Arbor Hill Neighborhood Plan

July 2003

Prepared for the:
City of Albany
and the
Arbor Hill Neighborhood Advisory Committee

By:
The Community Builders, Inc.
and Behan Planning Associates, LLC

Funding provided by: U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development
Albany Local Development Corporation
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Purpose

The purpose of the Arbor Hill neighborhood planning effort was to develop consensus on strategic actions to revitalize this community in Albany, New York. The plan provides a framework for residents and investors to approach development in Arbor Hill.

The plan was developed by The Community Builders, Inc. and Behan Planning Associates, LLC, and guided by a team of residents and stakeholders comprising the Arbor Hill Neighborhood Plan Advisory Committee. The committee wants Arbor Hill to become a community where people with a wide range of incomes want to live. This means meeting crucial needs for assured safety and security, leveraging the unique culture and heritage of the neighborhood, growing economic development and employment opportunities, and increasing incentives for long-term homeownership and high-quality rental housing. Momentum is critical to spurring this kind of change. To turn around the investment climate, the plan’s recommendations should be implemented in a wholesale, all-inclusive manner.

Plan Area

Located in the northeast section of the city, Arbor Hill is bordered on the north by a mix of industrial and residential uses, terminating with the I-90 highway and railroad corridors. To the south lies Sheridan Hollow which creates a natural separation between Arbor Hill and downtown Albany. To the east, I-787, a regional north-south highway, separates Arbor Hill and Albany from the Hudson River. Dense urban residential neighborhoods, beginning with West Hill, lie to the west of the neighborhood. Within the Arbor Hill community are two smaller neighborhoods, Sheridan Hollow and Ten Broeck Triangle.
Demographics

In 2000, the City’s total population was 95,658 with 5,491 persons residing in Arbor Hill. While less than 29 percent of the City’s population was African American, this sector represented 77 percent of Arbor Hill’s population. In 1999, the City’s median household income was $30,041, while Arbor Hill’s was $16,222.

Process

The plan was guided by the Arbor Hill Neighborhood Advisory Committee, a body representing a variety of neighborhood stakeholders – homeowners, tenants, lenders, neighborhood associations, faith-based groups and service organizations – in conjunction with the City of Albany. Technical assistance was provided by The Community Builders, Inc., a 501 (c) (3) community development organization, and Behan Planning Associates, LLC, a planning and design firm, through a grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and assistance from the Albany Local Development Corporation.

Broad public involvement in the planning process was afforded through an initial public meeting held in June 2002 and a hands-on design workshop held in September 2002. Members of the public also participated in the development of the plan by making comments to the Advisory Committee at its monthly meetings, and later, by serving on the four subcommittees to emerge from the planning process (described in the next section).

A final public meeting on the plan was held in June 2003 with over 100 people in attendance. Unlike previous meetings, participants’ expression of frustration with ongoing neighborhood problems was tempered by their optimism that conditions in Arbor Hill could improve as a result of implementation of the plan. Further, they recognized that such change would only be possible if residents, neighborhood organizations, and City staff worked together to address the neighborhood’s problems. Many meeting participants expressed their desire to help implement the plan.

About 100 people participated at the June 2003 public meeting.
Four Areas of Focus

Based on the public input obtained from the design workshop, the plan was organized around four areas of focus: I) Homeownership and Rental Housing, II) Arts, Culture and Heritage, III) Business and Job Development, and IV) Quality of Life. Subcommittees for each of the focus areas, comprised of neighborhood advisory committee members and members of the general public, developed principles and corresponding actions. Planning consultants and staff developed budget estimates and matched actions to resources.

I. Homeownership and Rental Housing

Homeownership and Rental Housing Guiding Principles:

A. Support new lower density housing,
B. Rehabilitate existing housing and build compatible infill housing,
C. Provide a variety of housing types for all ages, family sizes and incomes,
D. Use high quality designs and materials, and
E. Support existing homeowners.

