



# 4C CAPITAL SOUTH PLAN

SEGWAY TO THE FUTURE

# Capital South Plan: *SEGway to the Future*

## Albany, NY

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July 2007

Prepared for:

**The City of Albany**

and the

**South End Action Committee**

Prepared by:

**Phillips Preiss Shapiro Associates, Inc.**

with FXFOWLE Architects, PC and the AIA Eastern New York AIA 150 Committee



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## Acknowledgements

This Capital South Plan would not have been possible without the leadership, guidance, and dedication of these key professionals and neighborhood advocates who advised the development of the plan.

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The AIA 150 Committee is composed of area architects, planners and other professionals, some of whom are also members of the South End Action Committee.

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For more information about the **Capital South Plan: *SEGway to the Future***, please visit the City of Albany website at [www.albanyny.gov](http://www.albanyny.gov) or contact Monique Wahba, South End Project Manager at the City of Albany Department of Development and Planning at (518) 434-2532 x26.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Albany’s “South End” generally refers to the southernmost portion of the City and includes a very broad area extending from roughly the Empire State Plaza south to the city limits; and from the Hudson River and Interstate 787 west to Delaware Avenue. It encompasses eight neighborhoods in total.

The core of the South End, a triangle bounded by Morton Avenue and Lincoln Square on the north, and South Pearl Street on the east, connected by a hypotenuse formed by Third Avenue, is the primary focus of this Plan. This area was recognized as in need of revitalization planning for three key reasons: (1) at the beginning of this planning effort, it was only community within the South End that was without an active neighborhood association; (2) it lies in the heart of the South End adjacent to significant community assets and opportunities including Lincoln Square, Giffen Memorial Elementary School, several civic buildings, Schuyler Mansion, and numerous churches; (3) plan coordinators recognized the need to work at a small scale where an immediate impact could be felt, and where existing public-private investments could be bolstered.

This plan focuses on the South End core and embraces the Mansion and Historic Pastures neighborhoods, recognizing the *need to enhance the entire area and build upon its location within the Capital city*. Thus this plan is entitled “Capital South” in order underline the interdependence of these three neighborhoods and their common interests, link them to the assets of New York State’s Capital City and the larger Capital Region, and embrace the spirit of vision and inclusivity that have guided these planning efforts. The subtitle “*SEGway to the Future*” highlights several important aspects of the plan. First, the letters S, E, G correspond to the three critical phases of the plan: Stabilize, Energize, and Grow. Second, the letters correspond to South End Greenway, a green and transit-friendly connector between the neighborhood, downtown, University Heights, the Hudson River, and the greater region. Finally, it evokes the forward-thinking optimism that has spurred this entire planning process.

The core of the South End boasts important strengths and exciting opportunities. And, while it is in need of investment and upgrade, it has the prerequisites for revitalization—a central location, intact urban fabric, and committed residents and stakeholders. These stakeholders, with public and private partners, have already begun to reinvest in the South End. New development activity (the Jared Holt Wax Factory Development, Howe Library and Giffen Memorial Elementary School Renovations, the Morton at Eagle Street Apartments Rehabilitation, etc.) and new commercial opportunities (the South Pearl Street Coliseum), are sources of excitement and new promise.

Physically, the South End is a checkerboard of historic homes, vacant lots, neighborhood institutions, and abandoned property. A vast number of older vacant residential buildings and vacant lots, eroded commercial corridors, a declining population, and an increasing concentration of poverty have plagued the South End for years. This comprehensive community plan recognizes that there are serious challenges to revitalizing the South End, and that the community will rise or fall based on the effectiveness of its stakeholders to implement a concerted revitalization effort. Existing efforts in this regard are extremely positive and point to the dedication of the South End's residents, businesses and representatives, and the full support of the City, including the Mayor, City agencies and the Common Council.

These groups have indeed collaborated several times on past efforts, but the past twelve months have been the most exciting, with the blossoming of the South End Action Committee (SEAC) as the key advisor and future implementation leader of this plan, and the realization of some major steps toward redevelopment and revitalization.

SEAC led an inclusionary planning process. From the outset, a key goal has been to provide opportunities for current residents to remain in, and thrive in, the South End while recognizing that new growth—from new residents of higher incomes and from new businesses—will be required to sustain the improvements proposed by this plan.

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE CAPITAL SOUTH PLAN

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Past planning efforts have been incredibly successful at building a constructive dialogue and dedicated group of stakeholders interested in the future of the South End. What is now needed is a plan that both presents an exciting vision and implementable actions that generate short- and long-term success.

This plan is intended to be holistic, tackling diverse issues and tying them together into a cohesive and realistic set of recommendations. To realize the community's vision of once again becoming a community of choice, the plan identifies three steps toward revitalization:

1. **Stabilize** the neighborhood, to provide the foundation for market renewal. The estimated timeline for these actions is within the first two years.
2. **Energize** the neighborhood, while ensuring resident participation and equity in market renewal. The estimated timeline for these actions is from year two to year five.
3. **Grow** the neighborhood, for the benefit of current and future residents, enhance South End's links with the entire Capital South area and the City as a whole. The estimated

timeline for these actions is between years four and ten, overlapping in part with the Energize phase.

The first “layer” of revitalization, **Stabilize**, is detailed in Chapter 3 and contains short-term actions intended to stabilize the neighborhood and reassure its current residents that their investments and efforts will be rewarded. These include anti-crime measures, homeownership programs and other initiatives. It addresses the need to provide immediate employment opportunities in jobs that are within reach of many of the lower-skilled residents. It makes recommendations that will lay the foundation for market renewal and an increase in property values, but also provides current residents with the reason and opportunity to remain in the South End. The Stabilize phase is intended to focus on *initiatives that are currently taking place, and recommendations that are achievable within the next two years*. It recognizes the need to create disposition plans for key blocks of the neighborhood, particularly those around new development, and the need to protect and enhance resources like historic buildings, community facilities, and green spaces. And finally, recommendations are made to increase community capacity through the establishment of watch groups, neighborhood associations, and a broader Capital South coalition, in order to take charge of the implementation process and participate in the community’s renewal.

It cannot be overstated that stabilization is required before long term renewal can begin, and before any of the broader recommendations in this plan can succeed. Ultimately, the success of this plan should be judged not by large physical projects, but by the increasing safety and desirability of the neighborhood and its everyday quality of life.

The second stage, **Energize**, is detailed in Chapter 5 and describes medium-term actions intended to attract new investment, and make the South End a “community of choice”. These include housing development and revitalization, rebuilding or replacing aged public housing, and building a community center. This is also the time to capitalize on and “connect the dots” between the significant public and private investments that are now occurring, including the new development at the Jared Holt Wax Factory site, the Morton Avenue apartments, Habitat for Humanity’s development, the renovations to Howe Library and Giffen School, and the expansion plans of the Capital City Rescue Mission. This stage also sees the planning process for the redevelopment of Lincoln Square, the Morton/South Pearl intersection and DMV site, and lower South Pearl Street and the South End Guild take shape and bear fruit. It promotes further education and workforce development, better access to employment centers, and more quality of life improvements, including planning for a community center, upgrading parks, and improving the neighborhood’s overall image, and hence, desirability. Finally, it recommends continued community capacity improvements, including development of a citywide community develop-

ment corporation, targeted public funding and grant-making, and continued support for social networking and civic engagement.

The final stage, **Grow**, is detailed in Chapter 6 and provides long-term actions that are more visionary, and respond to potential big opportunities. This stage builds upon the success of the previous stages with the premise that once the neighborhood's image and quality of life improve, the marketplace will be strong enough to respond longer term visions. These include a fully redeveloped Lincoln Square, if not as an educational campus then as a mixed-income housing development, continuing block-by-block improvements in the core of the neighborhood itself, commercial redevelopment along South Pearl Street, including the South End Guild, a redeveloped mixed-use DMV site with a grocery store, a new civic space called the Capital South Square, and the SEGway, a continuous and safe connections between the Capital South communities, downtown, University Heights, the Port, and the Hudson River. It emphasizes that each redevelopment opportunity is also an employment opportunity, and local training and employment is necessary to sustain success. Finally, this plan places Capital South in a position of strength to participate in the economic success of the broader Capital region and the comprehensive plan for the City.

Each of the plan's recommendations build upon each other, with the foundation being what can be done within the next two years to benefit the current residents of the South End.

The action items for each phase are organized into four primary focus areas, as follows:

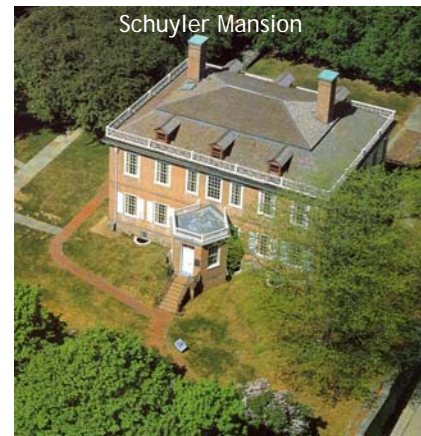
1. Physical Planning: housing investment, historic preservation and rehabilitation, home-steading, new development, transportation improvements.
2. Workforce and Business Development: access to jobs, transit to employment centers, business development.
3. Quality of Life: crime prevention, alternatives to crime, code enforcement, cleanliness, community amenities.
4. Community Capacity: community organizing, public/private partnerships, citizen/government task forces.

The matrix included in the Appendix of this plan details actions within each of these three phases. The numbered recommendations correspond to each of the recommendations within the plan text.

# 1 INTRODUCTION: COLLABORATION FOR A NEW PLAN

***Albany's South End is a community of notable strengths and exciting opportunities, including rich historic districts and important community institutions.***

Scattered development is creating new excitement and promise. But there are serious challenges standing in the way of revitalizing the South End, including widespread abandonment, derelict buildings and crime. This plan is intended to improve the stability, physical condition, and economic condition of the South End neighborhood, and build the community's capacity to implement the plan.



***Historically the South End area has included three neighborhoods***—the South End proper (south of Morton Avenue), Mansion, and Pastures. While this plan focuses on a core area of the South End south of Morton Avenue, the plan recognizes the need to enhance the entire area, bridge gaps between the three neighborhoods, and reinforce the strengths of each. Thus this plan uses the title Capital South to emphasize the interdependence and shared strengths of the three neighborhoods.



***The South End has persevered through difficult times with a solid core of committed residents and institutions.***

The South End Action Committee (SEAC) was convened by the Mayor to guide and coordinate neighborhood planning. The South End Improvement Corporation (SEIC) has pursued its revitalization efforts notwithstanding limited funding. The Albany Housing Authority, one the neighborhood's largest land owners, has shown its dedication by building its headquarters in the neighborhood, and is engaging its South End residents in planning for the future of a housing stock that has



more than come of age. The Albany Board of Education just announced plans to renovate the



South End Improvement Corporation



Trinity Institution



neighborhood's elementary school. Beginning with an emphasis on bold community policing improvements, the City has set its revitalization sights on the South End. Indeed, the City and Housing Authority have together invested considerably in the re-

Lincoln Park



talization of South Pearl Street. Just to the north, the proposed Albany Convention Center is to be sited. Private entrepreneurs have invested in and redeveloped commercial space on South Pearl Street, for example, the "Coliseum," a retail mini-mall of locally-based minority businesses. Church and faith-based organizations are important organizers and resource centers, especially Trinity Institution and the Capital City Rescue Mission. The Eastern New York American Institute of Architects (AIA), Habitat for Humanity, Historic Albany Foundation, Omni Housing, the Charitable Leadership Foundation, and University of Albany (U. Albany) all have targeted the South End for technical assistance and funding.

Capital City Rescue Mission



Most important, the neighborhood boasts many long-time residents who have, as they ex-

pressed it, "stuck it out" through good times and bad and are passionate about creating and being a part of the community's renewal.

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## THE PLANNING PROCESS

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As noted, *the Mayor convened a diverse group of stakeholders and formed the South End Action Committee (SEAC) to guide the development of this plan.* SEAC led the community through a collaborative, empowering planning effort. As one of its first steps, SEAC identified

four areas of focus for this plan: (1) quality of life, (2) physical planning, (3) workforce and business development, and (4) community capacity.

***The workshops, brainstorming, and this plan are organized around these topic areas.***

Several principles underline these recommendations. First, implementation requires a strategic alliance of many players and stakeholders. Second, given the need to be realistic about the limitations of the neighborhood's economy as well as public largesse, the strategy must rely on linking reinvestment to regional investments, trends and assets. These have included, by way of illustration: job training in connection to new commercial development, a grocery store that can tap resident and highway traffic, mixed-income housing and historic homesteading, and capacity building in partnership with adjoining neighborhood organizations. Third, the purpose of the plan is not to improve the place for its own sake, but for the benefit of its current low- and moderate-income residents and to attract new residents of generally higher incomes.

***From the outset, the challenge has been not to just plan, but to plan with implementation in mind.*** A number of thoughtful and sincere planning efforts precede this one. Yet comprehensive revitalization has proven elusive. This Plan builds on the neighborhood's considerable assets, but also seeks to be honest about how daunting the revitalization challenge is in light of the fact that the Albany region is growing slowly and at that, continues to grow still more suburban. A long-term vision has been formulated, with the key involvement of the team's urban designers: FXFOWLE Architects and the AIA 150 Committee.

***The predicate of this current collaboration is that there is no silver bullet for the challenges presented in the South End, but that a concerted effort will be needed on the part of a variety of players, who logically should be the co-authors, not the mere recipients of the plan.*** First and foremost is SEAC, the City-initiated but community-based task force that led the planning effort. The City of Albany's Department of Planning and Development and Albany Housing Authority co-led the task force and study efforts. Most important, at key junctures, the community at-large was consulted. Community "town hall" meetings and workshops had a keynote kick-off by Mayor Gerald Jennings, were chaired by City Councilmember Carolyn McLaughlin, and each were well attended by an impressive 100 or more people.



Members of SEAC and the AIA 150 Committee discuss ideas at the December community charrette

The Plan's details were developed in a series of brainstorming and work sessions with neighborhood, citywide and regional entities capable of participating in implementation, and through public meetings, noted below:

Action / Meeting	Month / Year
Preceding planning efforts (HOPE VI, SERP, etc.)	2001-2003
Planning for AHA projects at Jared Holt	2003-2006
Visual preference survey	December 2005
Initial SEAC meeting	January 2006
SEAC subcommittees (Physical Planning, Workforce and Business Development, Quality of Life) begin to meet	2006, and ongoing
Guiding Principles for Development are established	February 2006
AIA 150 Committee selects South End project	March 2006
U. Albany intern survey work	June – August 2006
RFP for consultants issued	June 2006
Consultant team (PPSA and FXFOWLE) selected	August 2006
Low income housing tax credits awarded to Jared Holt project	August 2006
Stakeholder meetings, focus groups, neighborhood tour	September 2006
Stakeholder interviews and data analysis	October 2006
Two-day public workshop	December 2006
Development of Capital South Plan	January-March 2007
Refinement of plan with SEAC and subcommittees	March-April 2007
Plan is posted for public review and comment	May 2007
Public Meeting: Presentation of Capital South Plan and comments from the public	May 16, 2007
Plan is finalized and adopted	July 2007

## PLAN GOALS

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***From the beginning, the unifying goal of the planning effort has been for the South End to once again be a community of choice.***

One aspect of this goal is to provide opportunities for current residents to remain in, and thrive in, the South End, and be able to benefit from their hard work over the long term. And this plan also recognizes that new growth—from a diversity of new residents and new businesses—will be required to sustain the improvements made under the guidance of this plan.

Councilwoman Carolyn McLaughlin speaks at the December community charrette.



***This project's vision was articulated by City Councilmember Carolyn McLaughlin, who "kicked off" the two critical workshops with a quote from Tavis Smiley, a prominent author, political commentator, and public advocate: "Our challenge as advocates, policy makers, journalists, faith leaders, community activists, and local residents and business people is to ensure urban revitalization works for African-Americans and low-income people of color; neighborhood reinvestment must not displace and further isolate low-income communities of color, but rather connect them to good jobs, educational opportunities, high quality affordable housing, comprehensive public transit systems, parks, and cultural amenities essential to living a healthy productive life."***

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## PLAN STRUCTURE

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This **Introduction** has described the background, genesis, and inclusive planning effort underpinning the Capital South Plan. **Chapter 2: A Profile of the Neighborhood** gives a detailed description of the demographic, socioeconomic, and housing characteristics of the neighborhood. Coupled with the intensive public process and interviews with stakeholders, including residents, businesses, service-providers, and city agencies, this data analysis helps lay the foundation for the recommendations that follow.

Chapters three through five correspond with the phases identified as necessary steps to provide the basis for comprehensive neighborhood revitalization. Each is based on the realities of the marketplace, funding, and phasing.

***Chapter 3: Stabilize, contains short-term actions intended to stabilize the neighborhood*** and reassure its current residents that they are not alone and that their investments and efforts will be rewarded. Anti-crime measures, homeownership and other initiatives are emphasized.

***Chapter 4: Energize, discusses medium-term actions intended to support existing homeowners and attract new investment***, and make the South End a "community of choice". These actions include homesteading, rebuilding (replacing??) aged public housing, and building a community center.

***Chapter 5: Grow, describes long-term actions which are more visionary, and respond to larger opportunities*** to re-imagine the South End, connect it to assets like Downtown and the Hudson River, and link the community with the vitality of the region.

These recommendations build upon each other, with the foundation being what can be done *this year* to benefit the current residents of the South End. All of the recommendations in this plan are detailed in the Appendix, in a matrix of key actions and players. Also included in the Appendix are the Guiding Principles of Development and the Capital South Planning and Design Criteria.



## 2 A PROFILE OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD

### 2.1 OVERVIEW

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*The South End lies—as its name reveals—just to the south of downtown Albany, in the southeastern corner of the city.* More specifically: the South End extends from roughly the Empire State Plaza south to the city limits; and from the Hudson River and Interstate 787 west to Delaware Avenue. Map 1 shows the Capital South community (highlighted in blue) and its three constituent neighborhoods.



Map 1: Capital South and South End Context

*The core of the South End neighborhood, and this plan's primary focus, is a triangle bounded by Morton Avenue and Lincoln Square on the north, and South Pearl Street on the east, connected by a hypotenuse formed by Third Avenue* (see Map 2). Though the en-



the South End stretches over several square miles, this core area corresponds to the one square mile that many planners view as the essential building block of urban neighborhoods—where all parts of the neighborhood are generally within a short walk, share the same major institutions, and coalesce on a day-to-day basis. Enhancing this natural cohesion, and linking the core area to rest of the Capital South area, is essential for the revitalization effort.



**Map 2: South End Core Study Area**

***When developed in the nineteenth century, the South End was a community of choice*** thanks to its close proximity to downtown and the State Capitol, access to jobs, and diversity. Both immigrants and working families were drawn to the booming Albany-area economy, where there were significant opportunities in the manufacture, production, and shipment of goods and services via railroads, the Erie Canal, and the Hudson River, in addition to the presence of the New York State government. This diverse population spurred development of a diverse housing stock, much of which remains, which served renters and homeowners, small and large families.

***Today, the neighborhood has been hit especially hard by weak economic and housing markets.*** With the exception of some strong anchors, the area is badly in need of revitalization having a large number of older, vacant residential buildings, excess neighborhood retail space,

inappropriate uses, a declining population with increasing concentrations of endemic poverty, and an aging infrastructure. Map 2 illustrates existing land uses.



**Map 3: Existing Land Uses in the Core Area**

**Historic district designations encompass much of the South End**, and dense pockets of historic structures can be found in the South End, as well as the adjoining Pastures and Mansion neighborhoods. These serve as reminders of a prosperous era. They also represent an intrinsic, latent value that is difficult if not impossible to re-create from scratch, and should be preserved to the maximum extent feasible. The dotted boundaries in Map 4 illustrate the expansive historic districts in the South End. Note the number of buildings in poor condition (blue) and lots having high buildability (green) with the historic district boundaries.





**Map 4: Historic District Boundaries**

The same might be said of the neighborhood's social infrastructure: ***a significant cadre of residents, businesses, and institutions that have remained in the area represent a dedicated and tight-knit group of stakeholders*** who have, for at least the last decade, made it their priority to reposition the South End to once more become a community of choice.

The balance of this chapter describes key findings regarding the South End's demographics, economics, and housing, and the neighborhood's trends in relation to the region as a whole.

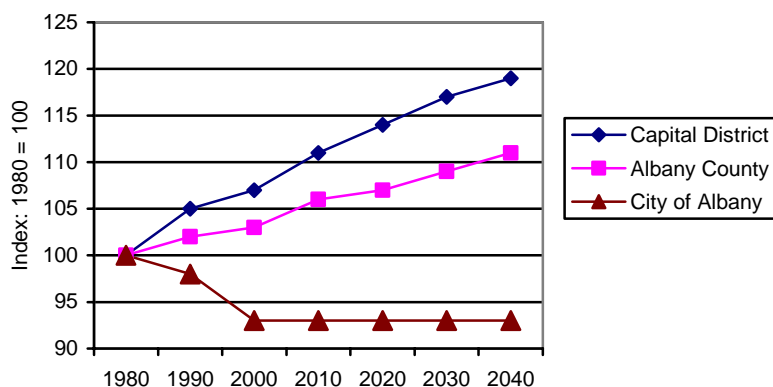
## **2.2 DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS**

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***Like the whole of Upstate New York, almost the entire Capital region has been witnessing population decline since at least the 1960s.*** People have been moving to more favorable climates and to areas where employment opportunities abound. Jobs have been shifting to lower-cost areas and where growing populations provide plenty of workers. In the 1990s, the Capital District (Albany, Rensselaer, Saratoga, and Schenectady counties) grew only two percent,

slower than the state (five and one-half percent), much slower than the nation (13 percent), and less than half of the Capital District's growth in the 1980s (about five percent).

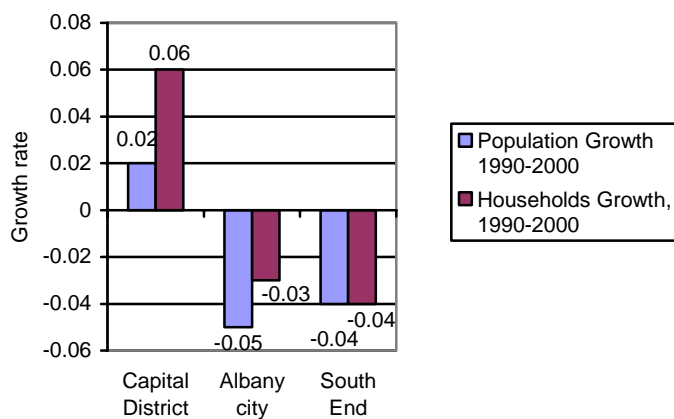
**Figure 1: Population Projections, 1980 - 2040**



Source: *Capital District Regional Planning Commission, 2004*

**The South End has been hit particularly hard by these trends.** Despite recent planning and development efforts, the South End population has been declining in recent decades and is projected to continue to decline. As of 2006, there were an estimated 7,840 people living in the South End. The neighborhood's population declined from 1990 and is expected to decline further (see Figure 2 and Table 1).

**Figure 2: Population Growth, 1990 - 2000**



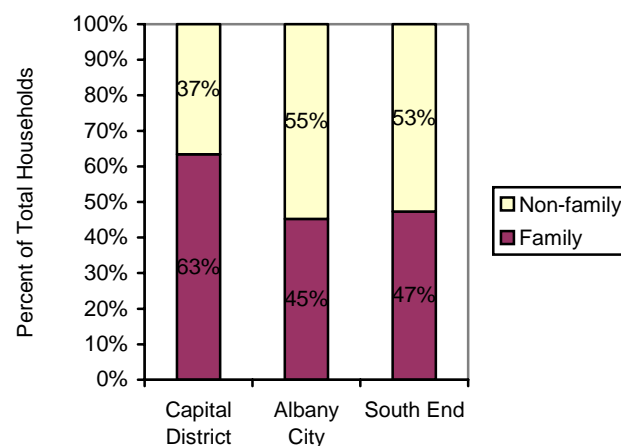
Source: *Capital District Regional Planning Commission, 2004*

**Table 1: South End Population and Households, 1990 – 2011**

	Population	Households
1990 Census	8,520	3,846
2000 Census	8,160	3,704
2006 estimate	7,838	3,582
2011 projection	7,618	3,483
Growth, 1990-2000	-4.2%	-3.7%
Estimated growth, 2000-2006	-3.9%	-3.3%
Projected growth, 2006-2011	-2.8%	-2.8%
Persons per household, 2000	2.20	
Persons per household, 2006	2.19	

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000, and Claritas, Inc., 2006

***The South End has remained substantially mixed in terms of household composition, a characteristic that enhances its history as a diverse community.*** A substantially larger percentage of total households in the South End and City are non-family households, while the Capital District as a whole is majority family households, as shown in Figure 3, below. Also, the average size of South End's households was 2.20, larger than the City as a whole (2.11) but smaller than in the Capital District (2.40). This data illustrates the tendency in many aging urban areas of mobile family households to move to the suburbs, leaving the non-family households (both young people and seniors) in the City center.

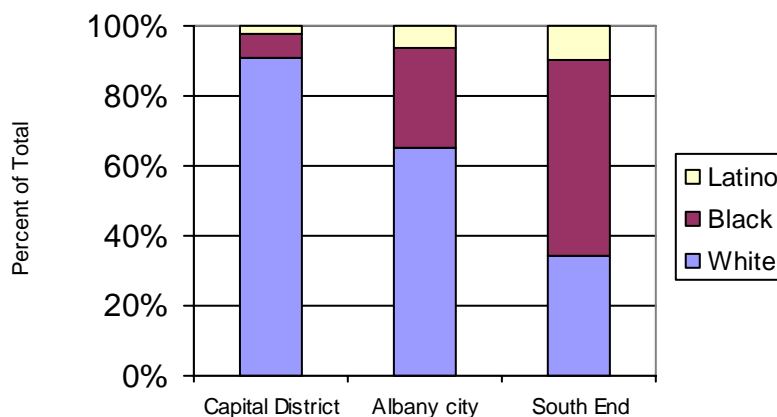
**Figure 3: Household Composition, 2000**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000, and Claritas, Inc., 2006

***In 2000, residents of the South End were a bit younger than the City as a whole.*** The median age of the neighborhood in 2000 was 30.5 while the City's median age was 31.4. The Capital District, however, was significantly older at 37.1 years of age. Only eight percent of the South End's population is over 65 years of age (compared to the City at 13.4% and the Capital District at 13.9%).

**According to the 2000 Census, the South End is majority Black or African-American** (56 percent black) while both the City and the Capital District are majority White (63 percent white and 89 white, respectively). The South End has approximately nine percent of the City's total population, yet approximately 17 percent of the city's total Black population. Figure 4 illustrates the relative racial composition of each area.

**Figure 4: Racial Composition, 2000**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000, and Claritas, Inc., 2006

**Hispanic or Latino residents are also concentrated in the South End.** Fifteen (15) percent of the City's total Hispanic or Latino population resides there, making up 10 percent of the neighborhood population. Of the South End's total Hispanic or Latino population, 71 percent are Puerto Rican by origin and represent 18 percent of the city's total Puerto Rican population.

