



CITY OF ALBANY  
DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENT & PLANNING  
21 LODGE STREET  
ALBANY, NY 12208  
TELEPHONE (518) 434-2532  
FAX (518) 434-9846

GERALD D. JENNINGS  
MAYOR

MICHAEL J. YEVOLI  
COMMISSIONER

## **Department of Development & Planning 2009**

The Department of Development and Planning provides staffing and management services to achieve economic and project development, business retention and attraction services as well as long-range neighborhood and land use planning activities. To that end, the Department is responsible for administering and facilitating a number of programs and initiatives and provides technical support and staffing to many Boards and operations. Below is a synopsis of most notable activities and achievements from 2009.

### **Development**

#### **City Of Albany Empire Zone**

Seven (7) businesses were approved for Empire Zone Certification in 2009, three (3) of which were new enterprises. These companies project to create 94 jobs and commit to invest more than \$4.6 million in the City's Empire Zone.

In total, over 5,000 people are currently employed by zone businesses and over \$663 million has been invested in new equipment and new or expanded facilities since the zone was designated in 1994 (plus this years reporting number to be confirmed.)

The City of Albany Empire Zone Board has approved over \$2 million in small business loans through the Statewide Zone Capital Corporation program, which will leverage \$5.8 million in expansion and improvements.

Going forward the City is prepared to continue its economic development efforts throughout the City and make necessary adjustments as the Empire Zone Program is set to expire in June of 2010. The City of Albany lobbied for this program in hopes that it would continue. Since designation in 1994, the Empire Zone programs has been a beneficial economic development program for the City of Albany and has resulted in several new and expanded business throughout the City. The City of Albany will continue to be advocate for businesses and be at the forefront of new programs and opportunities that we can offer to our businesses to help foster a strong economic climate for this City.

## Highlighted New Businesses and Expansions- 2009

- Downtown Albany welcomed a new restaurant in Spring of 2009 with the opening of Dale Miller at 30 South Pearl Street. This full-service restaurant and banquet facility plans on investing \$960,000 over the next five years for building renovations, and the purchase of new furniture, fixtures and equipment and plan on creating a total of 35 new jobs.
- Auburn Armature, Inc. (AAI) opened their new distribution and showcase facility at 875 Broadway in June of 2009. AAI is a rapidly growing electrical distributor and has been in business for over 60 years. This is the company's first Albany location. They plan to invest a total of \$750,000 over the next five years, and hire 10 employees. This investment on a building that has been left vacant for several years has also had an affect on its neighboring business owners who have started to make improvements to their buildings as a result of AAI's move to the neighborhood.
- The North Albany industrial district welcomed CMC-KUHNKE to their new manufacturing facility at 1080 Broadway. A manufacturer of Can Inspection Gauges and Software, CMC-KUHNKE plans to invest \$380,500 in building renovations and furniture and equipment. They also plan on hiring 15 full-time employees over the course of the next 3 years.
- Chris' Coffee Service, Inc., located at 10 Corporate Circle, specializes in the sales, service, and manufacturing (roasting) of coffee and coffee equipment. This family owned business has been serving the Capital Region for over 30 years. Chris' Coffee Service started in 1976 with 3 part-time employees and currently they have 28 employees. They are transitioning their business as they increase their in-house roasting which will require them to acquire additional equipment and make necessary improvements to the facility to meet these needs. They plan to invest \$1,154,500 over the next three years, primarily in new production machinery & equipment and in building renovations. They will also be purchasing new delivery vehicles. They will hire an additional 4.5 employees over the next three years.

## **Planning**

### **Comprehensive Plan**

2010 will be an exciting year for the City of Albany as we hold our first series of public meetings related to our first comprehensive plan at the end of January 2010. Albany2030 will look forward twenty years, while at the same time considering where we are now and where we've been. The plan will cover all aspects of city life: housing, recreation, transportation, and infrastructure just to name a few

Thanks to the community volunteers of the Comprehensive Plan Board and Planning Staff, preparation for kicking-off the first comprehensive plan resulted in the start to a seamless process. Hundreds of people have been engaged already and this plan will continue to grow from collective visions and dreams and serve as a roadmap for our great city for the next twenty years. All citizens and stakeholders are encouraged to take part in this unique opportunity to have voices heard and to shape our city for future generations. This collective energy will clearly produce a living document that will continually lead us forward, with an eye towards the past, as we strive to become a model and sustainable capital for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Visit the comprehensive plan website at [www.albany2030.org](http://www.albany2030.org) and get involved.