Key Homeownership and Rental Housing Actions:
1. The Albany Community Development Agency in partnership with the Albany Housing Authority and housing providers is finalizing a plan which:
   a.) Renovates existing and builds new housing in clusters throughout the neighborhood by leveraging publicly-owned property.
   b.) Strives for an equal ratio of homeownership to rental housing.
   c.) Targets abandoned buildings for rehabilitation and selective demolition.
   d.) Controls density with an average of two housing units per lot.
   e.) Provides for and integrates market-rate and subsidized housing opportunities.
   f.) Works with homeowners and renters to form support networks.
   g.) Serves the needs of modern families by providing amenities such as off-street parking.
   h.) Supports the re-opening of the former Robin Daycare Center.
2. Implement an initiative to reduce the number of abandoned properties.

a.) Launch a pilot program in cooperation with Albany County to return abandoned buildings and lots to productive use. In this program, the County would transfer abandoned properties to the City. The City would then solicit developers and individuals who have interest in rehabilitating these properties through a request for proposals process. Proposals would be evaluated based on compliance with the guiding principles and the applicant’s experience and financial capacity to complete the proposed development.

b.) Work with the Enterprise Foundation to develop a strategy and entity focused on acquiring, rehabilitating and/or demolishing abandoned properties citywide.

c.) Continue efforts to create more homeowners through the services of the Albany Home Store and other programs.

3. Seek financial incentives for property owners to rehabilitate their properties, e.g. through support of the pending NYS Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit, municipal programs such as the Residential-Commercial Urban exemption and 421f Residential Improvements exemption.
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II. Arts, Culture and Heritage

Arts, Culture and Heritage Guiding Principles:
A. Preserve the historic integrity of the neighborhood by maximizing the reuse of historic buildings.
B. Support cultural institutions’ applications for grant funding within or about Arbor Hill.
C. Promote Arbor Hill as a place for arts, culture and heritage, recognizing the neighborhood’s rich history, including the African-American experience.
   i. Encourage the expansion of arts, culture and heritage activities.
   ii. Attract future development related to arts, culture and heritage.
D. Expand public participation in the arts through:
   i. Strengthening neighborhood ties to city and regional arts & cultural organizations and institutions.
   ii. Increasing opportunities for neighborhood youth and adults to participate in arts and culture programs.
   iii. Promoting the neighborhood as a regional arts center and place of historic significance.

Key Arts, Culture and Heritage Actions:

1. Support the reuse of historic buildings where possible, namely:
   a.) St. Joseph’s Church/41 N. Ten Broeck St.
   b.) St. Joseph’s School, N. Swan St.
   c.) Salvation Army Building, Clinton Ave.
   d.) The King Building, 27-29 N. Swan St.
   e.) Holy Innocents Church, N. Pearl St.
2. Support ongoing Underground Railroad research and other research pertaining to the African-American experience in Arbor Hill.
3. Create an Arbor Hill Arts, Culture and Heritage Committee comprised of neighborhood and citywide institutions and cultural organizations to build ties between Arbor Hill and citywide artistic, cultural, and heritage organizations.
4. Support new library services in Arbor Hill.
III. Business and Job Development

Key Business and Job Development Actions:

1. Hold small business development workshops to encourage the growth of existing businesses and improve communication amongst them.

2. Expand the Empire Zone to include more Arbor Hill properties.

3. Support the opening of a SEFCU branch in Arbor Hill.

4. Support the Chinatown Plaza proposal on N. Pearl Street.

5. Support the Whitney Young Medical Center’s efforts to acquire the Urban League Building for use as a neighborhood pharmacy.


Business and Job Development Guiding Principles:

A. Support Henry Johnson Boulevard and Clinton Avenue as the neighborhood’s primary commercial corridors.

B. Promote the growth of quality small businesses, which serve and employ neighborhood residents.

C. Support the development of marketable retail sites.

D. Build upon the emerging cluster of ethnic restaurants and grocers.

E. Make streetscape and other enhancements to improve the image of Arbor Hill’s commercial corridors.

Elevation view of a potential neighborhood gateway at Henry Johnson Boulevard (left), and potential Whitney Young Medical Center pharmacy site (right).
IV. Quality of Life

Quality of Life Guiding Principles:

A. Foster understanding, cooperation and trust between the community and the police department to improve public safety.
B. Make physical improvements to enhance public safety.
C. Support efforts to clean and beautify Arbor Hill.
D. Improve existing and develop new neighborhood green spaces.
E. Calm traffic and make other improvements to make Arbor Hill more pedestrian-friendly.
F. Give priority for on-street parking to residents, particularly where off-street parking options do not exist.
G. Encourage stronger physical connections to the downtown.