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## 2.3 ECONOMICS, INCOME, AND EMPLOYMENT

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**The Capital Region is one of the only Upstate areas that is adding jobs and population** (albeit slowly), countering the previously noted trend in which Upstate New York has seen a significant decline in manufacturing jobs for decades. Today, innovation and ideas are the driving sectors of the national economy, though a transition to knowledge and service-related jobs is still in process. In 1970, 22 percent of jobs in the United States were in manufacturing. By 2000, that share had halved to 11 percent. By contrast, services grew from 19 percent of US economy to 32 percent.

**This transition to a services economy is well underway locally in the Capital Region** (defined as the six-county Albany-Schenectady-Troy MSA<sup>1</sup>). In 1970, manufacturing was 19 per-

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<sup>1</sup> Albany, Montgomery, Rensselaer, Saratoga, Schenectady, and Schoharie Counties.

cent of the region's economy. By 2000, it had declined to less than seven percent of the region's economy, as the number of manufacturing jobs fell from 63,000 in 1970 to 35,000 in 2000. The decline in manufacturing has been accompanied by a rapid growth in the services sector. In 1970, the service sector comprised 18 percent of the jobs in the MSA; by 2000, that share had risen to almost 35 percent. During that time, the number of service jobs tripled, from 61,000 to 182,000.

***What sets the Albany region further apart is the heavy concentration not only of government, but also higher educational institutions and health related facilities—the so-called “eds and meds” sectors.*** Nearly one-quarter of the area's jobs are in the public sector, thus sheltering the region from major unemployment shocks, though leaving it vulnerable to budget cuts in time of fiscal crisis. Nearly one-fifth (18 percent) of the area's jobs are in the educational and health services sectors, compared to 13 percent for the nation. Since the turn of the decade, the concentration of jobs in educational and health care services has grown at rates that are higher than the national average. The concentration of the “eds” sector is of particular note. Some 24 institutions of higher education are located in the Capital Region, including roughly 25,000 students in Albany itself,<sup>2</sup> and these are attracting special attention through public and private investment in ventures.

***Building on this existing mix, Albany seems to be succeeding with the high-tech sector that many cities aspire to capture, but few do.*** These notably include the Albany Nano Tech and the new biotech centers at RPI and the University at Albany. The Albany Center for Excellence in Nanoelectronics and University at Albany (SUNY Albany) house 17,000 students and 220 degree programs. The University at Albany also boasts one the only university-based 300-millimeter wafer semiconductor facility in the world. Additional facilities are likely to be developed in the near future in North Greenbush, Malta, and within Albany at the Harriman Campus. High technology holds great promise for the region's development and these exciting ventures need to be leveraged to spur regional growth across economic sectors.

***The shift to an innovation and knowledge economy places a high premium on acquiring more advanced levels of education and skills.*** At the family level, there is a direct connection between education and income. A high school graduate will earn \$1.2 million over their lifetime. By contrast, an individual with a bachelor's degree will earn \$2.1 million, and an individual with a master's degree will earn \$3.3 million. Finally, an individual with a professional degree (a doctor or a lawyer, for example) will earn \$4.4 million.<sup>3</sup> This is the new “law of wages” in the United States: the more you learn, the more you will earn.

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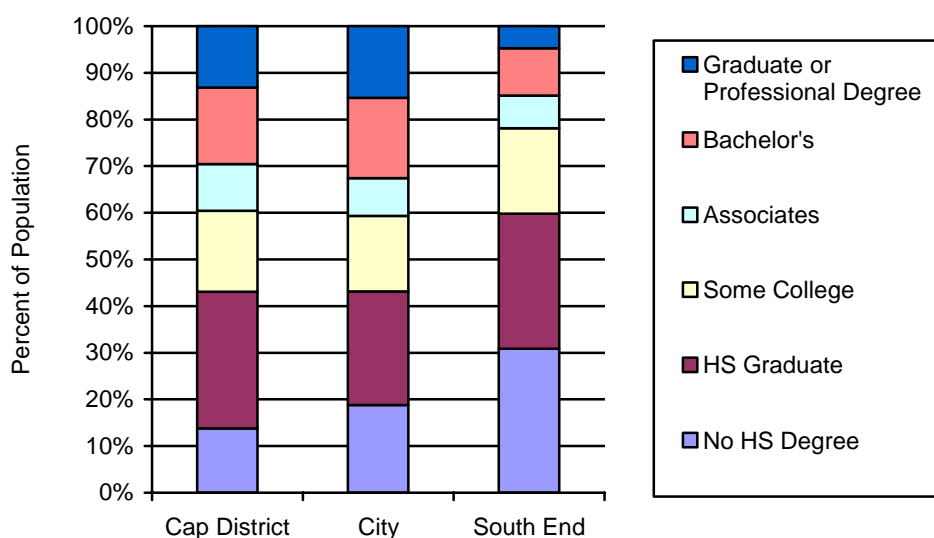
<sup>2</sup> Over 17,000 at UAlbany, and nearly 8,000 at private colleges and universities.

<sup>3</sup> See American Demographics, July/August 2004. <http://adage.com/americandemographics/>

***With even the lowest-paying jobs requiring at least a high school degree or equivalency, educational attainment greatly affects a person's employability.*** The City and the Capital District boast respectable educational attainment figures, but a significant “BA” gap (those with Bachelor's degrees or higher) persists in the region, particularly in urban neighborhoods and among minority groups. In 2000, only 19 percent of Schenectady's adults over the age of 25 had a bachelor's degree. The same was true for Troy. On the other hand, the BA share in the City of Albany is high (33 percent), representing the impact of the state university.

***But the South End's workforce does not share this high level of education and employability.*** A very high 30 percent of the South End's population has not graduated from high school, and only a small 15 percent holds a Bachelor's degree or higher. Figure 5 illustrates the educational composition in the region, the City, and the South End.

**Figure 5: Educational Attainment, 2000**



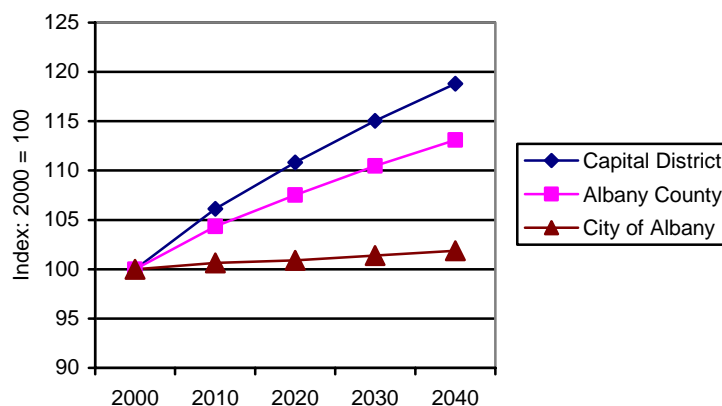
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000, and Claritas, Inc., 2006

## 2.4 HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS

***This cycle of population and employment shifts has been particularly hard on Upstate New York's cities,*** as better land and housing values have drawn the remaining, more upwardly-mobile city residents out to the suburbs. As Figure 2 indicated, between 1990 and 2000, Albany (as with the South End) lost population, while the Capital District as a whole gained residents, primarily in the suburban towns surrounding the City and along the Northway. Over the

next several decades, from 2000 to 2040, the Capital District is projected to grow in population by approximately 11 percent, Albany County is projected to grow by approximately seven percent, yet the City of Albany is not projected to grow by any significant measure. Figures 1 and 6 illustrate population and household projections using an index graph. Albany's suburbs continue to grow; the city continues to lose population; thus the region continues to sprawl.

**Figure 6: Household Projections, 2000 - 2040**



Source: Capital District Regional Planning Commission, 2004

**As of 2000, there were 4,440 total housing units in the South End, of which 3,700 were occupied, representing an occupancy rate of only 84 percent.** This is significantly lower than the City (88 percent) and Region (90 percent), as well as the benchmark generally considered to be healthy (95 percent). In this case, the housing market, particularly within the city and South End, is quite weak.

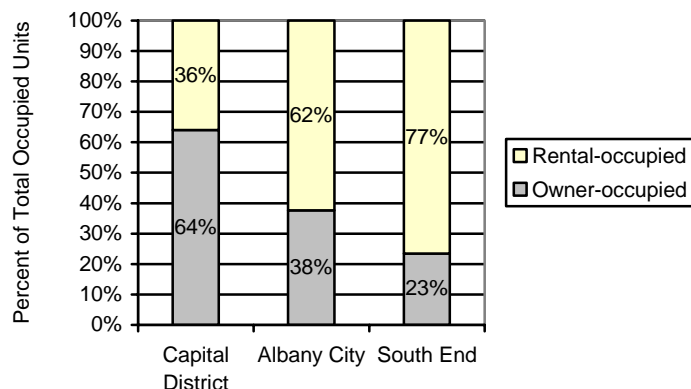
**Table 2: Housing Units, 2000**

	Total Units	Occupied Units	Occupancy Rate
Capital Region	375,290	337,662	90%
Albany city	42,669	37,436	88%
South End	4,435	3,704	84%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000, and Claritas, Inc., 2006

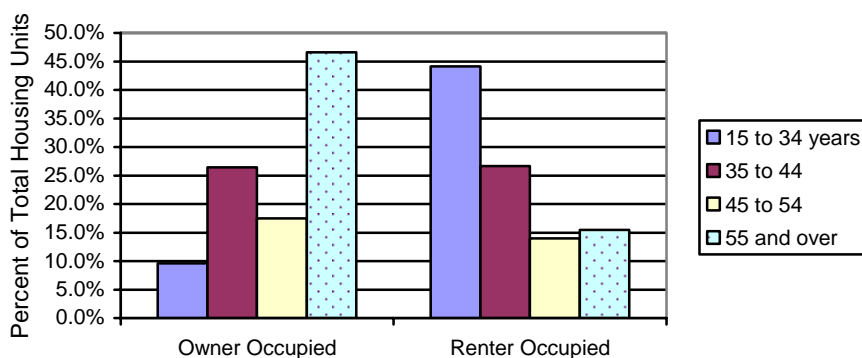
**The South End's housing stock is at further risk of decline due to low homeownership, which usually correlates with housing investment.** Figure 7 illustrates the tenure of housing units in the South End, City and region. In the City, 62 percent of households are renters, and only 36 percent of Capital District households are renters. In the South End 77, percent are renters.



**Figure 7: Housing Tenure, 2000**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000, and Claritas, Inc., 2006

***Adding to the challenge, the South End's renter population is particularly mobile, and therefore may easily be transient.*** According to the 2000 Census data most (44 percent) of these South End renters are young, less than 34 years of age. The opposite is true for owner-occupied households, where most households (about 47 percent) are 55 years of age or more. Figure 8 illustrates these statistics. The prevalence of renter-occupied households by young people suggests several conclusions: young households may lack the equity for homeownership, and, once they do gather significant equity, they move elsewhere in search of homeownership opportunities. This suggests the need to increase access to employment and increase residents' incomes. Building equity for South End residents will engender a resident middle class to realize the equity potential of homeownership.

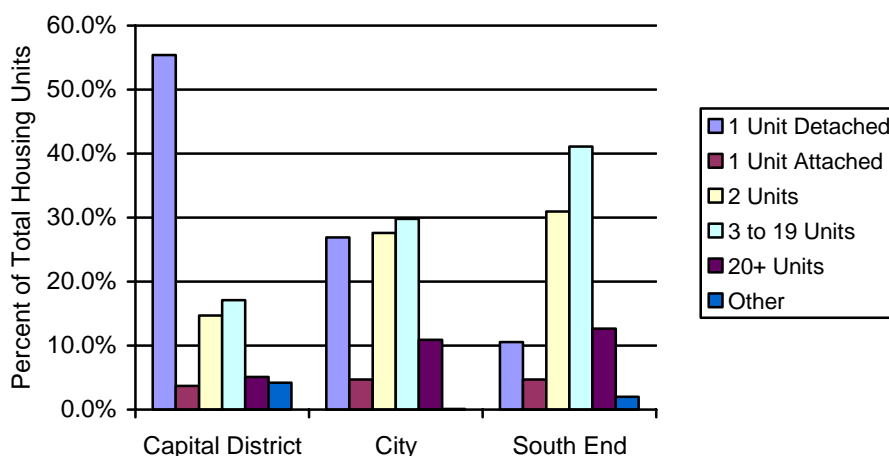
**Figure 8: Tenure by Age of Householder, South End, 2000**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000, and Claritas, Inc., 2006



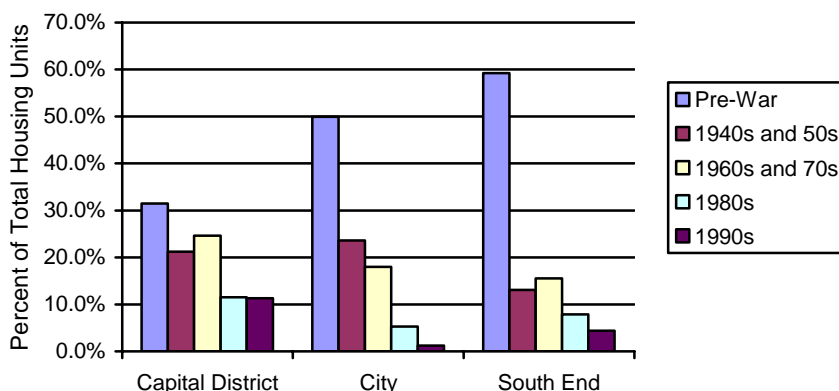
**The built environment of the South End is low scale; yet the large proportion of the housing units in the South End are in structures of three to 19 units and structures of 20 or more units.** This paradox is explained by the substantial presence of the three public housing sites in the neighborhood and immediate vicinity (Lincoln Square, Steamboat Square, and Creighton-Storey Homes) as well as larger multi-unit buildings. In all, a total of 54 percent of the housing units in the South End are in structures of more than three units. Over 41 percent of the housing units are in structures of three to 19 units. This is compared to the City, where about 30 percent are in structures of three to 19 units, and the Capital District, where the proportion is only 17 percent. This data hints at the importance of multi-family rental housing as a resource for the current population, and to the predominance of several large public housing developments. This data is presented in Figure 9.

**Figure 9: Housing Characteristics, 2000**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000, and Claritas, Inc., 2006

**Housing units in the South End are older than those of the City as a whole and the Capital District, reflecting the South End's past importance as a residential area and the historical nature of much of its housing stock.** As illustrated in Figure 10, almost 60 percent of the housing units were built before 1940, compared to the Capital District where a little over 30 percent of the units are pre-war. The South End's housing stock is therefore in need of significant upgrade but is also significantly more historic in nature and value than housing units in the City as a whole and in the region.

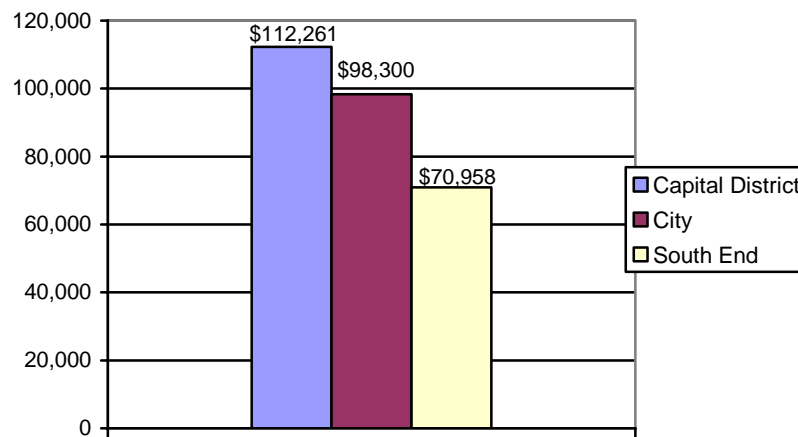
**Figure 10: Housing Units by Year Built, 2000**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000, and Claritas, Inc., 2006

***The prevailing low housing value and median rent data, as with the high vacancy rate, points to a weak housing market in the South End.*** While the housing stock is older and has intrinsic historic value, years of disinvestment have contributed to deterioration and high vacancy rates, driving values far below the region. (The lower value, if buttressed with community amenities and safety, may attract a new market population; indeed, some local and downtown landlords report rental demand is getting stronger, particularly among young college graduates.)

Compared to the City and the Capital District, the median value of an owner-occupied housing unit was fully 28 percent and 37 percent lower, respectively. In 2000, the median value of all owner-occupied housing units in the South End was only \$71,000 (compared to \$112,000 in the Capital District and \$98,000 in the city). Also in 2000, 90 percent of the owner-occupied homes in the South End were valued under \$100,000 (compared to 40 percent in the Capital District and 53 percent in the City). Median rent in the South end was \$390 (compared to \$610 for the Capital District and \$570 for the City). These low values and low rents point to low demand, low return on housing investment, and generally reflect the fact that newer suburban homes in good repair have attracted the bulk of the region's housing market.

**Figure 11: Median Value, Owner-occupied Units, 2000**



*Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000, and Claritas, Inc., 2006*

But also, in contrast to most metropolitan housing markets, at these rates, the housing in the area is quite affordable, pointing to the importance of the South End's existing housing stock from a social equity point of view.

### 3 STABILIZE THE SOUTH END

Realizing the Capital South Plan will require grappling with a key issue that cannot be overemphasized: the housing market is very weak, and attracts little outside investment. Thus there is an immediate need to give the population base of the neighborhood confidence that the neighborhood can turn the tide of disinvestment. Correcting basic problems of abandonment will lay the foundation for more confident investment and a market where values rise, not fall. Correspondingly, the very basics of jobs and crimes need to be addressed.

#### 3.1 PHYSICAL PLANNING

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##### 3.1.1 Stemming Abandonment and Rewarding Investment

***The single most critical issue facing the South End is a cycle of decay and abandonment.***

Albany, like many urban areas, experiences a host of quality of life issues like property disinvestment and crime. For at least the past 50 years, households have moved out of cities like Albany and into the suburbs, resulting in a period of decline, disinvestment, and abandonment. A 2006 survey by the City of Albany Department of Fire, Emergency and Building Services, identified over 950 vacant and abandoned buildings citywide. Over one-third of the properties lie in one of Albany's historic districts, and a high proportion of these are in the South End.



Abandoned buildings and vacant lots plague the South End.

***Abandoned buildings and vacant lots signal distress and an undesirable place to live.*** This image can contribute to a cycle of decline and can cause a domino effect in a city's quality of life. This negatively affects a community's image and its ability to draw residents and employers. Furthermore, abandoned buildings consume tax dollars and drain already scarce city funds. Non-payment of taxes, reduced property values, increased crime, and money spent securing buildings and cleaning vacant lots all siphon significantly more funds than they contribute to the tax coffers.



**A comprehensive strategy for abandoned properties must be developed** and must accomplish the following three things: prevent abandonment, manage abandonment, and reuse abandoned buildings. This strategy must build on the simple observation that abandonment is almost always an economic decision made by the building owner. In a depressed housing market as exists in the South End, there is little incentive to keep a building up to code—it costs more to maintain the property than the owner could realize at sale. In this case, incentives are critical.



Currently, foreclosed properties are managed and auctioned by the County and outstanding taxes are reimbursed to the City in full, so that the City's short term tax collections are not negatively affected by these structures. However beneficial this is to the City in the short term, the current policy does little to prevent abandonment and encourage stabilization. This short-term outlook hurts the long term financial health of the City as well as the properties themselves and their surrounding neighborhoods.

**Gaining control of abandoned properties.** Cost-benefit studies have shown that up-front costs for property rehabilitation produce a significant net fiscal gain to a city, and help to prevent demolition or substandard conditions, which are a drain on property values and to a city's fiscal health.<sup>4</sup>

Some reforms have been made recently. Notably, instead of auctioning all properties, the County has been transferring some properties to the City or housing development organizations, including the Albany Housing Authority, in an effort to piece together developable assemblages of land and transfer site control to the City and its redevelopment agencies. These efforts should continue. In particular, organizations like Capital City Housing Development Fund Company (CCH or Cap City), which assist the city in the efficient and effective use of community development funds, and which utilize a wide variety of public and private funds to leverage its resources, should be directly involved in the foreclosure, acquisition, transfer, and redevelopment process.

In addition, existing efforts to create a **Strategic Properties Acquisition Fund** should be fully supported by all stakeholders. Such a fund would enable targeted intervention by the City to support existing development efforts.

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<sup>4</sup> See, for example, "Pay Now or Pay More Later: St. Paul's Experience in Rehabilitating Vacant Housing" and other articles from the National Vacant Properties Campaign. [www.vacantproperties.org/index.html](http://www.vacantproperties.org/index.html) accessed April 2007.

***The current foreclosure/auction/reimbursement policy could work better to benefit the South End; a proactive approach to preventing foreclosure should enhance the current system.*** While the transfer of foreclosed properties from the County to the City can help boost revitalization efforts, a system to catch properties before the foreclosure stage is needed to prevent further deterioration of buildings. Recognizing this, Mayor Jennings established a Vacant Buildings Committee in 2005 to identify vacant buildings, notify property owners of required mitigation measures, and prosecute owners that did not comply. This effort is a good start, but immediate and stronger action is required in the South End.

***Significant public-private projects are now underway throughout the South End.*** Each one promises new hope in the community, but each one requires complementary planning and investment in order to create momentum and ensure that early successes are sustained. These projects include the Jared Holt Wax Factory development, the renovations of both Giffen School and Howe Library, Habitat for Humanity's development on Odell Street, and the Morton Avenue apartments.

### **3.1.2 Recommendations**

#### **1. *Reward property owners with incentives and financial assistance for rehabilitations.***

Loan programs, tax abatements, favorable refinancing terms, etc. can all help compliant property owners and can help forestall abandonment. In Albany, organizations like the Community Preservation Corporation can provide landlords with affordable financing. The City should also contribute to these types of programs—the money is better spent up front, reinvigorating the tax base and preventing abandonment, than dealing with a crumbling tax base and public safety concerns later.



Three story residences: before and after rehabilitation.



**2. On the other hand, *disincentives are needed to discourage irresponsible and unresponsive owners from holding on to vacant and blighted properties.*** Disincentives should include: (1) rigorous code enforcement, and (2) substantially increasing the penalty for owning abandoned property without the prospect of occupancy within a reasonable time. Penalties should be high enough to: (a) at least cover the maintenance expenses of the city, (b) cause non-compliant property owners to divest themselves of the property, and (c) act as a deterrent to abandonment. By comparison, the current Vacant Buildings Registry combined with low property assessments effectively concedes permission to own vacant property in perpetuity because there is no substantive penalty for doing so. The City should consider increasing its vacant buildings fee—the \$200 annual fee is affordable to the property owner but is insufficient income for the City to fund proper policing of these structures. The fee should be used to pay for a dedicated staff person to handle registry, inspection, fines, etc., as well as referring owners to rehabilitation and disposition resources.

**3. *Develop disposition plans for blocks with abandoned property.*** While it need not delay the earlier actions, it is still essential for the community to have a coordinated (if flexible) strategy for how abandoned property should be reused. Model block disposition programs like the one developed in Arbor Hill are an example of community-based renewal strategies. This Plan provides guidance as to land uses within the South End (e.g., a mix of commercial and residential uses on South Pearl Street, and a mix of residential types within the neighborhood), and initiatives like the redevelopment of the Jared Holt Wax Factory Site (between Clinton and Broad, and Third and Fourth Avenues) and the Ploof property (on Morton Avenue at Eagle Street) are already underway. The City, Albany Housing Authority, developers like Habitat for Humanity, Omni Housing, and Touhey Homeownership Foundation, and Historic Albany Foundation should continue to collaborate with the community on block-by-block reuse plans, and should coordinate with SEAC's abandonment and reinvestment efforts.

Within these areas, apply a systematic approach to surveying vacant and abandoned property and determining their disposition, demolition, and/or re-use possibilities. This will represent a rational approach to an emotionally-charged issue and for which there are only limited resources available. Focusing resources on priority areas, in a block-by-block approach, will have a stabilizing effect and create the opportunity for private investment. Properties should be classified into four primary categories:

- **Demolition:** Some buildings have been destroyed through abandonment or lack of maintenance (demolition by neglect). They are daily hazards that harbor crime and repel investment. Buildings with uncooperative property owners and severe life/safety code violations should be condemned and the property owners should be fined. Buildings that

are determined to be unsalvageable should be demolished, and plans for the redevelopment of those lots should be coordinated with SEAC.

- **Mothball:** Some buildings are not so deteriorated to warrant demolition and are of significant historic value; yet they would require too heavy an investment to rehabilitate. As per the current City ordinances,<sup>5</sup> these buildings should be secured, stabilized, made weather-tight, and targeted for façade improvements so that they are less of a blight on the streetscape. These buildings would thereby be preserved for rehabilitation when either new rehabilitation resources are in place or when improvements to the surrounding neighborhood have buoyed property value appraisals enough to make rehabilitation more feasible. Property owners who do not mothball their buildings should be fined, and, per the current City ordinance, should have to pay the City for the cost of securing and stabilizing the building.
- **Immediate Redevelopment:** Some buildings, with varying degrees of stabilization, may be ready to be put into queue for rehabilitation. Ownership status should be determined and a plan created to either assist the property owner in rehabilitation or to acquire the building.
- **Upgrade:** Some buildings within the block may simply need a facelift or other cosmetic approach in order to enhance its appearance and value. Façade grants of up to \$15,000 are available from the City, and are supported by a variety of housing funds.

**4. Be creative when it comes to reusing abandoned properties.** When abandoned buildings are too difficult or expensive to rehabilitate, consider donating them to investors through a homesteading program, where private owners are willing to rehabilitate and occupy a unit for a minimum period of time, or donating abandoned lots to adjacent owners for side-lot greening.

