to protect, and enhance as needed, this asset. Encourage the creation of a citywide network of grassroots neighborhood organizations. The individual neighborhood organizations will harness the energy of community volunteers toward neighborhood self-improvement projects. An “Amsterdam Neighborhoods Association” will provide a forum for shared ideas and work in partnership with City Departments to facilitate projects.

➤ **Redevelop Old Mill Sites and Improve Connections to Neighborhoods**

Reposition some of Amsterdam's historically most important and valuable real estate, preparing it for expanded investment or future reinvestment. The focus for the former Mohasco Complex and the Chalmers Building will be to redevelop these derelict sites/structures as a catalyst for improvements to their surrounding neighborhoods. The focus for the Lower Mills (DeGraff Street) Complex and the Willow Street Complex will be to partner with business owners to stimulate the expanded use (increased value) of these facilities and to improve the integration of these massive complexes to their respective neighborhoods.

➤ **Enhance Important Gateways to the Community**

Improve Amsterdam's "front door" image. Market Street, Church Street, East Main Street, West Main Street, and NYS Route 5S each serve as important gateways to the City and to their respective neighborhoods. Through a combination of transportation enhancements, design guidelines, rehabilitation incentives, and other coordinated efforts, these gateway corridors can create a "sense of arrival" to the City.

➤ **Create a City Greenway System**

Create amenity, connect neighborhoods, and provide recreational opportunities for residents and visitors. The City's parks, the waterfront, the New York State Canalway Trail, and the remaining tree-lined boulevards all contribute to Amsterdam's quality of life. Maintaining, improving, and expanding these resources will benefit the entire community.

Section 4 of the Comprehensive Plan – *Plan Recommendations* - provides literally dozens of recommendations for each of the seven goals listed above. However, it is understood that a community cannot undertake all of these things simultaneously. Therefore, Section 5 – *Implementation* – outlines a programmatic strategy for implementing the plan's major recommendations. It is in this section that activities are prioritized, and programs and projects are described.

In order to oversee implementation of the Comprehensive Plan, the Plan suggests that a reconstituted version of the Comprehensive Plan Committee be established as a Standing Committee to the Common Council. The Committee would work with staff from the City's Community and Economic Development Office to undertake and monitor the programs and projects. It also suggests that the City of Amsterdam utilize its representatives at the County Board of Supervisors to seek support and assistance from Montgomery County. The Montgomery County Department of Planning and Development and the Montgomery County Economic Opportunity and Development Office, in particular, would be necessary partners in implementing the plan.

The following timetable for implementing major programs and projects described in the Comprehensive Plan has been developed:

Immediate Actions (upon adoption of the comprehensive plan):

- Rewrite the City Zoning Ordinance
- Communicate the Plan to the City's Partners
- Initiate Chalmers and Bridge Street Feasibility Study

Short-term Actions (initiate within 1 year of adoption of the Comprehensive Plan):

- Strengthen and expand the role of the City's Community and Economic Development Office.
- Use brownfield remediation funding (if approved) to begin clean-up of the Mohasco Site.
- Launch the Downtown Amsterdam Initiative
- Establish a City Promotional Committee in partnership with the Chamber of Commerce
- Kick off the Amsterdam Neighborhood Initiative
- Begin the Greenways Initiative
- Undertake the NYS Route 5S Corridor Study

Medium-term Actions (initiate within 3 to 5 years after adoption of the Comprehensive Plan depending on status of short-term actions):

- Begin the Construction Phase of the Downtown Amsterdam Street System Restructuring Project
- Begin the design and engineering phase for the Route 5 West arterial
- Pursue funding for the design and construction of the Riverfront Loop Trail

Long-term Actions (initiate within 5 to 10 years after adoption of the Comprehensive Plan)

- Update the Comprehensive Plan

The estimated costs for select programs and capital projects described in the comprehensive plan are listed in the Implementation Section. The total estimated cost for all of these programs and projects is between \$43 million and \$76 million over perhaps ten or fifteen years. It is understood that the City of Amsterdam cannot pay for this alone. Much of the funding for these programs and projects can be obtained from outside sources if the City takes a coordinated and aggressive approach to identifying and requesting assistance. However, the City must invest at some level to leverage these outside sources of funding (state and federal grants, and private sources). The City must be prepared to apply for and administer grants. It will also need to provide matching funds for many of the grant programs. The City of Amsterdam must also utilize its state and federal legislators to lobby effectively on its behalf.

City of Amsterdam *2003 Comprehensive Plan*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	
<i>Executive Summary</i>	
I. INTRODUCTION	I-1
II. THE COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING PROCESS.....	II-1
III. VISION AND GOALS.....	III-1
IV. PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS	IV-1
Improve Amsterdam’s Image and Identity in the Region.....	IV-1
Rebuild Amsterdam’s Economic Foundation	IV-3
Reestablish Downtown as the Community Center	IV-10
Stabilize and Strengthen Neighborhoods	IV-24
Redevelop Old Mill Sites and Improve Connections to Neighborhoods	IV-32
Enhance Important Gateways to the Community	IV-34
Create a City Greenway System	IV-37
Comprehensive Plan Map	IV-38
.....(Following Page)	
V. IMPLEMENTATION.....	V-1

Appendices (under separate cover)

APPENDIX A.....	INVENTORY
APPENDIX B.....	THE ECONOMIC SETTING
APPENDIX C.....	PUBLIC PARTICIPATION RESULTS
APPENDIX D.....	EXTERNAL SOURCES OF FUNDING

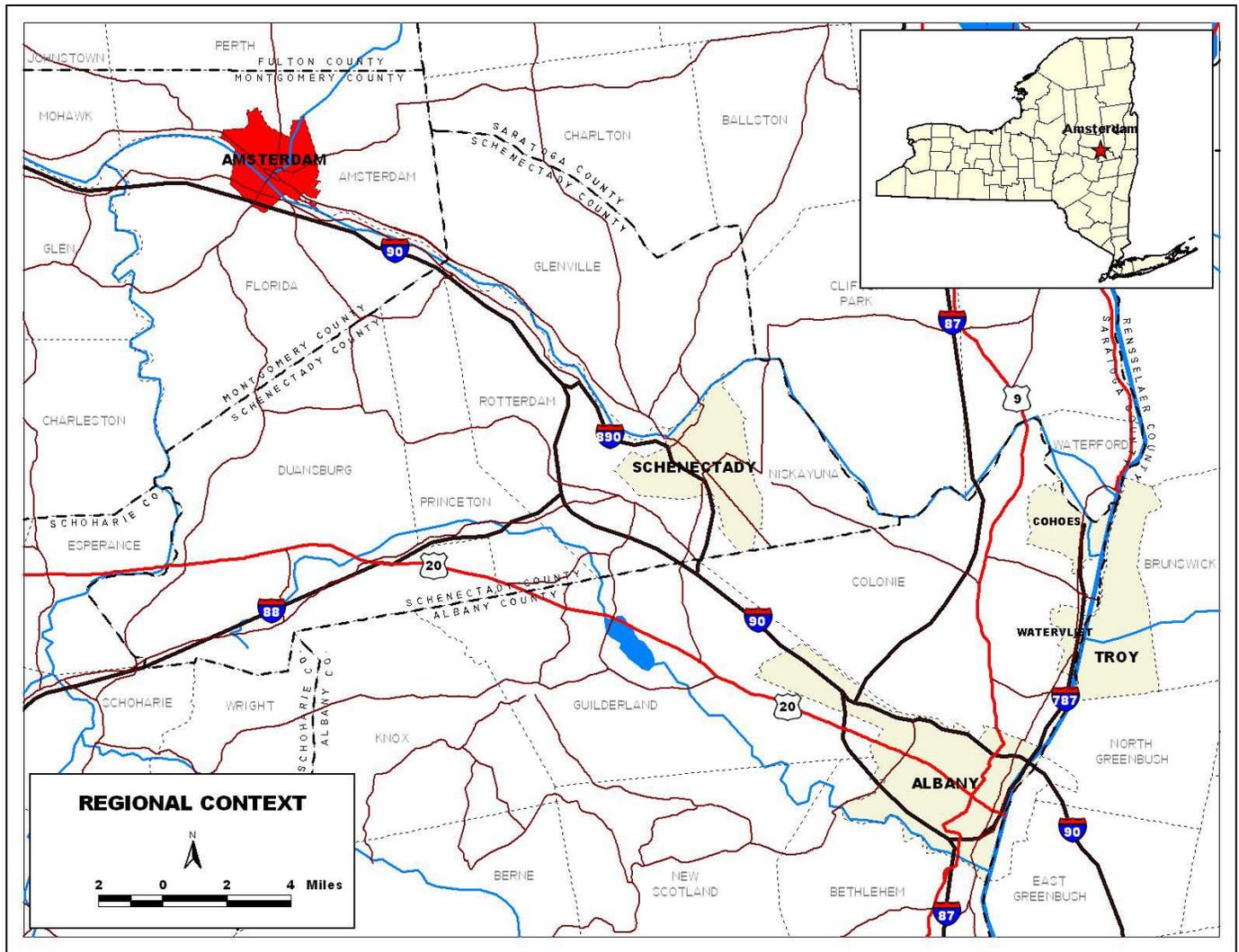
The City of Amsterdam is located in the northeastern section of Montgomery County, in New York State's historic Mohawk Valley. The Mohawk River divides the City into northern and southern sections. The City was originally an incorporated village named Veddersburg within the Town of Amsterdam. The Town of Amsterdam borders the north side of the City, and the Town of Florida borders the south side, which was once known as Port Jackson. The City of Amsterdam is Montgomery County's only City, comprising approximately 6.28 square miles or 4,020 acres of land. The County is one of the smaller counties in New York State, comprising 409 square miles or 262,009 acres.

The City of Amsterdam is at a crossroads as it begins the 21st Century. The City, like many former mill towns in Upstate New York and elsewhere, finds it's economic base, neighborhoods and commercial areas in transition. The City's population has been in decline since the 1930's, the downtown and the neighborhoods around it have suffered from the legacy of Urban Renewal and highway construction, and new commercial development has occurred almost exclusively outside the city limits in recent years. The City leadership has chosen to undertake a comprehensive planning process to respond to the ongoing economic, social, and cultural changes that are shaping the community. Their desire is to meet the needs and expectations of the community in a sustainable manner that reestablishes the City of Amsterdam as a destination of choice in which to live, work, and visit.

The City of Amsterdam is located very near the geographic center of New York State. This central location offers excellent access to other areas in the northeastern United States. Just off the New York State Thruway at Exit 27, the City of Amsterdam is only 30 miles from the State Capital of Albany, 180 miles from New York City, and 60 miles from Utica. New York State Route 30 connects the Thruway to the Amsterdam area and bisects the City. This highway is a major north-south route from the Adirondack Mountains to the Catskill Mountains, and is heavily traveled by recreation travelers. The Fulton County cities of Johnstown and Gloversville are 10 miles to the northwest, and historic Saratoga Springs is 27 miles to the northeast. Due to its strategic location, many travelers pass through Amsterdam on their way to other destinations.

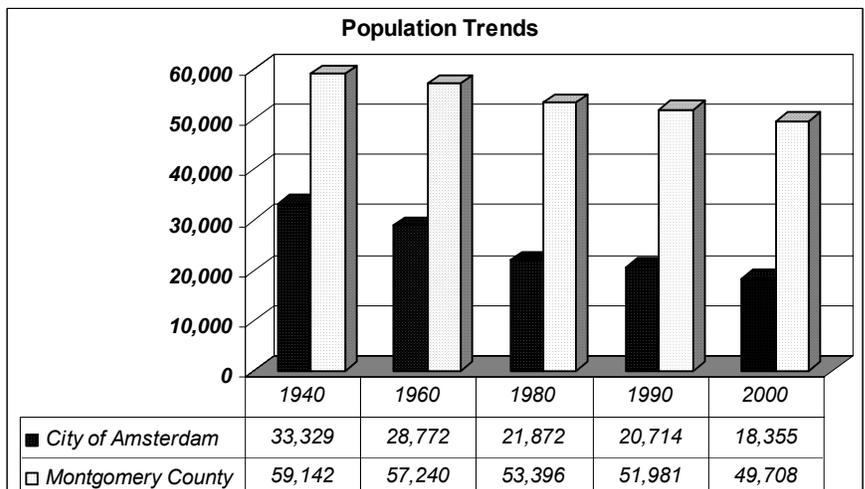
In addition to its highway access, the City is also well served by rail transportation, with CSX providing freight and Amtrak providing passenger service. The Erie Canal, which runs from Albany to Buffalo, passes through Amsterdam with approximately 2,000 boats using Lock 11 annually. The Erie Canalway Trail runs through the south side of Amsterdam and continues intermittently through Montgomery County. It will eventually link to a statewide recreation trail network along the entire length of the canal.

The City of Amsterdam was once a major industrial and commercial center. Named in honor of its early Dutch settlers who came to trade with the Native American Indians, it enjoyed certain advantages that acted as a magnet for both immigrants and workers from nearby towns. It's streams provided waterpower for mills of all kinds. It's shops provided luxuries for the residents of small Mohawk Valley towns. But by the 1930s the population of Amsterdam had begun to decline. In fact, the City's population peaked at over 34,000 persons in 1930, and it has lost population in every decade since. In 1930, Amsterdam made up almost 60% of Montgomery County's population. Today, the City is only a little more than a third of the County's population. Although the "Population Trends" chart (below) indicates that Montgomery



County has also been losing population, its population exclusive of the City has actually increased consistently since 1930.

Why has Amsterdam faced this extended downturn? A major cause has been economic. The first carpet mill left in 1955, heralding the start of a migration to the South where the labor was cheaper, and where there was better access to raw materials. Moreover, Amsterdam’s economy, so well tuned to the manufacturing boom of the previous century, could not keep up with modern times where



vacuum cleaners replaced brooms and synthetics replaced wool. Many major employers gradually withdrew from the area, declaring bankruptcy, downsizing or relocating.

Another significant cause has been the nation's societal trend away from urban areas to suburban ones. Stimulated by the post World War II baby boom, and major federal housing and transportation incentives, American families left cities in increasing numbers during the 1950's, 1960's, and 1970's. Commercial enterprises and workplaces soon followed this path to the suburbs. Our desire for "life in the country" had a profound negative impact on the economic and cultural health of American cities. More recently, the cumulative effect of millions of Americans moving to the "country" has begun to produce diminishing returns for the suburbs. As people have started to become disenchanted with suburban life, and as the baby boom parents age, urban areas are being rediscovered.

Not to be overlooked in a discussion of the City of Amsterdam's transition from a bustling to a struggling small city is the role of the city's changing physical form. Amsterdam is not alone in its economic circumstance – old industrial cities throughout upstate New York, New England, and the Mid-West have undergone similar transitions. Amsterdam, however, is uniquely challenged by the degree to which it has surrendered the physical integrity of its center – the downtown. Although this is not the sole cause of the city's current problems, the removal of the city's core over the last 30 years has certainly hindered its ability to recover from the economic downturn it has faced. Many urban areas in the northeast and elsewhere in the United States have at least started to recover, and some are thriving again. Demographic and cultural trends indicate that vibrant urban places will remain a lifestyle alternative for an increasing number of Americans. But why choose urban life when the quality of the urban experience has been so significantly damaged as it has been in Amsterdam?

Through a series of well-meaning, federally and state subsidized, but (in hindsight) misguided steps downtown Amsterdam ceased to exist as the civic, cultural, social, and economic center of the community. The results have been problematic not only for the downtown, but also for the neighborhoods that surround it and for the community as a whole. Where once the factory floor and the downtown served as the integrating and unifying forces of the community, bringing together diverse peoples and connecting their distinct neighborhoods, today both are essentially gone.

The 1960's Master Plan

Urban Renewal and Arterialization were suggested remedies for the downtown and adjoining neighborhoods on the east and west when the city last completed a Master Plan almost forty (40) years ago. According to the "Urban Renewal Plan" portion of that document, "In order to make the most effective use of Amsterdam's resources, a program of self-help through urban renewal is proposed. Such a program will enable the city to combat blight, remove substandard and obsolete structures and rebuild with more suitable and valuable facilities." The Urban Renewal Plan designated a huge area - from Tryon Street on the west to Degraff Street on the east, and south of Division Streets or Guy Park Avenue and the Green Hill Cemetery, including all of downtown - for "redevelopment." According to the plan, "Redevelopment consists of clearing those areas in which the housing is too dilapidated to be repaired.

Under redevelopment procedures, the city designates an area as substandard and applies for a federal grant for acquisition of the properties and clearance of the structures. The cleared land is then made available for new uses in accordance with a redevelopment plan.” Another section of the master plan document, the “Central Business District Plan”, suggested the general types of uses that should occupy this cleared area. It called for separating land uses into different portions of the CBD (core, fringe, highway-oriented, professional office, and residential), and it emphasized the efficient flow of automobile traffic, the removal of on-street parking, and the creation of much more off-street parking.

The “Traffic Plan” component of the 1960’s master plan had as its main objectives, “to insure efficient vehicular flow for both through and local traffic, and to tie the various sections of the city together with a coordinated system of traffic circulation.” For the Central Business District, the Traffic Plan stated that:

“Traffic bound for the central business district has traditionally used Main and Market Streets for access and for parking. But during the past decades, volumes have exceeded the streets’ capacity. The interference to free flow from parking movements and traffic blockages caused by delivery vehicles have created a poor psychological image of the Amsterdam Central Business District in the minds of potential customers. The proposed circulation plan has three objectives: first, it seeks to separate as much as possible the traffic bound for the central business district from that which has other destinations; second, it attempts to provide direct access to as many destination points as possible within the central business district, thus reducing walking distances for those who wish to use the city’s retail, business and professional facilities; finally, it allows traffic to circulate easily around the commercial core.”

The traffic plan is notable for its bias toward automobile transportation and “efficient” flow. Even the reference to walking assumes that the walker must arrive by automobile to a point as close to his/her destination as possible.

The combined impacts of the Urban Renewal and Traffic recommendations of the 1960’s era Master Plan are plainly visible on the landscape of downtown Amsterdam today. Almost forty years later, the most remarkable aspect of the program outlined in the Master Plan is how much was actually implemented. It required a couple of decades of effort, but downtown Amsterdam was clearly transformed. As the Master Plan pointed out, a tremendous amount of state and federal money was available at the time to assist in these efforts. For the road proposals, the master plan stated that they “will involve participation by federal and state highway agencies. Their share of the program will cover the costs of all construction work and half the cost of all-right-of-way acquisition where a state highway is involved.” For “redevelopment” the master plan noted that, “The federal government pays three-quarters of the net project cost and the state government pays one-eighth, leaving one eighth to be paid by the city. The city’s share can be made up wholly or in part of non-cash grants-in-aid.” In fact, later the plan noted that in addition to the direct federal and state subsidies for urban renewal, “many public improvements may be incorporated into the various projects and part of their cost defrayed on the same basis. By combining urban renewal with the provision of other master plan improvements, such as highways, the city may

obtain the greatest possible financial advantage.” So for example, the city could use urban renewal funds to clear buildings and acquire right-of way for its highway-building program.

In fairness to the 1960’s Master Plan, the programs it proposed were sometimes expanded in scope as more detailed plans were later developed. The traffic plan for downtown, for example, was expanded as it was implemented. Although the master plan called for the counter-clockwise traffic pattern that currently exists, it envisioned that Market Street would continue to serve as a southbound arterial. Instead, a new southbound loop (Shuler Street) was created to the west of Market Street as the arterial plans were finalized several years later.

Hugh Donlon, author of *Amsterdam, New York: Annals of a Mill Town in the Mohawk Valley* (1980), wrote about the confusion caused by the arterial system in a section called, “New Sign Language.” He claimed that “Bewildered and exasperated travelers offered pledges like: ‘If you please show me how to get out of this town, I’ll promise never to come back.’” He observed that, “Even after vehicular operators were becoming used to the new order, many pedestrians, mostly senior citizens needing both understanding and mobility, were not readily adapting to the hazards of wide arterials and crossing directions from walk lights that failed to make senescent allowances. Winter travel proved even more difficult if crossings had not been cleared. The changes offered definite reminders that the old Downtown was no more. Gone also were many of the pedestrians.”



The Current Setting

As described above, the City of Amsterdam has experienced a sustained economic downturn and a long-term decline in population over the last half century. Still, the City retains many positive attributes, such as its nice neighborhoods, cultural diversity, beautiful parks, great-tasting and abundant water, an excellent golf course, and its location as a gateway to the Adirondacks, Saratoga, and other regional destinations. A complete description of the City of Amsterdam’s current setting, the positive and the negative, is attached as Appendix A: Inventory and Appendix B: The Economic Setting.

Some important facts, however, require consideration up-front. In the course of preparing the Comprehensive Plan, these items of information were considered cause for concern and helped to “define the problem” for the Comprehensive Plan Committee.

Residential land accounts for 85.3% of the City of Amsterdam’s taxable property value. This places a heavy tax burden on residential property owners. →

Compared to a sample of other small cities in Upstate New York (Auburn, Corning, Glens Falls, Fulton, Oswego, and Rome), Amsterdam’s total (city, county, school) equalized taxes per \$1,000 full value are the highest. Amsterdam’s city taxes are below the average of the sample cities, but county and school taxes are above the average. However, local small cities such as Gloversville and Johnstown have equally high or even higher total equalized tax rates (combined city, county, school).

Twenty-nine percent (29%) of residential parcels in the City of Amsterdam are owned by people who are 65+ years old.

The housing vacancy rate nearly doubled between 1990 and 2000 (from 7.5% to 13.9%), and almost half (48%) of occupied units are rented. High and growing vacancy rates reflect problems in the housing market.