Key Quality of Life Actions:

1. Establish a Quality of Life Committee comprised of police officers and members of the Arbor Hill neighborhood to work cooperatively and creatively to improve living conditions in Arbor Hill.
2. Make lighting improvements and clear vegetation in problem areas.
3. Encourage the efforts of neighborhood residents, organizations and churches to clean and beautify Arbor Hill.
4. Continue code enforcement activities.
5. Support efforts to light St. Joseph’s Church.
6. Remediate brownfield sites in Arbor Hill.
8. Investigate improvements to traffic flow and pedestrian circulation on Henry Johnson Boulevard.
9. Support a residential parking permit system.

Prepared by The Community Builders, Inc. With Behan Planning Associates, LLC

Funding through a technical assistance grant from the U.S. Department of HUD
Implementation

The Arbor Hill neighborhood planning process was initiated with the specific goal of reaching consensus on a housing strategy for the neighborhood, using a $5 million HOPE IV award. However, there was also a larger goal, to find ways to better leverage existing resources to help revitalize the neighborhood.

As a result of the planning process, a housing strategy was developed which not only responds to objections to the previous Swan Street proposal but also leverages the federal funding to help address other neighborhood problems such as the blighting influence of abandoned properties, the desire for more yard space and off-street parking, and the need for neighborhood day care services. In addition, four areas of focus were identified, outlining the priorities of the neighborhood. The principles developed in each area provide a basis for evaluating new development proposals in the neighborhood. **Further exploration of the four focus areas revealed that the neighborhood is rich in human resources, but they need to be better coordinated and their services better communicated, to maximize their use by the community.**

Accordingly, implementation of the neighborhood plan will be guided by three independent, yet interrelated bodies. The primary responsibility for implementing the plan will lie with the subcommittees for the plan’s four focus areas. These subcommittees will meet as needed to carry out their respective actions and evaluate development opportunities for consistency with the principles. Participation in these subcommittees will be open to all interested parties. Representatives from each of the subcommittees will attend monthly coordination meetings to share progress. A larger Friends of Arbor Hill organization will be established that will hold periodic meetings and provide a forum for interested parties to share progress, and provide additional networking and information sharing opportunities for the stakeholders of Arbor Hill.

Implementation goals:

- Continued emphasis on the plan’s four areas of focus, and
- Provision of different opportunities for involvement, and networking with other individuals and organizations working in the same field.

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Chapter I: Introduction

A. Purpose of this planning effort

With the support of an existing grant from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), The Community Builders, Inc. (TCB) began in mid-2002 to facilitate the completion of a participatory neighborhood planning process for the Arbor Hill neighborhood in Albany, New York. The Community Builders worked closely with the City of Albany and TCB’s subconsultant, Behan Planning Associates, to ensure a successful planning process. The goal of the planning process was to garner consensus on a vision and a roadmap for comprehensive neighborhood revitalization. The Mayor asked a broad group of local stakeholders, including residents, property owners, elected and public officials, non-profit group leaders, historic preservation advocates, developers, church officials, and bankers to serve on a Neighborhood Advisory Committee (see Appendix A).

B. Study area

The planning area roughly encompasses Census Tract 2. It is bounded by Tivoli on the north, Sheridan on the south, Broadway on the east, and Henry Johnson Boulevard on the west. While the Plan addresses the neighborhood as a whole, more intensive land use research and specific recommendations were focused on the historic core bounded by Clinton Avenue on the south and Livingston Avenue on the north.