## **Sustainability**

This past year, the City of Albany made great strides in our effort to become a more sustainable city. More than two hundred participated in the development of our first citywide Bike Master Plan. This plan lays out a comprehensive bike network to be constructed over the next twenty years and includes routes, signage, end-of-trip facilities, and policies. The goal is to promote bicycling as a viable transportation option, which is not only part of a healthy lifestyle, but also reduces our greenhouse gas emissions. We are fully committed to this plan and are proud to announce that just over five miles of new bike routes will be completed by the fall of 2010, and some new bike routes have already been installed. The Divisions of Planning, Engineering, and Traffic Safety are seeking implementation funding, as well as incorporating bike facilities into upcoming paving and capital projects when feasible.

The other major sustainability initiative this year has involved the funding and development of an Energy and Sustainability Office for the City of Albany. The Division of Planning successfully secured U.S. Department of Energy funds to create a position called Energy and Sustainability Manager for a period of three years beginning in 2010. This individual will be responsible for developing and implementing a comprehensive sustainability program, building on the sustainability agenda enacted last earth day. This is a tremendous milestone that will lead city government and the community-at-large to become more environmentally, socially, and economically sustainable. The Energy and Sustainability Manager will be situated within the Division of Planning and will work on many innovative measures including: municipal performance contracting for city facilities, development of a revolving energy loan fund and program for energy-efficiency projects across sectors, and the research and development of green infrastructure and building codes. This office will also be responsible for working with the community to develop a citywide Climate Action Plan, which will track our annual energy and environmental performance based upon numerous milestones.

## **State Street**

State Street is the front door to the Capitol and runs through the heart of our downtown. The City has successfully secured the funds necessary to transform this road into not only a thoroughfare to move cars and buses, but a dynamic public realm for pedestrians that will support new residential and commercial development transforming downtown to a place to work, visit *and* live.

The project will run from Eagle Street to Broadway and will include a rehabilitated roadway, new curbs and sidewalks, ornamental streetlights, and pedestrian and bike amenities. The City team is currently reviewing proposals from engineering firms in order to select a group in 2010 and to coordinate with all stakeholders including the Downtown Albany BID and CDTA as the project develops.

## **Bicycle Master Plan**

The City of Albany recently completed its first Bicycle Master Plan that identifies a network of bicycle routes to improve cycling as a viable mode of transportation throughout the City. The network will support a safe and healthy transportation alternative that is paramount to achieving sustainability and enhancing the quality of life in the City. The City, along with its partners, have started to implement recommendations from the plan. This includes:

- Three bicycle routes that are consistent with the Bicycle Master Plan. Completion date is estimated for the fall of 2010 and this project will provide over five miles of bicycle infrastructure on and along City streets.
- Also CDTC and the City of Albany are currently developing a Bicycle Education Campaign to inform motorists and bicyclists about the need to share the road. This program will reach out to the residents of the City of Albany, as well as the commuters and visitors. This program is funded by UPWP and will be unveiled in spring of 2010.

### **Federal Stimulus Activity**

The City of Albany has worked diligently over the course of the year to seize every opportunity the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act presents since it was approved back in February. This act was created to preserve and create jobs, promote economic recovery, assist those most impacted by the recession, provide investments needed to increase economic efficiency by spurring technological advances in science & health, invest in transportation, environmental protection, & other infrastructure that will provide long-term economic benefits, and stabilize State & local government budgets, in order to minimize & avoid reductions in essential services & counterproductive state & local tax increases.

The City of Albany has been active in organizing the various funding sources and prioritizing those shovel ready projects that can receive stimulus funding. In addition to formulating a Priority Project Report, the City of Albany hosted a community forum in May at Albany High School to help clarify the ARRA and explain the current state of stimulus funding. The City of Albany broke ground in May on the \$15 million road reconstruction project for Delaware Avenue. This project was the first stimulus project in New York State.