The assessed value of residential property in Amsterdam is lowest in the neighborhoods close to downtown - the further from downtown, the higher the property value. →

Educational attainment in Amsterdam is lower than that of the Albany-Schenectady-Troy and Rome-Utica Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs). Just 12% of the adult population in Amsterdam has a college degree or higher. The figure is almost 16% for the Utica Rome MSA, and 23.4% for the Albany MSA.

Land Use	Taxable Acres	% of Total Taxable Acres	Assessed Value of Taxable Property	% of City's Taxable Property Value
Commercial	261.85	13.02%	\$ 33,171,800	9.85%
Community Services	3.73	0.19%	\$ 871,000	0.26%
Industrial	128.93	6.41%	\$ 7,885,500	2.34%
Public Services	48.29	2.40%	\$ 3,014,489	0.90%
Residential	1144.96	56.93%	\$ 287,129,950	85.30%
Recreation / Entertainment	3.06	0.15%	\$ 809,000	0.24%
Vacant	404.11	20.09%	\$ 3,668,855	1.09%
Forested; Public Parks	16.24	0.81%	\$ 76,000	0.02%
Total	2011.17	100%	\$ 336,626,594	100%

Table 1: Taxable acres and assessed value of taxable property in the City of Amsterdam. A very high percentage of the city’s taxable property value comes from residential land.

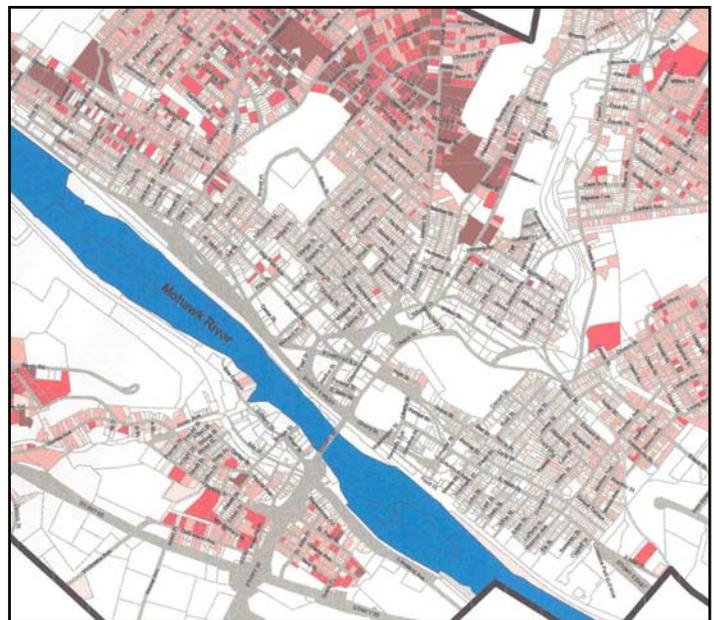


Figure 1: Assessed value of residential property in the City of Amsterdam (the darker the shade the higher the assessed value)

The 2003 Comprehensive Plan

For every complex, difficult problem, there is a simple, easy solution...and it is wrong.

- H.L. Mencken

There is no simple solution to the range of issues that the City of Amsterdam currently faces. It has been about 40 years since the City last completed a Master Plan. As described above, the City did achieve many of the objectives outlined in that plan. Implementation required a couple of decades, many millions of dollars of mostly federal and state funding, and substantial effort on the part of City staff and community volunteers. Now, a long overdue reassessment of the City's goals for the future is being completed. It must be understood that implementation of the new course outlined here will also take time, money, and coordinated effort. There is no quick fix.

There are two important ways in which this comprehensive plan differs from its predecessor. Most importantly, the ideas contained in this document were derived from the community. The recommended process for developing a comprehensive plan today places much more emphasis on public involvement. The process here in Amsterdam has been exemplary in its efforts to involve a broad range of participants, and to incorporate their concerns. Secondly, this plan recognizes that circumstances and ideas change over time. Forty years is obviously too long to wait before undertaking a community-wide planning effort. However, this plan recommends that the City review, check progress, and update as needed the comprehensive plan every five to ten years. The plan should be viewed as an important policy document and must remain current so that it can be a useful tool for decision-making.

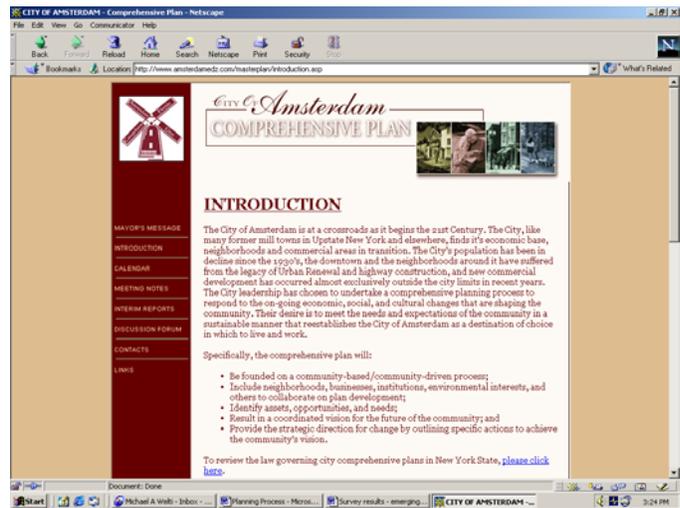
A comprehensive plan is meant to be directive. It sets a vision for the future of a community and outlines a path for achieving it. Just as with the 1960's Master Plan, additional detailed study will be required to implement many of the ideas presented in this new Comprehensive Plan. But we cannot underestimate the power and value of developing a vision to direct community efforts. Although history has revealed the unintended consequences of federal and state urban renewal and transportation policies that dominated planning and funding priorities from that era, the power of the vision contained within Amsterdam's 1960's Master Plan is evident in its results. For better or for worse, the community worked toward and achieved what the plan recommended.

For Amsterdam to succeed in implementing the new vision for its future outlined in this comprehensive plan, all parties must agree to work in a long-term, sustained effort toward this vision. Each person and organization brings its own interests and strengths to the table. But the comprehensive plan should channel the energy of the community's many actors and stakeholders toward a common set of goals. Building on the dedication of community leaders and volunteers, recent accomplishments along the waterfront and downtown, successful economic development initiatives, and existing strengths such as the city's wonderful neighborhoods, Amsterdam's future should be viewed with optimism.

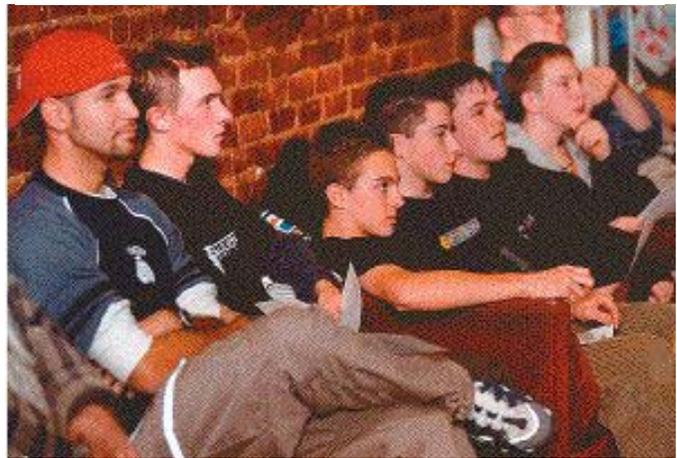
The City of Amsterdam established a Comprehensive Plan Committee in the summer of 2001. The committee included a cross-section of residents who have been involved in local government and community activities, plus City staff. The committee met approximately monthly at City Hall. All of the committee meetings were open to the public, and a portion of the agenda at each was devoted to public comment.

The committee reached out to the community on several occasions to solicit public input. Special opportunities for public involvement included the following occasions:

- **October 2001 - Neighborhood Meetings** – Neighborhood Meetings were held around the City to identify neighborhood and citywide strengths, and issues of concern that should be addressed through the comprehensive plan. Meetings were organized for the following six (6) neighborhoods: Upper Church / Reid Hill, Southside, Market Hill, West End / Henrietta Heights, Rockton, and East End / Downtown. The results of these meetings are attached as Appendix C.
- **Mid-October 2001 – Launch of the Comprehensive Plan Website** – Information about the plan, upcoming meetings, meeting notes, interim work products, contact information, and an online discussion forum were incorporated into a website established for the comprehensive plan process. The Amsterdam-Florida-Glen Empire Zone helped to create and hosted the site (www.amsterdamedz.com - click on the “City of Amsterdam Comprehensive Plan”).
- **November and December 2001 – Focus Group Meetings** – Focus Group Meetings were held on three occasions to solicit input from particular groups in the City. The first was an Economic Development Focus Group held for the City’s business leaders. The second was held for Amsterdam’s seniors. The third, held at the Byte This! Cyber Café for the City’s youth, was held just before the December holidays so that middle school, high school, and college students home for vacation, could attend. The results of these meetings are attached as Appendix C.



City of Amsterdam – Comprehensive Plan Website

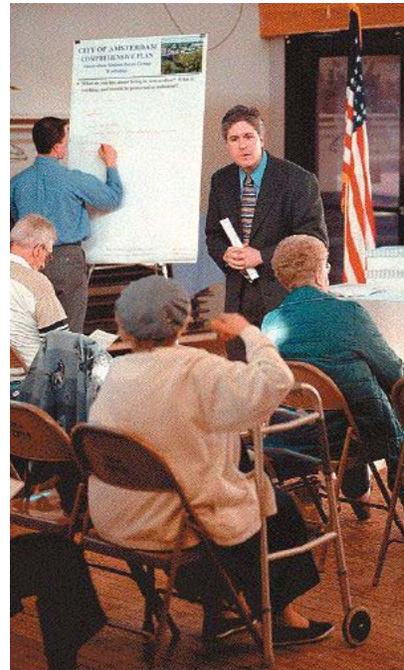


Amsterdam’s Youth: Focus Group Workshop
December 18, 2001 – Byte This! Cyber Cafe

- **March 2002 – Community Survey** – In March 2002, approximately 1,500 community surveys were mailed to a random sample of registered voters in the City of Amsterdam. In total, 470 completed questionnaires were returned to City Hall, entered into a spreadsheet by the Amsterdam Urban Renewal Agency, and analyzed by The Saratoga Associates. The response rate for this survey was over 31%.

The Survey solicited input about broad level citywide and neighborhood concerns, and also about the relative importance of different strategies for the future success of the City of Amsterdam. It also asked respondents to help prioritize among the various strategies.

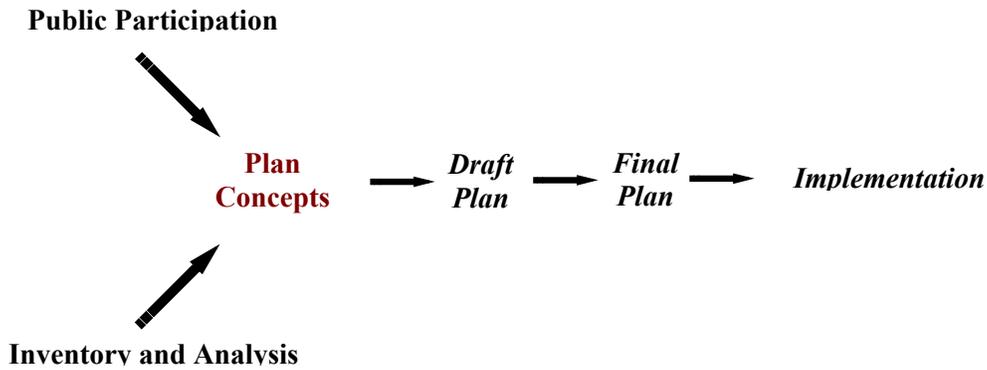
The survey responses have a sampling error of +/- 5% at the 95 percent confidence level – in other words, the chances are 19 out of 20 (95 percent) that the actual population value is within 5 percent of our estimates in either direction. The complete survey questionnaire and responses are attached as Appendix C.



Amsterdam Seniors Focus Group
Workshop
December 3, 2001
Horace J. Inman Senior Center

- **November 2002 – Comprehensive Plan Committee Public Hearing** – The purpose of this meeting was to present the main elements of the draft comprehensive plan to the community and to receive feedback from the public. As required by state law, the Comprehensive Plan Committee conducted this public hearing before it voted on a resolution to forward the final draft plan to the City Council for adoption in December 2002.
- **January 2003 – Common Council Public Hearing** – The Common Council held a public hearing before voting to adopt the plan.

At the start of the Comprehensive Plan Committee's work, simultaneously with initial portions of the public outreach process, existing conditions in the City and the region were examined. The results of this investigation are documented in the Inventory attached as Appendix A. The Inventory describes the City's demographics, land use patterns, zoning, environmental features, historic and cultural resources, war memorials, heritage organizations, the historic resource overlay, the proposed Downtown Historic District, parks, recreation, and open spaces, the City's neighborhoods, the transportation network, parking, public transportation, canal transportation, public utilities, other utilities, educational services, police, fire, and emergency services, health services, and human services. Information for the Inventory was collected from a variety of sources including local, county, regional, state, and federal agencies, and from previous reports and studies of Amsterdam and the region. Appendix B contains an analysis of the City's economic setting.



General plan concepts were first discussed to address the problems and issues defined through the inventory, and from the initial public outreach process. From these general concepts, specific policies and recommendations were developed. Finally, a strategy for implementing the recommended policies and actions was created. The strategy assigns responsibility, prioritizes actions, and identifies resources for implementation.

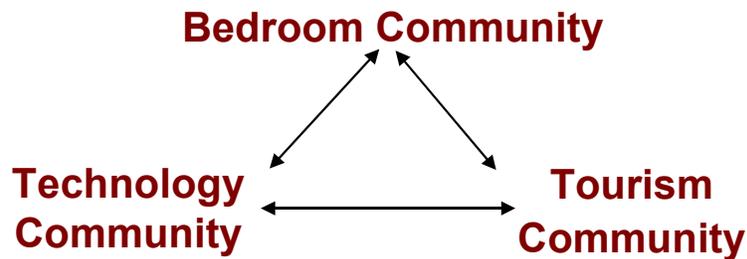
Once the City Council adopts the comprehensive plan, it should serve as a guide for future action by both public and private entities active in the community. As with any plan, it should be reviewed periodically to determine if the goals and recommendations within continue to be relevant based on changing circumstances, and refined or updated as appropriate.

Amsterdam’s Comprehensive Plan is about *Renewal* based on *Traditional Values*. All communities exist because of economic and social factors. In Amsterdam, the original economic force was waterpower that fueled the development of industry along the Chuctanunda Creek. The City’s social development was based on the influx of people and families from around the world who came to work here. These different ethnic groups retained ties to their separate cultures even while they assimilated and became Americans. Over time, there have been shifts in the economy and social structures throughout Upstate New York and the nation. These transitions are ongoing, and effect all communities. The challenge is to adjust to these transitions, and to reinvest toward the next level of economic and social activity.

Amsterdam has a proud history and strong traditions. The City can build its future based on traditional values – downtown as the heart of the community, vital neighborhoods, diversity and social interaction. It can take steps to enhance its quality of life and to connect to the economy of the 21st Century.

The City of Amsterdam seeks to strengthen its role as a livable city; a great place to live, work, and visit in the Capital Region.

As the original plan concepts were developed, three complimentary strategies, or ways of thinking about the future of the City, were identified:



The qualities necessary to achieve these desired outcomes are not unfamiliar to Amsterdam. At the turn of the last century, Amsterdam had vital neighborhoods (like a bedroom community), was an industrial innovator (a technology community), and its downtown was the center of commerce and culture in the region (a tourism community).

What are the qualities that Amsterdam would need in order to achieve each of these outcomes today?

To be a Bedroom Community to the Capital District:

- Quality schools
- Reasonable housing costs & taxes
- Good quality / diverse housing product
- Strong, mixed-use urban neighborhoods
- Efficient transportation – car, rail, bus
- High Quality of Life:
 - Small city, low crime, nice neighborhoods, culture, entertainment, parks, trails, recreation

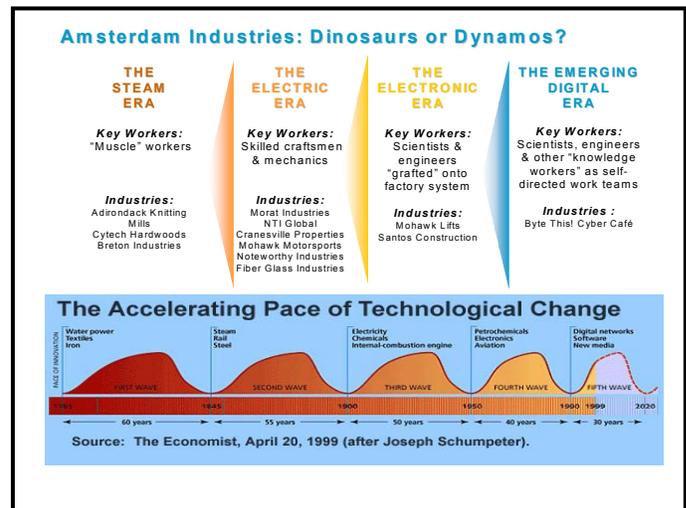


To be a Technology Community in the 21st Century:

- *Talent* – Labor Pool (Education and Training) - High quality of life to attract and retain workforce
- *Technology* – Process and Products

In Amsterdam, start by retooling existing industry (applying high tech processes) instead of revolutionizing industry (overtime move toward high tech products)

- *Tolerance* – conducive to the in-migration of new workforce
- Economic diversity – production, tourism, health care, education, etc.
- Infrastructure
 - Telecommunications, Transportation
- Site preparation



To be a Tourism Community along the Mohawk River:

- Arts and Culture
- Erie Canal
- Ethnic heritage
- History
- Destinations / attractions
- Attractive, vibrant downtown
- Quality of life amenities



Amsterdam already possesses many of these qualities. But in order to “strengthen its role as a livable city; a great place to live, work, and visit in the Capital Region” - Amsterdam must strive to improve itself in terms of each of these qualities.

To achieve its vision, the City of Amsterdam has established a set of goals to guide decision-making. The recommendations in this comprehensive plan attempt to direct action toward achieving these goals. The goals are to:



- **Improve Amsterdam’s Image and Identity in the Region.** Market Amsterdam effectively to the Capital District region and beyond. Overcome negative perceptions and emphasize the community’s positive attributes, such as: nice neighborhoods, cultural diversity, beautiful parks, great-tasting and abundant water, excellent golf course, and its location as a gateway to the Adirondacks, Saratoga, and other regional destinations, etc. Align the City more closely with the Capital Region.
- **Rebuild Amsterdam’s Economic Foundation.** Assist existing manufacturers in applying new technologies to their manufacturing processes, provide incentives to lure new industry to Amsterdam, and diversify the City’s economic base beyond manufacturing. Ultimately the goal is to create employment opportunities and wealth in the community. Utilize existing efforts and organizations such as the Amsterdam Industrial Development Agency (AIDA) and the Empire Zone, but improve local and regional coordination with the goal of creating “one-stop shopping” for economic development. Also recognize that the other goals described here are necessary and complimentary to the City’s economic development efforts. Today, a high quality of life (in the City this should be understood as a high quality urban environment) is recognized as a critical ingredient for successful efforts to attract and retain businesses and skilled workers.
- **Reestablish Downtown as the Community Center.** Return to the community a vibrant central place for people to meet, shop, live, work, and visit. Engage the coordinated efforts of City government, state agencies, and downtown stakeholders toward a common vision for downtown. Recognize this as a long-term, evolutionary process.
- **Stabilize and Strengthen Neighborhoods.** Amsterdam’s greatest asset is its neighborhoods. The goal is to protect, and enhance as needed, this asset. Encourage the creation of a citywide network of grassroots neighborhood organizations. The individual neighborhood organizations will harness the energy of community volunteers toward neighborhood self-improvement projects. An “Amsterdam Neighborhoods Association” will provide a forum for shared ideas and work in partnership with City Departments to facilitate projects.

- **Redevelop Old Mill Sites and Improve Connections to Neighborhoods.** Reposition some of Amsterdam’s historically most important and valuable real estate, preparing it for expanded investment or future reinvestment. The focus for the former Mohasco Complex and the Chalmers Building will be to redevelop these derelict sites/structures as a catalyst for improvements to their surrounding neighborhoods. The focus for the Lower Mills (DeGraff Street) Complex and the Willow Street Complex will be to partner with business owners to stimulate the expanded use (increased value) of these facilities and to improve the integration of these massive complexes to their respective neighborhoods.

- **Enhance Important Gateways to the Community.** Improve Amsterdam’s “front door” image. Market Street, Church Street, East Main Street, West Main Street, and NYS Route 5S each serve as important gateways to the City and to their respective neighborhoods. Through a combination of transportation enhancements, design guidelines, rehabilitation incentives, and other coordinated efforts, these gateway corridors can create a “sense of arrival” to the City.

- **Create a City Greenway System.** Create amenity, connect neighborhoods, and provide recreational opportunities for residents and visitors. The City’s parks, the waterfront, the New York State Canalway Trail, and the remaining tree-lined boulevards all contribute to Amsterdam’s quality of life. Maintaining, improving, and expanding these resources will benefit the entire community.

The comprehensive plan recommendations are targeted toward achieving the vision and goals identified in Section III. The recommendations are organized around the seven goals and are not presented in any order of priority. The purpose of this section is to present recommended methods for moving toward the community's vision in these areas. The next section - Section V, Implementation – will present a programmatic strategy for implementing the plan's major recommendations. It is in that section that activities will be prioritized, and programs and projects detailed.