C. Organization of the plan

This Plan is built upon a solid foundation of prior planning efforts as described in Chapter II. Since existing real estate conditions will dictate the pace at which the plan can be achieved and the public and private resources needed, we have reviewed the market for housing and commercial activity in the area, and the issue of abandoned properties in Chapter III. Chapter IV describes the extraordinarily active public input process. In Chapter V, we describe the Guiding Principles and Recommended Actions for Revitalization organized around four topical areas: Homeownership and Rental Housing, Arts, Culture and Heritage, Business and Job Development, and Quality of Life. The Action Plan described in Chapter V supports all these topical areas as well as infrastructure and other leveraged improvements necessary for the success of the recommended actions.
Chapter II: Prior Planning Efforts

The planning effort was able to concentrate on alternate visions for the future in part due to the planning work that had preceded it. Those prior planning efforts are summarized below.

A. Synopsis of Prior Henry Johnson Boulevard Initiatives

In 1989, the City engaged in a participatory planning process which resulted in a plan for mixed use, urban style development for Henry Johnson Boulevard. Over the past ten years, investments by the Albany Community Development Agency (ACDA) in buildings for several small businesses (e.g. Roy's Caribbean) and residential strips (e.g. between Sheridan and Orange on the east side of Boulevard) have preserved some of the urban, mixed use history of the street. However, due to market conditions, changing shopping patterns, and the loss of density and buying power during this period, the efforts failed to have the hoped-for spillover effect of leveraging private investment.

Certain private initiatives, such as the location of the former Dunkin' Donuts/Rite Aid strip center at Livingston Avenue and Henry Johnson Boulevard, along with significant City investments along the Boulevard (including the ACDA building and the North District Police Substation) removed some of the blighting influences on the street. However these efforts, along with the Urban League’s Gateway Commons office building project, also changed the architectural character of the street. Gateway Commons, located on the west side of the street between Second and Third Street was developed to house a private sector employer. The development failed when employer’s business failed. The City's Public Safety Department ultimately moved into the modern office space.

Gateway Commons was just one element of the Urban League’s ambitious plan to bring commercial activity to Arbor Hill. The League had hoped that the more than 20,000 cars and 32,000 individuals passing along or crossing the Boulevard every day and the more than 24,000 persons living within a one-mile radius of the Boulevard, would make the strip an attractive location for commercial development. The League tried in particular to attract a large grocery store. However, as will be described more fully in the market analysis section of this report, the demographics and buying patterns in the area surrounding the street do not support the large grocery store model chains are developing in the current era. Most planners and developers believe smaller scale efforts, coupled with improved housing and increased density in the area, will ultimately be more successful.

B. Synopsis of Albany Housing Authority Swan Street Plan

Recent work had been undertaken on behalf of the City and the Albany Housing Authority (AHA) on a housing project that was intended as a response to drug and crime problems that had become chronic and debilitating by the Year 2000. The Albany Police force made progress in shutting down the worst of the drug and violent crime activity that had overtaken Swan Street with some key arrests and traffic pattern changes. The Mayor and AHA put forth the idea of using $5 million in HOPE VI funds to leverage an $18 million revitalization effort, primarily located on Swan Street. This original, largely new-construction, housing plan was criticized by neighborhood activists for a perceived insensitivity to historic preservation and grass-roots support for arts and culture. It was also criticized for an insufficient public process, an insufficient income mix and ratio of rental to homeownership units. As a response, an advisory committee was formed and a Swan Street planning study articulating the project was completed.
However, a lawsuit challenging the development’s adherence to SEQRA procedures stopped the project. The March 2001 plan drafted with that advisory committee consisted of 120 housing units: 20 for-sale homes and 73 apartments in 61 new townhomes and 27 rental units in 7 rehabilitated buildings. Ultimately, the City and the AHA decided to engage the community in the subsequent Arbor Hill participatory planning process described here to place the Swan Street development in the context of a more comprehensive neighborhood revitalization effort.