## **Long Range Neighborhood Planning**

### **Arbor Hill**

The Arbor Hill Neighborhood Plan, adopted in June 2003 focuses on four key areas: 1) Homeownership and Rental Housing, 2) Business and Job Development, 3) Arts, Culture and Heritage, and 4) Quality of Life

Over the past six years, significant strides have been made and over \$41 Million investment that has already taken place or been committed to the neighborhood since the 2003. The North Swan Street Mixed-Use Project is an example of strengthening our neighborhoods and creating the partnerships between the City, the Albany Housing Authority and Albany County. With all 23 apartments rented and businesses moving into the storefronts, N Swan Street is continuing to improve.

The Arbor Hill Neighborhood Association continues to beautify the neighborhood with cleaning the sidewalks and planting tulips along Henry Johnson Boulevard. The partnership between the Neighborhood Association, Planning Department and the General Services continues to grow and improve the neighborhood.

Success from the Arbor Hill Neighborhood Plan continues to develop with the recently Restore NY award, the beautification of the neighborhood and the continued investment throughout the neighborhood. Future developments for the neighborhood will include the renovation of Ida Yarbrough low-rise buildings, AHA developing 10 housing units for homeowners, a new Arbor Hill/West Hill Library as well as redevelopment along Henry Johnson Boulevard and N Swan Street.

### **Restore NY – Round 3 Announcement – Arbor Hill Reclamation Project**

NYS Empire State Development Corporation awarded the City of Albany \$5 million from ReStore NY grant program for the Arbor Hill Reclamation Project. This Project consists of the adaptive reuse and rehabilitation for more than 50,000 square feet of vacant and blighted space along Henry Johnson Boulevard and North Swan Street in the Arbor Hill neighborhood. The Arbor Hill Reclamation Project is more than additional residential units and commercial space; it is a GATEWAY project to a higher quality of life for residents and a signal to others that Arbor Hill is a community of choice. Included in this project is the rehabilitation of St. Joseph's Academy; this vacant and dilapidated 41,448 square foot structure will be transformed into "Academy Lofts," with 17,400 square feet of commercial space and 25 studio and one-bedroom affordable residential units. The major strength of this project is that it connects community development and economic development, which will spark an influx of transformative public and private investment in the surrounding neighborhood.

## **Park South**

Revitalizing our neighborhoods continues to be a driving focus for our City. In addition to the tireless dedication of our codes, fire and public safety divisions, we have numerous targeted neighborhood plans in full swing with major projects on the horizon.

Park South is a shining example of what can be accomplished when a neighborhood comes together with our City departments to address quality of life issues. As we enter the fifth year of the Park South Urban Renewal plan, we have tallied over \$40 million of public and private investment in the neighborhood. New Scotland Avenue is being transformed by our 16 New Scotland project, a partnership between the City, the Albany Local Development Corporation, Columbia Development and Albany Medical Center.

This partnership is also producing the new construction boom across for the world-class hospital. Once development is complete, this section of New Scotland Avenue will have over 100,000 square feet of new fully-occupied Class A office space, a new V.A. facility, a new 3,000 car parking garage and a new national restaurant.

Local small businesses are opening along the corridor in light of this redevelopment, and the street is seeing a new bustle and vibrancy that is spilling over into the surrounding neighborhood.

With the commercial progress moving rapidly, our next focus for this dynamic neighborhood is new residential development. We work closely with our development partners and our national representatives and the fine educational institutions surrounding the neighborhood to plan our next steps strategically. Like Knox Street, which has received both national and state honors since its completion, and 16 New Scotland Avenue, the upcoming projects will be high-impact developments that will spur homeownership and private investment, making Park South a neighborhood of choice. The future is bright for this pivotal community.

## **South End**

The City's Capital South Plan was completed in 2007, and the City continues to build momentum for the South End. The guiding principles set forth in the South End plan continue to drive revitalization efforts for the South End. The South End Plan, focuses on four key areas: 1) Physical Planning, 2) Workforce and Business Development, 3) Quality of Life, and 4) Community Capacity.

### **South End Revitalization Project Phase I**

The strategic partnership between the City of Albany, ALDC and the Albany Housing Authority facilitated the development of a \$12 million dollar project, which constructed

provided 52 housing units: rehabbing 42 units at Eagle Court Apartments and constructing 10 lease-to-own units at the Jared Holt Wax Factory Site.