Each of the seven subsections below will begin with a description of the issues that have been raised by the community in terms of the specific topic. This will be followed by a discussion of the proposed response to these issues, and then the specific tools/methods recommended for consideration.

Improve Amsterdam's Image and Identity in the Region

Issues:

Amsterdam is located at the western edge of the Capital District. Most City residents seem to identify with the Capital District for a variety of reasons – work, friends or family, shopping, culture or entertainment, etc. Most television, radio, and print media used by City residents also comes from the Capital District. Still, Amsterdam residents do not feel fully embraced by the Capital District. They note that the regional television news stations only cover Amsterdam High School football and an occasional negative story about crime in the City. Unfortunately, this creates false impressions and Amsterdam residents believe that their City is viewed negatively by most in the Capital District.

Amsterdam's identity crisis is exacerbated by its divided political affiliations. Depending on the state or federal program, Amsterdam is either grouped with other communities as part of the Capital District, or it is tied to a different region. For example, the United States Bureau of the Census includes Montgomery County (and therefore Amsterdam) in the Albany-Schenectady-Troy Metropolitan Statistical Area. However, Montgomery County is not part of the Capital Region for tourism promotion because New York State Tourism has instead included it in the Leatherstocking Region. For transportation, Montgomery looks to the NYSDOT regional office in Utica.

Amsterdam is, of course, responsible for many of its image problems. As described earlier, the City has lost almost half of its population over the last half century and the strength of its industrial past has faded into memory. Most residents of the Capital District cannot remember what Amsterdam was. They only know what it is today. They do not have many reasons to visit, and unfortunately, the City's nicest features – its neighborhoods and parks – are not visible when one passes through the community.

The City's image problem is partly deserved and partly unfair. To improve its image, Amsterdam must tackle both sides of this equation. There would be little benefit to aggressively marketing the City without working to improve the product. As one member of the comprehensive plan committee said - we

cannot try to sell this as million dollar boots, people will come and discover the truth. The recommendations found under the other six sections (below) provide solutions for improving the product - Amsterdam's economic vitality and the quality of its urban experience. This section suggests ways that the City can do a better job marketing its existing assets to improve its image.

Recommendations:

➤ **Strengthen political affiliations with the Capital District**

Work with state government representatives to explore options for moving Amsterdam into the Capital District region in terms of state agency representation (for example: Montgomery County is currently affiliated with the Leatherstocking region for tourism promotion - can it be promoted as part of the Capital District instead?)

➤ **Develop an identifying image for Amsterdam**

This image must be something that speaks positively about the City and distinguishes it from other communities in the region. One idea could be to build an identity around the City's ethnic diversity. Highlight the past and present contributions of the all of the City's cultural groups and create opportunities to put the food, music, and traditions of these groups on display for residents and visitors.

➤ **Promote Amsterdam**

Promote community events, reasons to visit, and reasons to come live and work in Amsterdam to the Capital District and beyond. In particular, the benefits of Amsterdam as a bedroom community to the Capital District should be highlighted. Travel times to Albany are shorter than from many communities in Saratoga County (same distance as Saratoga Springs), the school district is good, housing prices are reasonable (especially to those who live elsewhere), and the City's neighborhoods and parks have much to offer. Promotional materials for this purpose should be developed. The City should also work with the Chamber of Commerce to improve welcoming materials distributed to newcomers to the community.

➤ **Establish stronger connections to regional media outlets (print, radio, and television).**

Encourage these organizations to get to know Amsterdam and to include Amsterdam in their coverage of regional news (other than sports and crime).

➤ **Remove financial disincentives to Amsterdam's role as a bedroom community to the Capital District (Integrate travel and telecommunication to the Capital District).**

A telephone call from Amsterdam to Schenectady, or to other cities in the Capital District, is not billed as a local call. To travel the NYS Thruway from Amsterdam to the Capital District requires a toll. While the individual charges are minor, cumulatively over a month or a year, they do add up. Symbolically, they make Amsterdam appear separate from the Capital District.

➤ **Improve Amsterdam's self-image.**

Residents should be familiar with and share Amsterdam's vision for the future. A positive community outlook is critical to all of the City's promotional efforts.

Rebuild Amsterdam's Economic Foundation

Issues:

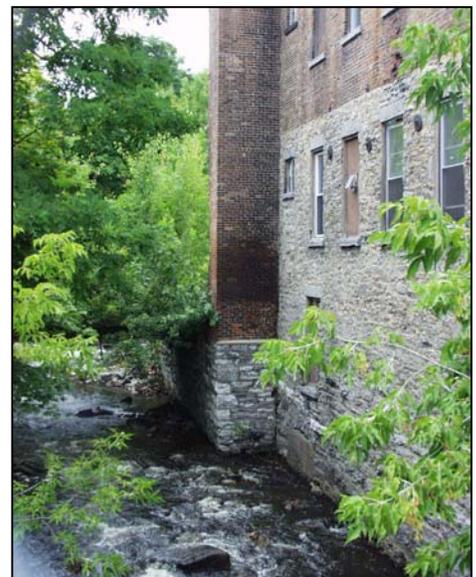
Like many former industrial cities in Upstate New York, Amsterdam appears trapped in a downward economic spiral. As industries closed or scaled back their operations, property tax revenues from these facilities were reduced and jobs were lost. The loss of employment opportunities also lead to declining population, reduced home ownership, distressed neighborhoods, and reduced quality of life; furthering erosion of the City's tax base and placing pressure on the City's infrastructure and services. Finally, older or poorly maintained infrastructure, diminished services, poorer quality of life, and/or higher taxes limit the City's ability to attract or retain businesses and residents resulting in further erosion of neighborhoods, further reduction in the tax base and so on – the downward spiral continues. Exacerbating the downward economic spiral have been federal and state policies that have encouraged development away from cities over the last half century.

Stopping the downward spiral is not an easy task. At first glance, it appears that the priority must be to focus energy on attracting new industries to, or retaining and expanding existing ones in Amsterdam. New or expanded businesses will create jobs and increase the City's tax base (though many of the standard business attraction incentives limit tax base expansion for several years). This is a good strategy, but because economic development incentives are available almost everywhere, there must still be a reason for businesses to come to Amsterdam. High quality of life, that attracts and retains a talented workforce, is a necessary ingredient in today's business attraction and retention strategies. However, in order to maintain and ultimately improve the City's urban quality of life, it must reestablish a vibrant downtown, invest in neighborhoods, maintain the City parks and expand recreational opportunities, shore-up the school system, etc. This is difficult for the City to accomplish without an increase in the tax base – a classic case of deciding, “which comes first, the chicken or the egg?” In reality, Amsterdam cannot focus on one or the other; both sides of the equation will require attention.

Rebuilding Amsterdam's economic foundation will require a multi-faceted approach. Some of the specific challenges that Amsterdam faces include:

Workforce - Amsterdam is not positioned to take advantage of growth occupations and industries. Only 12% of its adult population has a Bachelors degree or higher. About a quarter of its population still depends on manufacturing jobs.

Technology – Amsterdam's industries are “dinosaurs” rather than dynamos.” In the past, Amsterdam's strategic advantage was its location near streams whose waterpower could be harnessed for



working mills. Today it lacks a strategic advantage to attract knowledge-based companies and professionals.

Quality of Life – Despite its assets, Amsterdam is not considered the most desirable place to live. Above all, the lack of connectedness, the worn out condition of some of its neighborhoods, and its nearly vacant downtown must be addressed to enhance the quality of life. This issue contributes to all three of the desired outcomes for Amsterdam’s future – the bedroom community, the technology community, and the tourism community.

Diversity – All over the developed world, native populations are aging, and immigration is increasingly being recognized as a vehicle to replenish and revitalize the aging workforce. Germany, for instance, will need 1 million immigrants just to maintain its workforce. America has the advantage of being attuned to integrating immigrants in its society. (*The Economist*, November 3, 2001) Indeed, minorities will account for 80% of the growth in workforce over the next decade: all the more reason to invest in them.

Amsterdam’s diversity has increased over the last two decades, but remains a largely untapped economic resource. Immigrants often contribute in a meaningful way to the revitalization of a stagnating economy, being determined to “make good,” if not immediately then by the next generation. Unfortunately, Hispanics in Amsterdam continue to be poorer, and more likely to be unemployed, than the rest of the population. They remain segregated physically, culturally, and economically from the rest of the community, though recent initiatives by Centro Civico and others in the community are headed in the right direction.

Recommendations:

➤ **Create a customer-friendly business development process:**

For the City to appear “open for business” it should create a single clearinghouse for economic development information and assistance. Creation of a “one stop shop” would provide a single point of contact for existing or potential new businesses. The Amsterdam Industrial Development Agency (AIDA), the City’s Community and Economic Development Office, the Amsterdam-Florida-Glen Empire Zone, the Montgomery County Industrial Development Agency (MCIDA), and all other economic development entities active in Amsterdam should be involved in the establishment of the “one stop shop.” The City’s Community and Economic Development Office, due to its knowledge of and location in the City, is the most likely choice to be the organizing point for Amsterdam’s “one stop shop”.

A customer-friendly business development process has two components:

- **Development Review** – The City’s Community and Economic Development Office at City Hall should be responsible for creating and distributing easy to understand information about the development review process to potential developers. This office would facilitate the development review process and provide staffing to the City’s development review boards. Development regulations (i.e. zoning) should be revised so that expectations are clear.

Standards can be high, but the language must be unambiguous. Developers seek predictability in the development review process.

- Economic Development Assistance – The City’s Community and Economic Development Office should become the organizing point for the City of Amsterdam’s “One Stop Shop” for economic development information and assistance. As such it would maintain and market information about the City’s inventory of development sites. It would also provide coordination and integration of all of the facets of economic development – land assembly, infrastructure rehabilitation, workforce training, small business loan programs, incentive programs, etc. – with its partners in the City, county, region, and state.

➤ **Establish a pro-active Economic Development Strategy for Amsterdam**

It is important that the City of Amsterdam is able to react to information about prospective employers who are interested in locating in Upstate New York. The City has a demonstrated ability to offer potential sites and to assemble incentive packages that have successfully brought businesses to the community. A more aggressive approach would be to develop a pro-active economic development strategy that identifies specific industries and businesses to target. This information could then be used to direct marketing efforts.

➤ **Consolidate Information and Make Improvements to Physical Inventory / “Product”:**

There are numerous locations in Amsterdam for renewed economic investment. These areas should be made “shovel-ready” to the degree possible. Zoning and other regulations should be carefully reviewed to ensure that desired types and forms of development are clearly articulated. Information about available infrastructure (including telecommunications infrastructure) should be readily available, and investments should be made to improve infrastructure as needed. Specific inventory that should be made ready for development includes:

- Edson Street Industrial Park – complete the build-out of this location. Continue to explore alternate routes for access to this important industrial site from Route 5 and Route 67. Widow



Edson Street Industrial Park

Susan Road in the Town of Amsterdam offers a potential connection to the industrial park from both Route 5 and Route 67, and a utility right-of-way that crosses school district property north of the industrial park offers another possible link to Route 67. Both alternatives would require dialogue with the Town of Amsterdam and all affected property owners. It might also be possible to expand the industrial park northward on land currently owned by the school district.

- Degraff Street (the lower mills) and the Willow Street Industrial Complex. Many of these buildings are used but are not fully occupied or are not used to their fullest potential.
- Mohasco and Chalmers – these sites will require remediation and/or rehabilitation. Both are long-standing problems for the community, but both are now in a position to be resolved. These sites each present excellent opportunities for future improvement that can be of significant benefit to the neighborhoods that surround them.
- Tremendous infill opportunities downtown, and in neighborhood commercial centers and along the West Main Street Corridor.
- Near the NYS Thruway – Work collaboratively with the Town of Florida and Montgomery County to address infrastructure needs at the Florida Industrial Park. Also investigate the feasibility of developing land to the west of Route 30, across from the Thruway Exit 27 Toll Plaza, for use as an industrial / warehousing center. Road improvements planned by the NYS Thruway Authority for this area will create a new opportunity for the vacant land at this location.

➤ **Place greater emphasis on Education and Workforce Development:**

In order to prepare for a more diverse economy the City will need a workforce that is equipped with the fundamental skills needed for today's technologies. To achieve this, the City and its partners should expand educational opportunities for traditional students, and continuing education opportunities for adults who are already in the workforce. The City should work with the Greater Amsterdam School District and with Fulton-Montgomery Community College (FMCC) to identify program needs and opportunities. Work with FMCC to ensure that transportation to the community college from the city is readily available. Also consider with the administration of FMCC whether the college might someday be interested in opening a satellite presence in the City of Amsterdam. Downtown Amsterdam, or one of the mill complexes in the City, could provide useful academic space for new or expanding college programs.

➤ **Maintain the City's water and sewer infrastructure and promote this as an economic development resource**

The City of Amsterdam's water and sewer systems are in good working order and have residual capacity. In addition to serving the residents and business of the City, this infrastructure has been used as a catalyst for successful economic development efforts in eastern Montgomery County. For example, the City worked cooperatively with the Town of Florida, Montgomery County, and New York State to extend infrastructure to the Town of Florida Business Park, helping to attract Kmart's new distribution center. Previously, the extension of City infrastructure north to the Town of Amsterdam also helped stimulate the retail development that occurred along Route 30 in the town.

There has been some debate about whether the extension of City infrastructure into the Town of Amsterdam has benefited the City. Certainly, users of this infrastructure in the town pay the City for the service. Revenues generated from these users helps the City to maintain the infrastructure, keeping costs down for City residents. However, the availability of City infrastructure in the town's Route 30

commercial district has allowed this area outside of the City to grow. Some believe that the growth of this suburban retail district has contributed to the City's dramatically diminished role as a center of commerce and activity in the region. In addition, property taxes generated from this growth in the Town fills the town's coffers, while the City continues to struggle with a declining tax base. Although agreements with the town are already in place and must be honored, future decisions about the extension of City infrastructure to neighboring municipalities should consider two factors. First, the City should examine the potential growth inducing impacts of its decision, determining whether and/or how the infrastructure extension would stimulate development outside of the City, and whether this induced growth would benefit or harm the City in the long-term. This comprehensive plan places a great deal of emphasis on refocusing growth within the City, identifying numerous opportunities for infill and redevelopment. Development at the periphery could harm efforts to rebuild the core. Second, the City should pursue opportunities for revenue sharing when the extension of City infrastructure will generate new property tax revenues for the neighboring municipality. For example, the City of Gloversville in Fulton County recently finalized an arrangement with the Town of Johnstown whereby the City and the Town each receive a portion of new property tax revenues generated by new development in the Town resulting from the provision of City infrastructure. The arrangement required a special "home rule" action from the New York State Legislature in the 2001 legislative session; however, the effort will help the City of Gloversville to expand its tax base even when development occurs outside of its borders.

➤ **Focus on business retention and expansion**

In addition to investments to lure new industry to Amsterdam, consider programs/incentives to assist existing manufacturers in applying new technologies to their manufacturing processes. Success in this sector will be based on product and process technology-driven innovations and resource efficiency. Establish an R&D center to aid existing industries to streamline and adopt new technology. Establish linkages with near-by technology parks and industrial centers for potential collaboration and training programs.

➤ **Nurture the creation and growth of small businesses in the community**

Start-ups and small businesses are an important component of the local economic and employment picture, and there are numerous ways for the community to help or hinder the success of these enterprises. First, and perhaps most importantly, the City must make sure that it removes obstacles (including unintended ones) to small business growth. Zoning and other City policies and regulations should be reviewed to ensure that they do not place unnecessary burdens these businesses. For example, an increasing number of Americans work for themselves from their homes. Sometimes such businesses grow and begin to take on a small number of employees, but are not yet in a position to leave the home office. In such cases, there is an important and delicate balance that City land use regulations must try to meet between protecting the interests of neighboring property owners, and not placing unnecessary burdens on budding enterprises. A review of the City's "home occupation" standards should consider

how to find the correct balance. Fortunately, there are many fine examples from around New York State to provide guidance (contact the NYS Department of State, Division of Local Government).

The City can also facilitate the creation and growth of small businesses through its efforts to establish a more customer-friendly business development process as described above. The creation of a “One Stop Shop” for economic development assistance and a clearer development review process will make it much easier for small business entrepreneurs to find their way to needed information and resources. The City could also expand its programs to, for example, assist small home-based businesses to “graduate” from the home to an incubator site or another type of facility as needed.

➤ **Continue to Diversify the City’s Economic Base (don’t put all your eggs in one basket):**

Nurture the development of new or nascent industries such as:

- Tourism - throughout New York State and the nation, tourism remains a booming industry. Amsterdam’s location on the New York State Thruway, Upstate New York’s main rail corridor, and the Erie Canal provides many opportunities to tap into the tourism market. The City has already made terrific strides in improving canal-side access with the development of the Greater Amsterdam Riverlink Park. Boaters on the canal have already been taking advantage of this impressive park, and future plans for enhanced facilities (restrooms, showers, food and beverage concessions) will make the Riverlink Park an even more inviting stop. Programmed events (concerts, festivals, etc.) at the Greater Amsterdam Riverlink Park have already been quite successful, and the number and variety of these events should be expanded. The next phase of the park’s development will expand it westward beyond the Route 30 bridge and create a second point of access from downtown. This should enhance its ability to accommodate large events and improve the spin-off benefits of such events on downtown businesses.

Tourism efforts in the region also received a major boost in 2000 when Congress established the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor. In June 2002, the National Park Service, in partnership with New York State, formalized a 27-member Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Commission. Over the next two years, the Commission will work with federal, state, and local leaders to create and implement a Canalway Plan for the corridor that fosters the integration of canal-related historical, cultural, recreational, scenic, economic and community development initiatives. Federal recognition and support for the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor will bring a new level of focus and resources to the region.

Focusing on the items discussed as part of the redevelopment of downtown (with attractions such as an ethnic marketplace or an extreme sports facility) and the creation of a City greenway system (below) will also provide travelers with a reason to stop and perhaps stay in Amsterdam. Amsterdam should look for opportunities to connect its tourism promotion to events and activities regionwide. Throughout the year travelers pass through the City on their

way to the lakes, the mountains, or Saratoga for the track or the performing arts. As Amsterdam enhances its offerings along the waterfront and downtown (retail, restaurants, cultural offerings), it should be able to capture some of this pass-through traffic.

- Information technology – utilize downtown space and old mill buildings to attract information based industries such as call centers and back office operations.
- Taking advantage of workforce and location, become the Capital District’s center for northeast light assembly and distribution center operations.

➤ **Capitalize on the City’s Diversity (Integration and Tolerance):**

Take advantage of, and invest in the talent of, all segments of Amsterdam’s population. For example, Amsterdam could capitalize on a relatively large Spanish-speaking workforce, using this as an asset to attract businesses that cater to the country’s rapidly expanding Hispanic markets (importing/exporting, call centers, entertainment, communications, etc.). Centro Civico has established training, educational and cultural programs targeted towards integrating Hispanics into the local economy. These efforts should receive continued support. Nationally, there could be many as 2 million Hispanic-owned businesses, generating more than \$300 billion in business (*Hispanic Trends*, Vista). Amsterdam can position itself as a community of choice for immigrants, with special programs designed to attract them and to facilitate their personal and professional integration in the community.

Reestablish Downtown as the Community Center

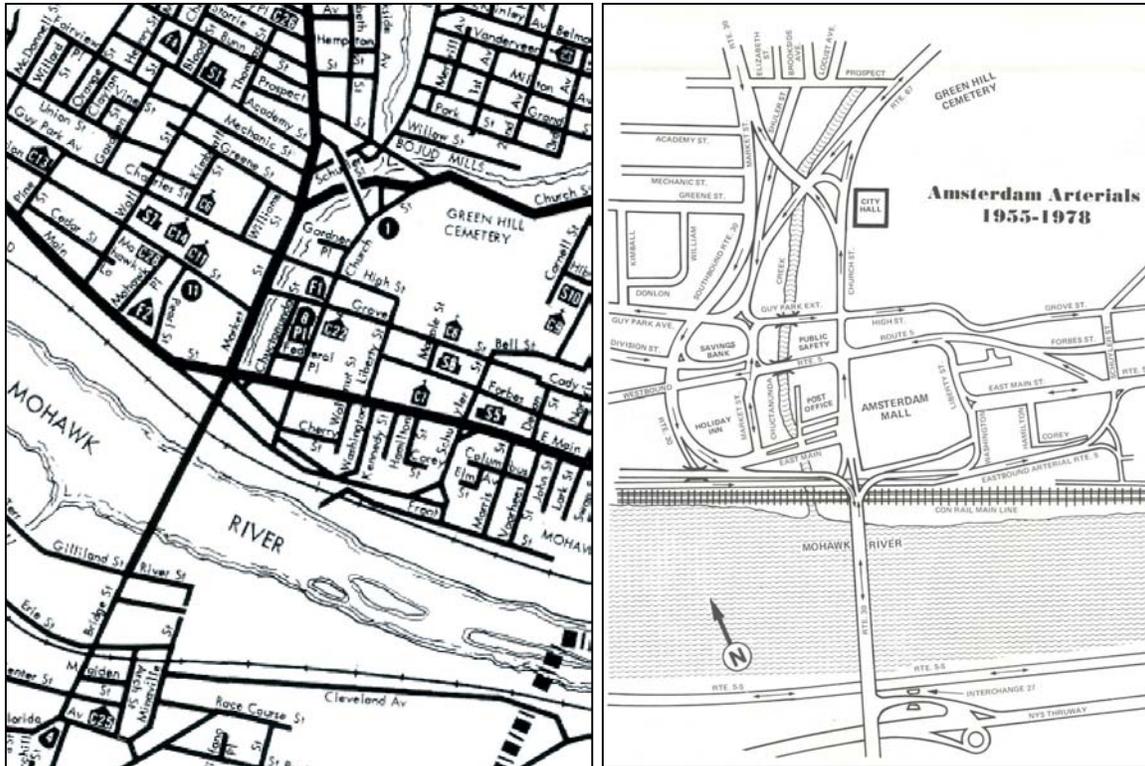
Issues:

Over the past 40 years, downtown Amsterdam has been reduced to a couple of blocks along East Main Street, and a scattering of old and new buildings surrounded by large areas of parking and highway rights-of-way. A comparison of photos from the 1930's and today shows in a dramatic fashion, the physical change that has taken place in a generation. Not surprisingly, downtown no longer serves as the economic, social, and cultural center of the City. Federally sponsored urban renewal and highway construction in the late 1960s and 1970s effectively removed the heart of the community. These physical changes, combined with national social and economic trends away from cities in favor of suburbs during the same generation, have left little remaining at the City's core. Today's downtown contains little activity during the day, and almost none in the evening. Few people live there and few people visit.