C. Synopsis of Dennison Draft Needs Report

In March of 2002, Dennison Associates, a Washington DC-based consulting firm, produced a draft Needs Assessment Report based on the technical assistance they had provided the City over the previous nine months. Coming on the heals of the demise of the ambitious Urban League plans, a wave of crime in the neighborhood, and a controversial proposal to transform Swan Street with a HOPE VI housing project, the Dennison report reflected frustration and cynicism in the community. At a community-wide meeting at the onset of the Dennison work, residents and community activists demanded strong action. One resident who addressed the group conveyed the importance of community responsibility for its part in the revitalization effort. It was suggested that residents look to the future and not let past disappointments hinder their willingness to participate in this initiative. The Dennison team supported these statements by explaining that the best way the community can be assured of a positive outcome is to diligently pursue goals and objectives that will have a positive impact on the neighborhood. The community discussion focused on weaknesses, or problems, facing the neighborhood as well as, strengths or positive attributes that make the neighborhood attractive. The following list of issues and draft recommendations were the results of the community meeting and Dennison work:

Problems/Issues of the Neighborhood

Youth and Family Services
- Expanded Programs for Youth – Day Care/After School Activities/Early Age (1-3)
- Better Information Flow/Communication with Residents-Satellite Office in Arbor Hill
- Develop Continuity in Programs
- Support Art/Cultural Programs for Youth

Employment Opportunities and Job Training
- Develop Programs to Assist Local Contractors-Training/Job Programs
- Assist Contractors in Obtaining a Greater % of Community Construction Jobs
- Keep Community $ in Arbor hill by Employing Residents
- Provide More job Training for Residence – Develop Apprenticeship Programs
- Resurrect Urban League JT Programs
- Promote Skill Training that Leads to Job Advancement and Higher Living Wage
- Expand Job Opportunities – Employee Tax Credits

Infrastructure and Public Improvements
- Streetscape Improvements/Maintenance – Sidewalks, Street Lighting/Cleaning, Trees
- Maintenance of Vacant and Underutilized Lots – Remove Trash and Debris
- Water/Sewer Utility Lines Require Upgrade and/or Replacement
- Removal of Abandoned Vehicles from Streets
- Install Traffic Controls to Hinder Speeding in Neighborhood
• Zoning Code Enforcement – Should Not be Applied Selectively in the Neighborhood

**Housing**
• Homeownership in Neighborhood and Develop Programs to Encourage Homeownership
• Stop Demolition of Housing Units and Promote Rehab/Reuse of Existing Structures
• Encourage Projects/Programs that Support Infill housing
• Loss of Equity/Value in Property

**Business and Economic Development**
• Retain Community-Based Wealth by Promoting Small Business Development
• Expand Small Business Technical Assistance Programs
• Encourage Loan/Grant Funds that Provide Minority/Small Business Access to Capital
• Lack of Neighborhood Retail Stores – Access to basic Necessities (food, laundry)
• Develop and Promote Tourism Linkages w/Downtown – Cultural Center Black Heritage, Museum, Restaurants

**Neighborhood/Historic Preservation (NPP)**
• Retrofit and Re-Use Historic Structures/Landmarks – Saint Joseph Church/41 Ten Broeck
• Reuse of Saint Joseph’s School
• Capitalize on Neighborhoods Unique Historic Environment

**Citizen Participation**
• Nature of Planning Effort – Master/Comprehensive Plan
• Realistic Action Strategy for Implementation
• Commitment of resources
• Community Role in Revitalization Effort
• Participation in Funding Decision – Resource Allocation
• Meaningful Role in Program Development and Operation

**Recreation/Parks/Community Amenities**
• Expand Community Gardens – Utilize City/County-Owned vacant Lots
• Give Residents Greater Access and Input in the Arbor Hill Community Center
• Reinstatement Funds for Soccer Program
• Restore Access and Control of the “Field of Dreams” to the Neighborhood

**Strengths of the Neighborhood**
• Active, Strong Resident Participation
• Environmental Program at Tivoli Park
• “Field of Dreams” Baseball Facility
• Youth Soccer Program
• Community Gardens