**5. Target certain areas of the South End as priority areas for preservation:**



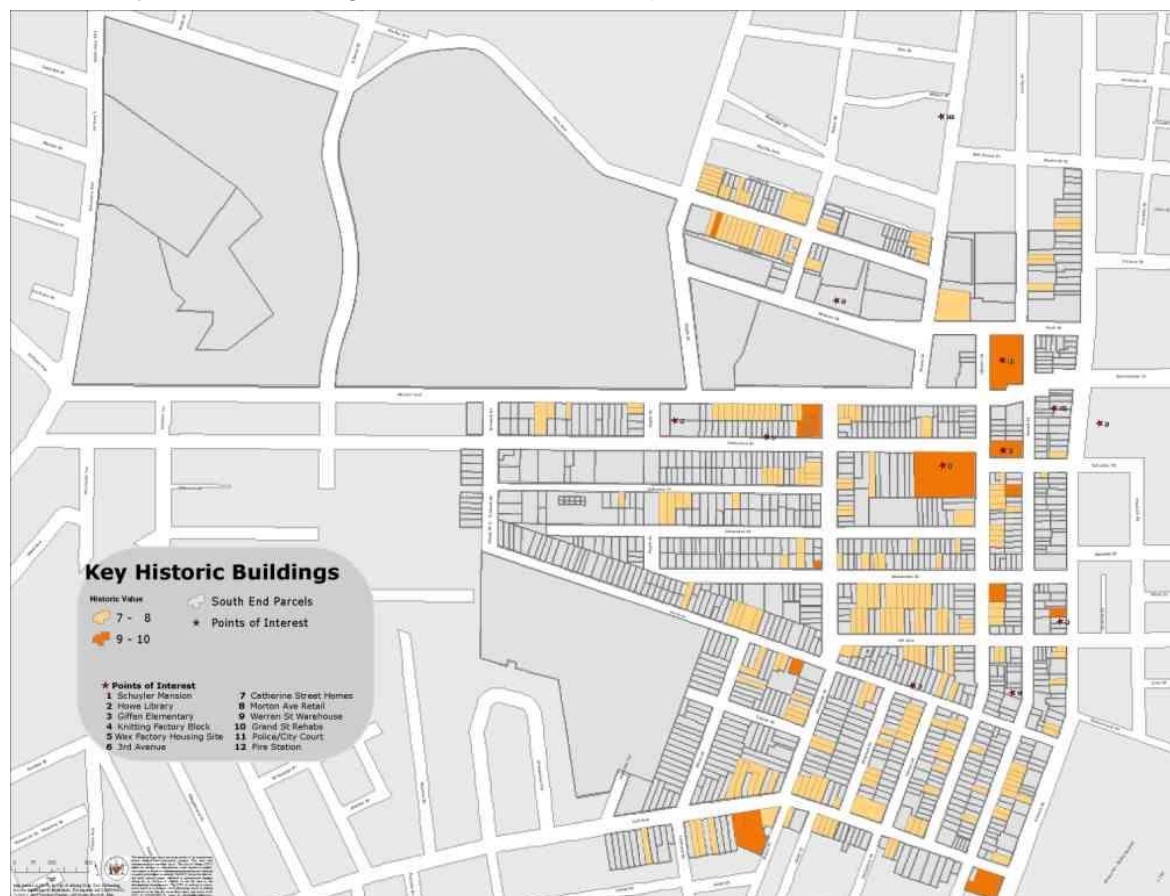
Clockwise from top: Howe Library, Schuyler Mansion, and St. Ann's Church are some of the South End's important historic buildings.

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<sup>5</sup> See City Code Article XIA, Vacant Buildings Registry, and Article XI, Maintenance of Vacant Buildings.



Targeted areas are those where there is an abundance of historic buildings in poor condition, and where the visibility of vacant and abandoned buildings has the most effect on the image of the community. These include Morton Avenue (from Hawk Street to South Pearl Street) and South Pearl Street (from Alexander to Second Avenue). Most of these areas already have historic buildings and/or institutions in good condition near which reinvestment can take root. Howe Library, Schuyler Mansion, and St. John's/St. Ann's are examples of historic anchors in these areas. Key historic buildings are illustrated on Map 5.



**Map 5: Key Historic Buildings**

**6. Generally, focus on historic buildings for reinvestment.** Much of the South End, particularly east of Elizabeth Street, is a designated historic district containing unique properties including (as noted above) Schuyler Mansion, St. John's, Howe Library, as well as numerous residential and mixed-use buildings. Usually, historic character like this would be considered an unequivocal position of strength. However, the South End (like other low value but historic neighborhoods) faces a



paradox: the same historic character that gives the neighborhood its unique urban form and latent value is also a liability. In the current economic climate and weak housing market, historic rehabilitation can be cost prohibitive, and owners who cannot demolish the buildings outright simply walk away.

**7. Particularly, target concentrations of historic buildings.** While this Plan recognizes the intrinsic value and opportunity of all of the South End's historic buildings, the Plan also recognizes that some properties more than others may deserve protection and some properties more than others may need to be demolished. Those properties located on largely intact blocks and along major neighborhood streets should be targeted for preservation, to the maximum extent feasible, and should be funded by preservation funds including New York Main Street and Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) dollars, and federal and state tax credit programs.

**8. Provide technical assistance to the owners of and would-be re-investors in historic buildings.** Too often, a historic designation may appear to represent another layer of bureaucracy to contend with, or an outlay of additional money by the owner to comply with these regulations. This in effect can discourage owners from maintaining the historic character of the structure. Therefore, the City and Historic Albany Foundation should assist property owners with historic buildings (a building fifty years or older may be eligible to be registered on the National Register of Historic Places) located in and out of historic districts to secure historic rehabilitation tax credits and/or tax abatements for rehabilitation of historic buildings. Technical assistance could prove especially valuable with regard to expensive additions like interior fire stairs or sprinklers.



Some historic structures in the South End have been restored and they now project a positive image of the community.

State law dealing with designated historic property allows for exceptions to current building and design codes in connection with public subsidies. These latitudes are either not well known or understood, except by more sophisticated owners and architects working on major rehabilitations. SEAC and the City should work with Historic Albany Foundation to provide better education and information regarding the Historic District Ordinance, and to provide rehabilitation guidelines for individual property owners.

**9. Target small grants and loans on favorable terms to homeowners and others rehabilitating historic properties.** The best way to secure the full cooperation of property owners and

investors is to provide grants and loans on favorable terms for design services that help to retrofit historic buildings to comply with current building codes, design standards in connection with funding sources, and other incremental costs associated with the rehabilitation of historic buildings. This includes using City funds directly through grants and loans and educating property owners about available programs. City funds should be directed to a reinvented SEIC to distribute to eligible property owners, in cooperation with Historic Albany Foundation.

**10. Tie redevelopment of abandoned property to public subsidies and tax incentives.** It will be difficult in the early stages of the Plan to attract growth and investment, so public-private partnerships, leveraged funds, and incentives will all be required. In addition, education and mortgage assistance, to create a local pool of homebuyers, is not only possible through programs at the State (e.g. Affordable Housing Partnership) and local (e.g. Albany HomeStore<sup>6</sup> and the Albany Housing Authority SHARP program<sup>7</sup>) levels, it is critical to sustain ongoing community participation in the renewal.

**11. Employ an abatement program for renovated buildings and redeveloped property.** Rehabilitations are risky because structures often cost more to repair than they can sell for in the current depressed housing market. Added to this, are the many “unknowns” of rehabilitation which may include environmental cleanup. This can add uncertainty and cost to a project, discouraging rehabilitation. Finally, from a policy point of view, while the benefits of historic preservation go to an entire community, the costs are typically borne by certain individuals. This public benefit argues for tax abatements for those bearing the costs and risks.

The City Code allows for tax exemptions to encourage investment in and rehabilitation of historic properties by exempting from taxation the extent that any increase in value is due to rehabilitation. This exemption is 100 percent in years one through five after rehabilitation; after that the exemption is gradually phased out.<sup>8</sup> While this program is a good incentive for larger rehabilitation projects, smaller projects do not necessarily result in a greatly increased assessment. The Department of Development and Planning, perhaps in cooperation with the Albany Assessor’s Office, should investigate additional tax credits, grants, and low-interest loan programs to encourage rehabilitation even on a small scale.

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<sup>6</sup> Albany HomeStore is a centralized one-stop facility that offers grant, savings and loan programs, comprehensive purchase counseling services, and other information needed to be a successful homeowner.

<sup>7</sup> The South End Homebuyer and Rehabilitation Program (SHARP) is a non-public housing program administered by the Housing Authority that provides grants to moderate and low income households (less than 80% of area median income) to assist with the purchase and repair of one and two family homes in the South End.

<sup>8</sup> See City Code, Article XIV, Exemption for Improvements to Historic Property



**12. Clean and green the vacant lots**, not all of which are foreclosed. Vacant lots discourage investment and encourage crime. It is absolutely critical to clean up such lots, either through side-lot programs or community greening programs. Initiatives like these are tremendous opportunities to create green space throughout the South End, knit together the large and under-utilized large parks (Krank Park, Lincoln Park), and increase the overall quality of life and community amenities. Several community gardens already exist in the vicinity (near St. Johns/St. Ann's, and on Warren Street north of Lincoln Square), providing models for additional community gardens (see Map 6).



**Map 6: Greening Opportunities**

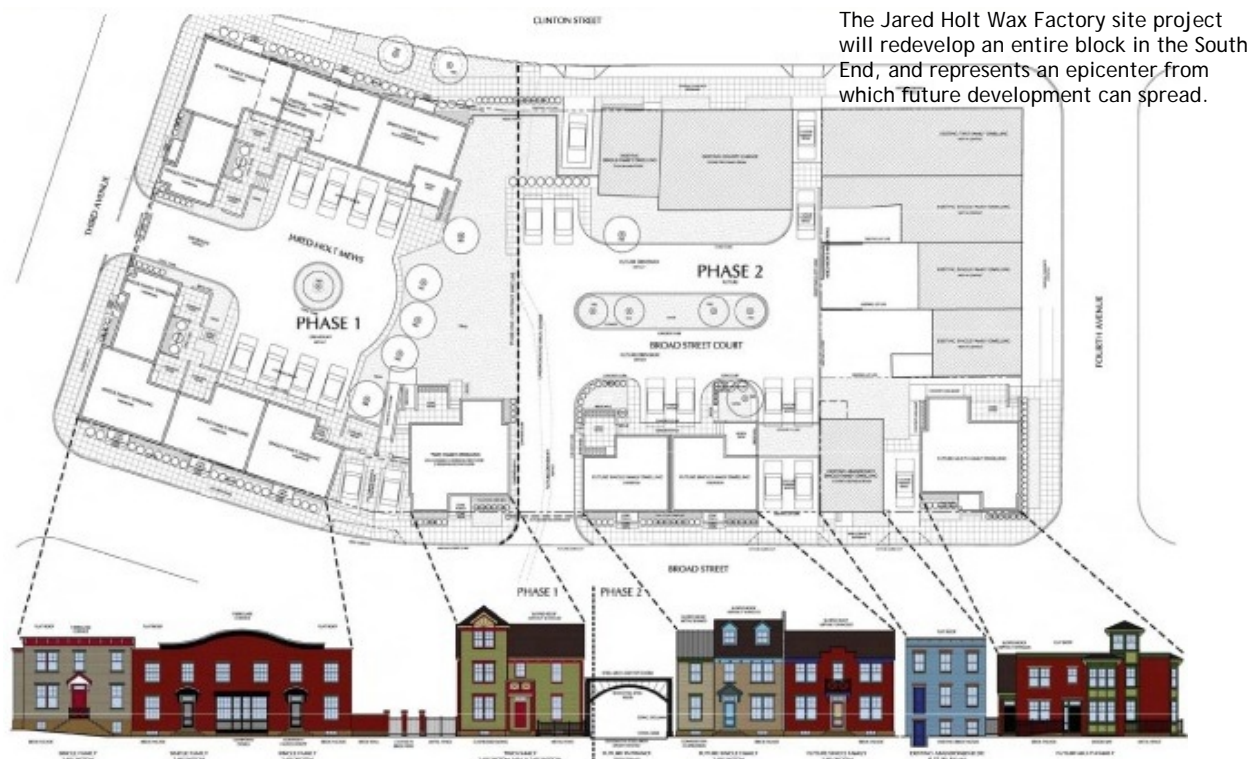


This beautiful community garden was once a vacant lot.

**13. Support new initiatives like the Senior Rehab Program.** This newly-introduced City program, developed by the Albany Community Development Agency, provides grants of up to \$5,000 to senior homeowners (aged 62 and over) who rehabilitate their homes. This has the potential to have an immediate effect in the South End, where the largest proportion of homeowners are seniors.

**14. Target new investment to areas where redevelopment is already occurring.** This will help create synergies between investments, supporting both the new and the current redevelopment, thereby helping to ensure that public subsidies are wisely used.

**15. The area around the Jared Holt Wax Factory site is one such area that is ripe for streetscape improvements and concurrent housing investment.** This area includes the portion of Third Avenue between South Pearl and Elizabeth Streets. Currently, abandoned buildings in this vicinity are crime-ridden and safety hazards. The new development (see rendering below), soon to break ground, at the Jared Holt site between Clinton Street and Broad Street will serve to stimulate the area, and the South End should capitalize on this momentum by redeveloping adjacent blocks. From this epicenter, the stretch of Third Avenue between Clinton and Elizabeth Street is an obvious target for renewal as a model block of residential townhouses. Certain historic properties and a range of individual owners pose challenges to outright redevelopment, but planning for this stretch should begin as soon as possible.



## 3.2 WORKFORCE AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

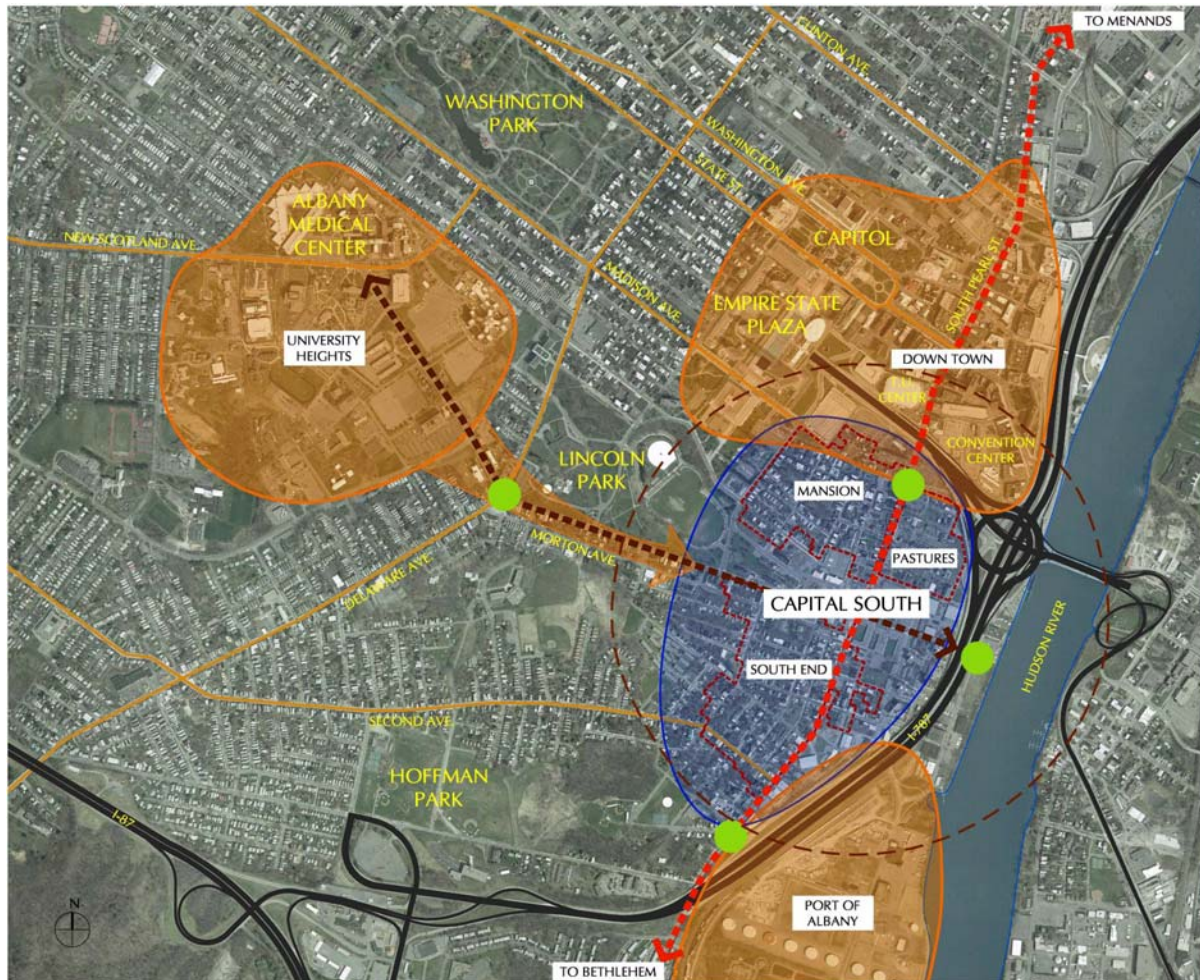
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### 3.2.1 Enhancing Access to Jobs

***While the Capital Region is experiencing economic growth, the City and especially the South End have been left out of the economic equation.*** This trend must be reversed, and our recommendations are intended to build on one another to do so. It starts with access to existing jobs (as presented in this chapter) and includes creating local jobs (as part of the improvement phase presented in Chapter 5); and promoting upward mobility through education and entrepreneurship (as part of the expansion strategy presented in Chapter 6).

***Connecting workers to jobs has many dimensions, most obviously job training and placement.*** This begins with thinking in terms of linking residents to economic and industry clusters, not individual firms. Albany boasts an impressive core of education and government, and to an increasing extent, technology and health care; and a good deal of growth is projected to occur in these sectors. Job growth in the region means little without the education and skills needed to successfully fulfill a job's requirements. The orange areas on Map 7 show the locations of Albany's key employment centers and their relation to the Capital South community.





Map 7: Employment Centers

**Another dimension to increasing job access is overcoming the “soft skills” gap.** While many positions offer opportunities for on-the-job training, among the South End’s poorest residents there is a lack of basic presentation and interview skills needed to secure these jobs. Programs exist to help in this regard. Trinity Institution and THE Center (Technology, Help, Education) are both important resources, but they need to be broadened and strengthened.



Founded in 1921, Trinity Institution is located at 15 Trinity Place.

**Trinity Institution** has been providing services to the South End community for more than 85 years. In 1998 the organization merged with the Homer Perkins Center to establish a stronger multi-social service agency. Today the private, community based not-for-profit, along with its sister organization, Arbor Hill Community Center, Inc. is devoted to meeting the needs of the community to improve the South End and Arbor Hill neighborhoods, with the mission to strengthen family life and assist in the social and educational development of children and youth.

The Family and Neighborhood Resource Center opened in 2006 and has already served hundreds of clients from the South End and Arbor Hill. The Resource Center brings together a spectrum of services geared toward providing safe environments for children and supporting solutions to problems within families that often lead to foster care placement. It has different entry points to meet the comprehensive needs of families, including an array of health and wellness activities, substance abuse support, an emergency food pantry, after-school, weekend and evening activities, summer camp youth development and gang prevention programs. For more information about Trinity and its programs, please call the administrative offices at (518) 449-5155.

**THE Center** at the Albany Housing Authority continues AHA's focus on services that opportunities for resident self-sufficiency. The Center partners with area employers to provide clients with real life work experiences through a mentoring program; partners with area employers to create a training program that mirrors real work place environments, needs and skills; and trains residents to be prepared to enter customer service positions in insurance, banking, hotel and health care.

Supplementing these core services are an array of educational, training and support opportunities provided by other partners, including computer training, pre-college English and math, entrepreneurship support, transportation and childcare assistance, small business development, GED and ESL assistance. For more information about THE Center and its programs, please call (518) 641-7132.

***Since car ownership rates in the South End are low, good transit service is often the make-or-break variable.*** According to the 2000 Census 42 percent of South End households had no vehicle, and 18 percent (over 3,200) of South End residents who traveled to work did so via public transportation. The CDTA has designated the South End as a transit-dependent neighborhood, and will add service so long as it is needed and the safety of riders and pedestrians can be ensured. Given variable working hours (e.g., for retail service jobs in the evenings and on weekends), such transit needs to run at all hours and on all days of the week, regardless of lower ridership during these off hours. Access to reliable public transit is especially important for single mothers and others who must hold a job while balancing the demands of a family.

***All of these factors compound and inter-relate.*** Successful workforce development programs—again, like those of Trinity Institution and THE Center—target the myriad of skills these companies require, from maintenance to data entry to sales and marketing. Partnering with the Housing Authority, THE Center provides clients with mentoring opportunities, skills-based training programs, and an array of additional services including language assistance, computer training, transportation, and childcare assistance.



### 3.2.2 Recommendations

Support and coordinate local (and attract additional Albany-based) providers of job training and placement, transportation, child care, and related support services. A directory of organizations is a first step. A “cabinet” of service providers, a regularly-meeting group that coordinates strategies and shares knowledge resources, is also logical. This would spur strategic thinking and partnership. To that end, Trinity Institution, THE Center, the Workforce Investment Board, Workforce NY, and others should establish regular contacts with each other and human service providers.

**16. For all educational, job training and placement programs: Focus on sectors where a college education is not required.** These presently include hospitality, construction and retail services. The Port of Albany is an obvious target in this regard, as is the significant opportunity presented by needed reinvestment, rehabilitation, and infill construction throughout the South End. The proposed South End Guild (see Chapter 4), which would include building contractors and materials suppliers, is intended to be a center of education and apprenticeship for the services and trades required to rebuild the City’s neighborhoods.

**17. Direct job training, placement, school sponsorship, internships, etc. to the populations most in need—including single mothers, new immigrants, and at-risk youth.** The SEAC and other local institutions and organizations, including the churches, should be tapped for this purpose. Trinity Institution is already one model in this regard.

**18. Encourage the Board of Education and charter schools to develop “school to career” programs and curricula at schools in the neighborhood, which introduce students to required job skills and “real world” environments.** These efforts should be developed in partnership with, and could be funded in part by, local, downtown, and regional employers.

**19. Provide neighborhood computer and internet stations, and provide adequate computer training and job search guidance.** This should be done as often as opportunity presents: with the rehabilitation of Giffen School, the expansion of Howe Library, and/or in the development of an educational campus in the neighborhood. Federal programs like Neighborhood Networks grants (available from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development) can help bridge the “digital divide” and provide a much-needed resource in these neighborhoods.

**20. Expand transit service in the South End.** The Capital District Transportation Authority (CDTA) considers transit expansion where ridership levels justify the service and where pedestrian safety is provided for (i.e., crosswalks). The potential to help residents find jobs should be a factor in the cost/benefit analysis for expanding services. This especially includes transit ser-

vice throughout the week and into the night, mindful that many jobs in health and retail involve weekend and night-time work.

**21. Better connect the South End to the employment centers that matter to local residents.** While it cannot be determined with precision where these South End commuters are traveling to, data does show that the City and the County are employment centers where daytime population is significantly higher than the residential population. In fact, the daytime population for the City is nearly 60 percent greater than its residential population (162,400 daytime versus 95,600 residents). All the same, most transit operates on a spoke-and-hub basis, bringing riders to a downtown. Current and prospective South End residents are as or more likely to work in suburban malls, the Port of Albany, or Albany Hospital. Routes should be revisited with this more dispersed (and admittedly less efficient) pattern in mind.



CDTA provides transit service connecting the South End with all points of the City.

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### 3.3 QUALITY OF LIFE

#### 3.3.1 Reducing Crime through Community Policing

***Like so many urban neighborhoods, the South End suffers from abandonment and crime, in all of its forms.*** These related issues were major topic of nearly every interview and workshop. Until these issues are dealt with, the South End cannot realize its potential. If quality of life concerns like crime, safety, cleanliness, etc., are not addressed, the buildings will remain havens for strife.

***The Albany Police Department has made important strides in combating crime in the South End.*** The Police Department is well on its way toward implementing a new community policing approach that places more officers on the street and targets even petty crimes in order to push criminal elements out of the neighborhood. The Police Department also provides free training and technical assistance for all of the Neighborhood Watch groups in the city. Albany Police statistics show that violent crime in the South End has declined in the last two years (down by 6 percent), just as it has declined in the City overall (down by 10 percent). All the same, crime occurs at a higher per capita rate in the South End than in the City as a whole.

***Landlord neglect and infringements on law are not to be tolerated.*** Fighting criminal activity is a prerequisite to securing existing and new investment in the neighborhood. But securing and renovating abandoned buildings and lots are important steps in mitigating these conditions and reducing overall crime. With hundreds of vacant buildings and lots, portions of the South End remain havens for criminal activity.

***Increasing homeownership can help decrease overall crime.*** As existing residents achieve homeownership, and as new homeowners are attracted to the South End, quality of life for everyone can be expected to rise. New homeowners, singly, in block associations, and in neighborhood watch groups, taking an enlightened self-interest in the appearance and safety of their neighborhood, can make a substantial impact on the overall quality of life.

### 3.3.2 Recommendations

**22. Increase police presence in the South End.** The Police Department has already begun this effort, by increasing the number of mobile units, and by placing squad cars at known hot spots of criminal activity (i.e., Third Avenue and Teunis Street). Initiatives such as this should be continued.

**23. Pursue a proactive approach to crime prevention in target areas identified by the Police Department and watch groups.** Particular focus areas—such as how to deal with drug dealing, or squatters, or graffiti—could be addressed in flyers, workshops and presentations facilitated by the Police Department.



**24. Establish neighborhood watch groups.** Neighborhood watch groups work hand-in-hand with police to locate hot spots for criminal activity (street corners, particular homes, or abandoned buildings). If there is not one already, an Albany Police hotline should be established (both via phone and internet). The Police Department should show immediate action to service calls, in order to demonstrate to citizens that neighborhood watch groups are effective.

**25. Focus on housing and property neglect.** There should also be a hotline where residents can alert the Albany Department of Building and Codes to unsafe conditions. Watch groups, flyers, workshops and presentations should address this topic as well.

**26. Prosecute owners of derelict and abandoned properties.** Establish “sentences” including fines, community service requirements, and increased tax rates, or apply a tax that applies to the land value (as opposed to the diminished property value) for abandoned properties. At the same time, ensure, through a ground lease (or, less effective, an affidavit signed at time of sale) that buyers of foreclosed properties will take action to rehabilitate and lease up/sell the property within a period of time. At the very least, require the owner to contract with a local firm to stabilize and beautify the exterior of the building (or lot) so as not to contribute to general blight.

**27. Re-establish “Weed N Seed.”** This federally-funded program is an innovative and comprehensive multi-agency approach to law enforcement, crime prevention, and community building. While it has been shown to have great success, the South End’s previous program failed largely owing to a lack of geographic focus and miscommunication between the partner organizations. Re-funding, though not secured by the latest application, is a worthy and wholly achievable goal. And there is an opportunity to learn from past problems. Potential partners include watch groups, churches, the SEAC, the South End Improvement Corporation, the Albany Housing Authority, and of course the Albany Police Department. The City should be prepared to commit to leveraging the federal funds with its own funds if required, and the SEIC should be prepared to staff the program. Leadership from SEIC, and implementation consistent with the block improvement strategies of this plan can help ensure weed-n-seed is effective again. Elizabeth Street is a good location from which to begin.



The previous Weed N Seed headquarters on Elizabeth St. at Alexander St.

**28. Seek additional grants, funds and partners.** The South End can benefit from the “Safe Routes to School” program (of the U.S. Department of Transportation) and other programs. The local U.S. Attorney’s Office can be of great help in implementing the Weed and Seed initiative, and in establishing tougher sentences for gun violence and drug offenders.

**29. Proactively identify champions for every block possible.** In addition to the watch groups, these include church groups, community organizations, the Albany Housing Authority, the tenants of an apartment building. Usually, the best strategy is not to start with crime—which is fear-



some to many; but with lot clean-ups, block parties, tree planting, graffiti removal, community gardens—which build camaraderie and confidence.

**30. Upgrade Howe Library.** Funding has been approved to renovate and expand the historic library (photo and plan below). Program planning has begun, but, just as with the community center above, a working group should be established to assist the library in programming decisions. Items of concern may be space for child reading groups, educational classes, computer terminals, etc. Libraries are particularly popular with new immigrants, seniors, and students (as from Giffen School, only two blocks away). This working group should include spokespeople for each of these constituencies.