Top: Downtown Circa 1935 (From *Circulation Plan for the City of Amsterdam, New York*, Camiros, Ltd., January 2001)
 Bottom: Downtown in the Fall of 2001 (Armstrong)

Most other cities in America suffered a similar fate during the last half-century. However, Amsterdam is somewhat unique in terms of the extreme degree to which the downtown was razed. Only two blocks of real urban fabric remain. The original street and block system has been supplanted by a highway arterial system that is designed solely for the purpose of moving cars through this area. An inward facing suburban-style mall sits in the middle of what used to be East Main Street. The mall's brief success as a retail and entertainment center quickly disappeared after it opened. Today it is only partially occupied, and it survives as a home for various social service and health related organizations. Neighborhoods surrounding the former center of the City are in critical condition. As you move away from the center, the City's neighborhoods remain generally strong and healthy.



Left: Amsterdam's original pattern of streets and blocks (From *Circulation Plan for the City of Amsterdam, New York*, Camiros, Ltd., January 2001).

Right: The arterial highway system that replaced the original pattern of streets and blocks (From *Amsterdam, New York: Annals of a Mill Town in the Mohawk Valley*, Hugh P. Donlon, 1980)

As mentioned above, vehicle circulation patterns in downtown Amsterdam are confusing and anti-urban. Even for the purpose that they were designed for – moving traffic through the downtown – the highway arterials are difficult to understand and confusing for residents and visitors alike. Furthermore, these highway arterials do not function as true urban streets because they were designed for the sole purpose of moving cars. City streets should serve multiple functions; they should be designed to accommodate automobile traffic, on-street parking, transit and pedestrians. The City's highway arterials create barriers within downtown, and between downtown and surrounding neighborhoods.

The challenge of returning life to this part of the City is a tremendous one. It is not a simple question of restoring old buildings and streets, because much of this basic urban infrastructure is gone. Instead, downtown must be recreated. In a sense, this can also be viewed as a great opportunity. Many cities feel that their future is constrained by a lack of developable land. Amsterdam's downtown contains many acres of vacant or underutilized land that could be redeveloped and used to rebuild the tax base.

A vibrant, attractive downtown district would significantly enhance Amsterdam's potential role as a bedroom community to the Capital District. Despite its nice neighborhoods, relatively inexpensive yet well-constructed housing stock, respectable schools, and close proximity to the Albany-Schenectady-Troy

region, Amsterdam is not the typical model of a bedroom community. Most people think of a bedroom community as a suburban enclave. However, changing demographics and tastes are leading to an increasing desire for “in-town” living by at least some segments of the population. In this region, the City of Saratoga Springs (with perhaps a longer rush hour commute to Albany than Amsterdam) has successfully captured the market for those who want to live in a small, lively city while commuting to work at points south. In addition to the city’s proximity to the New York State Thruway, downtown Amsterdam could also benefit from its location along upstate New York’s primary passenger rail corridor. Both automobile and rail transportation modes could enhance Amsterdam’s position as a convenient bedroom community to the Capital District. But before the City is considered as a true bedroom community option, it must improve its urbanism. It cannot compete as a bedroom community for those who desire to live in the suburbs or in a rural environment. It must present itself as a vibrant, urban community with all of the benefits that a small city can possess. This will require that the City’s downtown be reestablished as the heart of Amsterdam, with a variety of uses and activities mixed together at a fine grain.

Reestablishing downtown will also benefit the City in terms of becoming a tourism community along the Mohawk River. Despite Riverlink Park and its associated boater facilities along the Erie Canal, and the City’s location immediately off the New York State Thruway, Amsterdam is not a major tourist draw. Aside from its history as a major industrial center, there is not enough activity or much else to do that would make passersby desire to stop and spend time in the City. As mentioned earlier, even if they must pass right through the center of the City on one of several state highways, the downtown arterial system does not make it easy or attractive to stop. In order to attract visitors to Amsterdam, the downtown must become a place where people can exit their cars and walk around in an interesting and inviting urban environment.

Reestablishing downtown as the community center will also position Amsterdam to move towards becoming a technology community. Quality of life should not be underestimated in terms of its importance to retaining and attracting talented people to a community. Companies that depend on a knowledgeable workforce understand that quality of life is a major factor in their ability to attract and retain workers. For Amsterdam to compete economically, quality of life investments must be considered as part of an overall economic development strategy. Improving the urbanism and vitality of downtown is a key to enhancing quality of life in the City.

Recommendations:

The purpose of this set of recommendations is to return to the community a vibrant central place for people to meet, shop, live, work, and visit. This initiative for downtown will take many years to achieve. It will require a sustained effort on the part of all stakeholders toward the common vision outlined here.

➤ **Remake the Urban Fabric of Downtown (physical transformation):**

The overall strategy is to direct an incremental transition (evolution) of downtown into a central place. This involves the establishment of a program of rational, incremental steps to remake the circulation system and urban fabric of downtown. This phased approach expands upon the *Circulation Plan for the City of Amsterdam, New York* (January 2001) by Camiros, Ltd. in two ways. First it illustrates the land use and urban design aspects of downtown redevelopment in addition to the roadways. Second, it is more ambitious in its desire to return much of the street system to urban blocks, and to connect downtown to surrounding neighborhoods.

The recommended approach would require public investments of approximately \$17 million to \$26 million over a period of years. This public investment will be used to reestablish an urban street system, improve infrastructure and the pedestrian environment, and prepare sites for redevelopment. The public improvements will set the stage for private investment downtown worth many millions of dollars more.

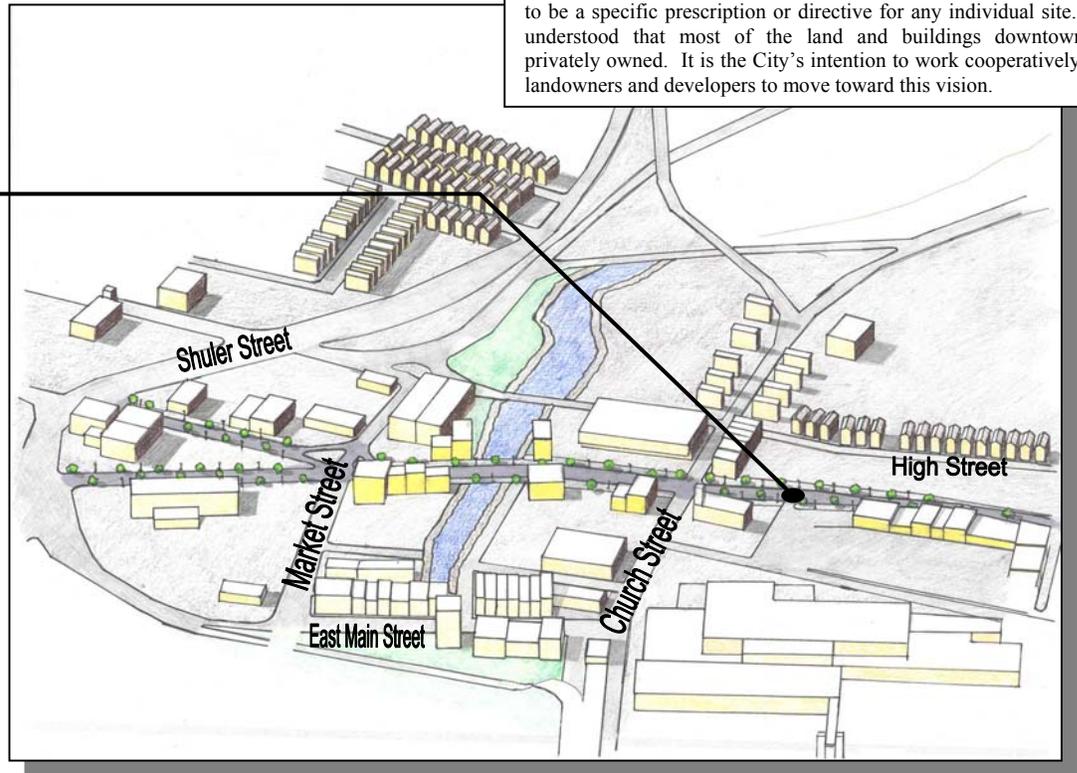
In order to succeed, the City and its state legislative representatives will need to be strong advocates for the City's downtown vision. A much greater level of design and engineering detail will be necessary before actually implementing this strategy. Since most of the roadways downtown are state highways, a major partner in this effort will be the NYS Department of Transportation (NYSDOT). The NYSDOT has made huge strides in recent years in terms of working with communities to ensure that state roadways enhance the livability of these communities. Reestablishing a traditional system of interconnected, multi-purpose (vehicular and pedestrian) streets in Downtown Amsterdam will be an ambitious project that could serve as a model for other small cities in the state that have suffered from arterialization. As such, the NYSDOT and the City should look to the NYS Quality Communities program for funding of this model program. The NYSDOT and the City of Amsterdam must work together to plan, fund, and implement the street system-restructuring portion of this vision. It is estimated that approximately \$250,000 worth of Transportation Planning and Engineering work will be necessary to design the transportation improvements outlined in the City's vision for downtown.

The conceptual renderings below illustrate a series of phased public improvements and the potential redevelopment of downtown in a general way. The renderings are provided to convey the *vision* for an incremental reestablishment of downtown Amsterdam. They are not meant to be specific prescriptions or directives for individual sites. It is understood that most of the land and buildings downtown are privately owned. It is the City's intention to work cooperatively with landowners and developers to move toward this vision.

Phase 1 – Grove Street and other east/west roads.

Note: This rendering is provided to help convey the *vision* for an incremental reestablishment of downtown Amsterdam. It is not meant to be a specific prescription or directive for any individual site. It is understood that most of the land and buildings downtown are privately owned. It is the City’s intention to work cooperatively with landowners and developers to move toward this vision.

- Grove Street**
- Two-way traffic
- Narrowed lane widths
- On-street parking
- Curbs and Sidewalks
- Street Trees
- Street Lights
- Well-defined crosswalks
- Reduced turn radii



This phase envisions targeting investments toward remaking Grove Street (now Route 5 west) into a two-way urban street. Investments in streetscape should be combined with traffic calming techniques to reduce travel speed and improve pedestrian safety. Narrowed lane widths, on street parallel parking, curbs, sidewalks, street trees, pedestrian scaled lighting fixtures and well-defined signaled crosswalks should all be part of this package. The highway-scaled geometry of existing intersections should be corrected to tighten turns, slow speeds, and shorten pedestrian crossing distances. Incentives for redevelopment and infill along the corridor should be tied to urban design standards for new construction. High Street, and the eastern portions of Guy Park Avenue and Division Street (now one way) should also be converted to two-way traffic and enhanced as needed. A preliminary estimate of the cost for the Guy Street and associated roadway improvements is between \$1 and \$2 million.

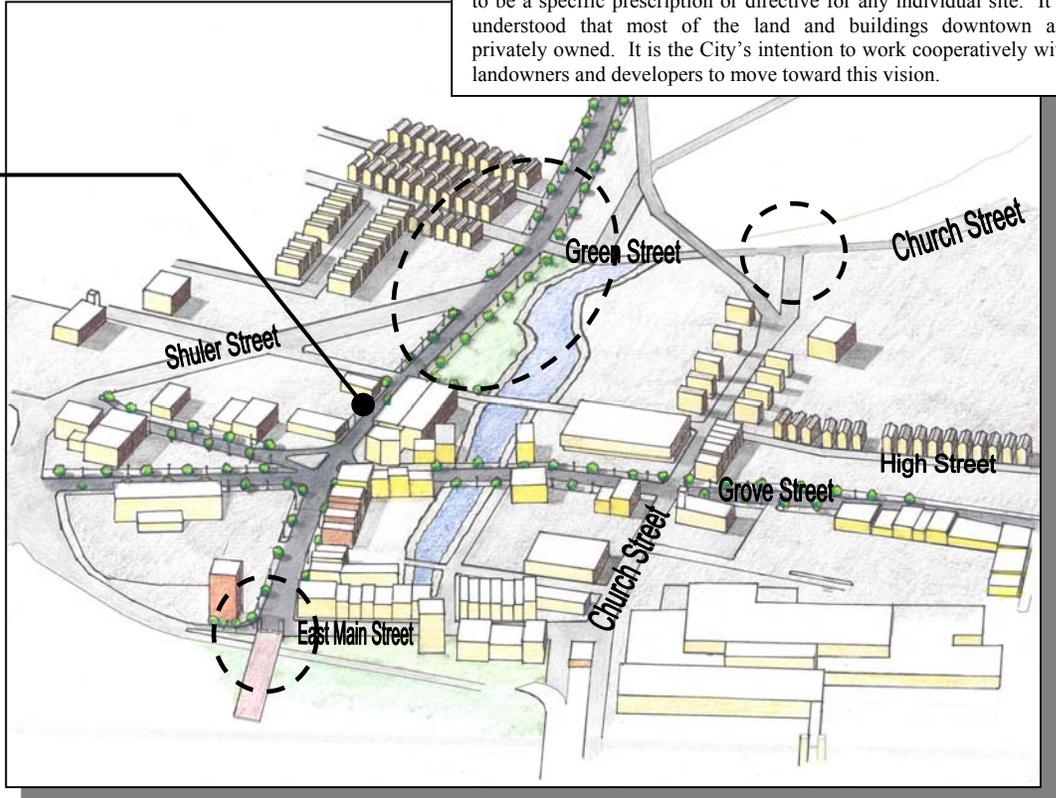
Incentives for redevelopment and infill along Grove Street, and the other east-west streets, should be tied to urban design standards for new construction. This will ensure that the quality and character of new construction is consistent with the establishment of a vibrant, pedestrian oriented downtown community.

Phase 2 – Market Street

Market Street

- Reconnect upper and lower Market Street
- Two-way traffic
- Narrowed lane widths
- On-street parking
- Curbs and Sidewalks
- Street Trees
- Street Lights
- Well-defined crosswalks
- Reduced turn radii
- Pedestrian bridge to the Southside

Note: This rendering is provided to help convey the *vision* for an incremental reestablishment of downtown Amsterdam. It is not meant to be a specific prescription or directive for any individual site. It is understood that most of the land and buildings downtown are privately owned. It is the City's intention to work cooperatively with landowners and developers to move toward this vision.

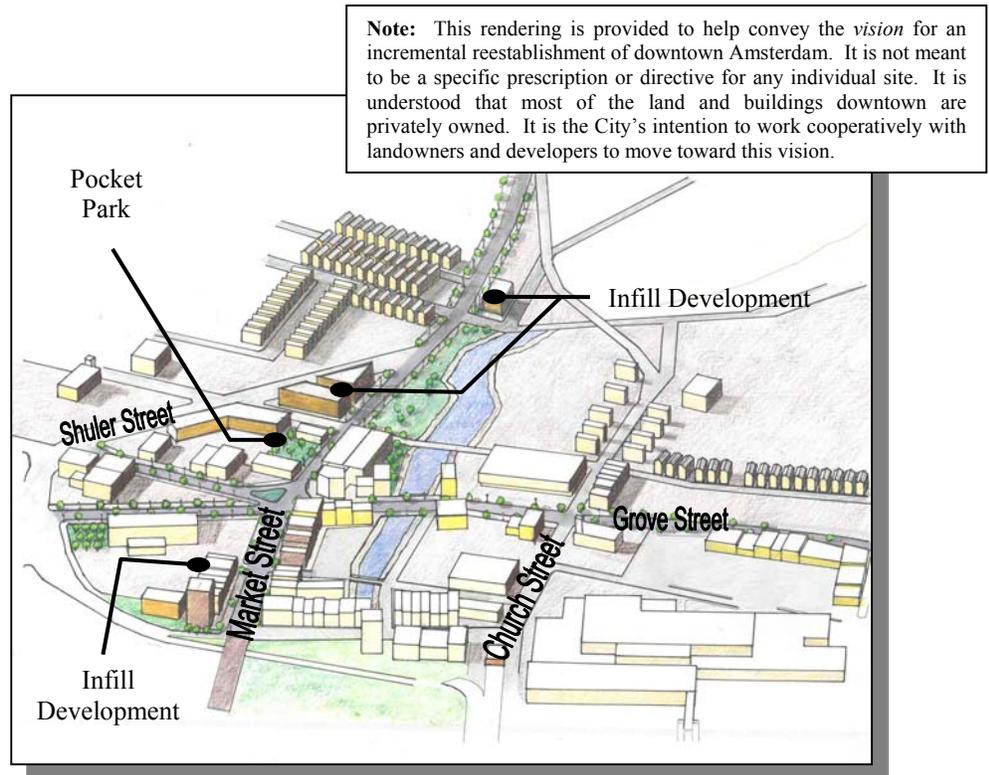


This phase envisions the reestablishment of Market Street as a primary north/south street through the community, including downtown. Upper Market Street and Lower Market Street should be reconnected as a two-way urban street with two travel lanes (one in each direction), on street parallel parking, curbs and sidewalks, street trees, pedestrian scaled lighting fixtures, and well-defined signaled crosswalks. The highway-scaled geometry of existing intersections should be corrected to tighten turns, slow speeds, and shorten pedestrian crossing distances. Realignment of several intersecting streets should also compliment the new role of Market Street. For example, Green Street should be extended east as a two-way road to Church Street. Church Street (from the river still a one-way street heading north up the hill) and Green Street should meet at a right angle and continue as two-way Church Street heading east from there. Shuler Street could remain a one-way southward bypass but should begin further south at a right-angled intersection with Market Street about halfway between Green Street and Guy Park Avenue. Shuler Street should also be scaled down significantly with well-defined pedestrian crosswalks to connect neighborhoods to the west with downtown. High Street should cross Market Street, then one block later Shuler Street before becoming Guy Park Avenue. Market Street would end at East Main Street, but the route could someday continue as a pedestrian bridge connecting downtown to Bridge Street on the south side of the Mohawk River. A preliminary estimate of the cost for the Market Street and related roadway improvements is \$3-4 million. A pedestrian bridge across the Mohawk River from Market Street to Bridge Street is estimated to cost \$6-8 million.

Incentives for redevelopment and infill along Market Street should be tied to urban design standards for new construction. In addition, the southern section of Market Street between Grove Street and East Main Street could become the focal point for Amsterdam's Ethnic Marketplace (described in more detail below). To support this role, this section of Market Street should be designed with extra-wide sidewalks to accommodate a vibrant street-life including outdoor seating for restaurants and café's.

Phase 3 – Continued Infill

Having completed improvements to Grove Street and reestablished the role of Market Street, a critical mass of reinvestment in these parts of downtown should be actively pursued. Infill projects that conform to established urban design standards developed for downtown should receive quick approval. The City should continue to stimulate this investment with further improvements such as the provision of small pocket parks and appropriate street furniture in the Market Street area.



During this phase, planning and design for the Chuctanunda Creek Greenway and linear park through downtown could also begin. Building on the presence of the Kirk Douglas Park on the western shore of the creek above High Street, the greenway would follow both shores of the creek as it cascades through downtown. Consisting primarily of a pedestrian promenade, the greenway and linear park would create a distinct amenity in the heart of this revitalized urban center for residents and visitors alike.