**Established, Organized Community Association Network**
• Arbor Hill Community Center, Inc.
• Arbor Hill Development Corporation
• Albany Housing Coalition, Inc.
• W. Heywood Burn Environmental Education Center, Inc.
• Historic Albany Foundation
• Ten Broeck Triangle Preservation League
• St. Joseph’s Housing Corporation
• Affordable Housing Partnership/Albany Community Land Trust
• Capital District Habitat for Humanity
• Arbor Hill Concerned Citizens

Cultural and Historic Heritage
• Underground Railroad
• African-American Heritage
• Ethnic Restaurants

Neighborhood Landmarks
• Ten Broeck Mansion
• Tivoli Park
• St. Joseph’s Church/Park
• Arbor Hill Park

The Dennison team never completed a final report as they withdrew from the process after the first public meeting when the City sought to expand the scope of the planning work.

D. Synopsis of Existing Conditions Report

In late summer, 2002 the City of Albany Department of Development and Planning provided more expansive and updated demographic, land use, regulatory and infrastructure information in an Existing Conditions report (see attached Appendix B). The 200-acre Arbor Hill neighborhood lies north of Sheridan Hollow, which creates a natural separation between Arbor Hill and the central business district. Lying east of Arbor Hill is I-787, a regional highway which provides north-south bound traffic from southern Albany to the city of Cohoes and separates Arbor Hill and Downtown Albany from the Hudson River. A mix of industrial and residential uses terminate with the I-90 highway and railroad corridors that form a northern boundary to the area. Dense urban residential neighborhoods, beginning with West Hill, lie to the west of the neighborhood. Within the Arbor Hill community are two smaller neighborhoods, Sheridan Hollow and Ten Broeck Triangle. Three neighborhood associations have served the community: Arbor Hill Concerned Citizens, Sheridan Hollow, and Ten Broeck Triangle Neighborhood Associations.

Arbor Hill is primarily a residential area, graced with several historic districts and outstanding architectural streetscapes in the Ten Broeck Triangle and along Lark Street and Clinton Avenue. The southern half of the neighborhood contains most of the historic heart of the area and is closest to the center of Albany. It was developed in the 19th and early 20th centuries, mostly with one to three family homes on urban (25-foot wide) lots. Despite a concentration of abandoned buildings and vacant lots, the area still retains pockets of well-maintained and owner-occupied homes. The neighborhood north of Livingston Avenue is more like a new town. It was developed on larger land parcels created under an urban renewal plan of the 1960s. This area contains large, subsidized apartment complexes, new single-family homeownership developments, the Whitney Young Health Center (the neighborhood’s largest employer) and Arbor Hill Elementary School. Almost half the neighborhood’s population, and more than half the neighborhood’s youth, live in this northern area. The table below summarizes the demographic characteristics described in the Existing Condition report:
### Arbor Hill Demographics based on 2000 U.S. Census

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Arbor Hill</th>
<th>City of Albany</th>
<th>County of Albany</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>5491 vs 6167 in 1990</td>
<td>95,658</td>
<td>294,565</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>4218 (77%)</td>
<td>26,915 (28.1%)</td>
<td>32,624 (11.1%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>814 (15%)</td>
<td>60,383 (63.1%)</td>
<td>245,060 (83.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>401 (7.4%)</td>
<td>5,349 (5.6%)</td>
<td>9,079 (3.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median Age</td>
<td>29.1 years</td>
<td>31.4 years</td>
<td>36.8 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persons under Age 18</td>
<td>1900 (35%)</td>
<td>19,085 (20%)</td>
<td>77,252 (26%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persons over 65</td>
<td>534 (9.7%)</td>
<td>12,781 (13.4%)</td>
<td>42,594 (14.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median Household Income - 1999</td>
<td>$16,222</td>
<td>$30,041</td>
<td>$42,935</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Households in Poverty – 1999</td>
<td>34.8%</td>
<td>16.0%</td>
<td>10.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 16 in Labor Force</td>
<td>56.8%</td>
<td>63.6%</td>
<td>65.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment Rate for 2001-02*</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing Units</td>
<td>2914</td>
<td>45,288</td>
<td>129,972</td>
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<tr>
<td>Percentage Vacant</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>10.1%</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage Built &lt; 1939</td>
<td>42.9%</td>
<td>49.9%</td>
<td>31.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage Single Family</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>31.6%</td>
<td>53.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent Homeownership</td>
<td>20.9%</td>
<td>37.6%</td>
<td>57.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Household Size</td>
<td>2.34 persons</td>
<td>2.11 persons</td>
<td>2.32 persons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median Home Value</td>
<td>$68,900</td>
<td>$98,300</td>
<td>$116,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reliance on Public Transit</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>13.1%</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Unemployment data from Capital District Regional Planning Association based on U.S. Department of Labor updates from 2000 U.S. Census.
Chapter III: Conditions Affecting Real Estate Investment in Arbor Hill