Howe Library on Schuyler Street (between Broad and Clinton) will soon be renovated and expanded.



### 3.3.3 Community Capacity: Bolstering Neighborhood Revitalization Capacity

***Virtually all of the recommendations indicated above had an organizing or capacity-building element.*** Yet something more is needed. At this point, the level of disinvestment exceeds the capacity of the marketplace, the largesse of the City, and the passion of the community. Absent a strong coordination of all three—such that the sum can be greater than the parts—the challenges posed by the South End will prove too great.

### 3.3.4 Recommendations

**31. Continue SEAC and SEIC's current prime roles in the community,** to guide efforts in the short and medium terms and help form a community development corporation (see the discussion in 4.3.4). SEAC's first responsibility should be to plan for specific development sites, hewing of course to the recommendations of this Plan, so as to be the first in line for City Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), HOME, and other funds in the coming year. SEAC should establish a subcommittee of its members to focus on abandonment and reinvestment, beginning with assessments of targeted blocks and the development of reuse/disposition plans for those key blocks.

SEAC should continue to be the neighborhood's prime "squeaky wheel," working with the South End Neighborhood Association (see below) and the Capital South Neighborhood Coalition (see below) as appropriate. Finally, SEAC's membership should include representatives of the South End, Pastures and Mansion neighborhood associations.

SEIC would, on the other hand, be the organization responsible for applying for and receiving grants in aid, loans, etc. from both the public and private sectors. SEIC's grant making would be guided, via its participation in SEAC and in communication with the Housing Authority and developers, towards properties where its funds would be most effective.

**32. *Evolve SEAC into a fully-empowered community/City partnership.*** In essence, it is recommended that SEAC evolve from its current role of guiding the planning process to a stronger role in implementing the plan. It should be established as an official coalition of all of the neighborhood's constituent groups, with a board made up of people capable of raising money and clout, and an advisory group for setting and implementing the direction of neighborhood planning. In addition to local residents, merchants and organizations and SEIC, permanent members of the coalition's board or advisory group should include ex-officio representatives of the Albany Department of Building and Codes, Albany Department of Development and Planning, Albany Housing Authority, Albany Police Department, Giffen School, Historic Albany Foundation, and Schuyler Mansion. Other technical assistance providers, such as the AIA 150 Committee, should be included.

**33. *Develop a South End Neighborhood Association.*** The South End's committed core of residents should be given the encouragement and support needed to establish a South End Neighborhood Association (SENA), complete with mission, bylaws, and regular meetings and events. The Mansion, Historic Pastures, Lincoln Park, and Delaware neighborhoods have established associations of residents in order to work toward the betterment of their communities. Neighborhood associations organize neighborhood-wide volunteer projects (including street cleaning and greening, property maintenance, and gardening), activities, and social events, and maintain regular contacts with the City Police to bolster community policing efforts. SENA would be an active voice for all South End residents as the City and stakeholders implement this Capital South Plan. To this end, SEAC should work to identify potential SENA leaders, and work with the Council of Albany Neighborhood Associations (CANA) to establish SENA.

**34. *Develop a Capital South Neighborhood Coalition.*** This coalition would include the newly-established SENA as well as the Mansion and Pastures Neighborhood Associations. Members of the three neighborhood associations would meet on a regular basis, perhaps quarterly, to discuss issues of mutual interest. The leaders of each association could meet more frequently on an informal basis.





## 4 ENERGIZE THE SOUTH END

***As the neighborhood is stabilized, it will at once invite needed private investment, and run the risk of displacement.*** “Gentrification” is not itself the problem. With a nearly 20 percent vacancy rate, the South End needs to tap (not chase away) would-be homeowners. More working class residents would generate more political clout in the long run, however committed the current City leadership is. The real issue is therefore not whether neighborhood improvements attract higher-income residents to the neighborhood, but how this energy is captured to the benefit of the neighborhood’s current residents, especially those who rent, live on fixed income, and are in other ways vulnerable to displacement. Homeownership is the key.

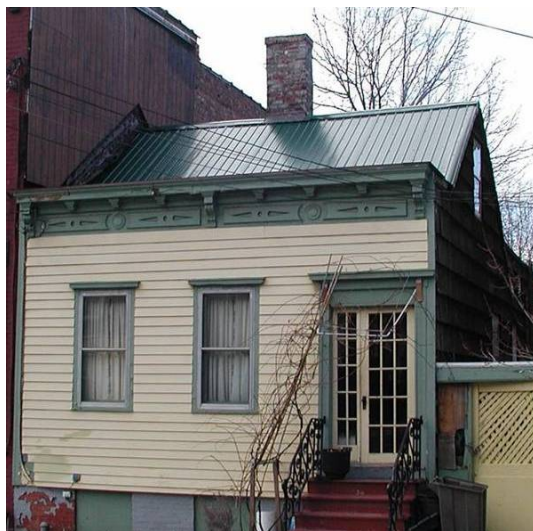
***The goal in this phase is to attract new people while giving current residents the ability and reason to stay.*** The South End needs an infusion of young homeowners; but not at the expense of the very people who the neighborhood’s revitalization is intended to serve.

### 4.1 PHYSICAL PLANNING

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#### 4.1.1 Spurring Homeownership and Homesteading

***Homeownership will be an important means of achieving neighborhood-wide investment and improvement, and for ensuring that current residents have opportunities to partici-***



A typical residence, rehabilitated by homeowners.

***pate in the neighborhood’s renewal.*** There are considerable obstacles to rehabilitation and housing construction beyond those factors that need and will (in the first phase) be stabilized. The cost of rehabilitation and new construction is presently, and likely to remain for some time, greater than the appraised and re-sale values of homes. This gap can be addressed through significant public subsidies, which do not appear imminent. Real estate and other incentives only go so far. The implication is that even in the next stage of the South End’s revitalization, sweat equity will remain a major element in returning vacant lots and buildings to housing.

***Homeowners and other investors need to be reassured that their investments will not be at risk due to inappropriate adjacent development.*** It has been noted time and again that

while one of the South End's most important resources is its historic character, it is increasingly costly and difficult to rehabilitate older buildings and to construct new ones in keeping with the historic character. This is a fundamental tension in stimulating the market place, but it one worth solving—now more than ever residents are moving back into downtowns in search of historic character. Additionally, zoning and permitting guidelines should be adapted to encourage new investment not just in the South End, but throughout Albany.

***Will such gentrification mean displacement? Or is it necessary to prevent entrenched abandonment in spite of the best efforts described in the prior chapter?*** The statistics at the front of this report are instructive. On the one hand:

- Only 23 percent of the South End's 3,700 occupied housing units are owner occupied, compared to 62 percent regionally. Renters generally are more transient.
- Nearly half (46 percent) of the South End's few homeowners are over 55 years old, meaning they are likely to sell within the next ten years and, based on the history of the past ten years, the probable buyer of their property is an absentee landlord.
- Only five percent of South End householders ages 35 to 54 own rather than rent. The present cadre of neighborhood leadership is made of homeowners, but it is aging, without a new generation of homeowners to take their place.

On the other hand:

- There is a relatively good proportion of two-family homes in the South End. Sales of one- and two-family homes dominate home sales (84 percent for the City of Albany and 91 percent for the County of Albany). The two-family homes provide the opportunity to combine affordable homeownership and a robust rental market.
- Approximately 970 of the 4,435 total housing units in the neighborhood are controlled by the Albany Housing Authority. Thus, 22 percent of all of the housing units are already secured for low-income households.

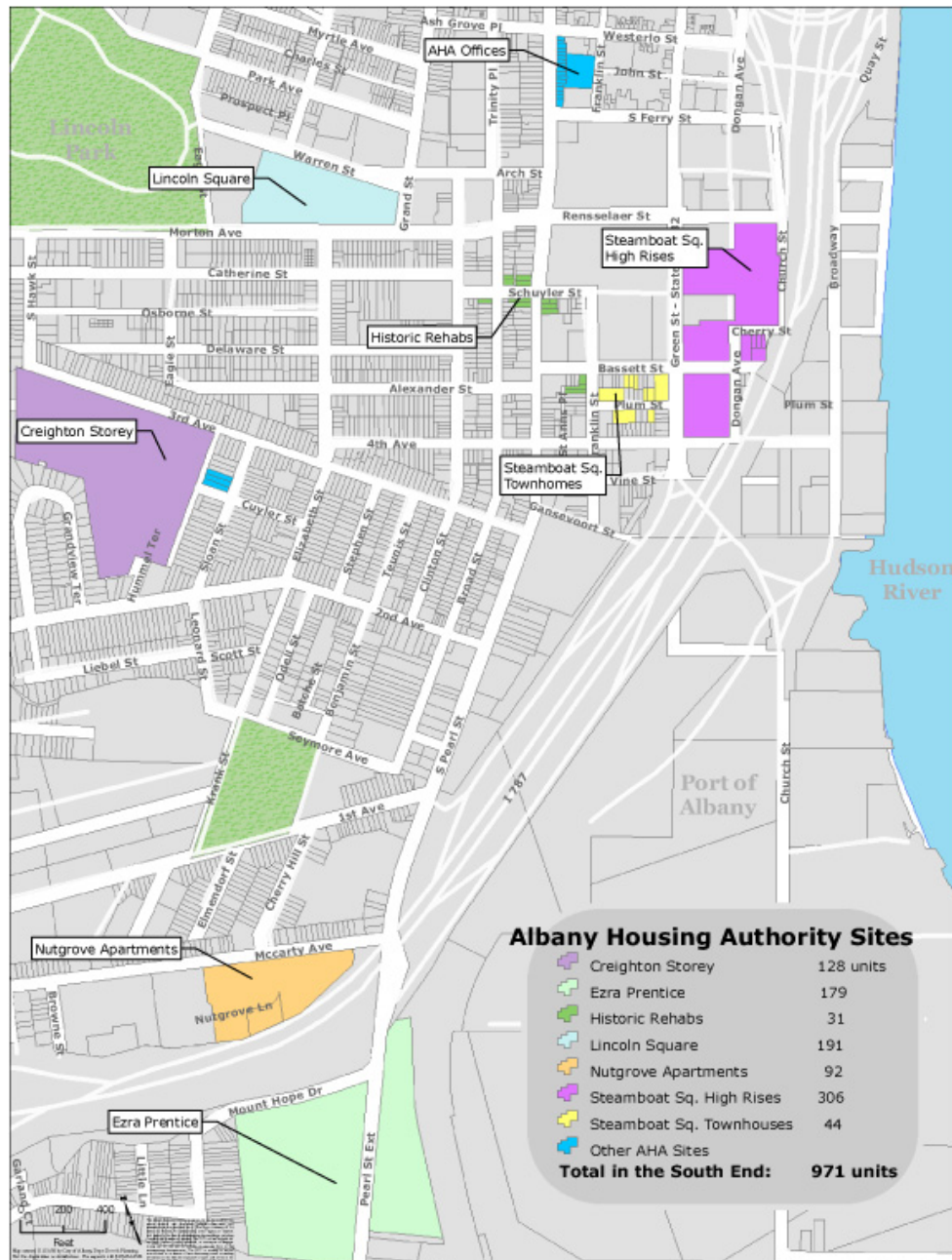
***These issues are already coming to a fore in connection with the Albany Housing Authority's inventory of 971 units on seven sites.***<sup>9</sup> (see Map 8) The vast majority (50 percent) of these South End units are in tower-in-the-park formats that are symbols of segregation and stagnation.<sup>10</sup> While tenants understandably remain wary of any change in their living arrangements, virtually all of the participants in the planning process clamored for the demolition of

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<sup>9</sup> Forty-six percent, or 971 units of AHA's total of 2,124 units are in the South End, with 191 of those units in the three Lincoln Square towers.

<sup>10</sup> "tower-in-the-park formats": 191 units in Lincoln Square and 306 in Steamboat Square.

these towers. The AHA is aggressively seeking sites and funding for this redevelopment. In so doing, the AHA remains fully committed to a policy of zero loss in the number of subsidized units, and are in fact committed to increasing affordable opportunities, particularly homeownership opportunities. Thus lower-income households are essentially guaranteed a great number of housing opportunities, should they wish to continue living in the South End.

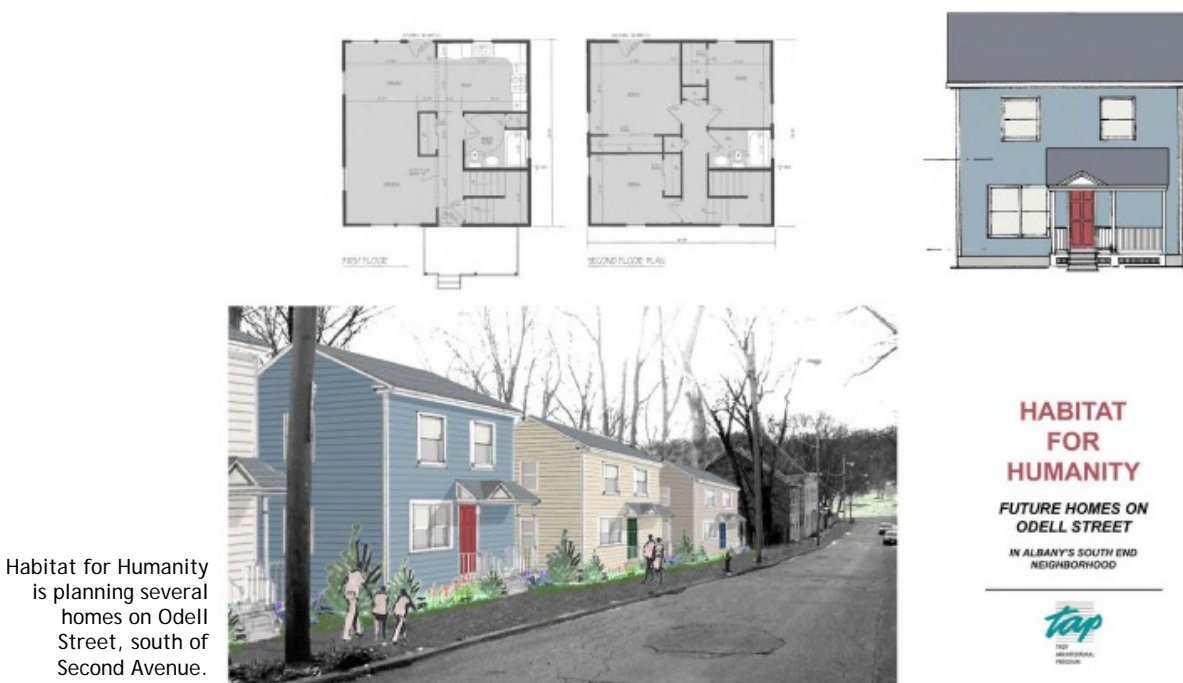


**Map 8: Housing Authority sites in the South End**

**Two Housing Authority projects stand out in this regard: Jared Holt Wax Factory, and Lincoln Square.** Jared Holt involves townhouse redevelopment on a former factory site, situated in the heart of the neighborhood. At question now is how to assure that the surrounding blocks are secured from crime and targeted for improvement, lest this new development be put at risk. Lincoln Square's three remaining towers<sup>11</sup> (totaling 191 units on a 4.5-acre site) are all but universally viewed as a priority for demolition, not just because they have become of age, but also because they loom over both the South End and Mansion neighborhoods, their central park, and Morton Avenue spine (where drug dealing is said to be prevalent). Questions arise how to redesign this site, as well how to replace the units there and/or elsewhere; which furthermore begs the question whether all three remaining towers need to go.

#### 4.1.2 Recommendations

**35. Support programs in which vacant buildings and lots are readied for rehabilitation by sweat-equity or mission-driven organizations.** Significant homeownership initiatives are already taking place. The City and the Housing Authority have been collaborating with mission-drive organizations like Charitable Leadership Foundation, Habitat for Humanity and the Touhey Homeownership Foundation to develop a workable program. This includes a lease-to-own program, and working with the Troy Architectural Program to create affordable designs for homeownership units that will be historically contextual. These programs can be expanded upon and should be funded by Capital City Housing on a large scale.



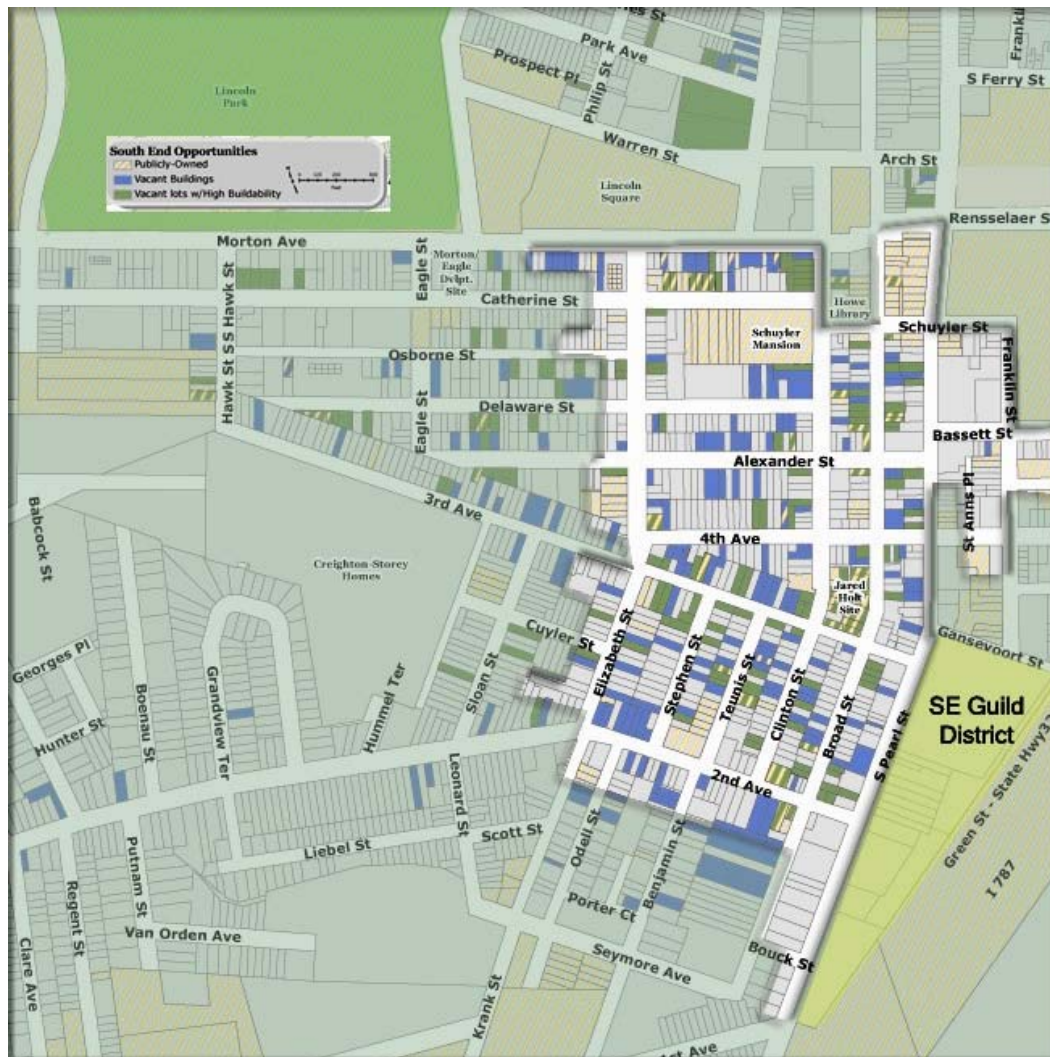
Habitat for Humanity is planning several homes on Odell Street, south of Second Avenue.

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<sup>11</sup> One of the four original towers was demolished in 2003.

**36. Transfer City- and County-owned property** to a City-wide community development corporation (perhaps Capital City Housing—see Chapter 4.3.4) that has direct subsidiaries or partners in the neighborhoods. In this case, parcels could be transferred based on a revitalization plan (e.g. this Capital South Plan). This organization, responsive to the neighborhoods, should be able to market properties and be able to sell (at low cost) or transfer (at no cost) properties to owners willing to live in the unit, rehabilitate it within a certain time period, then either remain there or sell it for limited equity. Partnerships with organizations like the Affordable Housing Partnership, Albany Housing Authority, and Community Realty to list and sell homes to low-income buyers are also important. As noted previously, tax incentives should be provided to homesteaders; as well as technical assistance from Historic Albany Foundation, recognizing that a robust education and community outreach component may be needed. Map 9 below illustrates housing opportunity sites within the Groesbeckville Historic District (the area in which streets are shown in white) and shows parcels that are publicly owned (in tan), vacant buildings (in blue), and vacant lots with high build-ability (in green).





**Map 9: Homeownership Opportunity Sites within the Groesbeckville Historic District**

**37. Provide incentives for homeownership.** Atlanta has had success with a tax abatement program, where, within designated zones, first-time homeowners receive 100 percent property tax abatement for the first year, 90 percent for the second year, and so forth over ten years. This is recommended for the South End.

**38. Employ a roster of “best practices” to discourage displacement, absentee landlords, and speculation.** Other cities have experimented with Land Trusts that retain options to buy back property that they or the City sells; with requirements that homebuyers continue to live on the premises for a period of time; with tax incentives expiring in the event of sale or rent of the premises; etc. Each strategy has its caveats and loopholes. Thus, no single strategy is as important as the commitment to be proactive. (This in turn hinges the capacity question discussed at the end of this chapter.)

**39. Continued code enforcement.** Current and prospective homeowners, even those participating in a sweat equity program and with less of a monetary value on the line, need to be confident that they will not be islands in a sea of crime and abandonment. Rigorous and timely code enforcement will ensure homeowners (and their lenders) that adjacent properties will be kept to the same standards as those units that have rehabilitated.

**40. Revise the City's regulations where necessary, and better educate owners and investors, to better maintain and reinforce historic character.** The current historic district ordinance provides written guidelines but no illustrations. Developers may not know what “distinguishing original qualities or character” are and are further concerned that historic district review will add additional obstacles and costs in an already weak market area. In the short term, the City and Historic Albany Foundation should work to produce a brochure or guidebook detailing the building types found in the South End. In the longer term, these brochures should be produced for each historic district, and the City should, in partnership with Historic Albany Foundation review and revise the current ordinance. Furthermore, the City and Historic Albany Foundation should identify low-cost solutions to contextual exterior siding, roofs, windows, etc. in order to promote rehabilitation. To promote appropriate infill, the City should eliminate the current the need for developers to combine lots from 20 feet to 40 feet along the street frontage. Guidelines are especially important to provide developers and homeowners with predictability as well as instruction.



**41. Employ a zoning overlay district that relaxes aspects of the modern building code that do not affect life/safety.** In fact, it seems that the siting and construction of the existing building stock is something to be emulated. These features include zero-lot-line setbacks, non-combustible exterior construction materials, corner stores (in effect, spot siting of neighborhood commercial), and incremental, thus relaxed, adaptive re-use requirements. Combined with a guidebook codifying form and aesthetics, outlining restrictions and approval processes, and listing technical and financial assistance resources created by the Historic Resources Commission, Historic Albany Foundation, Albany Local Development Corporation, and Albany Community Development Agency in consultation with others would go a long way to preserving the character of the neighborhood and provide much clarified guidelines for prospective investors.

**42. *Ease permitting for older structures.*** Further consideration should be given to intelligent leniency with regard to fire and code issues like sprinklers, fire escapes, stairwells, and, finally, to the fact that not all historic structures can be rehabilitated in a timely and costly manner. Greater leniency should be provided with regard to the size and arrangement of units to allow, for example, units as small as 700 square feet.

**43. *Relax parking requirements.*** Reducing off-street parking requirements will allow developers to build more and/or larger units, thereby increasing the return on investment. In fact, consideration should be given to establishing a maximum off-street parking allowance (Troy uses 0.75 spaces per unit, for example), particularly if the development includes affordable units. Designs should encourage the use of on-street parking (which has been shown to slow through-traffic and provide pedestrian buffers).

**44. *Plan proactively for the residents of Lincoln Square.*** As noted, Lincoln Square's towers are coming of age, and the site represents a major opportunity for redevelopment and remaking the image of the South End. Faced with a choice between substantial rehabilitation or new construction, the Housing Authority, community, and the consultant team favor relocation of residents (with the option of occupying a rehabilitated or newly-built unit within the South End) and demolition of the towers. To humanely carry out this intention, the Albany Housing Authority should continue to hold units vacant as they turn over, and to offer alternatives to existing tenants. These relocation alternatives obviously include projects like Jared Holt, as described above. Indeed, the Housing Authority and City of Albany are pursuing other housing developments on Morton Avenue and elsewhere in the neighborhood. The alternatives also include making residents aware of homeownership opportunities in the neighborhood.

**45. *Actively market Lincoln Square.*** In the course of this planning process, the community advanced and supported an educational campus as the preferred re-use of Lincoln Square; a second-best option would be low-rise, mixed-income housing. This Plan recommends that as development of infill housing throughout the neighborhood continues, and Lincoln Square's residents are relocated to those housing opportunities, that AHA and SEAC, with the full support of the Mayor, seek out partners interested in developing an educational use.

**46. In any case, *re-use of the Lincoln Square must be supportive of housing investments made in surrounding neighborhoods*,** must spur continued private investment in the surrounding neighborhood, and must be of value in and of itself. Any re-use scenario must take advantage of off-site amenities like Lincoln Park, the proximity to and views of Empire State Plaza and downtown, and the views of the Hudson River.

**47. The re-use must knit together communities now separated by the wall of high-rise towers.** The design should recognize that the site, though it does not lie in a historic district itself, is wedged between and within the view-shed of two different historic districts. This offers a unique opportunity to design buildings and spaces that take cues from the existing fabric while creating something new that has its own identity. Use of green building practices could also add to the uniqueness of the site. And the site should be organized by its infrastructure of common areas such as streets, alleyways, walkways, parking and green space.



**48. An educational re-use** has excellent potential to be an asset to the South End, and serve as a link in the educational corridor spreading from University Heights to Giffen Memorial Elementary School, and, in the future, south to lower South Pearl Street (see below). As such, every effort should be made to realize this vision. However, recognizing that the towers must come down, that residents must be provided with better housing opportunities, that the AHA should be made whole, and, finally, that years of inertia can and must be overcome with development at this site, **a “Go” or “No Go” decision on an educational campus must be made within the next few years**, depending on the outcome of feasibility discussions for an educational campus and AHA’s relocation efforts. SEAC should consider setting a deadline for this decision, so that the site’s redevelopment supports and proceeds with redevelopment of the neighborhood as a whole. Comprehensive neighborhood redevelopment will suffer greatly if the three towers remain standing or if the site is left undeveloped for an extended period of time.