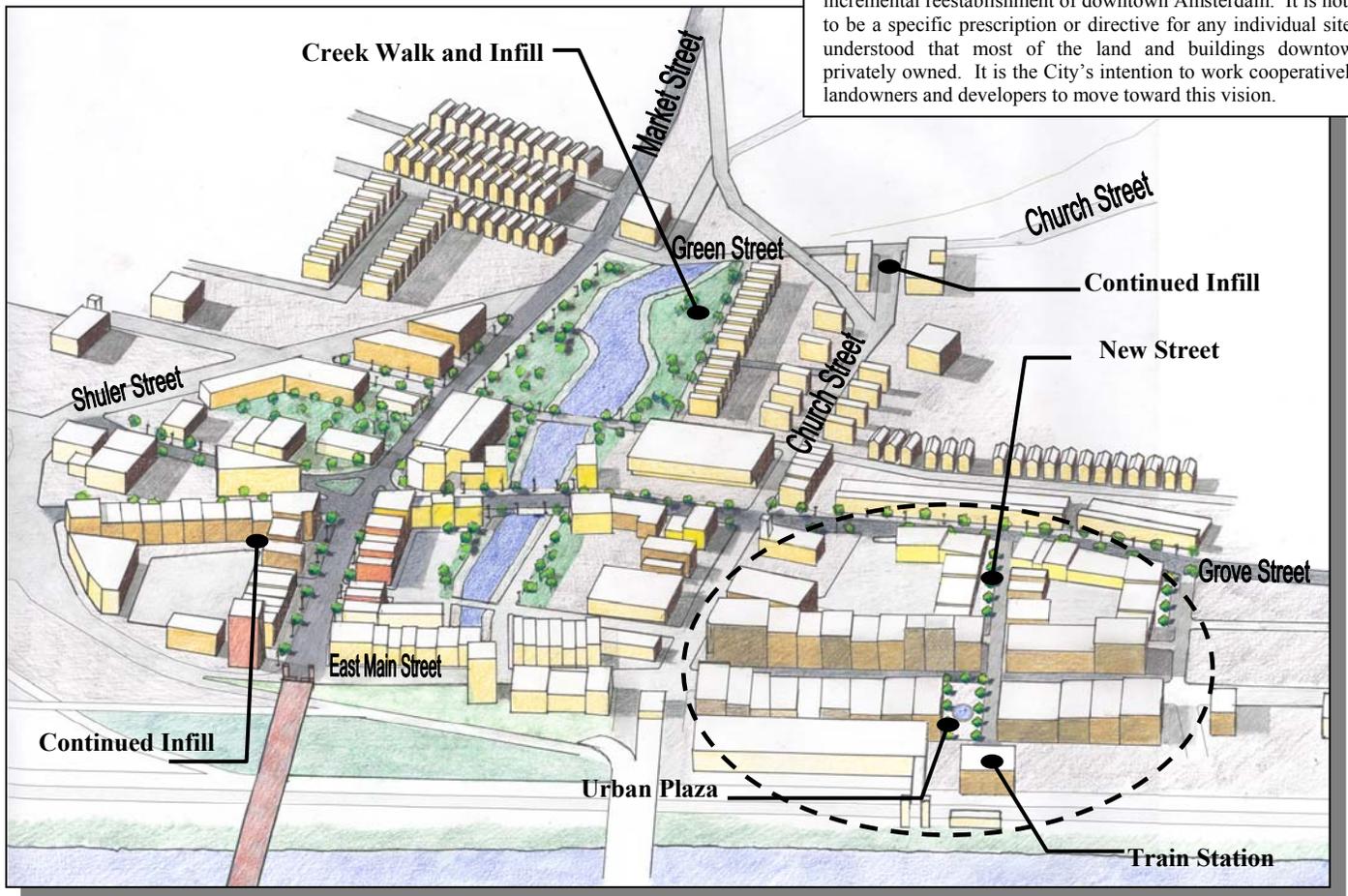
Phase 4 – Reconnection of Main Street (the long-term vision)

The Riverfront Center, which sits where Main Street used to be, had a brief period of success as a regional shopping mall. However, the commercial success of this structure passed quickly. Today, most of the mall is void of retail activity, but in the last few years much of the vacant space has been filled with office uses, medical facilities, and public service agencies. These uses have kept the building occupied during the daytime, and they provide needed services to the community. The Riverfront Center remains a significant place of employment in Downtown Amsterdam and it contributes much needed revenue to the City's tax base.

Still, it is a common opinion in Amsterdam that the mall divided Main Street and cut-off downtown from the surrounding neighborhood. At public meetings held during the development of this comprehensive plan, many people expressed a desire to see the mall torn down. While construction of this type of suburban structure in a downtown is today recognized as a mistake, the fact remains that the Riverfront Center exists. The building is privately owned, and at present it appears to be at least modestly successful. Redevelopment of this site is unlikely to occur in the near future.

The purpose of this final phase in the series of illustrations is merely to present a long term vision for Downtown Amsterdam that includes the possibility of reconnecting Main Street and redeveloping the Riverfront Center super-block at some future time. When, or even if, this will occur is not currently known, however there are certain events or conditions that could become catalysts for a major change at this location. For example, it is possible that in ten to twenty years, the physical structure of the Riverfront Center will require significant investment for maintenance or upgrading. Another likely possibility is that the rationale for redeveloping the site will grow as the City's efforts elsewhere in downtown (Phases 1 to 3) move forward and a critical mass of new economic activity develops there. In this scenario, the current owner of the site or another developer will recognize the potential for creating a higher economic return through redevelopment at a much higher density. When it is time, the City should promote and facilitate the redevelopment of this very important site in partnership with the owner or developer.

Note: This rendering is provided to help convey the *vision* for an incremental reestablishment of downtown Amsterdam. It is not meant to be a specific prescription or directive for any individual site. It is understood that most of the land and buildings downtown are privately owned. It is the City's intention to work cooperatively with landowners and developers to move toward this vision.



The conceptual sketch on the preceding page is based on simple and timeless urban design concepts. It recognizes that the existing building's inward facing design, and the super-block that the building and associated parking occupy, are unsuited for sustaining a vibrant, pedestrian-oriented urban area. In place of the Riverfront Center super-block, the sketch shows Main Street reestablished as a principal east/west urban street in the community. The large block north of this new section of Main Street (where the Riverfront Center's surface parking is currently located) could be divided into two smaller city blocks by creating a new north/south street between Main Street and Grove Street. This north/south street is shown crossing Main Street to a southern terminus at a new train station (multi-modal facility) on the north side of the railroad tracks. The train station could create a new point of crossing for pedestrians, linking downtown to the Riverlink Park. The whole area would be re-developed for mixed-uses with active uses (retail and service) on the first floors and more passive uses (such as residential and office uses) on upper floors. Buildings would line the sidewalks and parking would be located in the interior of blocks and on the street.

➤ **Rewrite the Zoning for Downtown:**

Downtown Amsterdam is divided into two zoning districts: Professional Business (PB) and Retail Business (RB). The Professional Business District covers all of the land west of Church Street except for the parcels that front on the north and south sides of East Main Street from Church Street to Market Street. The Retail Business District covers that two-block stretch of East Main Street and the virtually all of the downtown land east of Church Street. This includes the super-block site of the Riverfront Center downtown mall. The current zoning map is contained in the comprehensive plan inventory, which is attached as an Appendix to this report.

A simple inspection of the regulations that apply to these two zoning districts reveals that the type of active, mixed-use downtown that once existed in Amsterdam, and the type that residents in the community still desire, is now illegal. For example, under Article IV (Use Regulations) most kinds of retail and service uses including restaurants, taverns, hotels, theaters, health clubs, educational institutions and many others are simply not permitted in the Professional Business District. This district occupies most of downtown. Cultural facilities, such as libraries, art galleries, and museums, are not permitted in the Retail Business District. Single-family and Two-family dwellings (though not really dense enough for a downtown setting) are permitted "as-of-right" in both of these zoning districts, but multi-family housing, boarding and rooming houses, and senior citizen housing are only permitted by Special Use Permit. It is not clear whether apartments above retail or other commercial uses are permitted at all.

Other requirements within the regulations for these zoning districts have a profound negative impact on urban design. For example, under Article V (Area and Bulk Regulations) requirements for ten or twenty foot front yard setbacks, and maximum building coverage requirements of 50% or 60% in these zones result in development patterns that are counter to good, pedestrian-friendly urban form. Worse still are the off-street parking requirements found in Article VI, Section 250-28 (Off-street parking and loading standards). According to this section, whenever a new building is constructed, an existing building is enlarged, or a new or changed use of a parcel of land or a structure is established, off-street parking and loading requirements described within the section must be met. These standards require that much of

Amsterdam's downtown will be consumed with parking lots instead of buildings and public spaces. This is very wasteful from an economic and fiscal perspective, and disastrous from an urban design perspective. On-street parking, shared parking arrangements, and carefully located and designed municipal parking should replace most off-street parking requirements in a downtown urban setting.

Zoning for downtown Amsterdam should be completely re-written. A mixed-use Downtown Zoning District should replace the two zoning districts currently in effect. The Downtown Zoning District should encourage a wide range of commercial retail, service, office, entertainment, cultural, and high density residential uses. Generally, active uses such as retail, restaurants, and services should occupy ground floor locations to the maximum degree possible. Active uses on the ground floor create an interesting street life and, therefore, a safe and attractive pedestrian environment. Less active uses such as offices and residential units should be encouraged on upper floors.

Overall, the primary emphasis of the new Downtown District regulations should be about design not use. The regulations should be prescriptive about the appropriate urban design and general architectural forms that are permitted. In terms of urban design, the two remaining blocks of Amsterdam's pre-1960's downtown should serve as model. Buildings should be built to the sidewalk, should occupy all of most of their lot frontage, and have multiple stories. Parking, when provided for individual buildings, should be located behind the buildings on the interior of lots.

To be most effective, the regulations should also be generously illustrated. It is important that the applicants, the reviewing boards, and the public can easily understand the design requirements. Graphic codes help convey the design requirements more effectively. The importance of easily understood design requirements cannot be understated. From a developer's standpoint, rigorous standards established by a community are not a problem as long as the review process is efficient and predictable. A well-written and illustrated code achieves this dual purpose.

Finally, the project review process itself must be streamlined. Along with a well-written code, the application process at City Hall must be made as user-friendly as possible. Information about the zoning requirements, application procedures, and review process should be readily available in a clear, easy to understand format. As discussed under the Economic Development Recommendations above, a "customer-friendly" approach must be established. Ultimately, the goal of the development review process should be to approve "good projects" (those that meet the clear but rigorous standards defined in the code) quickly, and to ensure that "bad projects" (those that are unwilling to meet the standards) are swiftly turned down or revised.

➤ **Adopt the new NYS Building Code**

New York State is entering a transition period from the old to a newly revised state building code. The new code will go fully into effect December 30, 2002. Until then, applications must fully comply with either the old or the new code. According to Secretary of State Randy A. Daniels, "The [new] code will encourage both new development and rehabilitation of existing buildings, which is key to revitalizing our downtowns. It also gives code enforcement and fire officials, design professionals, builders and

contractors a set of requirements consistent with the rest of the country.” The new code should make it easier to reuse upper floors (for apartments or offices) of historic structures such as those found along Main Street in Amsterdam.

➤ **Create a “shovel-ready” development area for the 21st Century**

Investigate the current condition of, and improve as necessary, the technology infrastructure available in Downtown Amsterdam. In previous decades, transportation, electricity, and water and sewer infrastructures were considered necessary ingredients for economic development. Creating “shovel-ready” sites for economic development therefore focused on ensuring that these areas were equipped with such infrastructure in advance of actual proposals. Today, in addition to these other forms of infrastructure, the availability of technology infrastructure (for high speed communication) is essential for the many technology based or technology dependent industries. Many of these businesses could be appropriately located in a downtown environment.

As physical improvements to downtown are phased-in over the next decade (as described above), technology infrastructure should be provided throughout the area. The NYS Thruway corridor is the telecommunications backbone for upstate New York. The location of downtown Amsterdam just one mile from the NYS Thruway Corridor should make wiring all of downtown Amsterdam with high-speed communications infrastructure (i.e. fiber optic cable) possible. Niagara Mohawk’s Wired Building Grant Program and similar initiatives through New York State and the federal Government should be pursued.

➤ **Identify and market mixed-use development sites in downtown**

As physical improvements to downtown progress, and code revisions are finalized, specific development sites should be identified and marketed for mixed-use development (note: ground floor building frontage should contain retail or other “active” uses, offices and residential should be on upper floors). The City should take a pro-active approach to achieving the vision created for downtown. This could involve the establishment of an Urban Revitalization District, the assembly of land by the City or some other entity created for this purpose, and the selection of a master developer for portions of the area.

Alternatively, a more modest but still pro-active approach could simply involve identifying development companies from the region that have the capacity and experience to put together complicated mixed-use projects as described for downtown. The City, through its Community and Economic Development Office, could put together materials describing the downtown vision, the revised zoning, and other related materials and distribute these to selected development companies. The city could also host information sessions for these development companies in order to introduce them to downtown Amsterdam.

➤ **Utilize public funds to stimulate private investment**

In order to stimulate private investment in downtown Amsterdam, the City should utilize tax incentives and/or sources of public funds to stimulate private investment. Any such public expenditures must be limited to projects that further the vision for downtown and which conform to the design standards created as part of zoning revisions. There are numerous ways that targeted tax incentives could be structured to stimulate new investment in Downtown Amsterdam. For example, increased taxes resulting

from improvements to property could be phased in over a period of years. The City could also pursue funding from state and federal sources to assist business development in downtown. State programs include the Community Development Block Grant Program administered by the Governor's Office for Small Cities, and the Empire Opportunity Fund administered by Empire State Development. Federal programs include several from the Economic Development Administration and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. A partial list of state, federal, and private programs entitled, *External Sources For Financial, Technical And Marketing Assistance* is attached as Appendix D.

Additionally, the City could explore creative strategies such as Tax Increment Financing (TIF) to generate funds for public improvements based on anticipated incremental increases in assessed valuation generated from the public improvement. Tax Increment Financing was designed to cure blighted neighborhoods, to redevelop properties that no one would touch, and to meet social and economic needs. It has been used for numerous types of economic revitalization efforts, usually in economically distressed or abandoned areas. Various TIF projects include redeveloping or rehabilitating deteriorated areas of a city, facilitating the construction of low-to moderate income housing, promoting economic development and providing employment opportunities. Tax Increment Financing is one of the few tools that local governments can use to intervene directly in development.

To raise public sector capital for a project, the Tax Increment Financing process uses the anticipated growth in property taxes generated by the proposed development project. Bonds are then issued to raise the capital needed for the proposed redevelopment, and the new tax revenues generated by the project are earmarked to redeem the bonds. After the debt has been paid, the increased property taxes become available for alternative uses.

Section 960 of the New York State General Municipal Law provides the basis for the establishment of a Municipal Redevelopment Area. The purpose of the law is for protecting and promoting sound development and redevelopment of economically under-productive areas whenever redevelopment cannot be accomplished without public assistance. The Municipal Redevelopment Law authorizes a municipality to:

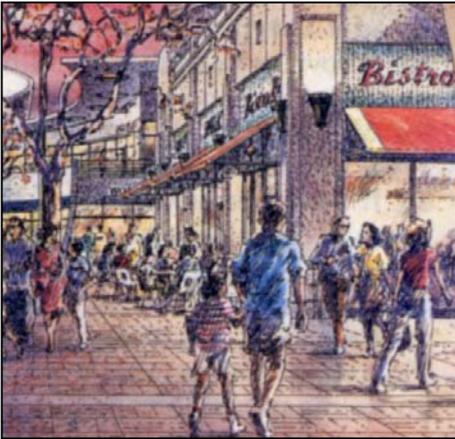
- Use eminent domain to assist in the acquisition or assembly of land for the purposes of economic redevelopment; and
- Issue tax increment bonds or tax increment bond anticipation notes for the purpose of carrying out or administering a specific redevelopment plan.

The TIF bonds would not be viewed as general revenue bonds in the market, since they would not be secured by the full faith and credit of the City. Rather, the TIF bonds would be as secure and as marketable as the private development on which they would be based. In order to attract purchasers, TIF bonds cannot be based on projected taxes from hypothetical developments. They must be based on projects already in the pipeline, where a steady stream of taxes can be virtually assured.

If Amsterdam chooses to use tax increment financing as a tool to redevelop downtown (or any other area), then an extensive process must be followed. This process involves a study and analysis both of area problems and of the feasibility of the TIF approach. The Comprehensive Plan can be used as a starting point for this study of the redevelopment area, but a more detailed study will need to be completed. This will include precisely defining the redevelopment area, a project feasibility study, a general land use plan and its relationship to the Comprehensive Plan, and recommended next steps. It then includes the preparation and adoption of redevelopment plans for the area, with review and recommendation by the Planning Commission prior to City Council adoption. Public hearings and environmental reviews are also required.

➤ **Develop one or more unique attractions for downtown**

In order to enhance the success of cultural activities, entertainment venues, restaurants, and other active uses in the downtown area, the City should work toward establishing one or more unique attractions downtown. These attractions would help to bring residents and visitors downtown. Two locally generated ideas that have emerged during this planning process are: a marketplace focused on Amsterdam’s ethnic diversity (a place to celebrate and capitalize on the unique offerings from the city’s many cultural groups); and a recreation center for “extreme” sports (including space for regional competitions and for related retail).



The *Amsterdam Community Marketplace* could be centered on lower Market Street. To establish the Market, the City would develop targeted incentives (micro-enterprise program and/or other incentives) to encourage the establishment of local businesses (restaurants, cafes, importing, retail, language and cultural education, etc.) highlighting Amsterdam’s diverse cultures. The City would also work with other downtown interests and community groups representing the City’s different ethnicities to establish a committee or foundation to oversee development of the Marketplace. A regular Farmer’s Market, holiday street festivals, and other community events could be celebrated at the Marketplace.

The *“Extreme Sports” Recreation Center* should be located in close proximity to downtown. One possible location could be just west of downtown on land recaptured from the Route 5 highway right-of-way when that road is downscaled. The center would be more than simply a place for kids to skateboard or rock climb. It would be designed for regional competitions and would include space for related retail and other similar ventures.



➤ **Explore the possibility of bringing state workers to Downtown Amsterdam**

Lobby the Governor's office requesting that downtown Amsterdam be considered as a possible future home for some of the New York State agencies that will be relocated from the Harriman State Office Campus and other state office locations elsewhere in the region. New York State has been moving these agencies into downtown locations throughout the Capital District. The addition of several hundred state workers to a downtown office location would be a significant boost for Amsterdam's efforts to redevelop the downtown.

➤ **Establish incentives for improvements to existing downtown buildings**

Initiate a business development investment (micro-enterprise) program and/or tax incentives for improvements to existing buildings downtown.

➤ **Develop a management entity for downtown Amsterdam**

In the short-term, tenants and property owners downtown must do more on their own to keep the streets and sidewalks in front of their buildings clean and attractive. Although picking-up trash, removing graffiti, and cleaning-up outside may seem like an endless battle, a clean appearance is a basic necessity for the success of any commercial district. The City Department of Public Works must work closely with these property owners and tenants to assist with regular maintenance, timely collection of trash, and other support. The downtown area currently consists of just a few blocks, and a focused, sustained effort between the City DPW and local business and property owners could accomplish much in a short time and at a low cost.

In the longer term, it may be useful to develop a management entity for downtown Amsterdam. Based on lessons learned from suburban shopping malls, many downtowns have succeeded by pooling the resources of individual property owners to coordinate ongoing maintenance and improvement efforts. A Business Improvement District (BID), for example, provides a mechanism for downtown landowners to raise funds for street and sidewalk maintenance and clean up, beautification, marketing, prospecting, and business recruitment and retention. Before moving to organize a BID, which requires property owners to tax themselves to raise funds, perhaps in Amsterdam these activities could be initiated as a business association supported by staff at the City's Community and Economic Development Office and/or the Chamber of Commerce. Eventually, as the downtown begins to grow and prosper, a BID might be a more efficient and cost-effective mechanism that could be supported by downtown property owners.

➤ **Bring the train station back to downtown**

Close the small train station at the western edge of the City and build a new station (multi-modal transportation facility) downtown. An ideal location for this new station would be east of Church Street between the Greater Amsterdam Riverlink Park and the site of the Riverfront Center.

Stabilize and Strengthen Neighborhoods

Issues:

This plan recognizes that Amsterdam's neighborhoods are its greatest asset. Protecting, and enhancing as needed, this asset is essential for the City's future. The economic development measures discussed above are one part of building wealth in the community, wealth that should have a ripple effect throughout the City's neighborhoods. But as discussed, successful economic development efforts also depend on the community's ability to maintain and improve its quality of life. While changes are taking place on the economic development front, on the neighborhood front several initiatives must be pursued. Neighborhoods stand at the core of any urban renewal effort; people live in neighborhoods and orient their activities from neighborhoods. If a city's neighborhoods are not safe and attractive, people with choices look elsewhere for housing, work, recreation and shopping.

In Amsterdam, like in many other communities in New York, Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) programs have become cornerstones for neighborhood revitalization. In many cases they are the principal funding source through which municipalities secure monies to develop safe, affordable housing; improve infrastructure; and nurture economic development. The strength *and* weakness of CDBG funds is that they have strong income restrictions that limit their use to low- and moderate-income families and neighborhoods. They are targeted at the poorest population segment to insure that those most in need receive benefits. However, these same restrictions sometimes exacerbate the problem of concentrating the poor in central urban areas.

A parallel trend, middle-class flight from American cities has been taken as a fact of life for the last fifty years. And yet, the presence of the middle-class in those same cities is considered critical to urban renewal. Many cities are establishing policies to retain middle-income families and to lure new middle-income families back into urban centers. The good news is that some are succeeding. To stop and reverse the great concentration of poor residents in urban areas we need policies that encourage families in a broad range of income categories to buy homes in urban neighborhoods.

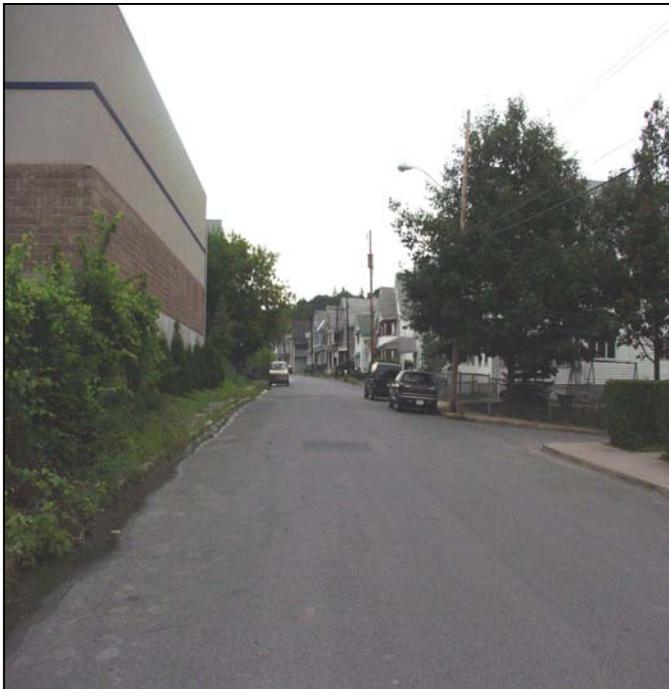


Today, Amsterdam faces a difficult situation. It has daunting tasks to undertake in the near future at a time when it also faces tight fiscal constraints. Still, to be successful, it will be necessary for the City to develop improved capacity to obtain and deliver funding support to assist people in becoming homeowners (and therefore becoming vested in the City's future). The City should also work to encourage the establishment of neighborhood organizations

that can galvanize and direct the energies of community volunteers toward neighborhood improvement efforts.