A. Market Conditions

As mentioned in the previous chapter, real estate market conditions have generally been extremely weak in Arbor Hill during the past 12 years. This weakness has been somewhat alleviated in the past few years by record low interest rates that have spurred a hot regional housing market and made homeownership a more viable option for lower income families. Still, despite these low interest rates and the neighborhood’s proximity to an improving downtown, the real estate market in Arbor Hill has suffered from real and perceived problems of crime and housing abandonment. Three areas with unique characteristics have been exceptions to this trend:

- The Ten Broeck Triangle area where committed individuals continue to make investments that might not seem economically justified due to their love for the unique character of the structures and streetscapes in this lovely historic area. It is not unusual to see an abandoned building next to a home in which a property owner has invested $300,000 or more. Clearly, to the extent that neighborhood-wide problems are alleviated or solved, property owners in the Ten Broeck neighborhood will greatly benefit and market values can be expected to escalate rapidly. To a lesser extent, investors along historic Clinton Avenue who have been able to buy selected smaller properties in decent condition at a discount are able to renovate and sell those historic properties on a timely basis for under $100,000.

- The area directly north of Downtown along Broadway and Pearl which is characterized by a mix of rental and owner-occupied properties as well as professional offices and businesses. Improvements at the Palace Theater and in the Quakenbush Square area continue to attract interest in the historic townhomes in this area. To date, the mix of uses has harmonized well, and only the most dilapidated structures remain abandoned. Still, as is the case for rehabilitated structures Downtown, market rents for office space remain relatively low. A typical single office with utilities included, shared receptionist and parking rents for around $500 per month or $20 per square foot. This cap on market rents limits property owners’ investments in their buildings. Similarly, market rents for residential properties in this area are still a relative bargain, with one bedroom rents not exceeding $600;

- The newer area of the neighborhood north of Livingston Avenue has been able to sustain both rental and home-ownership development activity. The Albany Housing Coalition’s homeownership project on Lark Drive has sold homes faster at $79,900 than their similar project in the South End. The Skyline Gardens complex off Livingston Avenue rents at $442 and up for a one-bedroom apartment and $521 and up for a two-bedroom apartment. The Capital Woods development, which boasts very affordable rents, has almost no vacancies. Clearly, to the extent an attractive and affordable project can be financed and brought to market, demand is high.

In the remainder of the core area of Arbor Hill and Sheridan Hollow, deeper subsidies are needed to attract a market. Most housing market analysts define residential market areas widely – for example, analysts determining the marketability of a housing project in Arbor Hill might define the market area as the City of Albany. As the City of Albany has lost population, neighborhoods facing the challenge of maintaining an aging housing stock and perceived and real crime problems have lost out to neighborhoods further west in the City, as
neighborhoods of choice for working families. To attract market rate renters, developers need to deliver a higher quality product than is generally available in the Albany-wide market place. But properties in neighborhoods like Arbor Hill are typically targeted to very low income households (at or below 50% of area median income) since there are larger potential pools of tenants available for these properties than for properties targeted to households with higher income levels. Analysts have concluded that almost half of the City of Albany’s rental households are cost-burdened, or paying more than 30% of their income for housing.