**49. Begin planning for lower South Pearl Street.** The lower portion of South Pearl Street, from roughly 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue south to 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue, consists of active industrial and manufacturing sites, but also waste hauling operations and several soft, redevelopable parcels. Planning for this area should begin by assessing the potential for assembling land and partners for the South End Guild District (see Map 10 and images in Chapter 5.1). This would be an area, in one or several buildings, home to a concentration of building contractors, materials suppliers, and artisan workshops, intended to be a center of education and apprenticeship for the services and trades required to rebuild the City’s neighborhoods. Products made on site could be sold to homeowners and contractors, making lower South Pearl a dynamic hybrid of manufacturing, construction, wholesale, and retail uses.





**Map 10: South End Guild District**

**50. Begin planning for the “Capital South Square” of Morton, South Pearl, and Rensselaer Streets.** This intersection (see panorama photo below) is a natural commercial and civic hub for the neighborhood. It represents the corner of “maximum visibility to the maximum number of people” and is anchored by Giffen School the Fire Department, the Courthouse/Police Station, and the DMV building. The DMV block in particular is of a size and location large enough to support mixed-use development, including a small-scale grocery store. The activity and resources provided by the presence of Giffen School and the substantial public safety and civic uses already on the corner would further strengthen development here. In the short to medium terms, the City and SEAC should work with the County, which now owns the DMV site (leasing portions of it to the State DMV), to assess possibilities and parameters of redevelopment.



A panoramic view of the Morton Avenue and South Pearl Street intersection, with storefronts at left, DMV at center left, Giffen School at center right, and the Fire Station at

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## 4.2 WORKFORCE AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

### 4.2.1 Increasing the Number of South End Jobs

***The stabilization strategies were about providing access (in every sense of the word) to existing jobs which overwhelmingly exist in downtown or at major employment centers.***

The next level of effort is with regard to promoting additional job opportunities within or within walking distance of the neighborhood. These would ideally be linked to the job placement, training, and other programs directed to South End residents.

### 4.2.2 Recommendations

**51. Promote strategic linkages to the major employers that encircle the South End.** These include, in a clockwise direction starting with downtown to the north: the proposed Convention Center on South Pearl Street, the main (240-acre) portion of the Port of Albany to the southeast, and both Stratton VA Medical Center and Childes Hospital and Nursing Home to the west. Sample programs and policies were elaborated on in Chapter 3.2 above. THE Center has already pursued this type of relationship with the Bank of America and others that require data entry technicians. Trinity Institution develops similar partnerships. Further partnerships with local organizations can help people who want to reenter to workforce but need special assistance.

**52. Promote walk-to-work arrangements.** The City of Albany should consider zoning incentives and, in connection with discretionary approvals for sale or subsidy, mandates that discourage automobile commutation. These include reduced parking requirements, “cash out” of parking spaces whereby workers receive stipends in lieu of using parking spaces, carpooling and other Transportation Demand Management (TDM) initiatives, shuttle buses, etc. The City might also promote business participation in a loan pool for Location Efficient Mortgages, in which borrowers can receive larger loans or obtain approval for lesser down payments in connection with forswearing of multiple car ownership. Even if these incentives are not tied to hiring South End residents, it stands to reason that they will still be among the prime beneficiaries.

**53. Promote employment linkages to State government and other downtown employers through a Live near Your Work Program.** Based on a State of Maryland program, the LNYW program would encourage employees of Albany's businesses and institutions to buy homes



near their workplace. In addition to providing resources for LNYW Programs sponsored by public and private institutions, the State can and should participate as a major employer. The LNYW program provides a minimum amount of money to home buyers moving to designated neighborhoods. Albany local government would designate LNYW areas with the State's concurrence and administer the program within its jurisdiction. Participating employers - businesses, non-profits, colleges or universities, or government agencies - will set eligibility requirements, promote the program to their employees and provide matching resources. To qualify, the employee must purchase a home in a designated LNYW area, and live there for a minimum amount of time. Alternatively, the City of Albany could create its own incentive program to defer payment and create no- or low-interest loans up to a certain amount for public employees who purchase homes in the South End.<sup>12</sup>

**54. Promote local hiring, generally.** Projects involving the sale of publicly-owned land or discretionary government financing should be contingent upon a good faith effort to hire Albany residents for half or more of all new jobs created. This is not so radical as it sounds: it provides specificity to the City's Living Wage Ordinance of 2005, which requires beneficiaries of publicly-owned land or subsidies to pay living wages and provide hiring preference to local residents. In time, as the City gains further strength, the same condition could be applied to discretionary zoning approvals and real estate tax incentives. Washington, DC has a model program of this type, called a "First Source" program which has produced 2,000 jobs for DC residents. The City should set the right example with those projects that it sponsors, particularly those in the immediate area of the South End (Convention Center and Hotel Complex, Corning Park, and Hudson River Way) as well as those called for within this Plan. Thinking even further in these terms, the new South End neighborhood association should join with the Council of Albany Neighborhood Associations and other community advocates and lobby the City to:

- **Coordinate Training Efforts with a Sectoral and Advancement Approach.** Following the example of Neighborhood Employment Network (NET) in Minneapolis, a network of training providers who are matched to major employers affiliated with redevelopment projects should be created in order to provide workforce development planning and implementation. This model is also an efficient one to provide a "sectoral approach" to linkage efforts. Many of the jobs created through real-estate led economic development are in several employment sectors: construction, building services, retail, and hospitality. Job training and placement organizations can develop specialties in these fields, and re-

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<sup>12</sup> Note that some of these initiatives have been attempted in the past. Several years ago, the Delaware Avenue Neighborhood Association and Albany Medical investigated a program like this, but, in general, the bureaucratic puzzles stifled wide-spread deployment. However, similar initiatives have borne fruit for the Capital District Homeownership Collaborative in Pine Hills. These should be investigated and replicated, if possible.

lationshps with key employers. While numerous cities have established construction linkage programs, few have followed this model in other real-estate related sectors.

- **Create Training Linkage Fees.** Following the example of the Neighborhood Jobs Trust in Boston, Albany could develop a per-square-foot charge for developers who receive concessionary land use action or subsidy. The proceeds would go into a trust fund which would be used to strategically supplement other available funds to help people get and keep family-supporting work. As a first step, the City should work with the Convention Center Authority to include such fees and/or local training and hiring guarantees, into its budget and development plan.
- **Consider the Creation of a Community Benefits Agreement (CBA):** A CBA is a legally enforceable contract, signed by community groups and by a developer, setting forth a range of community benefits that the developer agrees to provide as part of a development project. CBAs are negotiated *before* a development goes to the city for approval. For many projects, the degree of community support or opposition will determine whether the developer will receive requested approvals and subsidies. CBAs can include benefits provided both by a project's developer and by its future tenants. Employment Opportunities and Training have traditionally been a major focus of CBAs.

**55. Promote commercial revitalization on South Pearl Street.** Retail revitalization will generally follow from the increased size and wealth of the South End's population. It also involves the Mansion and Pastures neighborhoods as much as the South End. Thus, it is more fully addressed in the next chapter. Nevertheless, a few measures should be taken even in this phase. Existing retail market, historic rehabilitation, façade improvement and other forms of technical or financial assistance should be directed to South Pearl to take advantage of streetscape improvements already made, and capitalize on the new energy and private investment at the Pearl Street Coliseum (on "upper" South Pearl Street, south of Madison Street).<sup>13</sup> The lower (southern) end of the corridor should be anchored by the South End Guild (described previously) and the Habitat office/warehouse center (at Seymour and Broad). Such improvements will help to fill vacancies with stores that will, as often as not, employ neighborhood residents. (These stores also provide a much needed amenity, consistent with improving overall quality of life.)

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<sup>13</sup> Significant streetscape work, including renovations to sidewalks and streets, installation of brick pavers and street lamps, etc., was completed along South Pearl Street (from Madison Street south to McCarty Avenue) in 2004.



Storefronts along South Pearl Street.

**56. Connect South End residents to employers in the City and region.** Just as important as transit frequency is transit connections. An ongoing working relationship between SEAC and the CDTA can help ensure that gaps in service and connections are identified and filled, ensuring ease of access to employers Downtown, on University Heights, and throughout the region, from Bethlehem to Malta.

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## 4.3 QUALITY OF LIFE

### 4.3.1 Creating a Neighborhood of Choice

***People choose their neighborhood first, and then their house within that neighborhood.***

This is the case in all housing markets. Attracting new homeowners and renters and discouraging existing residents from leaving is contingent on creating an attractive package of neighborhood amenities, a sense of place, and a self-image based on pride.

***The foremost amenity for most families is schooling, and in particular, the elementary school within the neighborhood.*** The reasons are easily conjectured: kids walk to elementary schools within their neighborhoods; these schools are considered neighborhood anchors; many parents are more tolerant of economic and racial integration within the younger grades; and parents tend to be more engaged with primary than with middle or high schooling. Giffen Memorial Elementary School's successes and its rehabilitation are therefore all-important.

***Other important amenities include: parks, recreation, library services, and local shopping.*** In a low-income community such as the South End, these services are also valued in terms of what they mean for youth that would otherwise be tempted into anti-social activity. Put differently: policing and strategies for dealing with abandonment and improving overall image need to be coupled with programs that provide alternatives to crime.

### 4.3.2 Recommendations

**57. Create a community center at Giffen School.** There is wide support for establishing a community center in or adjoining the South End. Now that the Albany School District has given its full support to improving Giffen School at its current location, the District and City should co-operate to develop a community center there, like that built the North End Academy (former School 20) in North Albany, which was created through a partnership of the City, School District and YMCA. The School District may be open to a public-public or public-private partnership, so long as the political and financial commitments (for construction, programming, and maintenance) from partners are firm. A key concern is security, so any community center must be severable (via secure doors, gates, etc) from the school classrooms and offices. Possible partnerships exist with Trinity Institution and the City, which has just inaugurated a fitness center at Lincoln Park (see discussion below).



The Rensselaer Street side of Giffen School.

An obvious first step is for the City, School District, and SEAC to jointly stage a public process to discuss needed programming and steps to implementation. The model is the State of New York's former Beacon School Program, which provided funding for community centers in public schools. Indeed, it might be hoped that the newly-elected governor would reinstate this program or its facsimile.

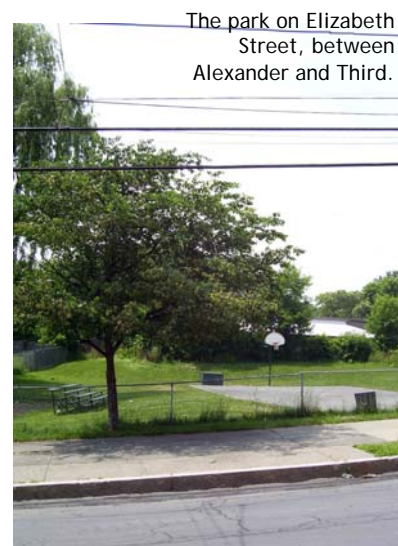
**58. Involve service providers in the community center planning process.** A community center represents a tremendous opportunity to “bridge the gap” between lower-income and more well-to-do residents, and thus it is *vital* that local, successful partners be included from the beginning. Trinity Institution, itself looking to expand its community center space, has had success in this regard, welcoming and accommodating diverse segments of the community by offering everything from after-school activities to so-called “high art” choral and instrumental concerts at Giffen School.

**59. Upgrade Lincoln Park as the central park of not only the South End, but also the Mansion neighborhood, Historic Pastures, and even portions of Center Square.** Lincoln Park is Albany's second largest park, featuring an outdoor swimming pool and ample green spaces. Yet Lincoln Park is, by all accounts, underutilized. The problem is essentially that the park has little to offer save a swimming pool in summer; and that unlike Olmsted-designed parks, it reads as a

buffer not as a destination. On the other hand, the newly-opened Youth Fitness Center at the Lincoln Park Bathhouse is an exciting initiative on which to build, both physically and programmatically. The existing community garden at Eagle and Arch Streets is immensely popular, and could be expanded. Greenway features could extend to South Pearl, through a shared, distinctive style of landscaping; virtually all of this property is owned by government or non-profit entities. (Lincoln Square's towers are virtually "towers in the park"; so the redevelopment of this property invites all sorts of ideas that are discussed the next chapter. Likewise discussed later, vacant sites around the park invite housing that would add users and "eyes" to the park.)

**60. Upgrade other neighborhood parks for active recreation**

Hoffman Park, Krank Park, and the (apparently unnamed) small park on Elizabeth Street between Third and Alexander Streets are important resources as well, and also extremely underutilized. Maintenance and programming for the parks should be implemented through a partnership of the City, Schools, churches, etc. Safety and security are of course key concerns—the Police Department and neighborhood watch associations should establish routine patrols. (And as with Lincoln Park, fully-occupied housing around their perimeters are also key.)



**61. Better coordinate human services.** The neighborhood churches and Giffen School are already excellent and obtainable service centers. They act as clearinghouses of information (but while Giffen maintains a directory of area services, it is not widely known); some even offer their own services like food and clothing pantries. Any neighborhood effort must fully engage the churches—not only are they established, they are links to untapped funding sources. Also, while the parishioners of some of the churches no longer live in the community, by all accounts they still have strong local ties, and they are likely to be among the first to move back as they witness its rebirth. Organizations like Trinity Institution's Family and Neighborhood Resource Center<sup>14</sup> and the Capital City Mission and others are the obvious places to strengthen comprehensive substance abuse and mental illness programs. Often, the people served by these organizations will be in need of job training and placement, literacy classes, and volunteer opportunities.

**62. Implement street beautification programs.** Trees and ornamentals should be planted street by street by the City and with each revitalization project undertaken (e.g., the Jared Holt

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<sup>14</sup> The FNRC provided services to 500 new people last year, its first year of operation, all of whom were new to Trinity's services.

Wax Factory project). Vacant lots should be a target for side-lot programs, as well as for community volunteering efforts (led, perhaps, by the new block associations, South End Improvement Corporation, church groups, etc). This could also be accomplished by landlords who have been “sentenced” to community service. “Green links” between key amenities (Giffen School, Howe Library, Schuyler Mansion, Lincoln Park, etc) should be established. Street trees should be planted at all bus stops.

**63. Begin night-lighting of historic or important buildings.** This is the next step in image-making for the South End. The most prominent and historic buildings, like Schuyler Mansion, the churches, and Giffen School, should be lit at night. Also, ensure that public spaces, particularly Lincoln Park, bus stops, large expanses like the DMV parking lot, and streets have adequate, pleasant lighting.



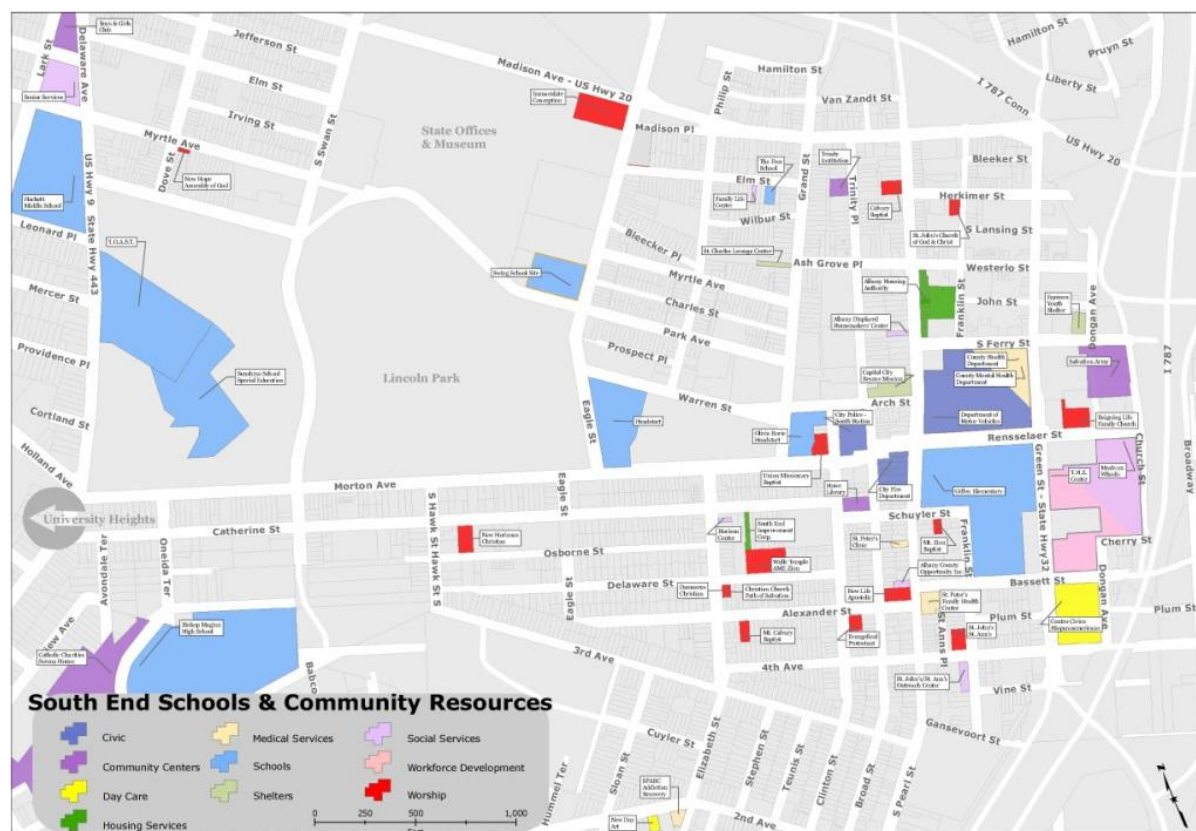
Night-lighting can help distinguish important buildings, like St. John's Church

#### 4.3.3 Expanding Community Capacity

The key challenge for neighborhood stabilization will be mobilization; for neighborhood improvement, it will be institutional sustainability.

***The South End is well served by its community organizations.*** (See Map 11) The South End Action Committee is a coalition of South End residents, businesses and other neighborhood stakeholders, with a history, when funding was more ready, of community renewal projects. They remain the key watchdog and advocate for the South End. The South End Improvement Corporation (SEIC), a community-based housing service serving the entire South End and its various neighborhood associations, provides modest, targeted homeowner assistance (grants for small repairs, home buyers education, marketing assistance), and coordinated quality of life services (e.g. assistance for senior citizens homeowners).





**Map 11: Schools & Community Resources**

There are a number of church groups, with congregations mostly comprised of current and past South End residents. The Capital City Rescue Mission is a church-sponsored non-profit organization committed to a range of community and social services. These include providing emergency food, clothing, and shelter. Their headquarters are on South Pearl Street near Warren Street.

The Albany Housing Authority is a major presence in the community, since 46 percent of its housing inventory is located here, as is its headquarters (on South Pearl Street near Ferry Street), and it is strongly committed to developing new homeownership and rental opportunities.

Trinity Institution, just north of the core South End planning area, has been providing services for more than 85 years. Trinity provides a full range of after school services, youth services, and family support services critical to strengthening family life and building the foundation for the social and educational development of youth.

In these groups, the South End now has at its disposal an important array of “implementers” who are willing to act, and now it is time to identify the proper people and organizations to see the South End Plan through implementation and beyond.

***Each of these organizations is limited in their mandate, funding or capacity to tackle all of the challenges and opportunities presented by the South End.*** SEAC has the mandate, but neither the staff nor a board able to secure significant funding. SEIC has the technical know-how, but not the ambition, as it is currently constituted. Of all of the church groups, the Capital City Rescue Mission has the most sophistication and best track record; but for good reason having to do with its present funding sources, the Rescue Mission dispenses with government financing, which would be a prerequisite for the neighborhood revitalization effort. The Housing Authority has all of the above, but is not a disinterested party. The South End Partnership for Safe Families, partially funded by the County and which is represented on SEAC, was created to address these issues. It has done well to coordinate service providers and organize community events, and should be strengthened in funding and mandate.

Finally, ***the City is hard-pressed to provide money to any one organization.*** The days of federal largesse seem to be over for the foreseeable future. The State is waking up to its fiscal crunch, the City is already experiencing. The County is focused elsewhere in terms of any substantial funding. The City and other funders will be understandably reluctant to provide money to one community (and community based organization) and not the other.

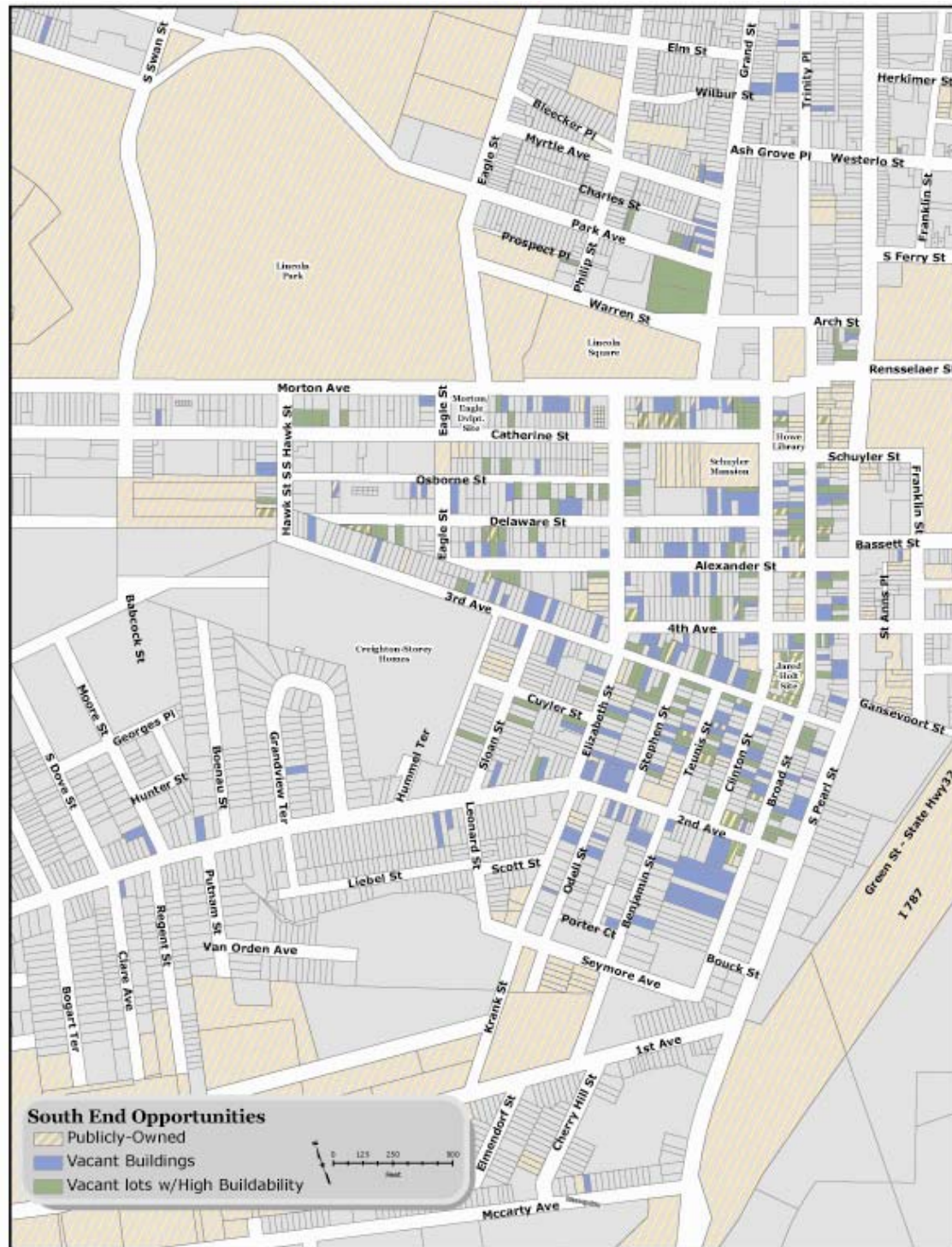
#### **4.3.4 Recommendations**

**64. Consider developing a city-wide community development corporation (CDC).** This CDC would be devoted to coordinating City policy with neighborhood revitalization efforts (like the Capital South Plan), acquiring and stabilizing abandoned properties, and dispensing City funds, CDBG monies. This organization would work closely with neighborhood organizations like SEAC and SEIC to provide funding and technical assistance for those efforts. The most obvious organization to undertake such a city-wide role is Capital City Housing (CCH), whose capacity will soon be increased with a full-time executive director.

**65. The CDC should target CDBG funds to one neighborhood or project each year,** in order to achieve economies of scale and damper politically charted competition for funds between neighborhoods. Instead of being spread thinly across the city, every neighborhood would have its turn, and the CDBG funds would have noticeable impacts. To do this, neighborhoods must identify where and how funds will be spent, and how the CDBG funds will leverage existing public and private investment.

**66. Explore enabling legislation to strengthen homesteading efforts.** The State of New York recently adopted legislation providing tax incentives for homeowners in low-income census tracts who rehabilitate their historic houses. The State of Connecticut enacted similar legislation,

but it has not been widely used. The problem is that the projects are too small to warrant the review process, which as of this writing (in both Connecticut and New York State) remains too undefined to put money at risk. A series of minor reforms, consistent with the intent of the legislators, is likely in order. The South End is a logical place to test a reformed program, given the building-by-building effort entailed, and, of course, given its location in the State's capital, within sight of the legislature. To this end, the City and local representatives should urge reform, with the South End as the pilot project. Map 12 shows the many buildings in poor condition (in blue) and the many vacant parcels with high buildability (in green), where residential programs of these types may be tested.



**Map 12: Residential Opportunity Sites**

**67. Continue to support the South End Partnership for Safe Families.** As noted previously, the Partnership is a successful organization that has begun to bridge the communication gap between the many service providers in the South End. The Partnership should be fully sup-

ported with additional resources (i.e. funds, and if necessary, staff) so that it may enhance its services and become more widely known as a “one-stop-shop.” In addition, the Partnership has a unique opportunity to become a *social networking* (as opposed to merely social services networking) group, bringing a diversity of residents together at picnics, barbeques, concerts, and other public social events.