This housing project is an initial component of the Capital South Plan: Segway to the Future a neighborhood plan that will help transform the South End.

### **South End Revitalization Project Phase II**

Phase II of the South End Revitalization Project, resulting in 43 additional housing units, will begin construction in the first half of 2010. Phase II will be a mix of new construction and rehab work on scattered sites. There will be nine lease-to-own units, three bedroom single family homes that will be constructed on Catherine, Clinton and Board Streets and 34 one and two bedroom apartments that will be rehabbed or built along Morton Avenue. Phase II is planned to be completed in mid-2011.

### **South End Revitalization Phase III, Knitting Factory Site**

The City of Albany, Albany Housing Authority, and Omni Housing Development, LLC are aggressively implementing the Capital South Plan, a comprehensive revitalization plan for Albany's South End neighborhood. In doing so, the team continues to acquire vacant lots and derelict buildings for the purpose of developing dignified, modern and safe affordable housing using public-private mixed-finance sources of funding.

With a HUD EDI grant, the City of Albany will provide \$96,224 for the acquisition costs for the Old Knitting Factory Site along S Pearl Street. The Albany Housing Authority and its developer-partner, Omni Housing Development, LLC, intend to secure the site for the purpose of developing affordable housing with possibly commercial space on the ground floor level. The project would fill a gap in the streetscape of South Pearl Street's, one of the city's most traveled mixed-use corridors, and, perhaps more importantly, would help satisfy the community's need for decent affordable housing and essential goods and services.

### **The City of Albany House**

For more than 20 years, Capital District Habitat for Humanity has been dedicated to building simple, decent and affordable housing for low-income families. During its early years, while it worked to perfect the Habitat model involving volunteers in house construction and renovation. Currently, Habitat for Humanity is focused on Albany historic South End. Ten homes have built there by Habitat, with two more under construction. Many of the homes are concentrated on Odell Street. In partnership with the Albany Community Development Agency and the Albany Housing Authority, the Capital District Habitat is undertaking a rehabilitation of an existing home on Odell Street. Given the nature of the partnership, the project has been named "The City of Albany House."

## **Midtown Homeownership Program**

In the heart of the City, the collection of neighborhoods known as Midtown is home to a diverse and vibrant mix of homeowners, renters, students, businesses and educational institutions. Our Midtown Plan is focused on stabilizing these neighborhoods and strengthening Midtown's many assets.

We continue to see remarkable success with Upper Madison, Park South and the Midtown Homeownership Program. Our focus in Midtown will be the Education District between The College of Saint Rose and the University at Albany's downtown campus. The College and University have partnered with the City to secure a grant from the Capital District Transportation Association. Together, we will assess the current opportunities and challenges in the District and determine physical improvements that can be made to the area to increase safety and quality of life.

Dr. George Philip from UAlbany, Dr. Mark Sullivan from Saint Rose and the City of Albany have committed to fulfilling the projects developed by this effort. We are dedicated to creating a safe, welcoming and energized activity center that caters to students, businesses and homeowners alike.

## **Midtown Homeownership / Employee Assisted Program**

- The program has had a successful four years since its inception in 2005. The program has welcomed 71 new homeowners to the Midtown area, 39 individuals/families utilized the Citizens Bank program and 32 through the Employer Assisted Housing Program.
- The Citizens Bank portion of this program came to a conclusion at the end of 2009. We are confident that with a new incentive being offered by Citizens Bank, that homeownership in the City and particularly the Midtown area, will continue. This exciting new product being offered County wide, offers interest rate reductions when purchasing a home in low and moderate income level areas. This incentive in combination with the newly extended \$8,000 first-time homebuyer tax credit should provide a valuable incentive for homeowners in the City of Albany.
- The Employer Assisted Housing program, which offers a \$5,000 forgivable loan for downpayment and closing cost when buying within the Midtown Boundaries, remains available for faculty and staff at the six participating institutions. This partnership with local colleges and universities allows for a valuable assistance tool for homebuyers in the Midtown area.