Some of the primary concerns that residents expressed about Amsterdam’s neighborhoods include:

Traffic – volume and behavior (i.e. speeding) – from the perspective of drivers, but more importantly, from the perspective of pedestrians.



This new commercial structure (which has its front on Market Street) presents an imposing blank wall to Elizabeth Street. This is an example of poor urban design in a neighborhood commercial center because the building is not well-integrated into the surrounding neighborhood.

Appearances – a general feeling that parts of the city need to be cleaned-up and that old structures (such as obsolete mill buildings) must be rehabbed or removed.

Maintenance of public spaces – streets, sidewalks, street trees and parks

Maintenance of private property – homes and lots – “eyesores”, absentee landlords, increasing vacancy rates, and aging population (property upkeep)

Infrastructure and city services – such as drainage (stormwater systems) and snow removal

Vitality and integrity of neighborhood commercial centers, and the relationship of new commercial structures to surrounding residential areas

In October 2001, a series of meetings were held in six neighborhoods around the City of Amsterdam. These meetings provided insight into the particular problems and concerns that need to be addressed in each of the neighborhoods. The complete results of the neighborhood meetings are attached in Appendix C. Recommendations for the individual neighborhoods below address a primary, or a small number of primary concerns for each neighborhood. Other, more minor problems or concerns are not addressed in the comprehensive plan. That does not mean that they are unimportant or that they can be ignored. The establishment of neighborhood organizations, and a framework for collaboration between the organizations and City staff, will create a mechanism for these problems and concerns, and future ones, to be resolved.

- Upper Church / Reid Hill ▪ Southside ▪ Market Hill ▪ West End / Henrietta Heights ▪ Rockton ▪ East End / Downtown ▪

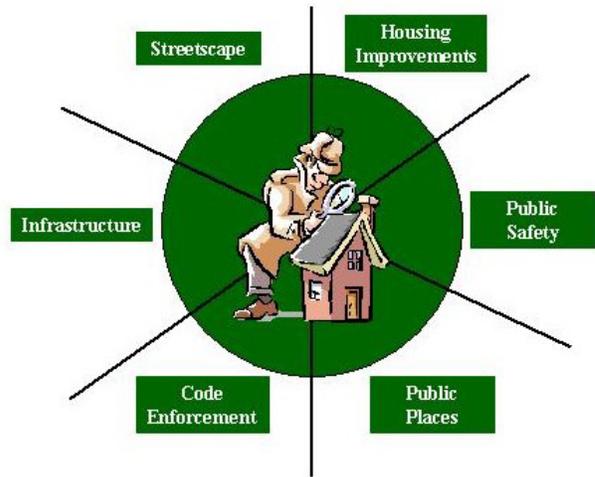
Recommendations:

- **Develop intervention strategies for each neighborhood:**

In some neighborhoods the emphasis will be on protecting existing character, while in other neighborhoods the goal will be to intervene and stabilize. For example:

- **East side** – has always functioned as an incubator for new groups that have arrived in Amsterdam. In this regard, Centro Civico’s efforts to develop additional phases of La Segunda Casa are right on target and should be strongly supported. Additional focus in this neighborhood should be to: Develop a much needed neighborhood park, assemble land to increase the lot depth of some of the shallow commercial lots fronting on East Main Street (make them more attractive for mixed-use development), undertake streetscape improvements along East Main Street, create a Greenway along Front Street connecting to downtown, expand homeownership and home improvement programs, and use CDBG and other public funding sources to stimulate private investment.

Components of Successful Neighborhoods



Note: This rendering is provided to help convey the vision for an Eastside Neighborhood Park and the redevelopment of East Main Street. It is only conceptual at this time, and it is not meant to be a specific prescription or directive for any individual site.

- **West End / Henrietta Heights** – this lower portion of this neighborhood presents some unique challenges involving circulation and land use conflicts. Recommendations for the West End Neighborhood include: restoring Guy Park Avenue and Division Street to two-way traffic flow, and working with the NYSDOT to downscale the Route 5 arterial to a City street which would connect to the redesigned (two-way) Grove Street and eventually to East Main Street (when it is restored). These recommendations will improve traffic and circulation while enhancing the cohesiveness of the neighborhood. Scaling-back the Route 5 arterial and associated right-of-way will also create valuable real estate along the Mohawk River. Additional recommendations include reviewing the zoning in the Retail Business (RB) District and the Commercial/Light Industrial (CLI) District. These districts should place greater emphasis on design and buffering to ensure compatibility between commercial uses and residential properties. Commercial encroachments into residential areas must be addressed through a combination of zoning changes, design requirements, and buffering. Finally, a Greenway connection along the waterfront from Guy Park Manor to Riverlink Park should be developed, and homeownership and home improvement programs expanded.
- **Southside** - Recommendations for the Southside Neighborhood include: Update the feasibility study for the Chalmers Building (adaptive reuse of all or part of the building for a mixed-use residential/office/entertainment/cultural center), improve the streetscape along Bridge Street from the river to the Armory Building, establish a mixed-use zoning district (moderate density residential, office, and neighborhood commercial services) with design guidelines along Bridge Street from the river to and including the Armory Building, and preserve the character and residential qualities of the historic Port Jackson Neighborhood. Consider a future reconnection of the Southside neighborhood to downtown by developing a pedestrian bridge across the Mohawk River from Bridge Street to Market Street.

**South Side:
Chalmers Building Redevelopment and
Bridge Street Reconstruction**

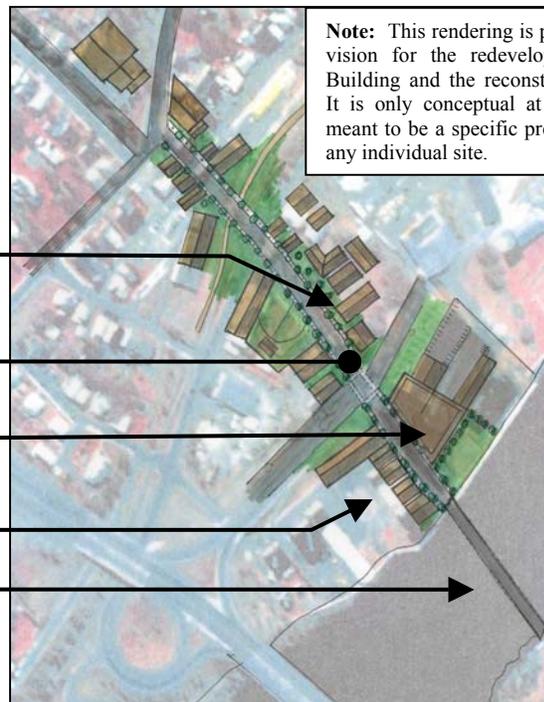
Mixed Use Infill Development

Rebuilt Bridge Street

Chalmers Redevelopment

Mixed Use Infill Development

Possible
Pedestrian Link
to Downtown

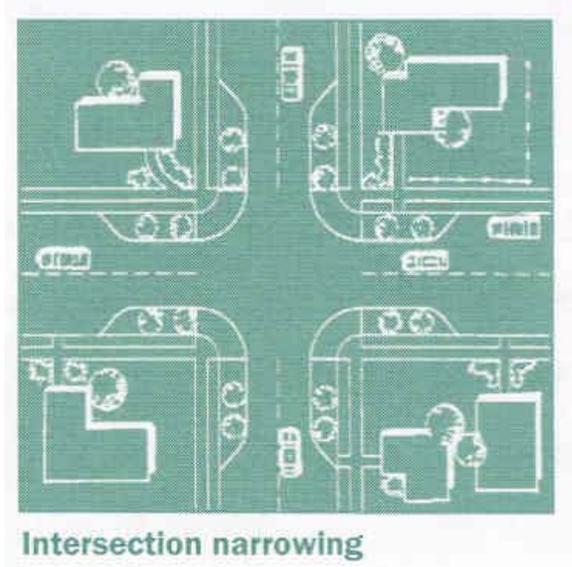


Note: This rendering is provided to help convey a vision for the redevelopment of the Chalmers Building and the reconstruction of Bridge Street. It is only conceptual at this time, and it is not meant to be a specific prescription or directive for any individual site.

- Market Hill** – Recommendations for the Market Hill neighborhood focus on traffic and pedestrian concerns along Market Street and into the surrounding residential neighborhoods. Market Street serves as a mixed-use commercial district at the southern end of this neighborhood, and as a residential street at the northern end. As NYS Route 30 it also handles fairly large volumes of cars and trucks heading between the NYS Thruway and the Town of Amsterdam or points north. Many of the side streets have also witnessed increased traffic volumes and speeds as drivers use these streets as short-cuts to and from the commercial strip in the Town. Maintenance and additions to the sidewalk system, improved crosswalks, and traffic calming are recommended solutions to these traffic concerns. In addition, the mixed-use commercial district at the southern end of Market Street would benefit from improved urban design, and design guidelines are recommended to ensure that the character of future mixed-use development in this area improves.



Crossing Market Street



Example of a Traffic Calming Technique.

- Rockton** – The Rockton neighborhood's primary concern is the Mohasco complex. This former industrial complex suffered from a major fire several years ago and has been deteriorating ever since. The City has pursued state funding to remediate this brownfield site, however the process has been slow and frustrating for neighborhood residents. Additional concerns include the need for improved sidewalk connections through portions of the neighborhood, and pedestrian safety improvements especially near the elementary school, and the neighborhood commercial districts on Forest Avenue and at the intersection of Lyon Street, Clizbe Avenue, Hewitt Street, and Northern Boulevard.
- Upper Church / Reid Hill** – The primary concern for the Upper Church / Reid Hill neighborhood is traffic and pedestrian safety on Church Street (NYS Touring Route 67) and

especially around the neighborhood commercial district at the 5-corners intersection. An expanded and maintained sidewalk system, crosswalks, and traffic calming would improve pedestrian safety and neighborhood cohesion. The neighborhood also desires stronger attention to code enforcement.

➤ **Encourage the creation of Neighborhood Associations**

Neighborhood associations provide a venue for neighborhood self-improvement initiatives. Harnessing the energy and talents of city residents may be the best way to increase quality of life at time when financial resources are limited. Someone at City Hall should be tasked with facilitating the development of these organizations. The City could use a specific project in each neighborhood as a catalyst for increasing neighborhood and involvement. For example, the East Side has a documented need for a new City Park. This project could become a positive rallying point for neighborhood participation, demonstrating the potential for future improvements. Of course, the East Side has neighborhood participation infrastructure in place thanks to Centro Civico. In other neighborhoods it might be necessary to reach out in a more general way to generate a core group of interested neighborhood leaders. Once organizations have been established in several or all of the City's neighborhoods, it would be useful to create a regular forum for bringing these organizations together. The City of Albany, for example, has an entity called the Council of Albany Neighborhood Associations (CANA). This type of citywide framework would allow for the sharing of information and experiences. The City could utilize this forum to bring the various City departments and services in regular contact with the neighborhoods to address issues as they arise, or to provide City support to neighborhood association activities. For example, the City DPW could provide special refuse pick-up to support neighborhood association sponsored clean-up activities.

➤ **Provide a wide range of housing options**

Balance traditional CDBG investments in low and low-moderate income neighborhoods by developing a partnership with the Fannie Mae Foundation for non-income restricted programs, and investigate other initiatives such as equity insurance), to attract and retain middle class homeowners in the City. Also provide incentives for diverse housing choices such as apartments and lofts downtown, and senior housing options to meet the needs of a wide-variety of household types.

➤ **Establish an in-rem property bid program.**

This type of program is aimed at getting an in-rem property (a property that the City has assumed ownership of due to failure to pay taxes) rehabilitated and back on the tax rolls to the benefit of the surrounding neighborhood. Some area municipalities, such as Schenectady and Troy, have utilized this strategy to attract residents to various locations throughout their communities. The City of Amsterdam has recently initiated such a program. In-rem property bid programs require the potential purchaser of a tax delinquent property to develop a rehab proposal for the property. The ranking system for the bid process is not entirely based on how much money the proposed use of the property will bring to the city, but rather it evaluates proposals based on which proposed use will most benefit the neighborhood. Some programs impose a residency requirement on the purchase. Other programs do not impose a residency

requirement on the purchaser, but instead give priority to those proposals that include the intention of owner occupancy. Sample criteria from such programs include the following:

- Prospective purchasers should be required to submit a proposal including a description of how the property will be used, a summary of improvements to be made and how they will be made, how the improvement will be financed, and proposed purchase price.
- In an effort to encourage increased owner occupancy in residential properties, prospective purchasers of residential property should be required to live in the residence for a minimum of five years.
- The winning bidder should be required to begin work within 30 calendar days, and repairs should be completed within a determined time frame (six to twelve months). If these criteria are not met, then the City should consider taking title to the property and offering it for sale to another party (subject to the same proposal criteria).
- Final approval of any proposal or sale of municipally-owned property should be made by the City Council.

➤ **Develop a Marketing Strategy to Bring Middle-Income Families into the City of Amsterdam.**

The City should consider educating and partnering with local realtors to help bring middle-income residents back into the City. To accomplish this, the City can organize regular meetings of local realtors to discuss municipal housing efforts and programs, as well as to discuss emerging trends noticed by either the realtors or the City. Local banks should also be encouraged to be involved in these discussions. The City's potential as a bedroom community to the Capital District is one marketing strategy to pursue. Another is to promote the Amsterdam School District as a community resource. Bringing in outsiders with a fresh perspective could help the City to see other positive aspects of the community that would appeal to newcomers. This action should be taken with the same seriousness as economic development initiatives. Recall from the inventory that 85% of Amsterdam's tax revenue comes from residential properties in the City.

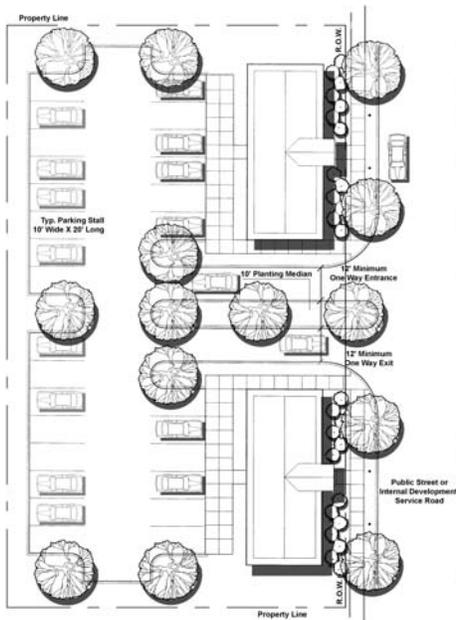
➤ **Inventory vacant and underutilized parcels**

In residential areas, create programs to encourage transfer or ownership of isolated parcels to neighboring residences or neighborhoods to create more visually appealing landscaped lots and/or community gardens. Where there are clusters of vacant parcels and homes that are scheduled for demolition, consolidate parcels and market the consolidated parcels to prospective developers.

➤ **Rewrite Zoning for Neighborhood Commercial Activities**

Examine the City zoning regulations to ensure that small neighborhood retail establishments, such as those that have anchored the neighborhoods for generations, can continue to operate and thrive. Currently, most of the small neighborhood commercial centers in the City are zoned for Retail Business (RB). As described under the recommendations for Downtown, this zoning district contains area and bulk, off-street parking, and loading requirements that are not appropriate for an urban setting. In fact,

they require forms of development that would be harmful to neighborhood character. This zoning district should be replaced with a mixed-use zoning district that places a strong emphasis on design.



Example of commercial design guidelines to ensure that neighborhood commercial development enhances the surrounding residential areas



➤ **Continue and expand existing code enforcement and property maintenance sweeps.**

The City should look to strengthen its enforcement powers over derelict properties. It should also continue to bring together the various City departments in conducting sweeps through the various neighborhoods. This program has proved to be very successful and should be expanded in scope and frequency. The sweeps could also be enhanced by working with the newly established neighborhood associations to identify problems.

➤ **Coordinate with the Greater Amsterdam School District on Neighborhood Issues**

Work with the Greater Amsterdam School District to maintain, to the degree possible, neighborhood elementary schools. All five of the elementary schools are located within (or immediately adjacent to) the City of Amsterdam. These schools are important anchors to the neighborhoods in which they are located.

➤ **Utilize traffic calming techniques to reduce the impact of traffic on neighborhoods.**

Traffic calming techniques should be implemented to send the appropriate message to drivers in these neighborhoods (see Neighborhood Gateway Corridors below).

Redevelop Old Mill Sites and Improve
Connections to Neighborhoods

Issues:

- Abandoned, deteriorating mill structures (Mohasco and Chalmers) are potentially dangerous and severely impact the appeal and value of adjoining neighborhoods.
- Underutilized mill complexes at the Lower Mills (Degraff Street Complex) and the Willow Street Complex – potential value of these sites are unrealized. They are also poorly buffered from the surrounding residential neighborhood.

Recommendations:

➤ **Mohasco**

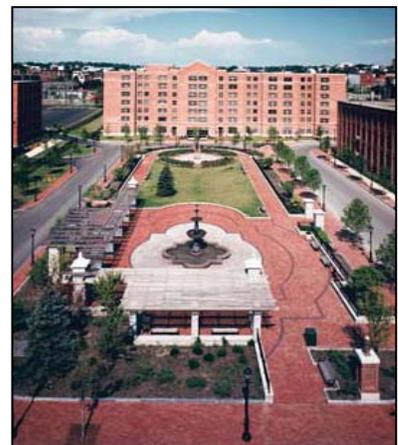
A grant application for brownfield remediation funding has been submitted by the City to New York State. Once funding is secured, complete brownfield remediation and create greenspace amenity focused on the Chuctanunda Creek (part of City Greenway System described below). If possible based upon the level of clean-up achieved during the brownfield remediation, select areas for multi-family residential development (taking advantage of the greenspace amenity) and complimentary neighborhood commercial uses.

➤ **Chalmers**

With recently approved funding from the New York State Department of State, update adaptive reuse study based on architectural, engineering, and market considerations. Reuse portions of this structure as feasible. Redevelop site as mixed-use residential and civic/cultural facility taking advantage of its location along the Mohawk River. Catalyst for improvements to the entire Bridge Street mixed-use neighborhood. Reconstruct Bridge Street (emphasis on pedestrian quality, streetscape, underground utilities, etc.). Consider a future reconnection of the Southside to Downtown (pedestrian bridge across the Mohawk River from Bridge Street to Market Street).



The Chalmers Building



Franklin Square, Syracuse NY
Redevelopment of old industrial
site into office / residential
neighborhood

➤ **The Lower Mills (DeGraff Street area)**

Encourage the continued re-development of this site. Utilize the Economic Development Zone (EDZ) to provide public incentives as needed to assist the private owner toward an efficient re-use of this complex and the creation of new jobs.

➤ **Willow Street Complex**

Buffer the neighborhood to the north, enhance parking and streetscape, and stimulate investment in underutilized buildings. Reorient southern end of Locust Avenue to Church Street to create an attractive entranceway to this industrial area and adjoining neighborhood.



As this photosimulation demonstrates, attention to landscaping and buffering can soften the visual impact of larger industrial sites.

Enhance Important Gateways to the Community

Issues:

- Improve Amsterdam’s “front door” image. Market Street, Church Street, East Main Street, West Main Street, and NYS Route 5S each serve as important gateways to the City and to their respective neighborhoods.
- State highways or city streets? These corridors serve as regional transportation routes, and as city streets that run through the heart of City neighborhoods.
- Pedestrian environment has been compromised by traffic volume and behavior (i.e. speed) and by a deteriorated and incomplete sidewalk system.
- Neighborhood commercial centers in these corridors are struggling. Condition of existing structures, and design of new commercial structures should be addressed.



Market Street

Recommendations:

➤ **Work with the New York State Department of Transportation**

Because these are all state highways or state designated routes, the City should work with the NYS DOT to make improvements to these transportation corridors, including:

- Traffic calming techniques (clearly delineated pedestrian spaces, narrowed roadways, smaller turn radii, and/or on-street parking, and other visual cues that signal the driver to slow down and pay attention)
- Enhancements to pedestrian infrastructure (sidewalks and crosswalks)
- Streetscape investments (street trees, appropriately scaled lighting, etc.)



This photosimulation demonstrates the potential positive aesthetic impact of streetscape investments on a busy commercial street

➤ **Develop design guidelines/standards**

Develop design guidelines/standards in zoning for new commercial buildings and improvements to existing structures in the neighborhood commercial centers. See Neighborhood recommendations above.