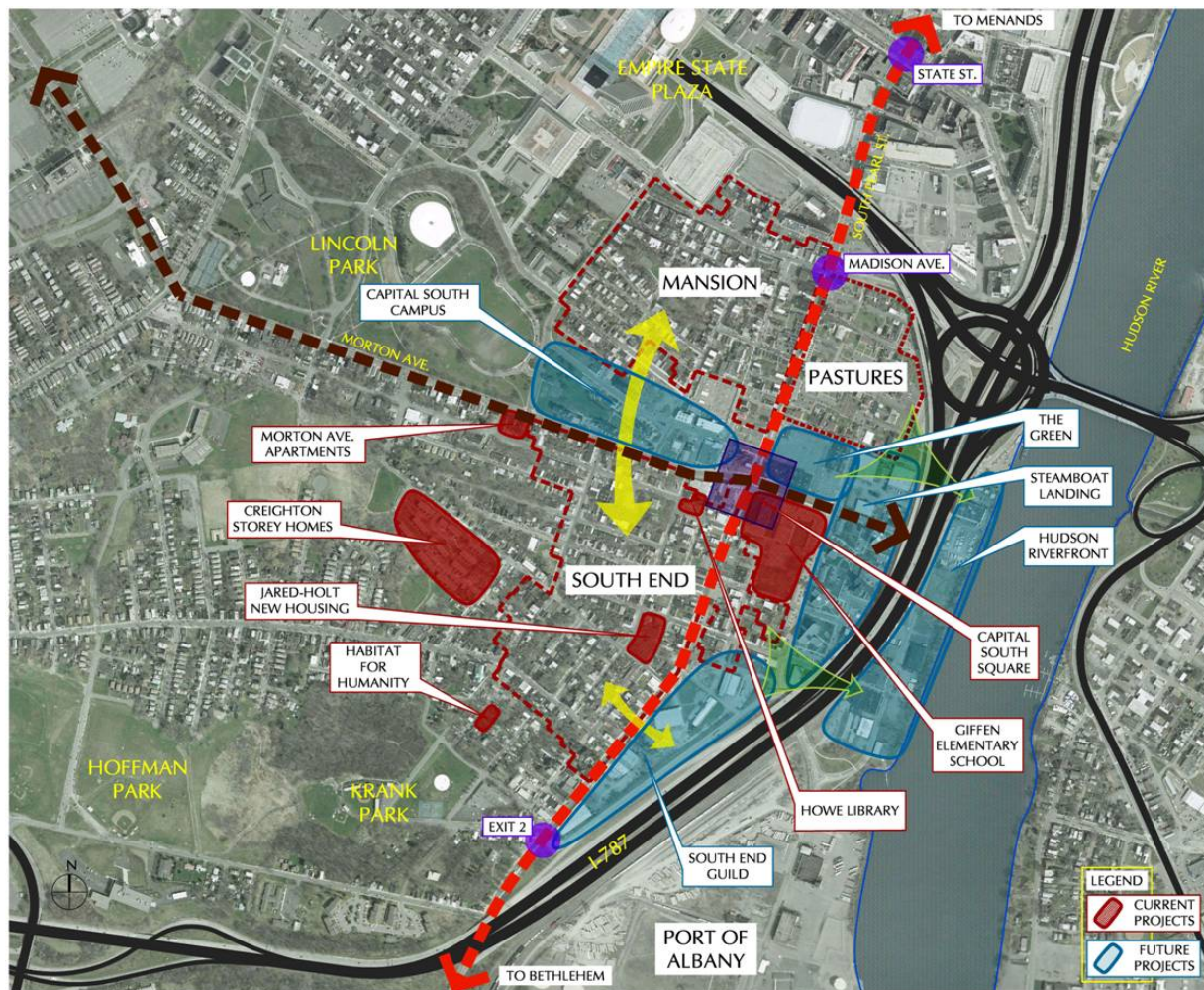


## 5 GROW THE SOUTH END

***As the neighborhood becomes more viable from a market point of view, the fuller ambitions of residents, property owners, businesses and advocates can start to take form.*** As emphasized, right now the math simply does not work without significant infusions of subsidy and technical assistance. If the first phase represented stabilization, and the second phase improvement and confidence, then this phase represents expansion and invigoration, and enhanced connections between the core of the South End to the greater Capital South community, downtown, University Heights, the Hudson River, and indeed the entire region.

***Some of the recommendations in this chapter will seem visionary—and they are.*** Market, ownership, physical, political, and social conditions will change in unforeseen ways in the next five years.

Certainly, this vision is contingent on added momentum for the region's economic expansion, and diminished interest on the part of Albany's suburbs to absorb the concomitant development. But without long-term vision and planning, infrastructure will be replaced as is or as opportunity presents, with missed opportunities for new and better parks, schools, connections, jobs, and upward mobility. Map 13 below highlights current projects and opportunity sites, and the potential to use good planning to re-link neighborhoods.



Map 13: Current Projects and Future Opportunity Sites

## 5.1 PHYSICAL PLANNING

### 5.1.1 Developing Mixed-Income Housing and Community Amenities

***Lincoln Square is indeed the top priority for redevelopment.*** Lincoln Square, a 4.5-acre superblock public housing site consisting of three remaining high rise towers and 191 housing units, is a blighting influence on the entire neighborhood and is in imminent need of major systems upgrades, for which there is insufficient and diminishing Federal funding. Plans to demolish the towers and replace them with low-rise, contextual townhouse development have been in place for at least the last seven years, but the funding for such a large scale project has not been realized due to the lack of Federal and State funding subsidies. Straddling the ridge

formed between Warren Street and Morton Avenue, Lincoln Square is one of the most visible properties in the city. It represents one of the best opportunities to create a new image for the South End. What happens at this site will set the tone for the entire neighborhood, with significant implications for the Mansion neighborhood as well.

***There is community consensus that mixed-income housing is the preferred way to replace substandard units and improve low-income housing.***



This includes renovating and replacing most of the towers now owned by the Albany Housing Authority. Since in principle there should be no net loss of affordable units, mixed-income housing would require considerable increases in the number of housing units. Thus a plan must be created to substantially increase the neighborhood's population, without undermining its historic character.

***Mixed-income housing is mainly about harnessing the interest of developers to build market rate housing, with sufficient profit to “cross subsidize” the low- and moderate-income units.*** There was a time when the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development funded such projects through the HOPE VI program. Given fiscal constraints and split legislatures, it is unlikely that such funds will be forthcoming in the moderate future, or that they will be adequate to the challenges in the South End. This invariably directs development to the sites that have the most to offer in terms of amenities, such as those fronting on parks and waterfront.

***Note that we are here addressing substantial development.*** Incremental development—much of it mixed-income—would have taken place through homesteading of two-family homes, Habitat's self-help housing, and infill projects like the Jared Holt Wax Factory. But a comparison of the unit counts (about 30 units at Jared Holt compared to 191 current units at Lincoln Square) illustrates the dimension of what needs to be done.

### **5.1.2 Recommendations**

***68. The redesign of Lincoln Square must respond to the site's intrinsic qualities:*** (1) the topography of the site, which offers fantastic views of downtown, the Capitol building complex, and the region east of the Hudson River, (2) its location along Morton Avenue, one of the city's and South End's most important arterials, and (3) its seeming location within Lincoln Park, the city's second largest, if underutilized, public park. Further, redevelopment must include demoli-



tion of towers and construction of replacement housing both on- and off-site, throughout the neighborhood. And finally, redevelopment must look to the needs of the South End and adjoining Mansion neighborhood in terms of quality of life or economic development.

**69. Embrace the community's vision of a renewed and reconnected Lincoln Square.** As a re-use for site, the South End community has surfaced and embraced the idea of developing an educational campus at Lincoln Square. This campus should be geared towards the needs of South End residents, and it should draw people of similar backgrounds and interests from other communities. Ideally, the uses would represent a hybrid of training, educational, and community functions, connecting students to the educational opportunities and technological advances that are driving prosperity in other communities around the Capital District. Indeed, the most obvious connections are to downtown, just north on Eagle Street, and the Medical Center and University Heights area, less than one mile west, up Morton Avenue. Map 14 below illustrates a future educational corridor, with Lincoln Square as an anchor. Blue shading highlights concentrations of educational institutions.



A redeveloped Lincoln Square Campus (in red) should be a link between neighborhoods.



**Map 14: Capital South Educational Corridor**

As envisioned, this campus would be an affiliation of higher education, government, and business similar to that of University Heights and perhaps consisting many of those same entities: Albany Medical College, Albany Law School, Sage College, Albany Pharmaceutical College, etc. Other possibilities include U at Albany, RPI, and Hudson Valley Community College.

In terms of design, the campus should not be a typical highway-style community college design, nor should it be a typical suburban, internalized design. It should be a more urban campus, consisting of several buildings fronting Morton Avenue, with obvious and well-planned pedestrian connections through the site to reconnect the Mansion neighborhood and the core of the South End. Permanent green space, ideally relating to Lincoln Park and the community garden, should be incorporated, and safe, inviting pedestrian connections between the campus, University Heights, and the Giffen Memorial Elementary School area are vital.





The Capital South Campus should be designed to be open to the community, provide access to and through the site, in a scale consistent with Morton Avenue, and should be low enough to preserve views of Downtown and Empire State Plaza.

**70. Conversations about programming for this campus, to determine whether it is realistic and feasible, must begin as soon as possible**, as noted previously in Chapter 4.1. The SEAC must first determine how to advance this educational concept to university, college, and institutional partners, as well as to the City, State, and even Federal governments (depending on funding sources, and bearing in mind that the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development must approve the Housing Authority's demolition and disposition activities). While this Plan acknowledges that a partner may not emerge immediately, it notes that it will be at least three years before the entire site can be readied for development and residents can be provided with new housing opportunities. It is during this time that outreach must take place. If an educational campus is feasible, then the community should pursue it with all due speed, being sure to incorporate it into the community, as shown in this sample design scheme.

If a housing plan is to be the course of action, this Plan recommends the AHA, in partnership with the City and SEAC, issue a Request for Expressions of Interest (REI) to attract partners for residential redevelopment. The REI should address the opportunities provided by the site's location, and should contain design guidelines, detailed in the Appendix.

**71. Consider replacing a portion of the housing on only a portion of the site.** Should discussions regarding an educational campus not bear fruit within a reasonable period of time (two years or so, depending on AHA's progress in deprogramming the site), the SEAC and community should re-assess the situation and move on to the **second best re-use of Lincoln Square: mixed-income housing**.

A mixed-income, low-rise housing plan would be an excellent re-use of the site. The sale or lease of the site will provide a much-needed revenue source to support the AHA's housing rehabilitation and development throughout the neighborhood, and the redevelopment of the site would still have the potential to reconnect the surrounding neighborhoods.

Earlier plans had shown the towers replaced by townhouses spread out across the entire site. As alternatives, a number of townhouses could be built along Morton Avenue, enjoying views to the north; or one tower could be retained, either along Morton Avenue to enjoy the same view, or along Grand Street to provide “eyes on the street” for this important pedestrian route. While the higher-up Morton Avenue tower would enjoy higher redevelopment values, the lower-down Grand Street tower might be devoted to senior housing, which would further reduce the amount of parking that would have to be provided. In addition, given the site's location and proximity to downtown, parking requirements for new development should be relaxed.

***72. Consider expansion of Lincoln Park as an alternative, inclusive of adjoining property.***

Lincoln Park is hardly used partly because of low population counts; something that this plan seeks to remediate through new development and rehab. Lincoln Park also suffers from a lack of attractions other than the seasonal swimming pool. The added acreage represented by Lincoln Square could be used for expanded park programming, e.g., a daycare center serving both the South End and Mansion neighborhood; a playground; expanded community garden like that across the street; basketball courts. With no or only one tower, Warren Street can be retired and reused as a park boulevard or for public parking. The so-called pump house (which more closely resembles a small armory) could be reused for indoor activities that benefit from the heavy load bearing floors and wide spans, such as a daycare center, indoor courts, a community theater, artist work lofts, or even a recreation center if the Giffen community center proves impractical. All of these alternatives would benefit Lincoln Park.

***73. Consider joint development to make these options more practical.*** For example, senior housing in downtown might be relocated to the retained tower, paid for out of the profits of the downtown project. The new park elements could be offset through zoning incentives directing development to the several adjoining vacant lots. The reuse of Warren Street for parking might be through a shared parking arrangement with adjoining privately funded projects, including one proposed by the publicly minded Capital City Rescue Mission.

(Though discussed in the prior chapter, it should be noted that any redevelopment will require relocating the residents into newly-rehabilitated or developed ownership and rental units throughout the neighborhood—a multi-year, multimillion dollar effort. Identifying and securing

replacement housing sites within the neighborhood thus becomes the first priority, which is how this aspect of the project came to be discussed in the earlier chapter.)

**74. Create a revenue stream for the Housing Authority's sponsorship of mixed-income projects.** Any redevelopment scheme other than for affordable housing at Lincoln Square or Steamboat Square must, for all sorts of obvious and legal reasons, attempt to maximize the revenue return to the Housing Authority. Where private development of Housing Authority land is involved, the project should, if possible, incorporate a land lease under which the Authority is provided with constant revenue stream. But there is an additional option even where there is private development of property not owned by the Housing Authority. The rezoning for high-density, market-rate housing should be linked to "inclusionary" stipulations, whereby affordable housing units are provided on-site, or a comparable expenditure is dedicated to off-site creation or maintenance of affordable housing units. The Housing Authority could be one of (if not the) designated recipient of such funds should developers avail themselves of the off-site option.

**75. Redevelop and intensify uses on the DMV site.** The Department of Motor Vehicles building at the intersection of Morton Avenue and South Pearl Street (see Map 15 below) presents an enormous opportunity for mixed-use or commercial redevelopment. The County owns the property; this is to good purpose, as it creates jobs and provides a service. However, retail is a more appropriate ground floor use. On-site parking must be set back from the street, ideally behind, to the side, or even under the current building, and should be open to patrons of all businesses on Morton Avenue and South Pearl Street. The site should be intensified in use, befitting its location at the intersection of two of the city's most important arterials: South Pearl and Morton. One option is mixed commercial, retail, and residential uses, involving the current DMV and Health Department lessees, as well as senior housing above a small grocery store. The senior housing could be built involving Housing Authority sponsorship as part of the "musical chairs" associated with the reuse of parkland on Lincoln Square, or, in the longer term, redevelopment of Steamboat Square.



**Map 15: The DMV site at Morton & South Pearl**

Regardless of the land uses, the parking should be shared and open to the public; the ground floor should have retail or other public uses; the buildings should front on and relate to South Pearl; the intersection and streetscape should be improved with bump-outs, street trees, attractive bus shelters, and other pedestrian amenities; so that the development no longer has a shopping center layout that belongs in the suburbs and not an historic neighborhood.

**76. Create Capital South Square.** South Pearl Street links the South End with downtown and the theater district. Pearl Street's "pearls" (including the entertainment district at North Pearl and Clinton, the government center at Pearl and State, the Times Union Center at South Pearl and Beaver, and the future convention center), should be enhanced and better



Capital South Square would be framed by Giffen School (red building, bottom) and a redeveloped DMV site (in yellow, top).

connected. Redeveloping the DMV site and locating the new buildings on the existing parking lot would free up roughly two acres of land on the north side of Rensselaer Street between South Pearl Street and Green Street, and would make a public square possible to stretch the “string of pearls” further south. This new green space, called Capital South Square, would function as a classic civic square, anchored by strong community institutions and amenities on all sides—Giffen School, the Police Station and Courthouse, and the redeveloped DMV. Capital South Square would provide a green link between these community uses, help connect the Morton Avenue educational campus to the Hudson River, and cement the Morton/South Pearl intersection’s importance in the Capital South community. It would also be a major component of the South End Greenway, or “SEGway” (see section 5.3.2 below).



An artist's rendering of Capital South Square and the Morton/South Pearl intersection, looking northwest towards Empire State Plaza. The redeveloped DMV site is at right, and the Fire Station is to the left.

Map 16 (following page) and the rendering above illustrate a redesigned Morton/South Pearl intersection, a redesigned DMV site, and a new Capital South Square.





Map 16: Grow the South End

**77. Approach potential grocery store chains and independent grocery stores that sell chain products about joint public/private/community sponsorship of a store at the DMV location.** Previous supermarkets at the DMV site have failed, and more recently Price Chopper and Hannaford Supermarkets both explored the South End as a location, apparently concluding that the population count was too low. And so it is: at the industry's rule of thumb of two square feet of supermarket space per capita, the South End's roughly 8,000 residents can only support about 15,000 square feet grocery store space on their own.<sup>15</sup> Thus any grocery that opens in this location will have to attract existing and new residents, plus shoppers who might work downtown and commute home via the South end and 787, in order to be successful.

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<sup>15</sup> By comparison, the typical *supermarket* today is larger than 50,000 square feet, and a more modern Wegman's is at least 80,000 square feet, and often up to 125,000 square feet.

Even so, the major chains may feel that they would be competing with themselves, since so many commuters would otherwise patronize their stores nearby to the south and west. In this case, the City and community would do well to focus on a specialty supermarket or an independent grocery store operator. For example, a 28,000 square foot store in Voorheesville is partnered with Hannaford Supermarkets, which provides a steady inventory and even a market image. This is an excellent model for the South End to follow. Also, in Northeast Philadelphia, for instance, the City supported a community development corporation plan involving a family-owned supermarket in a similarly low-income neighborhood. The result has been very successful, and is mirrored in other projects such as those by New Newark (in Newark, NJ) and the Mid Bronx Desperadoes (in Bronx, NY).

**78. Redevelop mixed-income housing along Green, Church and even Broadway.** These sites are largely privately owned, but also include some property owned by the County. The Housing Authority's holdings in this area include Steamboat Square, another tower-style project, parts of which have been de-tenanted and could be demolished, raising the same issues as discussed above for Lincoln Square.<sup>16</sup> This development can go forward on an incremental basis, as partners are identified and the housing market re-energizes. Redesign of these sites should follow appropriate urban planning and design principles that re-knit the superblocks into the South End fabric.

**79. Revisit the design of Interstate 787 and remove the elevated highway.** To realize the full economic value of sites in this part of the neighborhood, redevelopment east of South Pearl and



I-787 is a barrier between the South End and the Hudson River.

Green Streets should be linked to the “boulevarding” of this stretch of Interstate 787—thus substituting something that diminishes housing values (the elevated highway) with something that enhances values (views of and access to the riverfront). The impact, in a strong regional housing market, would be a more modest version of that experienced in connection with other highway-to-boulevard projects, such as, Boston’s Big Dig, Manhattan’s Westway and San Francisco’s Embarcadero. (All of these seemed

equally implausible when first mentioned.) Transportation agencies may not yet be ready for such a project, but research indicates that is often cheaper to tear down and re-design an elevated highway than to rebuild it in place. This is illustrated in Map 16, above.

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<sup>16</sup> There are 306 units in the Steamboat Square towers, and 44 units in the Steamboat Square townhomes, along the west side of Green Street.



Rebuilding 787 as a boulevard with multiple crossings between both the Pastures and South End and the Hudson Riverfront may be possible in the long term. Elevated highways generally come of age every twenty to thirty years, which corresponds to the age of this portion of Interstate 787. As evidence: the New York State Department of Transportation is now spending millions of dollars replacing rocker bearings on the bridge portion of the highway because two years ago a section failed, dropping three feet, and almost coming down entirely. As further justification, redesigning the elevated expressway as a boulevard would not only (1) open up the neighborhood to the riverfront, and (2) open up land for redevelopment (as described above), it would also (3) save the public the expense of tearing down a Housing Authority project unsuitably fronting the elevated highway, (4) divert traffic off the highway and onto South Pearl Street to the benefit of local businesses, and (5) provide better access to the proposed Albany convention center. Also, as mentioned previously, any future light rail or bus rapid transit route through this area should include a station stop near the Capital South Square. This would reinforce links between the South End and Bethlehem and the South End and Downtown.

**80. Build out the South End Guild.** With planning begun in previous stages, the Guild should be well on its way to full development, already providing construction and trades services to help rebuild the South End. Now is the time to realize the full potential of the Guild not only to serve the needs of the South End, but the entire City, and beyond. Not only will the Guild provide an industrious image for the southern gateway to the neighborhood, its range of services and training will be an important resource for City residents.



Top: 180° panorama of Gansevoort Street, looking east from South Pearl Street, down Gansevoort.  
Bottom: The same view, showing an artist's rendering of the South End Guild at Gansevoort Street, looking east from South Pearl Street.



Above: Rendering of the South End Guild, bounded on the right (east) by 787, on the left (west) by South Pearl Street, and on the top (north) by Gansevoort Street.

## 5.2 WORKFORCE AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

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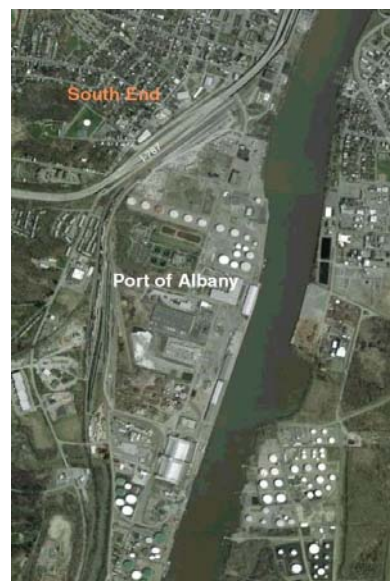
### 5.2.1 Enhancing Economic Opportunity for South End Residents

***Once the South End is stabilized in terms of population, it will prove more attractive to retailers.*** Major retailing chains base their locational decisions not only on stable and improving demographics, but also on the availability and visibility of sites. This especially includes businesses that would benefit from visibility and access from Interstate 787, as well as business that look to capture downtown commuters. And, local businesses that often seek out niche markets, providing services demanded by existing and new residents, will benefit from pedestrian traffic and increased resident buying power.

### 5.2.2 Recommendations

***81. Link new commercial development to workforce development and access-to-job strategies,*** as described above for existing employers. Organizations dedicated to improving access to jobs for South End and other low- and moderate-income workers can seek out partnerships with these employers; and they can fashion training and job placement strategies with them in mind. The City can provide zoning and tax incentives, as well as tie approvals, to local hiring. (Refer to Chapter 4.2.)

**82. Pursue destination commercial development at the Port of Albany.** Other, suburban sites have already snatched up most of the big box stores. But these stores are now entering a new age where they cannibalize from one another, especially taking advantage of the periodic shakedowns in the retail sector. (Witness the rise, fall and re-rise of retailers like Toys-R-Us; or the evolution from 10,000 square-foot A&Ps, to 40,000 square-foot Waldbaum's, to the 80,000+ square-foot Wal-Mart.) With its enormous acreages, as well as highway access, the Port of Albany would invite such uses.



Above: The Port of Albany, just to the southeast of the South End.

**83. Pursue community-oriented commercial development between South Pearl Street and the Interstate 787 service road, near the new South End Guild.** These sites have the highway visibility and access to be attractive to retailers. The Habitat for Humanity proposal for their facility (at Seymour and Broad) and a large-scale hardware store at this location is consistent with its latent value.



**84. Attract a vocational or community college to Lincoln Square, as part of the educational campus redevelopment plan** and complement it with a full array of job training and placement resources.

Community colleges have two main advantages for low-income residents. First, tuition costs are obviously lower. Second, locations and class times are convenient, allowing students to juggle home, school and work responsibilities. The community college could be a new institution, or allied with the Hudson Valley Community College (HVCC) or University at Albany, whichever is most politically and economically practical. The community college could focus on growth sectors, not individual firms. In Albany, the existing major clusters are education and government, and the next generation of growth sectors include technology and health care. Thus a focus on applied sciences, with vocational, technical, and preparatory programs, would be a natural link to employment opportunities.

**85. Promote local entrepreneurship.** Local jobs and upward mobility can also be promoted through the development of local businesses and the revitalization of commercial corridors. The Pearl Street Coliseum is an example of a local success in this regard, where local developer renovated a commercial building into a mini-mall with flexible layouts and shared services for dozens of local entrepreneurs and small businesses.



In addition, local companies, including those in the Port of Albany, should be supported in the following ways: (1) technical assistance in bidding on City, County, and State procurement contracts; (2) technical and financial packaging assistance for small business entrepreneurs and community-based firms; (3) help for local businesses that might be displaced by new development projects to find locations in neighborhood business centers; (4) target companies seeking to enter these sectors (through incubators or no-interest loans) and target potential employees for these sectors (apprenticeships, etc).

**86. In the same vein: lend support to incubation of “home-grown” businesses**—with

low-cost rental space (i.e., formal incubators), public markets, and micro-enterprise and small business loans. The cost of space is often a prime barrier to new business formation. Subsidized space, which becomes incubator space when coupled with shared business services, can help stimulate new business formation.

The recurring problem of incubators is the need to graduate successful businesses from the low-cost space to market rate space. However, they can be the right solution when a few key ingredients are available: a building in search of a reuse, a strong community that can support new entrepreneurs, the potential for a public market, etc. One business incubator already exists in Albany, just north of Downtown. Physical and informational connections between it and the South End should be strengthened, and businesses graduating from, that space can be guided to South Pearl Street.



**87. Ease the startup process through small-scale lending.** Such loans avoid the issues of incubators, since businesses are still on their own to locate space. Successful loan programs are subject to the same due diligence with regards to underwriting as would commercial loans; yet, they can afford to take on more risk and provide lower rates due to public backing. The Capital District Community Loan Fund makes loans ranging from \$500 to \$35,000, focusing on women, minority, and low-income business owners. This should be fully leveraged by the community. The South End Action Committee should work in concert with Workforce NY and the Workforce Reinvestment Board to identify entrepreneurs in need of Loan Fund assistance.

Above: A small business owner in the South Pearl Street Coliseum helps a customer.

## 5.3 QUALITY OF LIFE

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### 5.3.1 Beautifying the South End

***The South End is rich in amenity and poor in image.*** For residents and passersby alike, the image of the neighborhood is created along its key corridors and destinations. The corridors include South Pearl Street and Morton Avenue/Rensselaer Street, and to a lesser extent Green Street, Second Street and Elizabeth/Krank Streets – all of which suffer from evident disinvestment of adjoining property. The destinations include the Schuyler Mansion, Lincoln Park, Giffen Memorial Elementary School, the County Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) building—of which the first are two are underutilized, and the latter two in need of architectural upgrade. The neighborhood’s most important “arrival point” is where South Pearl and Morton/Rensselaer intersect, and where the DMV and Giffen are sited. This “100 percent intersection” (in real estate lingo) is now occupied by parking, buildings that turn away, and cars, cars and more cars.



Community gardens and green spaces help beautify and enhance the neighborhood.

***The South End is also disconnected from some of the key features that have been central to the revitalization of other neighborhoods.*** These include downtown (only blocks to the north), the Hudson River, other neighborhoods further along in the renewal process (e.g. Mansion, Center Square), and major institutions (teaching and research hospitals, not to mention the seat of State government). The development of ***strategic gateways*** will enhance these connections and create real estate value.

### 5.3.2 Recommendations

***88. Strengthen ties to downtown further.*** Pedestrian and streetscape improvements to South Pearl Street can help reconnect it to Downtown, the arena, the planned convention center, and the hub of employment activity. Consideration should be given, once property values improve, to extending the Downtown Albany Business Improvement District (DABID) south of Westerlo down South Pearl Street. In the future, if a light rail or bus rapid transit route is developed on Route 32 a station stop should be located in the South End, most appropriately near the Capital South Square. This would reinforce links between the South End and Bethlehem and the South End and Downtown.