## Land Use Division

### **Planning Board**

#### Park South projects:

16 New Scotland (under construction): 53,000 s.f., three-story mixed-use medical office and retail building including a SEFCU and CVS on the first floor

22 New Scotland (complete): Five-story building with 77,000 s.f. of administrative offices for Albany Medical Center

43 New Scotland (in review): AMCH new patient wing, 6-stories and 325,000 s.f. of new construction plus 46,000 s.f. of renovations. Total project cost is \$360 million

40/50 New Scotland (approved): 1500-space community parking garage for AMCH.

Mixed use residential/retail building facing New Scotland.

#### Patroon Creek projects:

555 Patroon Creek Blvd. (complete): Three-story building with 35,000 s.f. of offices for the Capital Region headquarters of First Niagara.

255 Patroon Creek Blvd. (complete): four-story, 300-unit apartment complex called "The Alexander".

#### Ongoing projects:

##### South End Revitalization Phase I and II

Phase I was completed at the beginning of 2009 and included the Jared Holt project (10 units) and Eagle Court (42 units) on Morton Avenue. Both projects are affordable housing units managed by the Albany Housing Authority. Jared Holt was new construction, Eagle Court was a rehabilitation of a historic building.

Phase II is under review and includes the development of 43 additional units of apartments and single-family homes on scattered sites throughout the South End (Morton, Catherine, Clinton, and Broad streets)

#### Downtown Projects (not yet under construction):

488 Broadway (Arcade building)- Rehabilitation of the upper floors into 52 market-rate apartments

17 Chapel St.: 22 Market-rate condominium units

Hoffman Park (nearly complete): 4.7 million worth of improvements to create fields for men's and women's D-II baseball, soccer/lacrosse, and softball, and practice facilities and team rooms. The facility will be constructed by the College of St. Rose and shared under mutual agreement with the College and the City.

## **Board of Zoning Appeals**

In 2009, the BZA evaluated 140 cases and 265 cumulative appeals. Some of the larger project reviewed were the following:

- 40/50 New Scotland Ave - construction of a six (6)-story, 36,244 square foot mixed-use building with a first floor restaurant, second floor offices and 36 residential dwelling units and an 8-level, 1,550-space parking garage
- 21 Hackett Blvd - construction of a +/-50,000 square foot private high school (Albany Leadership Charter High School for Girls)
- 29 Colvin Ave - construction of a 3,770 square foot medical office building (Dr. Robert Vignali)
- 10 Enterprise Dr - construction of a +/-10,840 square foot addition to an existing 46,288 square foot warehouse (Ruch Distributors)
- 17 Chapel St - a 65,968 square foot residential structure w/ 22 residential dwelling units (17 Chapel)
- 74 Fourth Ave - construction of a +/-10,079 square foot house of worship (St. John's Church of God in Christ)
- 100 Watervliet Ave - construction of a +/-31,008 square foot grocery store (Honest Weight Food Coop)
- 43 New Scotland Ave - construction of a six (6)-story, 325,000 square foot addition to AMC (still pending approval)

## **Historic Resources Commission**

During 2009, the Historic Resources Commission considered **35** separate matters. There were **49** agenda items (not counting ones that were postponed or canceled) for the **17** meetings that were held. Staff reviewed over **250** applications for certificates of appropriateness/building permits [predicting total for year].

The more interesting or significant projects on which Commission members and staff worked with owners/developers include: several major renovations of non-residential buildings to contain residential units (23-25 N. Pearl St., 217-219 Lark St., 17 Columbia St., 488 Broadway); the rehabilitation of both long-vacant buildings (50 State St. – commercial, Downtown; 149 Dove St. – residential, Hudson/Park) and one severely damaged by fire early in the year (89 Columbia St.); and the proposed restoration of the masonry façade of a significant Downtown building (100 State St.).

Staff continued to work with the developers of the complex containing the former Wellington Hotel on State Street, and expect to be dealing with the rehabilitation of the remaining buildings, now that the demolition and stabilization phases of the work there are being completed. Design review is expected to continue on a proposed row of new houses on Jay Street east of Lark Street for which preliminary approvals have been granted. Ongoing involvement will continue with redevelopment plans in the South End that include both new construction and rehabilitation.

For more information on economic development programs, please visit the [Albany Local Development Corporation Annual Report webpage](#).