➤ **Provide incentives for improvements to real estate in these corridors**

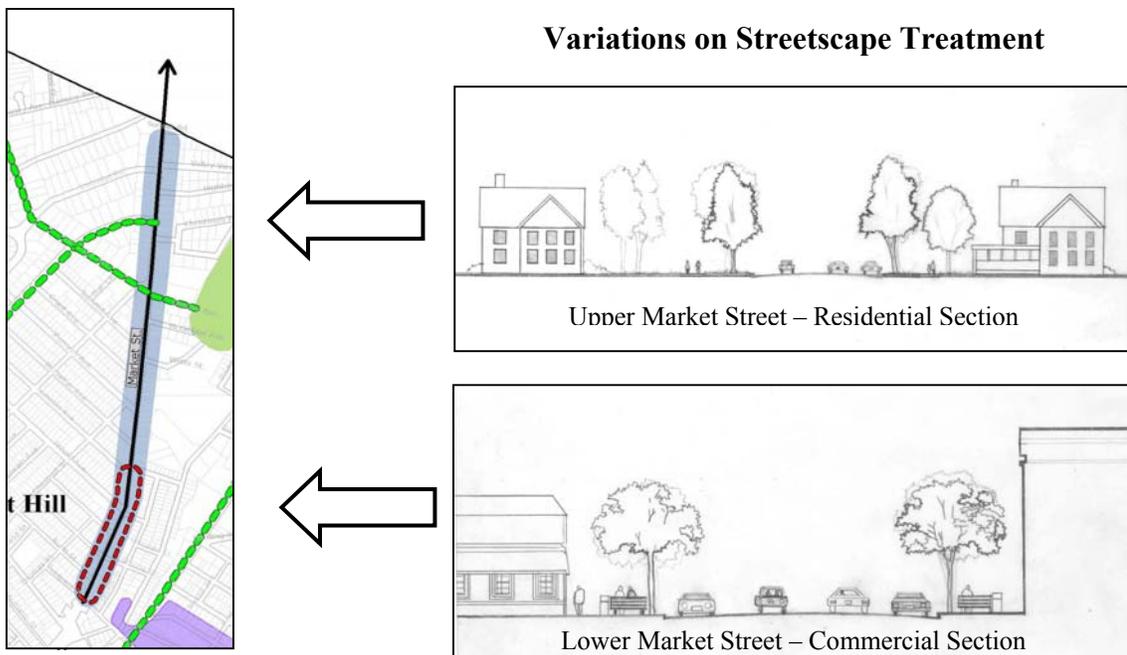
Initiate business development investment (micro-enterprise) program and a matching grants program to provide incentives for improvements (consistent with design guidelines) to existing buildings

➤ **Examine parking supply and design**

Examine parking supply and design to improve business development and neighborhood appearance. Look for opportunities to provide on-street parking, and municipal and/or shared off-street parking arrangements as an alternative to parking lots for individual businesses.

➤ **Additional actions specific to certain corridors:**

- Upper Market Street – sidewalks, lighting, and underground utilities. Buildings set back from the street with sidewalks and wide planting strips with street trees (see section below).
- Lower Market Street – reduce the number and size of curb cuts, enhance visibility of pedestrian crossings, and improve the streetscape. Buildings should be located close to the sidewalk with street trees in a narrow planting strip or in planters (see section below).



- Five Corners” intersection – define the roadway and pedestrian crossings without losing the traffic calming benefits of the current, “informal” design

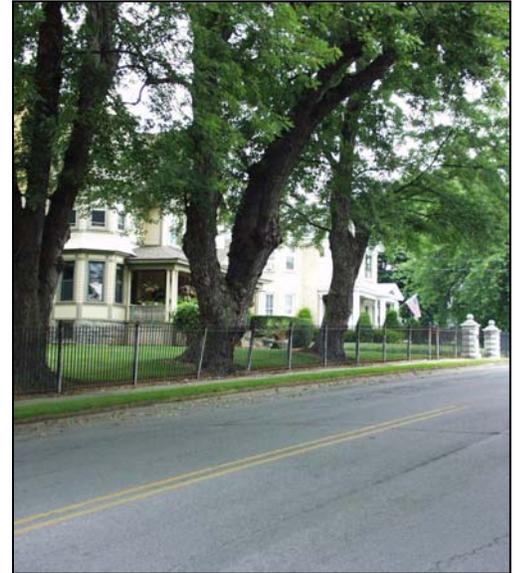


- East Main Street – buffer residential from industrial properties. Expand certain commercial lots on East Main to make them more viable for reinvestment. Develop a neighborhood park.
- West Main Street – Redesign the Route 5 west arterial (from Caroline Street to downtown) as a local street with adjoining development sites that take advantage of river views. Return Guy Park Avenue and Division Street to two-way traffic. Improve connections between the neighborhood and the Mohawk River.
- NYS Route 5S – increased truck traffic from the Florida Industrial Park will effect the safety and function of this roadway. The increase in traffic is also likely to induce new commercial development along this corridor. Access management, pedestrian safety, and site design are all important issues that should be addressed for this area. The City of Amsterdam should seek financial assistance from the Empire State Development Corporation and/or the New York State Department of Transportation to study these traffic impacts in detail. Most of the north side of this corridor is zoned R1 for single-family residential. The south side is zoned CLI for Commercial/Light Industrial. The study of the Route 5S Corridor should recommend revisions to the City’s zoning as needed.

Create a City Greenway System

Issues:

- Greenways, boulevards, and trails enhance quality of life and property values in surrounding neighborhoods. Desirable bedroom communities require high quality of life and neighborhood integrity.
- Amsterdam has several natural features that should be seen as resources to beautify and connect the community. These include the Mohawk River and the Chuctanunda Creek. Greenways and trails utilizing these natural corridors could provide recreational opportunities and connections through the City.
- Amsterdam's system of parks, schools, and other green spaces provide relief from the urban environment and recreational opportunities.
- Some of the City's older, prominent streets (Guy Park Avenue, Locust Avenue, etc.) are still distinguished by mature street trees and sidewalks with generous planting strips. The maintenance of these attractive amenities, however, is inconsistent.

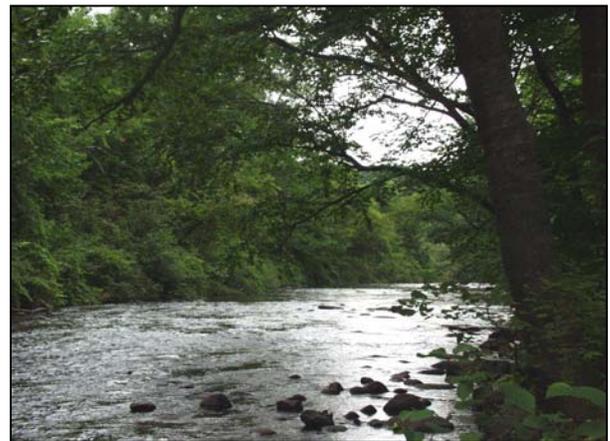


Locust Avenue

Recommendations:

➤ **Greenways**

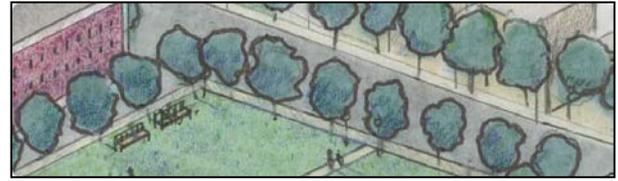
Enhance the natural green corridors, such as those along the Chuctanunda and South Chuctanunda Creeks, that run through the City. This can be accomplished by buffering new development from these greenways and by adding to these corridors as opportunities arise. For example, as part of the Mohasco site remediation the City has an opportunity to develop a Greenway along the Chuctanunda. The City should also attempt to secure ownership or easements for property along the Mohawk River and the other streams/creeks when available. Walking or multi-use trails in these natural corridors would provide recreational opportunities and linkages throughout the city.



Greenways could be established along natural corridors such as the Chuctanunda Creek

➤ **Boulevards**

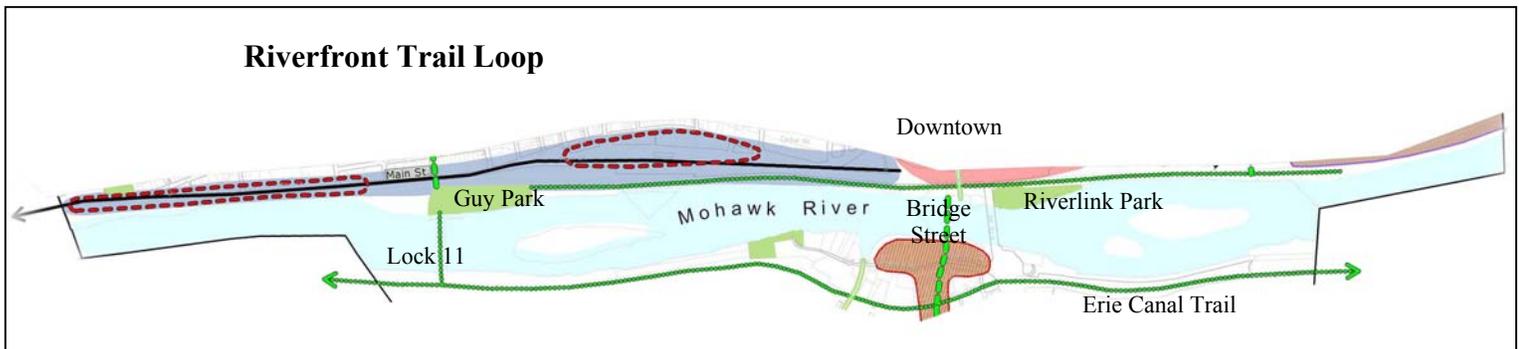
Similarly to the neighborhood gateway corridors (described above), enhance these important local streets by adding and/or maintaining street trees, sidewalks, curbs, and planting strips. The treatment on the streets might be somewhat less formal than the treatment on the busier, commercial stretches of the neighborhood gateway corridors. The “greening” of these boulevards will create safe and attractive walking environments through the city’s neighborhoods. It will also enhance the value of residential real estate along the boulevards and in the surrounding neighborhoods. Targeted local streets include: Guy Park Avenue, Lindbergh Avenue, Van Dyke Avenue, Chapel Place, Locust Avenue, Clizbe Avenue, Northern Boulevard, Lyon Street, Forest Avenue, Vrooman Avenue, Bridge Street, and Florida Avenue.



Important local streets throughout the City should be improved as Boulevards

➤ **Trails**

Expand the City’s multi-use trail system by developing a trail along the northern shore of the Mohawk River from Guy Park Manor to Riverlink Park. This trail would be connected to the Erie Canal Trail on the south shore at the proposed Bridge Street pedestrian bridge and at Lock 11 of the canal, creating a looping system that would benefit residents and visitors.



CITY OF AMSTERDAM, NEW YORK Comprehensive Plan

Comprehensive Plan Map

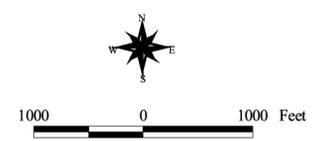
Land Use

- Commercial / Light Industrial
- Conservation / Park
- Downtown
- Urban Neighborhood
- Single-Family Neighborhood
- Low Density Residential
- Neighborhood Commercial
- Neighborhood School
- Redevelopment Area

- Downtown
- Boulevards
- Community Gateways
- Other Important Roadways (not Gateways)
- Railroad Track

- ### Recreational Resources
- Public Parks / Public Golf Course
 - Erie Canal Trail
 - Proposed Loop Trail

- ### Natural Areas
- Steep Slopes
 - Greenway



November 2002

THE SARATOGA ASSOCIATES

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS, ARCHITECTS, ENGINEERS, AND PLANNERS, P.C.
 NEW YORK ■ SARATOGA SPRINGS ■ BOSTON

This map is computer generated using data acquired by The Saratoga Associates from various sources and is intended only for reference, conceptual planning and presentation purposes. This map is not intended for and should not be used to establish boundaries, property lines, location of objects or to provide any other information typically needed for construction or any other purpose when engineering plans or land surveys are required.

Boulevards

Important local streets throughout the City should be improved as Boulevards.

Locust Avenue

Greenways

Greenways could be established along natural corridors such as the Chautauque Creek.

Redevelop Old Mill Sites and Improve Connections to Neighborhoods

Rejuvenate and Redevelop the Mohasee Site.

Design Guidelines

Prepare commercial design guidelines to ensure that neighborhood commercial development enhances the surrounding residential areas.

Riverfront Trail Loop

Expand the City's multi-use trail system by developing a trail along the northern shore of the Mohawk River from Guy Park Manor to Riverlink Park and connecting to the Erie Canal Trail on the South Side.

Redevelop Old Mill Sites / Stabilize and Strengthen Neighborhoods

South Side Neighborhood

Develop Unique Attractions for Downtown

The Amsterdam Community Marketplace

The Amsterdam "Extreme Sports" Recreation Center

Remake the Urban Fabric of Downtown (Incremental Transition)

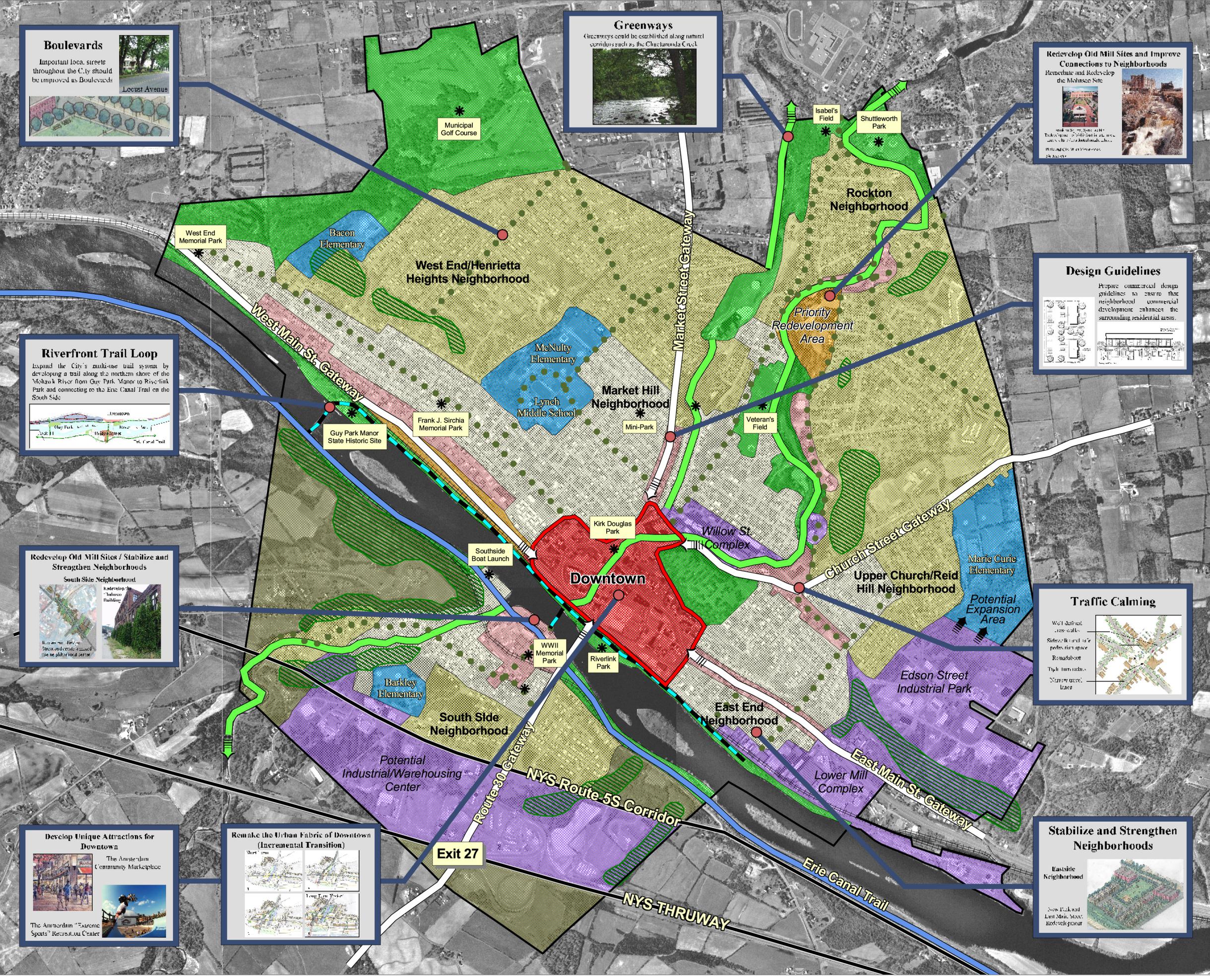
Traffic Calming

Well defined crosswalks
 Sidewalk paved with permeable surface
 Roundabout
 Traffic roundabouts
 Narrow travel lanes

Stabilize and Strengthen Neighborhoods

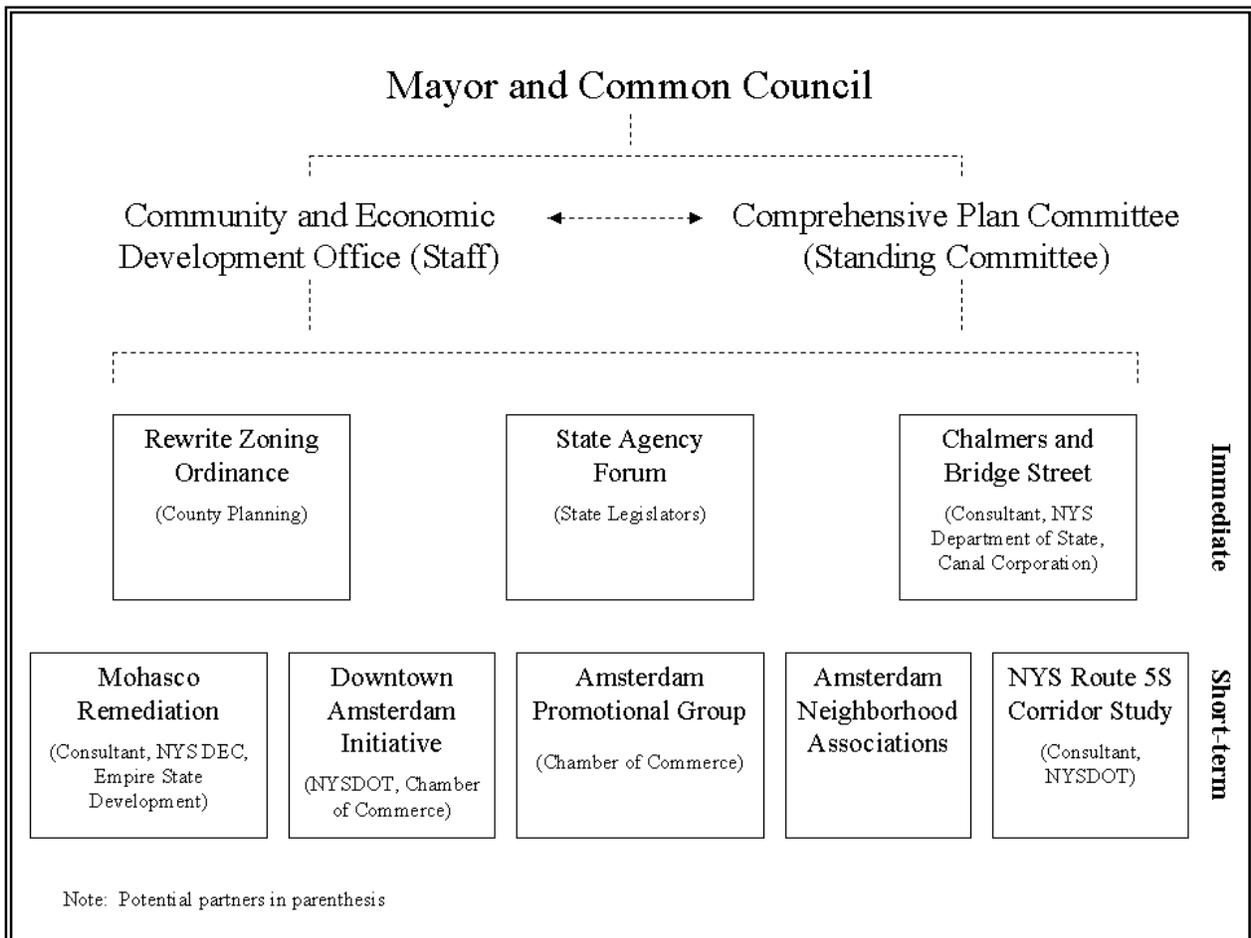
Eastside Neighborhood

New Park and East Main Street Redevelopment



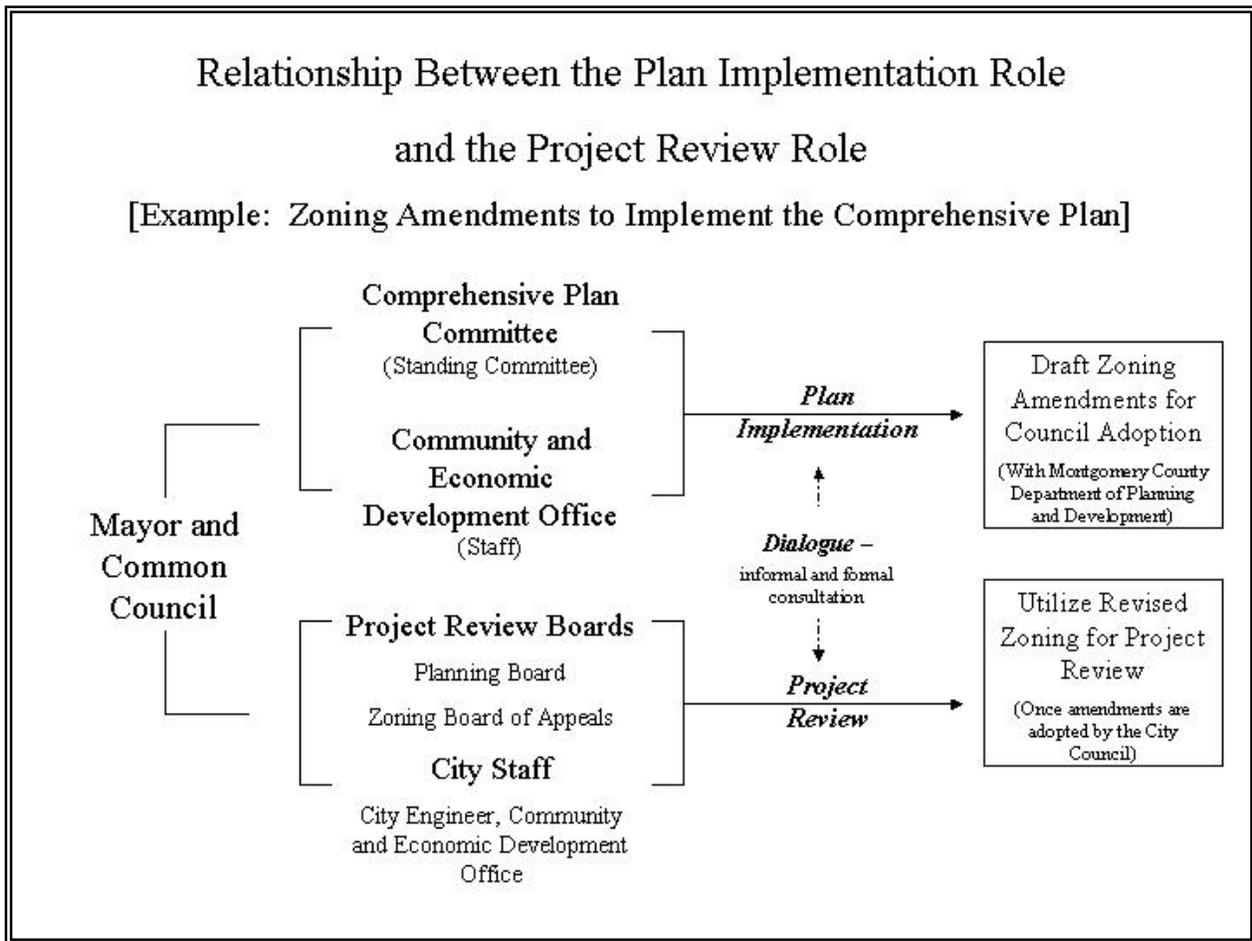
Implementation

In order to oversee implementation of the Comprehensive Plan, a reconstituted version of the Comprehensive Plan Committee should be established as a Standing Committee to the Common Council. The Committee would work with staff from the City’s Community and Economic Development Office to undertake and monitor the programs and projects identified below. The City of Amsterdam should also utilize its representatives at the County Board of Supervisors to seek support and assistance from Montgomery County. The Montgomery County Department of Planning and Development and the Montgomery County Economic Opportunity and Development Office, in particular, would be necessary partners in implementing the plan.