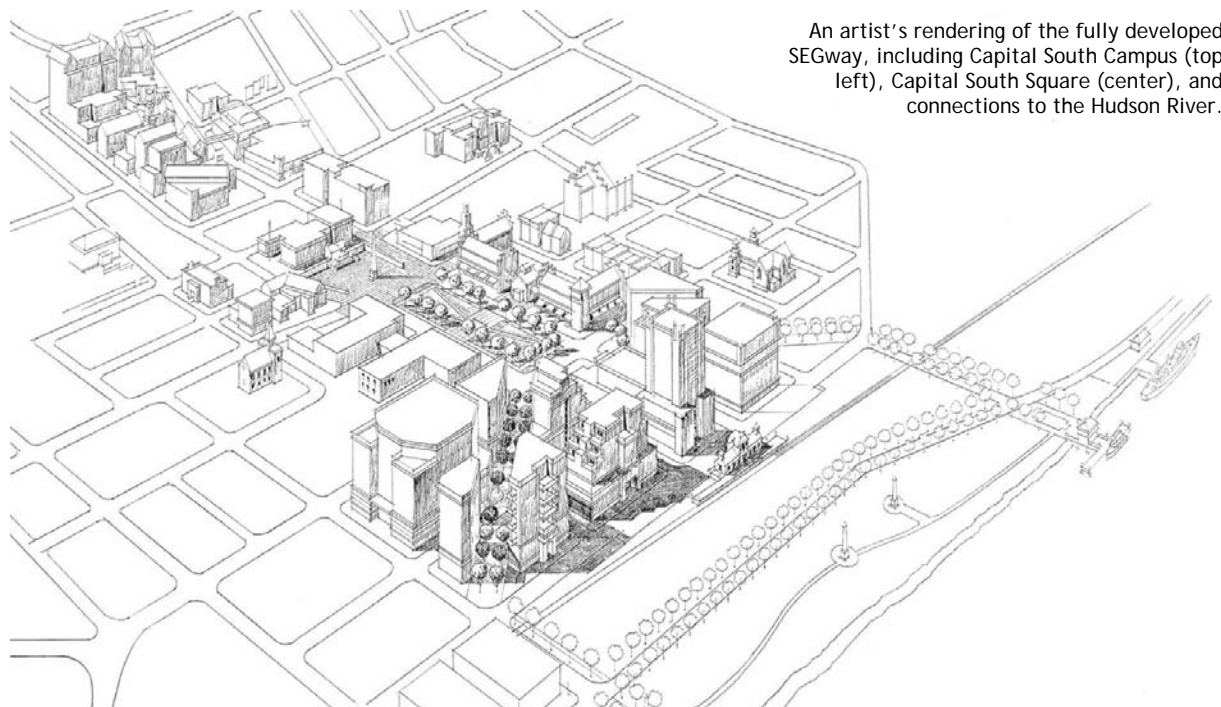


**89. Enhance the quality of Morton Avenue and Rensselaer Street** through the redevelopment of vacant buildings and streetscape improvements. A landscaped and pedestrian- and bicycle friendly boulevard will improve this important connector to the west, linking to University Heights and countless job opportunities. This is the time, as revitalization of the surrounding housing stock is taking place, to work with DOT to **transform Morton Avenue from an automobile thoroughfare into the SEGway (South End Greenway), a transit-, pedestrian, and bicycle-friendly boulevard connecting Lincoln Park to the Hudson Riverfront** (see Map 17).



**Map 17: SEGway (South End Greenway)**

The Capital South Plan places a great deal of emphasis on re-connecting existing and new residents of the South End with adjacent neighborhoods, with employment centers, and with the unique beauty of the Hudson River. ***The SEGway is the unifying feature that can support and enhance these connections. It will be an asset that encourages investment, increases property values, and knits neighborhoods together.***

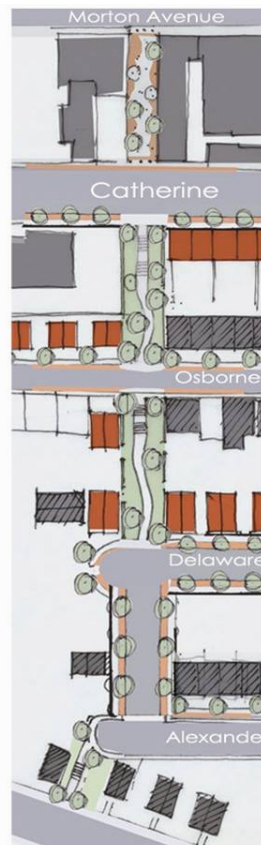


An artist's rendering of the fully developed SEGway, including Capital South Campus (top left), Capital South Square (center), and connections to the Hudson River.

Continuous bicycle lanes, improved sidewalks and streetscapes, improved transit service, and better transit connections will link residential neighborhoods with employment centers, shopping and services, parks, and the riverfront. In the future, bus rapid transit service on Route 32 or rail service along the river will connect north and south, and a water taxi service from a new riverfront park can provide regular connections to Corning Preserve and across the river to Rensselaer and Troy.

**90. Extend streets to break up overly long blocks and connect sub-areas** as well as strengthen the connection between the South End and adjoining neighborhoods. As examples: Eagle Street should be extended through to Third Avenue; Delaware Street should be extended to Third Street; Elizabeth Street should connect with Phillip Street; and Grand Street to Catherine Street. In all these instances, the priority is on pedestrians and greening; indeed, it is likely that lot configurations and/or topography will make one or a number of these impractical for roads.

An extended and enhanced Eagle Street would be an important connection between Morton and Third Avenues, and could provide opportunities for infill development and rehabilitation.



Close Eagle between Morton and Catherine to thru-traffic

New Row Infill Row Houses

Create Shared Local & Pedestrian Greenway

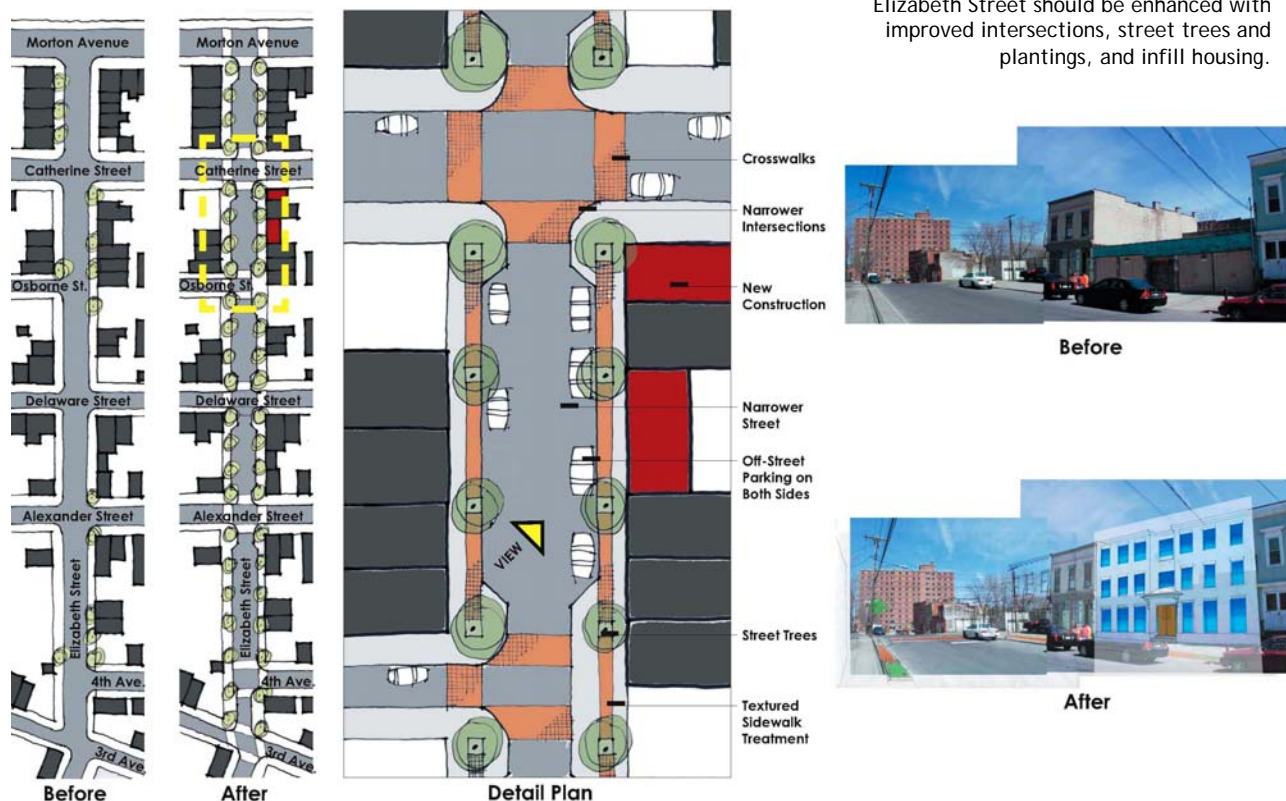
Create New Detached Infill Housing

Open Pedestrian Link to 3rd Avenue

**Eagle Street Connector**

**91. Embellish Elizabeth Street.** Once an important street in the interior of the neighborhood, Elizabeth now feels abandoned despite the relative absence of vacant buildings. Action should be taken to green the street and redevelop it as a residential core with street trees and pedestrian amenities. Residents have expressed need for a local bus route here; therefore, insofar as pedestrian safety is a key criterion for citing local bus stops, it should be given priority. A better image and better transit serving along Elizabeth Street will serve the entire interior of the neighborhood, and could eventually support small corner stores carrying everyday needs. See photos and design renderings below.



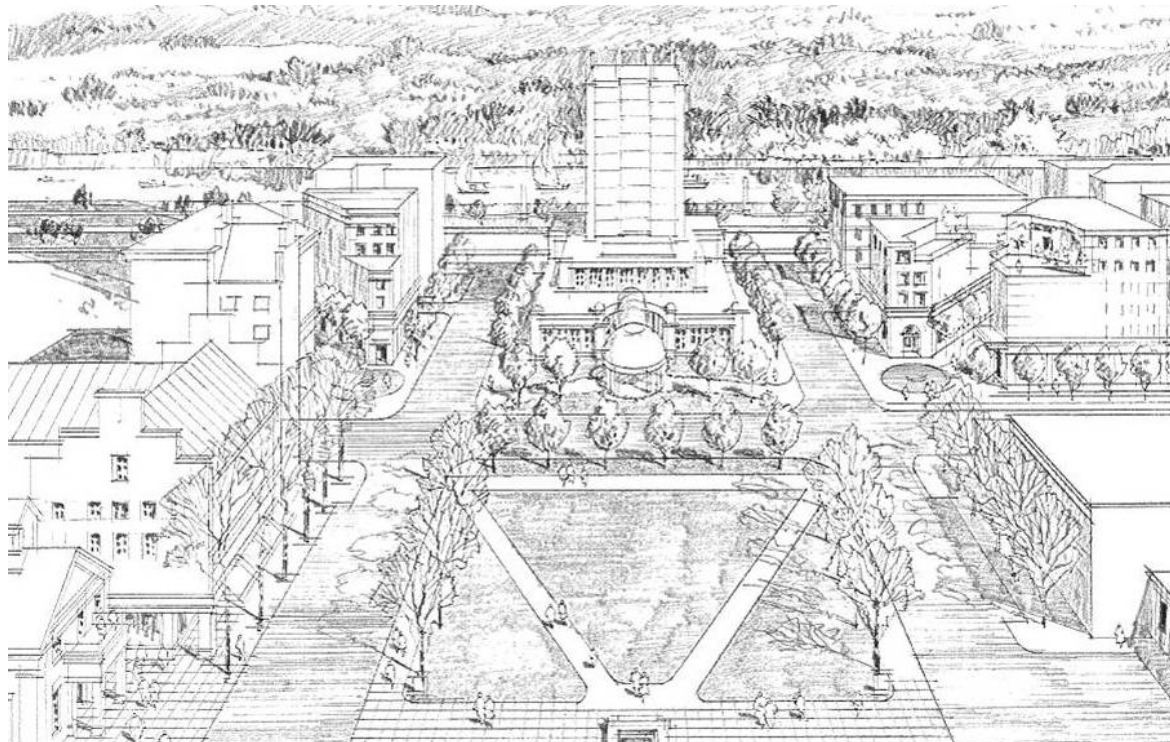


**92. Reveal the Schuyler Mansion to the public.** This landmark, along with the Howe Library, forms the historic core for the South End, but is hidden from the major streets like Morton Avenue by crumbling buildings and underutilized lots. The extension of Grand Street through to Catherine Street noted above would create a new “front door” for the Mansion. Revealing the Mansion may occur serendipitously, as the Union Missionary Baptist Church has proposed a parking lot for the properties on the west side of Clinton Street between Catherine Street and Morton Avenue. As this is in the Historic District, the Department of Development and Planning should work with the Church on design. Schuyler Street should be traffic-calmed (e.g., with cobblestones), landscaped (i.e., with trees), and highlighted for wayfinding. This would direct people to Schuyler Mansion as well as Howe Library. It would also provide a safe route for the students of Giffen School just across South Pearl Street, especially those students going to and from the library.



**93. Connect the South End to the Hudson Riverfront: create a wide, visible, safe, and beautified link under 787 to the River.** The Hudson River is one of Albany's most underutilized assets. The recent success developing the Corning Preserve speaks to the possibilities created by reclaiming the waterfront. In the South End, access to the waterfront will require a safe corridor under 787 and crossing the railroad tracks. While these are surmountable barriers given the right traffic and urban design treatments, the underpass below Interstate 787 will invariably remain a barrier, and many sites are privately owned. A connection like this is the lower-cost option when compared to re-engineering 787, which might prove infeasible given its height and its interchange with the South Mall Arterial and Routes 9 and 20. This would also provide a link from the South End to a bicycle and pedestrian waterfront corridor with connections to points north, west, and south.

The SEGway will connect the entire Capital South area with the Hudson River, creating new development opportunities and encouraging private



### 5.3.3 Long Term Community Capacity: Fostering Alliances

***The South End, to go beyond revitalization, will need to strike strategic alliances with neighbors;*** or better yet, to join in city-wide efforts. At the very least, the South End must join with Mansion and the Pastures on issues of common interest, like those relating to: the proposed Albany convention center, anti-crime measures, the proposed community center, downtown linkages, Giffen Memorial Elementary School, Lincoln Park, Lincoln Square, the Port of Albany, transit improvements, and so on.

### 5.3.4 Recommendations

***94. Use this plan as the “first draft” of the neighborhood’s position on the forthcoming citywide comprehensive plan.*** That plan will have to be based on citywide concerns, such as those emerging from the current citywide economic development strategy

***95. Explore a private/public partnership to undertake small and large projects, sometimes on a turnkey basis, for convenience and sometimes as a major initiative.*** Programs like site and land assemblage, housing opportunity zones, transferring sites and buildings at low or no cost, providing historic buildings assistance, and providing homebuyer counseling can all work in this regard. The City must empower an agency or department like the Albany Local Development Corporation (ALDC) with full powers, including condemnation and funding decisions. The ALDC’s goals should include tailoring its programs and responses on a lot-by-lot basis, and provided marketing and educational assistance (including efficient communication organizations like the Housing Authority and Historic Albany Foundation).



## **6 APPENDIX**





## 6.1 IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX

The following matrix provides a summary of the Plan's three phases and their areas of focus. "Lead parties" (the entity responsible for coordinating the implementation of each recommendation) and "key actors" (parties whose participation can be considered vital to the proper and effective implementation of each recommendation) have been preliminarily suggested for most recommendations. These lead parties and key actors will likely change and evolve over time.

<b>I. STABILIZE THE SOUTH END</b>			
Physical Planning			
<i>Objectives</i>	<i>Recommendations</i>	<i>Lead Party</i>	<i>Key Actors</i>
Stem abandonment and reward investment	1. Apply incentives and financial assistance for rehabilitation 2. Apply disincentives and penalties 3. Develop disposition plans for abandoned property 4. Reuse abandoned properties	DDP  Albany Common Council DDP SEAC, SEIC	ACDA, CPC and other lenders DDP, City, County Codes, Fire, Police, HAF, AHA
Plan for the neighborhood's re-development	5. Target areas around key historic anchors for preservation 6. Focus on historic preservation 7. Target concentrations of historic structures 8. Provide technical assistance for historic properties 9. Target grants/loans to historic rehabilitations 10. Employ tax incentives and subsidies 11. Employ an abatement program 12. Clean and green the vacant lots 13. Support new initiatives like Senior Rehab 14. Target new investment around new/re development 15. Target the area around the Jared Holt development	SEAC DDP DDP DDP ALDC  SENA SEIC SEAC SEAC	HAF, Codes HAF, Codes, Developers. HAF, Codes HAF, Codes     Coalition, SEIC, DGS
Workforce and Business Development			
<i>Objectives</i>	<i>Recommendations</i>	<i>Lead Party</i>	<i>Key Actors</i>
Enhance access to jobs	16. Focus on sectors not requiring college education	SEAC	Workforce Investment

	17. Direct programs to populations most in need 18. Develop “school to career” programs 19. Provide neighborhood computer stations and training 20. Expand transit service in the South End 21. Better connect the South End with employment centers	SEAC  SEAC SEAC	Board THE Center, Youth & Wkforce Services Social service providers Library CDTA, Capital South Neigh Coalition
<b>Quality of Life</b>			
<i>Objectives</i>	<i>Recommendations</i>	<i>Lead Party</i>	<i>Key Actors</i>
Reduce crime and increase residents’ participation	22. Increase police presence 23. Pursue a proactive crime prevention approach 24. Establish neighborhood watch groups 25. Focus on housing and property neglect 26. Prosecute owners of derelict properties 27. Re-establish Weed N Seed 28. Pursue public safety grant funding 29. Identify “block champions” 30. Upgrade Howe library	SENA SENA, SEIC SENA, SEIC, Police, DGS SEIC, SENA, SENA, SEIC SEIC, TI, Police  SENA Library	Police         Codes, Corp Counsel SENA
<b>Community Capacity</b>			
<i>Objectives</i>	<i>Recommendations</i>	<i>Lead Party</i>	<i>Key Actors</i>
Bolster neighborhood revitalization capacity	31. Continue SEIC and SEAC 32. Evolve SEAC 33. Develop a South End Neighborhood Association (SENA) 34. Develop a Capital South Neighborhood Coalition	Mayor, DDP Mayor  SENA, Mansion, Pastures	SENA, Coalition
<b>II. ENERGIZE THE SOUTH END</b>			
<b>Physical Planning</b>			
<i>Objectives</i>	<i>Recommendations</i>	<i>Lead Party</i>	<i>Key Actors</i>
Spur homeownership	35. Support sweat-equity and mission-driven programs 36. Transfer City- and County-owned property 37. Provide incentives for homeownership 38. Discourage displacement, absentee landlords, and speculation 39. Continue code enforcement	DDP DDP DDP, ACDA  Codes, Courts	NYS, City, County
Revise City regulations and en-	40. Develop a historic district guidebook	DDP	HAF

courage rehab and infill development	41. Revise or relax regulations to reinforce the design and nature of the South End 42. Ease permitting for older structures 43. Relax parking requirements for residences	DDP  Codes DDP	
Plan for the major opportunity sites	44. Plan for Lincoln Square's redevelopment 45. Actively market Lincoln Square 46. Develop plans that reinforce housing investments 47. Develop plans that knits together the community 48. Pursue vision for an educational campus at the site	DDP, AHA, Omni DDP, SEAC City	SEAC, Coalition ProTech, S Pearl Businesses County
	49. Plan for South Pearl Street and the Capital South Guild 50. Plan for Capital South Square		
<b>Workforce and Business Development</b>			
<i>Objectives</i>	<i>Recommendations</i>	<i>Lead Party</i>	<i>Key Actors</i>
Increase job opportunities for South End residents	51. Promote linkages to major employers 52. Promote walk-to-work arrangements 53. Promote a Live Near Your Work program 54. Promote local hiring 55. Promote commercial revitalization of South Pearl St. 56. Better connect the South End with employment centers	SEAC City City City SEAC, City	Convention Ctr  NYS  Downtown BID
<b>Quality of Life</b>			
<i>Objectives</i>	<i>Recommendations</i>	<i>Lead Party</i>	<i>Key Actors</i>
Create a neighborhood of choice	57. Create a community center at Giffen School 58. Involve service providers in the planning process 59. Upgrade Lincoln Park 60. Upgrade other neighborhood parks 61. Better coordinate human services  62. Implement street beautification programs 63. Night-light historic and important buildings	Mayor  SEAC  SE Partnership  SENA, SEIC SEAC	SEAC, Giffen, School  Parks  TI, Other social service providers DGS
<b>Community Capacity</b>			
<i>Objectives</i>	<i>Recommendations</i>	<i>Lead Party</i>	<i>Key Actors</i>
Expand community capacity	64. Establish a City-wide community development corporation 65. Target CDBG funds annually 66. Explore homesteading legislation	Mayor, Common Council Common Council	

	67. Continue South End Partnership for Safe Families	County	
<b>III. GROW THE SOUTH END</b>			
Physical Planning			
<i>Objectives</i>	<i>Recommendations</i>	<i>Lead Party</i>	<i>Key Actors</i>
Redevelop Lincoln Square	68. Develop plans that respond to site's qualities 69. If feasible, develop educational campus 70. Pursue educational campus 71. If campus is not feasible, develop mixed-income housing. 72. Or, consider expansion of Lincoln Park 73. Pursue joint development options 74. Create revenue for the AHA's neighborhood efforts	Educational developer AHA SEAC	SEAC  DDP, AHA
Redevelop Capital South Square	75. Redevelop and intensify uses at the DMV site 76. Create Capital South Square 77. Pursue a grocery store at this location	County	SEAC, DDP
Invigorate the area between South Pearl and the Hudson	78. Plan for Green St., Church St. and Broadway 79. Revisit the design of Interstate 787	DDP	AHA, SEAC
Invigorate Lower South Pearl Street	80. Develop the South End Guild	DDP - incentives	S Pearl Businesses, DABID
Workforce and Business Development			
<i>Objectives</i>	<i>Recommendations</i>	<i>Lead Party</i>	<i>Key Actors</i>
Enhance economic opportunities for South End residents	81. Link commercial to workforce development 82. Pursue destination commercial uses for the Port 83. Pursue community-oriented commercial development 84. Attract a vocational college to Lincoln Square 85. Promote local entrepreneurship 86. Support incubation of homegrown businesses 87. Provide small scale lending to assist start-ups	Wkforce agencies Port of Albany  ACES, CDCLF ALDC	
Quality of Life			
<i>Objectives</i>	<i>Recommendations</i>	<i>Lead Party</i>	<i>Key Actors</i>
Beautify the South End and enhance neighborhood connections	88. Strengthen ties to downtown further 89. Develop the SEGway and enhance Morton Avenue 90. Extend streets within the South End to re-knit blocks	DDP DDP	DGS DGS



	91. Embellish Elizabeth Street 92. Reveal Schuyler Mansion 93. Re-connect the South End to the Hudson River	DGS DGS	
Community Capacity			
<i>Objectives</i>	<i>Recommendations</i>	<i>Lead Party</i>	<i>Key Actors</i>
Foster alliances	94. Use the Capital South Plan to influence a city-wide comprehensive plan 95. Look to develop public/private partnerships	SEAC SEAC	

**KEY**

ACES: Albany Center for Economic Success  
 ACSD: Albany Central School District  
 AHA: Albany Housing Authority  
 ALDC: Albany Local Development Corporation  
 APL: Albany Public Libraries  
 CDCLF: Capital District Community Loan Fund  
 CDTA: Capital District Transportation Authority  
 CDTC: Capital District Transportation Committee  
 City: City of Albany  
 Coalition: Capital South Neighborhoods Coalition (Mansion, Pastures, and South End Neighborhood Associations)  
 Codes: City of Albany Department of Building and Codes  
 County: Albany County  
 DABID: Downtown Albany Business Improvement District  
 DDP: City of Albany Department of Development and Planning  
 DGS: Department of General Services  
 Giffen: Giffen Memorial Elementary School  
 HAF: Historic Albany Foundation  
 NYS: New York State  
 Omni: Omni Housing Development, LLC  
 Parks: Albany Parks Department  
 SEAC: South End Action Committee  
 TI: Trinity Institution



## **6.2 GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR DEVELOPMENT**

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The following guidelines were developed in response to public comment received at the Albany Housing Authority's first meeting for the Jared Holt Wax Factory project, in 2005, before the South End planning process began. They hold true and should continue to provide guidance for the South End's development.

### **General Principles**

- Strive for energy efficiency.
- Use green and natural building techniques wherever possible.
- Maintain buildings and lawns.

### **Rehabilitation**

- Rehabilitate existing buildings wherever possible to maintain the (rowhouse) feel, architectural integrity, and diversity of the South End.
- Rehabilitation in older homes is a good investment because many were built so well.
- Provide incentives for homeowners to rehabilitate their homes and restore original facades.
- Rehabilitate structures as a means of recycling/reusing buildings, materials, etc.
- Where a whole building cannot be saved, efforts should be made to maintain its facade.
- The choice to rehabilitate a building must be guided by several factors, not just its location in a historic district.

### **New Construction**

- New construction must blend in with existing homes without necessarily replicating surrounding architectural styles.
- New construction must have architectural integrity, be of high quality, and be built to last.
- New construction must be affordable and maintainable.
- New construction should be diverse to avoid monotony ("cookie cutter" effect).
- New construction should be designed with the needs of future residents in mind, e.g. outdoor areas which are safe and usable, insulation for noise control, parking, outdoor garbage storage areas, and access for the elderly and/or disabled.

### **Unit Types and Mix**

- Diversity is key to the future viability of the neighborhood in terms of household type served, income mix, homeowner tenant mix, and land use mix (residential with commercial).

- Encourage homeownership and owner-occupied rentals.

### **Landscape**

- Having a variety of open spaces where neighbors can gather or meet informally fosters community. (Examples: community gardens, play yards, tennis courts, bocce courts, exercising areas, pocket parks, common greens, formal parks.)
- Opportunities to recreate in nature are especially important to children.
- Existing and new public parks and open spaces need to be maintained – e.g. lighting, plowing.
- Having private, outside spaces for housing units enhances the appearance of the property, softens the urban environment, and provides a wonderful amenity for residents.
- Plantings should be appropriate to the urban environment, e.g. street trees should not grow into power lines and hide facades.

### **Parking**

- Reduce overall parking need by considering ways to encourage residents to walk, bicycle or take the bus, e.g. support residents use of transit by placing housing on bus lines to job centers, seek better transit service on certain routes, stripe bike lanes, etc.
- Provide adequate but not excessive parking to preserve land for green space.
- Parking should be thoughtfully integrated so as not to create massive parking lots. Small, dispersed parking lots or on-street parking, convenient to residents is desirable.
- Employ alleys for off-street parking, where possible.
- Address parking demand for existing homes, e.g. more off-street parking or commercial parking garages.
- Consider the convenience of families with children when designing parking spaces.

### **Other Comments**

- Plan with children in mind.
- Make developments pedestrian-friendly.
- Experiment with tenant cooperatives so residents have personal responsibility for maintenance and greater connection with property.
- Integrate traffic calming into designs, e.g. curve streets.
- Provide training and hire the local workforce.
- Provide new sidewalks, streets and landscaping for existing homes.
- Make Morton Avenue more walkable.
- Educate people for home maintenance, how to be a good neighbor.
- Help homeowners afford to stay in their homes.

### 6.3 CAPITAL SOUTH PLANNING AND DESIGN CRITERIA

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The following principles were developed in response to public comments during the South End planning process, and are intended to guide the redevelopment of specific South End opportunity sites, including Lincoln Square, Capital South Square, South End Guild, as well as infill development throughout the neighborhood.

Purpose: Provide guidance for the AIA 150 Team in developing concepts and in some cases, would be used to develop a Request for Expressions of Interest (REI).

#### **Areas of Focus:**

1. Lincoln Square and surrounding area
2. DMV block, Giffen School, Capital South Square
3. Lower South Pearl Street and the South End Guild

#### **1. Lincoln Square**

- a. Scope: Entire assemblage of vacant land and abandoned and underutilized buildings around and including Lincoln Square. Like the larger Capital South Plan, the reprogramming should be as a whole, but implementable in pieces independent of one another. The scope should include:
  - i. Lincoln Square
  - ii. Lincoln Park
  - iii. Lincoln Park – the parcel east of Eagle Street (replacement parkland would be created elsewhere in area)
  - iv. Warren St. community garden
  - v. 15 Warren Street (the bunker building and the Quonset hut)
  - vi. Vacant land bounded by Warren, Grand, Park
  - vii. Park Ave. properties (auto garage, recycling warehouse, other properties)
  - viii. Both factory buildings on Arch St.
- b. Parameters:
  - i. Replace existing Lincoln Square units to off-site locations within residential neighborhoods.
  - ii. Demolish 2 or 3 towers (2 Lincoln being the only tower with the possibility of staying, if it fits the desired plan in design and program).
  - iii. Create three plans for redevelopment of the Lincoln site and its surroundings:
    - 1) a most-probable reuse scenario such as housing that will be implemented if, after a finite period of time or a series of event milestones is exhausted, best efforts fail to develop;
    - 2) a highly dynamic reuse such as an campus of applied science and technology; and
    - 3) a hybrid of the two.



- iv. Reuses must be supportive of housing investments made in surrounding neighborhood, must spur continued private investment in surrounding neighborhood, and must be of value in and of themselves.
  - v. Ideally the reuses would be financially beneficial to AHA through either a) a one time purchase of all or part of the Lincoln site, b) an extended lease, c) a new-housing site to an AHA affiliate, or d) a combination of all the above.
  - vi. AHA sees the opportunity for a single approach that has two potential outcomes for redeveloping the Lincoln site.
  - vii. In any event, the AHA intends to continue using conventional financing to build replacement housing off-site within the surrounding neighborhoods, primarily on and south of Morton Avenue, as means of stabilization and making the Lincoln site more attractive for development. AHA intends to use the replacement housing as a relocation resource for residents of the Lincoln site, leading to the eventual vacancy, decommissioning and demolition of each of the towers. This is likely to take three years, though it could be expedited if other resources are found. At the end of that period the site could be efficiently redeveloped for housing, the most probable reuse of the site.
- c. Any Lincoln Square reuse concept must:
- i. Take advantage of off-site amenities like Lincoln Park, proximity to Empire State Plaza.
  - ii. Maximize view opportunities – of Hudson River, Empire State Plaza, Downtown, etc.
  - iii. Create a new image for the site. Exterior design should be guided by principles that prescribe a vocabulary of design and materials with a common denominator of quality and durability. The vocabulary should allow for a balance between unifying themes and diversity. The sites are wedged between and within the view shed of two different historic districts, though do not lie in a historic district. This offers a unique opportunity to design buildings and spaces that take cues from the existing fabric while creating something new that has its own identity. Use of green building practices are encouraged to add uniqueness to the site.
  - iv. Consider the possibility that the sites will be subdivided into smaller building lots and built upon at different times and possibly by different developers with designs by different architects. Each building lot would have a designated use. The site would be organized by its infrastructure of common areas such as streets, alleyways, walkways, parking and green space.
  - v. Site layout, building configuration, lighting, landscaping, and a mix of property ownership should be arranged in a balance of New Urbanism design principles – to impart a sense of place and connect the infill community to its sur-

roundings – and those that create defensible space, otherwise known as Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) – to create a hierarchy of spaces ranging from public to private and in doing so impart a real sense of security at all times without the necessity for heavy handed surveillance or police presence.

- vi. Energy efficiency should be built into the design, orientation, construction, and mechanical systems of buildings whenever possible. This should be undertaken for obvious reasons, but also to promote a lower energy consumption lifestyle that contributes to the affordability of living in this community. This should be at the core of any marketing campaign.
- vii. The site(s) should be pedestrian- and transit-friendly to encourage reduced dependence on the automobile. Create new pedestrian connections through the site, and possibly street connections (north/south and east/west). Incorporate a transit stop and shelter on Morton Avenue.
- viii. Reduce parking requirements and incentivize shared parking. Consider finding a suitable location for a small parking garage that serves multiple sites during different times of the day and is paid for with public money to incentivize coherent and efficient development or a combination of public (initially) and private (later) money that is pooled together and used to take out the initial public investment as sites are developed. Otherwise, consider marketing housing opportunities to renters and homeowners who desire and/or require a reduced car-dependent lifestyle and design the site accordingly. Use increased density allowances and reduced parking requirements in combination to incentivize this kind of development.

d. Educational Campus Concept:

- i. The concept is a campus of applied science and technology – one that connects the South End to the educational opportunities and technological advances that are driving prosperity in other communities around the Capital District. The facility would be geared toward the needs of South End residents, but may also draw people of similar backgrounds and/or interests from other communities.
- ii. The campus would be an affiliation of higher education, government, and business similar to that of University Heights and perhaps consisting many of those same entities: Albany Medical College, Albany Law School, Sage College, Albany Pharmaceutical College, etc. Other possibilities include University at Albany, RPI, and Hudson Valley. The offerings would be a combination of preparatory education and supportive services tailored to the individual's needs, but generally intensive in areas that are lacking and considered barriers to qualifying for higher education and gainful employment.

- iii. Components of these offerings might be:
  - 1. Pre-med, pharmacy, medical technician, and nursing
  - 2. Pre-law, paralegal, and criminal justice
  - 3. Building sciences and construction technology
  - 4. Construction trades and business
  - 5. Engineering and nano technology applications
  - 6. Computing and networking applications
  - 7. Life skills
  - 8. Career development
  - 9. Community service and internship
  - 10. Physical fitness and nutrition education
  - 11. Day care
  - 12. Affordable housing
- iv. Involving institutions of higher education is critical to providing a natural next step in the students' educational career. Partnerships with business are critical to providing the career incentives upon successful completion of the educational experience. It is important that each has a high quality vocational component to maintain a practical and attainable application of the vast majority of the students' knowledge and skills. Partnerships with not-for-profit service providers are essential to supplement the individual's support network as needed. A not-for-profit partner may run the physical fitness center and double its use as a community center available to all residents of the South End.
- v. This campus would serve as one of several portals through which students, faculty and others would be brought into the South End. The school experience would be their introduction to new lifestyles brought about by opportunity and it would be ideal if the community were able to retain these people with homeownership opportunities and the fundamental benefits that one would expect from a community of choice. In the same manner, retain residents indigenous to the South End who also have taken advantage of this opportunity and now have a choice to move away or stay.
- vi. Educational Campus Design Guidelines:
  - 1. The educational concept as it has been suggested lends itself to a campus of several buildings serving different purposes instead of everything being in one large building. The campus would not be one of a college detached from its surroundings, but more of a downtown college with buildings interspersed amongst other uses. Existing institutions such as Giffen might be made a part of this campus, providing

elementary age children with an intensive math and science curriculum.

2. Lay out the campus so that it may grow incrementally and systematically over time. The entire area should be master planned with permanent infrastructure and green space giving order to future infill.
3. Preserve future building sites as temporary green spaces. The school may begin in one building, leaving future sites as green space or other types of temporary uses (though none should be left just vacant). One approach may be to use existing buildings first, such as the pump house for uses requiring large free span spaces like recreation, auditorium/theater, and/or machine/construction shop. Classrooms and tertiary spaces might be added on to the rear of the building. The factory building at the corner of Arch and Grand could serve as housing for single adults and couples. The tower at 2 Lincoln might also serve this purpose or geared to a different type of student. Some family housing should be provided, perhaps by using rehabilitated single- and two-family houses within the adjacent neighborhoods.
4. Permanent green space should be preserved within the plan. This could be an extension of Lincoln Park. The section of Lincoln Park that is east of Eagle and is currently underutilized could be developed, in doing so creating a hard edge to that side of the park. Replace that parkland in kind with other permanent green space that supports the master plan. It should be different than what Lincoln Park offers and take the form of a series of smaller spaces connecting Lincoln Park to the new public square at the redeveloped DMV block, which would be rededicated parkland as well. Lincoln Park itself could remain open fields but be better programmed to serve the needs of the school's recreational programs while remaining available to the public.

e. Housing Concept:

- i. Housing could be integrated into an educational use concept, preferably mixed income with little or no retail on-site. Possible accessory uses include a community room, day care center or fitness center.
- ii. The housing type should be varied, suitable to several different lifestyles and family compositions.
- iii. Housing types should not be largely duplicative of what may already be found in the surrounding community. A housing reuse of the site should not drain resources from efforts to rehabilitate vacant and underutilized buildings and infill on vacant lots within the inner neighborhoods. At the same time, new housing types would create another market that would draw new residents or

retain existing residents who would otherwise move out of the community if their housing needs are not met. Some duplication would be acceptable, especially around the edges where new development can reflect existing housing types, as a way of blurring the lines between old and new, allowing the new to fit in a complement the old.

- iv. There should be an affordability mix, meaning all units should be affordable but within a range of incomes (say, 50% to 125%AMI). The affordability mix should be skewed toward the higher end to create stabilization and offer a housing type that is not currently present.
- v. All units should be well designed and constructed, no matter the income level of the intended occupant. A baseline of amenities and construction standards should be established, including minimum square footage, types and quality of materials used, and conveniences, in order to insure a quality, durable, and desirable product. The standard should not necessarily be in comparison to what is found in the immediate market (the surrounding community), but set a new standard that will be highly marketable and cause future infill to be competitive.

## **2. DMV Block/Giffen Elementary/Capital South Square**

- a. Scope: Ferry to Bassett, S Pearl (both sides of street) to Green Street.
- b. General Design Guidelines:
  - i. If Giffen School is to remain, it must be made a contributing element to the 100% corner. Also, the Rensselaer Street façade will be one side of a three sided public square and therefore must contribute to the activity that will make the square vibrant. Reorienting the school's "front" toward the square is a step, but probably inadequate to affect the desired result. Perhaps the Rensselaer Street section (the spine) of the building becomes another use more favorable to the 100% corner and the square and replacement classrooms are built at the rear or the "field side" of the building, connecting the three wings and putting the gymnasium in the middle of the new complex (in a better position to share if the other side were made a community center). Thus the school would be reoriented toward the "L" shaped corner of Schuyler and Franklin Streets where a natural drop off area already exists. The Rensselaer side of the building could become one or a combination of 1) a community center, 2) the indoor section of an otherwise outdoor retail mall surrounding the public square (like Stuyvesant Plaza but with housing and offices overtop and with trees instead of cars), or 3) another use compatible with retail and entertainment and having (almost) 24/7 drawing power. Giffen has to be creatively reused in part, if not in whole.



- ii. A three sided public square (the fourth side being South Pearl Street allowing passers-by to view and briefly interact with the activities of the square) would magnify the impact the 100% intersection: Instead of having four buildings facing an intersection, there would be three block-lengths of stores and attractions facing the intersection. Also, the space at the intersection of Morton and South Pearl, which is now occupied only by cars, would be expanded by the public square so that it becomes useful to people. The open space that is the public square would be replacement parkland taken in exchange for developing the part of Lincoln Park east of Eagle St. This new retail/public space node would act as the anchor to the South Pearl Street corridor, at the other end of which is the Palace Theater/Canton Square entertainment node, in between are restaurants (the food court, if you will), a sports/entertainment arena acting as mid-way anchor and linking it all are specialty shops. By making the South End the southern terminus of the urban mall that is Pearl Street, we will have made it an integral part of a larger whole and therefore given it legitimacy. (See Pearl Street Corridor section of this paper.)
- iii. Senior housing should be considered as the type of residential housing above the first floor commercial space. Units of different configuration and degree of independence should be designed to create the core of an “aging in place” community, complete with a safe urban environment that includes convenient access to shopping, recreation, and entertainment. Presently the County of Albany is very interested in senior housing and this could used to pique their interest in redeveloping the block. The undertaking should be of a similar scale to the County’s development of the Knickerbocker Arena (now the Times Union Center).
- iv. A small supermarket should be located on the eastern edge of the square with the parking between it and the railroad/highway “wall”, which is undesirable space anyway. The interior of the public square should not be a giant parking lot, as is now the case on the DMV block. The supermarket would have to be a part of a vibrant outdoor retail mall surrounding the square in order to attracting the volume of customers – both local and from outside – necessary to make it viable. It has to be a store that provides low-cost staples for everyday consumption but has a regional hook that makes people want to get off the highway or pull off of South Pearl Street to shop there. The supermarket cannot occupy the space that is to be the open public square (perhaps kiosks and small stand-alone stores could and be use to add interest to the space).
- v. Parking for the 100% intersection/public square – A large public parking garage should be constructed under the public square if possible and feasible.

This is frequently done in European cities with great success. If necessary, another parking garage could be constructed elsewhere.

- vi. The cost of parking garages could be exorbitant, so it would necessarily be a public works headed up by the County and serve as a municipal garage for the police department, city court, as well as private parking for the redeveloped factory buildings; the remainder would be used for public parking for shoppers in order to support the commercial component of the project. These may be two of the least intrusive ways of introducing the massive volumes of parking that are necessary to support the retail and public spaces without stifling the surrounding neighborhoods.
- vii. All efforts should be made by in the planning and development phase to plan for retail and mixed-uses that do not necessitate or generate large volumes of traffic. The site and new Capital South Square must be a pedestrian friendly and, if possible, car-free zone. To the extent that vehicle use is minimized, the space requirement and cost of parking garages decreases accordingly.

c. DMV Block:

- i. Mixed-Use Development: Ground floor: retail, including about 25,000 square feet for grocery, and public uses (potential County uses relocated here – DMV, Consolidated Mental Health Services; city uses – police station and city court).
- ii. Upper floors: office and/or mixed income housing – perhaps senior housing
- iii. Pedestrian scale and orientation
- iv. Safe and attractive pedestrian circulation system within site and to S Pearl Street sidewalk.
- v. Parking behind or under buildings, open to patrons of all businesses on Morton and S Pearl Street
- vi. Buildings should relate to surrounding streets – no blank walls, as appropriate
- vii. S Pearl/Morton Intersection: improve to facilitate crossing and provide pedestrian amenities, beautify with street trees.
- viii. Incorporate transit stop and shelter on S Pearl Street.
- ix. Public green space to tie to Lincoln Park and possibly the riverfront.
- x. Incorporate green building practices, as possible for energy and resource savings.
- xi. Incorporate access from the rear via Green Street

d. Giffen Elementary School

- i. Redesign Giffen and its campus as a welcoming and safe place
- ii. Mitigate existing blank and inactive façades facing S Pearl and Rensselaer Streets

- iii. Move the main vehicular entrance to face south to a newly improved park (with relocated teacher parking) to improve safety for students arriving on foot or by bus. Thus the school would be reoriented toward the “L” shaped corner of Schuyler and Franklin Streets where a natural drop off area already exists.
- iv. Create an inviting pedestrian main entrance on S Pearl Street, making better use of the existing green.
- v. Include a community center, preferably on the Rensselaer Street spine of the building
- vi. Allow for the sharing of resources (e.g. gymnasium), but ensure that community center and school (classrooms and offices) are separable.
- vii. Incorporate green building practices, as possible for energy and resource savings.

### **3. Lower South Pearl Street: “South End Guild”**

- a. Scope: 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue to McCarty; both sides of S Pearl St to I-787 including Vine St off-ramp.
- b. Design Guidelines:
  - i. This area is envisioned as being concentrated with crafts people, e.g. carpenters, potters, shipbuilders, etc. Not only would crafts be made at this location but apprenticeship opportunities provided to South End residents to learn these crafts/trades to develop their own livelihoods. Having such talent and resources in the neighborhood would also support the rehabilitation of buildings within the neighborhood. Crafts could be sold within the neighborhood, e.g. on the redeveloped DMV block or a new waterfront plaza.
  - ii. Design gateways at Vine Street and 1<sup>st</sup> and S Pearl St, and any new access to S Pearl Street proposed.
  - iii. Development (buildings and/or signage) should maximize visibility from I-787.
  - iv. Development could take the form of a crafts village, allowing for easy communication amongst trades people.
  - v. Shorter term: Focus on Gansevoort Opportunity Area: Habitat for Humanity is interested in the site for its administrative offices, manufacture of prefabricated housing panels, and the Re-Store, an discount outlet for building supplies that could double as an affordable hardware store for the adjacent neighborhood. It is possible that they will team up with Historic Albany Foundation to provide historic home repair seminars. Perhaps they are hired out as the neighborhood’s reliable and affordable handyman company, performing odd jobs for homeowners? Perhaps this is a branch of the applied science and technology campus that offers hands on training?



## 6.4 TRANSPORTATION

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The *Capital District Transportation Authority* (CDTA) provided the following summary of current South End transit service.

#6 Bus, 2nd Avenue: 7 days per week; Operates on Pearl St. and 2nd Ave.

Mon-Fri every 20 minutes 5:40AM - 9:00AM & 1:40PM -6:00PM; every 35 minutes in between.

Saturday service is hourly from 5:58AM - 5:28PM; Sunday/Holiday service is hourly from 8:28AM to 5:58PM. (Note: see #8 Arbor Hill for 2nd Ave. night service Mon.-Sat.)

#7 Bus, Glenmont: 7 days per week; Operates on Pearl St. and Rt. 9W to WalMart & Price Chopper. Mon - Sat every 30 minutes 6:30AM-10:30PM; Sundays & Holiday service is hourly from 9:00AM to 6:00PM.

#8 Bus, Arbor Hill: 7 days per week; Operates on Pearl St. and Mt. Hope Drive from the Arbor Hill neighborhood. Mon.-Fri. service is every 20 minutes from 5:40AM-6:40PM and every 30 minutes from 7:25PM until 12:25AM; Saturday service is every 30 minutes from 7:00AM-12:30AM (after mid-night). Sunday/Holiday service is every 30 minutes from 8:15AM-5:45PM. (Note: Mon.-Sat. after 7:00PM this bus serves 2nd Ave.)

The *Capital District Transportation Committee* (CDTC) reviewed the Capital South Plan's recommendations for transit, roadway, and highway improvements in Capital South, and submitted the following research regarding the concept of removing the elevated portion of I-787.

### **Relationship of "Big Ideas" in Albany's Capital South Plan to the *New Visions* Regional Transportation Plan**

The Capital South Plan has numerous, wide ranging recommendations that intend to transform the South End into an energetic community of choice for existing and potential future residents and businesses. The plan includes short-term recommendations that are intended to help stabilize the neighborhood, medium-term recommendations that intend to support existing homeowners and attract new investment and longer term recommendations that intend to capitalize on future opportunities, allowing the neighborhood to grow.

With respect to regional transportation ideas, a recommendation in the growth stage of the plan is to consider removing the elevated section of I-787 to create an at-grade urban boulevard. As described in the plan, this would allow for improved access to Albany's waterfront, would open up additional land for redevelopment, would eliminate the need to tear down an Albany Housing Authority property that inappropriately fronts the highway, would increase traffic on South Pearl Street to



the benefit of local businesses, and would provide better access to the proposed Albany Convention Center.

Although ambitious, the notion of removing the elevated section of I-787 to create an urban boulevard is not without precedent in the nation. Elevated highways in Milwaukee, San Francisco, Portland and New York City have all been replaced with at-grade urban boulevards. In the case of Milwaukee, constructing the boulevard was significantly cheaper than rebuilding the structures needed to support an elevated highway. Also, in nearly all of the cases, surrounding property values increased with boulevard road designs.

The Capital District Transportation Committee (CDTC), the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Capital Region, has explored the conditions that need to be present for a “big ticket” or “big idea” project such as the I-787 boulevard concept to become reality. This exploration was undertaken as part of CDTC’s update process for the *New Visions* regional transportation plan to the year 2030. As part of this effort, seventeen “big idea” initiatives along with the regional transportation plans of thirteen MPOs from around the nation were reviewed. This review revealed several common themes about what is required to implement big initiatives. These themes or conditions as they relate to the I-787 boulevard concept are listed below:

**1. A sense of urgency is typically present.** This sense of urgency may be related to long-standing issues of great magnitude (such as the congestion present in London prior to area-wide congestion pricing) or to an experience and atmosphere of rapid growth. Congestion pricing on SR91 in California is justified on the basis of rapid declines in service quality and projections of gridlock. Raleigh, North Carolina’s rail initiative is justified not on the basis of current development but on the basis of the region being the sixth fastest growing region in the nation based on population data.

*A sense of urgency may not be present in the Capital Region under current growth trends for this initiative. However, under higher regional growth scenarios, especially scenarios that concentrate growth in urban areas, the concept could generate a great deal of support.*

**2. A champion is typically a critical element as catalyst and sustainer of the initiative.** Elected officials or, occasionally, planning professionals are often directly associated with marshalling the support and forging the necessary partnerships to make an initiative a reality. The champion is often essential to shepherding the initiative through the difficult implementation phases of environmental analysis, NIMBY opposition and cost increases. Without a visible champion, an initiative could die easily in the face of such obstacles.

*The concept for I-787 will require a champion as there could be a number of big initiative ideas on the table throughout the region, particularly under higher growth scenarios. A champion can get and keep the concept at the forefront of discussions at the regional level.*

**3. The initiative reflects the sensibilities and community values of the region, producing a strong community consensus.** For example, Portland's and Minneapolis' initiatives in the areas of growth management, environmental stewardship and livability both draw from and reflect the personal priorities of the local residents and business leaders. Big initiatives today are not likely to succeed simply because they fall within the purview of a powerful government agency; they require broad public support.

*The concept for I-787 is consistent with the big initiative reviewed by CDTC for a riverfront access and urban development program. It is also consistent with New Visions planning principles, which have enjoyed strong and growing support among Capital Region communities. As the Capital South Plan enters the implementation phase, it is fair to assume that the community consensus of the neighborhood and other stakeholders in the study area is one that is supportive of the boulevard concept for I-787 and it would offer a number of benefits to the South End neighborhood, the City of Albany and the region as a whole. Improving waterfront access is a key component of the growth phase of the Capital South Plan and the neighborhood would greatly benefit from a redesigned I-787.*

**4. Commitment to a major initiative is as much related to a subjective rationale as to objective analysis.** This does not mean that a decision to reconstruct the Central Artery in Boston or a regional rail system in Raleigh-Durham is unfounded. Rather, it means that regions pursue major initiatives as much because they want to as because they believe the initiative is economically efficient in achieving results. The "look and feel" of the completed project; the desire to make a public statement of the region's priorities; the hope of lasting positive benefits are at least equal to calculations of user savings, transit ridership, emissions reductions or cost effectiveness in the decision process.

*The subjective rationale in the City of Albany and the Capital Region as a whole for the I-787 boulevard concept is compelling. A project such as this could be viewed as a national case study and could greatly enhance the image of the region.*

**5. Funding is achieved through a combination of local sources and state or federal funds – reflecting a willingness to pay.** The funding paradox ("We can't plan something big because we don't have money and we can't get money because we haven't planned anything big") is resolved in successful initiatives by (1) securing local financial support for a popular initiative with public support by promising external funds to vastly subsidize the local cost; and (2) leveraging the local enthusiasm and local funding commitment to obtain external (state or federal) funds from discretionary pots.

*The question of the willingness to pay for the I-787 boulevard concept has an uncertain answer in the Capital Region under existing conditions. I-787 is beginning to age and the need to start planning for replacing the structures that support it may need to occur sooner than later due to their high replacement cost. It is possible that a boulevard concept for I-787 may actually save money as it may be cheaper to build an at-grade facility rather than an elevated*

*highway. That said, a thorough review of traffic and other potential impacts will need to be undertaken to ensure that the idea is even feasible before a significant commitment can even be considered for the concept. Although replacing the structures supporting I-787 may be many years away, the potential need for their replacement may provide an opportunity to further explore the boulevard concept.*

*Even if the boulevard concept is found to be feasible, there is still the issue of regional growth. Growth pressures brought about by higher regional growth scenarios, particularly scenarios in which the growth leads to significant urban reinvestment, may influence the public's willingness to pay for a project of this scale. I-787 as a boulevard offers a number of opportunities for the City and the region and the general public might be more willing to support paying for this type of project if the investment is viewed as a tool to manage growth and protect and enhance community quality.*

*Higher growth scenarios may also lead to increases in regional transportation revenues and higher population growth will result in increasing shares of federal funds. Although forecasts of future levels of State and federal funding are uncertain; if funding increases, having a plan like the Capital South Plan in place would help the I-787 boulevard concept be well positioned to take advantage of those funds if a regional consensus is developed to pursue it. The recent state investments and incentives for Nanotech and chip fab industries in the region raises the possibility that the external funding needed to help support big transportation initiatives in the region may be from the state budget as much or more than from the federal budget.*

**6. In the absence of the conditions to support big initiatives, it is difficult to attain comparable impact through incremental changes.** Incremental actions, such as those contained in CDTC's existing New Visions plan and funded in the 2005-10 Transportation Improvement Program, are different in kind as well as in scale from big initiatives that derive from a sense of urgency. For example, in the absence of expectations of rapid growth in the region, in 2000 CDTC chose a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) option for the NY 5 corridor and full implementation will not be completed until 2015. Over that same timeframe, other metropolitan areas will have built substantial regional rail systems, undertaking the difficult and expensive actions because of urgency caused by growth. The substantial commitment to rail transit in those metropolitan areas will produce a land use impact (with development more oriented to station locations) that the slow rollout of BRT in the Capital District cannot.

*Forty years from now Capital Region residents may wonder why their region lacks the transportation infrastructure evident in other areas and conclude that planners and elected officials at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century lacked foresight. For that reason, it is important to at least consider big initiatives for the Capital Region. With respect to I-787, a boulevard concept can help the City of Albany achieve other goals, including revitalizing its waterfront area while at the same time pursuing urban reinvestment. Although connections to the waterfront can still be made without the boulevard for I-787, the boulevard will create a much more attractive landscape and could lead to additional investment in the City.*

Under a higher growth scenario in the Capital Region, particularly one with a more urban focus, a boulevard concept for I-787 becomes more feasible. In addition, even if a higher growth scenario does not materialize for the region, the high replacement cost of the structures for I-787 may present an opportunity to consider the boulevard concept, a potentially cheaper alternative. Having the concept as a recommendation of the Capital SouthPlan will give it additional teeth, particularly in a neighborhood that is eager to revitalize and faces numerous obstacles.

If the conditions described above are met, it is reasonable to assume that this concept may be more seriously considered at the regional level. Until then, it is possible that the Capital District Transportation Committee along with the New York State Department of Transportation and other key stakeholders could further evaluate the boulevard concept for this section of I-787 in terms of its level of feasibility. A feasibility analysis is essential to determining whether or not the concept is truly realistic, even if cost is not the issue. The concept may have unforeseen traffic impacts and the relationship of a boulevard with the Dunn Memorial Bridge and Empire State Plaza ramp system would need to be closely examined as well as the relationship of the boulevard to the freight rail line in the area. It is clear that before regional support can be won for this concept that a great deal of work will need to be undertaken to ensure that a boulevard would not have unintended consequences on the City of Albany and the region.