The City Planning Board and the Zoning Board of Appeals will also have important roles in implementing the comprehensive plan. These Boards are responsible for reviewing project proposals in the City; and as such, they are the primary users of the City’s land use regulations (zoning and subdivision regulations, design guidelines, etc.). Therefore, it will be these community volunteers who will ensure that new development projects are consistent with the City’s zoning once the zoning has been amended to reflect the comprehensive plan. Both Boards should be consulted as the zoning amendments

are drafted. The diagram below illustrates the relationship between the Plan Implementation Role and the Project Review Role.



Immediate Actions (upon adoption of the comprehensive plan)

- **Rewrite City Zoning Ordinance** – The Comprehensive Plan Committee, or a separate zoning revision committee established for this purpose, will work with the Montgomery County Department of Planning and Development, and consultants as needed, on a rewrite of the City of Amsterdam’s Zoning Code. The zoning rewrite should move the City away from single-use zoning districts in favor of mixed-use zoning with an emphasis on scale and urban design. A useful model for this type of code is called the Transect.

The Transect is a concept developed by Duany Plater-Zyberk & Company, a Florida based town planning firm. As the figure below illustrates, the Transect represents the continuum of development form from rural to urban. Each point along the continuum has particular design elements that characterize that type of development. For example, the T3 Suburban Transect has different design characteristics than the T6 Urban Core Transect. Streets in suburban areas tend to be more curvilinear in form, buildings are usually detached and set back from the street, etc. In the urban

core, streets form regular blocks, buildings tend to be attached and located close to the sidewalk at uniform build-to lines, streetscapes are more formal, etc. These general design elements are described in the transect graphic on the next page.

From this general continuum, Duany Plater-Zyberk & Company’s have developed a set of standard design parameters for each transect. These standards, usually illustrated in simple to read tables, address a host of design elements ranging from the type of streets and public spaces, the building position, building type, and general architectural characteristics that are appropriate for each transect. Of course these elements must be tailored to the specific circumstances of individual communities.

A Transect based code could be easily adapted to Amsterdam, with Downtown Amsterdam toward the right side, at the most urban scale along the continuum (T6 – Urban Core). Most of the City’s neighborhoods would fall between the T5 and T4 locations, with a few of the post 1940’s neighborhoods (for example, portions of Henrietta Heights and Rockton) falling into the T3 category. The Transect system recognizes that there might be certain specific areas in the community that simply do not fit into this framework. The column at the right edge of the transect graphic (next page) illustrates this point. The “Special Districts” column is for these areas. For example, areas for industrial / light industrial development such as the Edson Street Industrial Park would fall into this category. Specific design parameters for each of these points along the continuum (T3-T6) would be established with the zoning revision committee.

Generally, the land use areas illustrated on the Comprehensive Plan Map would fall into the following Transect categories:

Land Use Areas	Transect System Category
Commercial / Light Industrial	Special District
Conservation / Park	T1
Downtown	T6
Urban Neighborhood	T5 and T4
Single-Family Neighborhood	T4 and T3
Low Density Residential	T3 and T2
Neighborhood Commercial	T5
Neighborhood School	Not applicable
Redevelopment Area	To be determined

- **Communicate the Plan to the City's Partners** - Coordinate a State Agency Forum to initiate dialogue with NYS about the City's Comprehensive Plan Vision. This session should be co-hosted by the City's legislative representatives, the Mayor, and the Common Council. The purpose of this event will be to unveil the City's plan to high-level officials from the various New York State agencies that will be asked to partner with the City of Amsterdam in reaching its goals, such as: the Governor's Office, the NYS Department of Transportation, Empire State Development, the NYS Department of State, the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation, the Canal Corporation, and others.
- **Chalmers and Bridge Street** - utilize recently approved state funds from the New York State Department of State to initiate a feasibility study for reuse of the Chalmers building and to generate design concepts for a Bridge Street reconstruction project. Funding from the NYS Department Of State's Division of Coastal Resources, the NYS Canal Corporation, the Governor's Office for Small Cities, and state legislative appropriations should be pursued for implementation.

Short-term Actions (initiate within 1 year of adoption of the Comprehensive Plan)

- **Strengthen and expand the role of the City's Community and Economic Development Office.** As described above, the Comprehensive Plan Committee, a standing committee of the Common Council, will oversee implementation of the Comprehensive Plan. The Community and Economic Development Office will provide staff support to the Comprehensive Plan Committee. Together, they must pay particular attention to pursuing the projects identified in the plan in a coordinated and integrated manner. They should also identify, and take advantage of opportunities to achieve multiple objectives as they arise (For example, if the City is going to undertake a streetscape improvement project, that is an appropriate time to try to work with Niagara Mohawk to underground utility lines).

The Community and Economic Development Office will be tasked with managing the implementation projects and programs on a day-to-day basis. It will identify and apply for grant funding, develop and administer home ownership/housing and neighborhood commercial reinvestment programs, will work to organize and support neighborhood organizations, and will organize downtown initiatives. It will also facilitate the development review process by working as staff to the City's review boards, and will coordinate the various economic development initiatives as the City's "one stop shop" for economic development assistance. The department will need to be resourced appropriately to do this work.

- **Use brownfield remediation funding (if approved) to begin clean-up of the Mohasco Site.** The City had already submitted a grant application to New York State for clean-up of the Mohasco Site. The comprehensive plan envisions the redevelopment of the site for, perhaps, multi-family residential development and neighborhood commercial uses, with the Chuctanunda Creek serving as a greenspace amenity for the new development. Detailed planning for this site will be needed before a final determination about the reuse of the site is made. A Master Plan for this area should be

developed with active participation from the community, and especially from the adjoining Rockton Neighborhood. One of the important factors that must be considered in determining appropriate uses for the site is the level of environmental clean-up that can be achieved there.

- **Downtown Amsterdam Initiative** – The Comprehensive Plan Committee and the Community and Economic Development Office should coordinate with the NYS Department of Transportation and the NYS Department of State (Quality Communities Program) to secure funding for the design and engineering phase of the Downtown Amsterdam street-system restructuring project. Downtown stakeholders including the Chamber of Commerce and others should be included in these efforts.
- **Establish a City Promotional Committee in partnership with the Chamber of Commerce** – this group of civic-minded volunteers will work to improve the image and identity of Amsterdam in the Capital District region and beyond. The group will develop a new identifying image for the City, host an event for representatives of the Capital District media outlets, and look for additional opportunities to present the positive aspects of living in, working in, and visiting Amsterdam.
- **Amsterdam Neighborhood Initiative** – Through the Community and Economic Development Office, the City should look to support the establishment of neighborhood associations. As a way of generating interest and volunteers from each neighborhood, an initial project should be initiated for each. Suggested initial projects include:
 - East End – Continued city support for Cento Civico’s Hacienda Project and initial work on locating and designing a new City park in this recreationally underserved neighborhood.
 - South Side – as already described, the Chalmers/Bridge Street project
 - Rockton – as already described, the Mohasco remediation program
 - Market Hill – streetscape and pedestrian safety improvements around the Market Street neighborhood commercial area
 - West End / Henrietta Heights – initiate dialogue with NYSDOT about redesigning the Route 5 west arterial
 - Upper Church/Reid Hill – streetscape and pedestrian safety improvements at the Neighborhood Commercial area at 5 corners.
- **Greenways Initiative** – In coordination with the City Department of Public Works, prioritize among the city streets identified as Boulevards under recommendations, and begin to program annual capital improvements to these streets. Look for innovative ways to fund the street tree planting program. Tree Gift and/or Cost Sharing Programs (between the city and residents, businesses, or community organizations) exist in many communities around the country. The National Arbor Day Foundation (arborday.org) has a program called Tree City USA that provides guidance for community urban forestry programs, and has standards that community’s can pursue to be designated a “Tree City USA.” Achieving such a designation does not necessarily require the expenditure of vast sums of money. In fact, the community’s forestry program must have a minimum annual budget of only \$2 per capita (approx. \$36,500 for Amsterdam) to qualify.

- **NYS Route 5S Corridor Study** – work with the NYS Department of Transportation and Empire State Development to secure funding for a land use and transportation study of this corridor. The study should cover the area from the frontage along the north side of this highway to the NYS Thruway right-of-way.

Medium-term Actions (initiate within 3 to 5 years after adoption of the Comprehensive Plan depending on status of short-term actions)

- **Begin the Construction Phase of the Downtown Amsterdam Street System Restructuring Project** – By this time, the design and engineering phase of the project should be completed and funding (over a period of years) secured.
- **Begin the design and engineering phase for the Route 5 West arterial** – in partnership with NYSDOT, redesign the road as an urban street and create redevelopment opportunities for remaining portions of the right-of-way.
- **Pursue funding for the design and construction of the Riverfront Loop Trail** – potential sources of funding include the NYSDOT, the Canal Corporation, the Department of State, and the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation.

Long-term Actions (initiate within 5 to 10 years after adoption of the Comprehensive Plan)

- **Update the Comprehensive Plan** – A comprehensive plan should be updated every five to ten years to assess progress on the implementation actions and to address the community's changing conditions, needs, and desires.

Cost Estimates for Select Programs and Capital Projects

The estimated costs for select programs and capital projects described in the comprehensive plan are listed in the table below. The total estimated cost for all of these programs and projects is between \$43 million and \$76 million over perhaps ten or fifteen years. It is understood that the City of Amsterdam cannot pay for this alone. Much of the funding for these programs and projects can be obtained from outside sources if the City takes a coordinated and aggressive approach to identifying and requesting assistance. However, the City must invest at some level to leverage these outside sources of funding (state and federal grants, and private sources – see also Appendix D). The City must be prepared to apply for and administer grants. It will also need to provide matching funds for many of the grant programs. The City of Amsterdam must also utilize its state and federal legislators to lobby effectively on its behalf.

PROJECT	DESCRIPTION	Preliminary Public Sector Investment	Potential Funding Assistance Note: most grant programs are competitive programs	Resultant Community Benefits	Induced Investment & Benefits
Rebuild Amsterdam’s Economic Foundation					
Redevelop Old Mill Sites and Improve Connections to Neighborhoods					
Mohasco Site Redevelopment	Remove burned out structures and demolish remaining industrial buildings. Remediate area to highest standards. Prepare a master plan for the site. Create design for City parkland featuring the creek (part of the Greenway system), and plan for pockets of moderate density residential with complimentary neighborhood commercial uses.	\$2.6 MM Remediation (Perhaps +/- \$1 MM local share) \$50,000 Feasibility Study \$1- 2 MM Redevelopment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ NYS DOS: Clean Water/Clean Air Bond Act ▪ NYS DEC ▪ Empire State Development ▪ NYS, Governor’s Office for Small Cities ▪ Legislative appropriations 	100- 200 units new residential area w/public greenway. Neighborhood commercial services.	Market rate housing, tax base expansion
Chalmers and Bridge Street	Prepare a feasibility study and identify a reuse strategy for the Chalmers Building, including a Phase I Environmental Investigation, and preparation of a South Side Neighborhood Redevelopment Plan, including Design and Construction Documents for the rebuilding of Bridge Street.	\$50,000 Feasibility Study \$1 MM Demolition \$1 MM Infrastructure \$1 MM Redevelopment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ NYS DOS, Division of Coastal Resources: Clean Water/Clean Air Bond Act ▪ Empire State Development ▪ NYS Canal Corporation ▪ NYS DOT: Industrial Access Program ▪ NYS, Governor’s Office for Small Cities ▪ Legislative appropriations 	50- 75 units new residential units and perhaps 40,000 GSF office &/or cultural facility	Market rate housing, office or cultural facility, tax base expansion
Edson Street Industrial Park Accessibility	Develop alternative point of access to the park from Route 5 East and/or from Route 67 east of the City line. Expand industrial park through land acquisition from the school district or others.	\$50,000 Feasibility Study \$3-6 MM Industrial Access Road and Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ NYS DOT: Industrial Access Program ▪ NYS Empire State Development Corporation ▪ Amsterdam Capital Bond 	Redirect truck traffic to Edison Street away from the upper Church Street neighborhood	Maintain functionality of Edison Street Industrial Park

PROJECT	DESCRIPTION	Preliminary Public Sector Investment	Potential Funding Assistance Note: most grant programs are competitive programs	Resultant Community Benefits	Induced Investment & Benefits
NYS Thruway Interchange (Exit 27) Industrial Area	Feasibility study for possible industrial park at Exit 27. Include transportation/land use investigation of Route 5S.	\$50,000 Feasibility Study \$2 - 5 MM Industrial Access Road and Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ NYS DOT: Industrial Access Program ▪ NYS Empire State Development Corporation ▪ NYS Thruway Authority ▪ Montgomery County 	+/- 30-50 acres (300,00 – 500,000 GSF) Industrial and Back Office/Call Center development	Employment center, tax base expansion
Telecommunications Initiative	Formulate and implement strategy for wiring Downtown, and perhaps the Lower Mill and Willow Street complexes with fiber		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Niagara Mohawk: Wired Building Grant Program ▪ Empire State Development 	State of Art telecommunications	Franchise tax
Marketing Strategy	Develop a strategy for marketing Amsterdam to businesses, tourists, and potential residents.	\$50,000 Economic Development Strategy & staffing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Member Item • City of Amsterdam budget 	Proactive Economic Development position	Employment
Subtotal		\$11- 19 MM subtotal			
Reestablish Downtown as the Community Center					
Main Street Business Development Program	Main Street Program: District Branding strategy, Business recruitment and attraction program. Micro-enterprise loan program Streetscape and parking enhancement program.	\$75,000 per year. Capitalize @ \$1 MM \$1.5 MM capital investment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Member items ▪ NYS, Governor’s Office for Small Cities – Economic Development projects. 	Specialty shopping and services district; arts, crafts and retail opportunities	Jobs, retail sales & tax base expansion
Downtown Transportation System Design & Development Strategy	Detailed transportation planning and engineering study to implement the comprehensive plan’s vision for downtown.	\$250,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ NYS DOT: TEA-21 & Regional Transportation Plan 		
Grove Street and other east/west roads	Conversion to two-way urban street with significant pedestrian accommodation and streetscape improvements. Reconnect Guy Park Avenue and Division Street to downtown. Downsize Route 5 west of the downtown.	\$2-4 MM Street realignment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ NYS DOT: TEA-21 & Regional Transportation Plan 	Reestablish downtown 2-way street system to enhance community circulation. 150,000 GSF new mixed use development along Grove Street 100,000 GSF new mixed use development along W. Main St.	New/infill mixed use development; expanded tax base.

PROJECT	DESCRIPTION	Preliminary Public Sector Investment	Potential Funding Assistance Note: most grant programs are competitive programs	Resultant Community Benefits	Induced Investment & Benefits
Market Street and related improvements	Reconnection of upper and lower Market Streets and conversion to two-way traffic. Significant pedestrian accommodation and streetscape improvements. Realign Church Street north of Route 30 north flyover.	\$3-4 MM Street reconstruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ NYS DOT: TEA-21 & Regional Transportation Plan 	Reestablish downtown 2-way street system to enhance community circulation. 100,000 GSF mixed-use development	New/infill retail and service development; expanded tax base
Pedestrian Bridge across the Mohawk River from Market Street to Bridge Street (south side)	Construction of pedestrian bridge from the southern end of Market Street to Bridge Street adjacent to the Chalmers Building.	\$6-8 MM bridge construction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ NYS DOT: TEA-21 ▪ NYSDOS: Environmental Protection Fund ▪ NYSOPRHP: Environmental Protection Fund, Clean Water/Clean Air Bond Act ▪ FHA: Recreational Trails Program ▪ Member Item 	Reconnect Main Street to Port Jackson neighborhood; promotes high quality walkable community	Bridge Street neighborhood services district
Chuctanunda Creek Greenway & linear park	Enhancement of the Chuctanunda Creek and establishment of a linear pedestrian corridor along both sides through downtown.	\$1-3 MM capital improvements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ NYS DOT: TEA-21 ▪ NYSDOS: Environmental Protection Fund ▪ NYSOPRHP: Environmental Protection Fund, Clean Water/Clean Air Bond Act ▪ FHA: Recreational Trails Program 	Enhance quality of life Pedestrian linkages to north-side neighborhoods to downtown; promotes high quality walkable community	Neighborhood investment; expansion of tax base
Relocate Train Station	Relocate to Riverlink Park area	\$3-5 MM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NYSDOT Regional Transportation Improvement Program 	Enhanced community access to Train Station & downtown activity.	Enhanced accessiibility
Subtotal		\$16- 26 MM Subtotal			

PROJECT	DESCRIPTION	Preliminary Public Sector Investment	Potential Funding Assistance Note: most grant programs are competitive programs	Resultant Community Benefits	Induced Investment & Benefits
Stabilize and Strengthen Neighborhoods					
Enhance Important Gateways to the Community					
Create a City Greenway System					
Mayor’s neighborhood Stabilization team	Review code, safety, enhancement programs	Current City budget	City of Amsterdam	Safer neighborhoods	Enhanced neighborhood values
Neighborhood Organizations	Facilitate neighborhood organizations to become involved w/weed, seed and clean programs.	\$35,000 per year staff commitment to lead volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City of Amsterdam Member Item? 	Safer neighborhoods. Neighborhood “ownership”	Enhance neighborhood values
Fannie Mae home ownership program	Incentives middle class reinvestment in neighborhoods	\$3-5,000 grant program per dwelling to incentives investment; \$1 MM program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Philanthropic or corporate sponsor(s) Fannie Mae New York 	Stabilize housing and neighborhood investment. Enhance tax base.	Neighborhood investment
Le Sagunda Casa	East side community center; community educational and empowerment zone	\$3-5 MM capital project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Federal and State agencies 	Workforce and lifestyle development	Workforce
East Side Neighborhood Park	Develop a neighborhood park off East Main Street	\$2 MM for land acquisition, design, and development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NYS OPRHP: Land acquisition and park development programs NYS, Governor’s Office for Small Cities. 	Quality of Life, neighborhood enhancement	Strengthen the East Side Neighborhood
Streetscape improvements to Neighborhood Commercial Centers	Neighborhood Centers on Market Street, Church Street, East Main Street, West Main Street, Bridge Street, and on Forrest Avenue and in Rockton.	\$1-2 MM each; parking, signage, streetscape and public spaces investment \$6-12 MM total	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NYS DOT: TEA-21 NYS, Governor’s Office for Small Cities NYS Office Parks and Recreation 	Safer, attractive neighborhood centers	Enhance housing and neighborhood values
Traffic calming measures on state highways running through neighborhoods	Market Street (Route 30), Church Street (Route 67), and East Main Street (Route 5)	\$1-2 MM each; \$3-6 MM total	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NYS DOT: TEA-21 	Safer Streets	Enhance Church Street housing and neighborhood values
Riverlink Park Extension to Guy Park Manor	Park extension Bike/Hike Trail connection	\$1 MM capital \$5 MM capital investment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Member Item NYS Office Parks NYS Department of State 	Enhanced quality of life	
Subtotal		\$16 – 3 1MM Subtotal			

Cost Estimates for Select Programs and Capital Projects

Total = \$43 to \$76 Million over Ten to Fifteen Years