Due to the same factors, the for-sale marketplace in the core area of Arbor Hill has also been targeted to the low and moderate-income population. Programs typically target households with incomes around 80% of Area Median Income (As of 2003, $47,850 for a family of four). According to a recent analysis by River Street Planning and Development, there were 3,539 families in Albany under 80% of Area Median Income based on 2000 Census data that could potentially qualify for modest for-sale homes. The difficulties in selling such homes, even at prices as low as $50,000, are driven by:

- In real estate, buying decisions are based on “location, location, location”. Even at bargain prices, buyers are reluctant to invest their scarce savings in areas where other property owners on the block are not maintaining properties well, where there is a high degree of vacancy and abandonment, and most of all, where criminal activity is apparent. Indeed, it is even difficult for homeowners of decent properties to procure insurance when they are located next to severely deteriorated or abandoned structures.
- In addition, buyers at these modest income levels are often heavily burdened by past credit issues and difficulty in saving enough money for down payments and closing costs. While the City of Albany and the Affordable Housing Partnership have a sophisticated set of supports available to address these issues (such as Individual Development Accounts and homeownership counseling), the path to homeownership at modest income levels is still not easy.
- It is difficult to obtain mortgages at the modest levels the market supports. Most lenders and mortgage companies active in the local market do not find it profitable to make loans for amounts less than $50,000.

Given these difficulties in similar market areas, The Community Builders and other experienced developers have concluded that one must create a market that does not already exist to create sustainable change in a neighborhood as distressed as the core area of Sheridan Hollow and Arbor Hill. This can only be achieved by securing enough control of properties in a given block or set of blocks so that the future can be driven by strategic targeted investments. Scattered efforts at rehabilitation or in-fill new construction on a one or two unit basis work in areas with existing strength (i.e. Ten Broeck Triangle) but do not make enough impact to change market perceptions in more devastated areas. Once larger-scale site control is obtained, it is critically important that the quality of what is produced is significantly higher than the surrounding marketplace. Similarly, it is important that positive change be signaled by a widespread marketing campaign of the neighborhood as a “community of choice” offering developments and services to a full range of renters or owners, not just low-income renters or owners who have no other choices. Announcing developments as affordable housing programs for low-income people does nothing to create positive market change in neighborhoods like Arbor Hill.

Signaling dramatic change is also important to attract commercial development. Retailers look for positive demographic trends including population and income gains, when making site selection choices. Commercial improvements tend to follow rather than lead,
improvements in inner-city neighborhoods. The fact that more than 20,000 cars and 32,000 individuals pass along or cross Henry Johnson Boulevard every day and more than 24,000 persons live within a one-mile radius of the Boulevard, creates a very significant commercial opportunity for Arbor Hill. However, leveraging that opportunity depends on waiting until the housing market improves so that when sites are made available to retailers, higher quality stores will be attracted. Retailers currently believe that even if 24,000 persons live within a mile, few people other than the 5,000 neighborhood residents are likely to stop and shop in a troubled neighborhood. The exceptions to this rule are: 1) retailers and professionals that appeal to a very local or specialized market (such as Roy’s Caribbean, barber and beauty shops), 2) convenience-driven retailers such as Stewarts, Subway or McDonalds that cater to both regional and local markets and are sited so customers can move in and out for very short visits, and 3) value retailers such as Family Dollar or Payless Shoe Stores that cater to moderate income households.

Given how long the neighborhood has been deteriorating, it is difficult to ask for patience from local citizens. However, long-term, sustainable success can only be possible with fundamental changes supported by real market strength. It is probably better for the long-term health of the Arbor Hill community to assemble sites, maintain them well and turn down opportunities for low-end retailers that might signal negative impressions of the neighborhood until the residential and community change that is envisioned in this Plan becomes a reality. While neighborhood demographics are still not likely to support large supermarkets like a 70,000 square foot Hannaford or Price Chopper, the right timing and location should attract and sustain a more modestly-sized grocer such as the local Co-op, Buy Low, A&P or an entrepreneurial spin-off from a wholesaler.

In thinking about retail demographics and potential retailers, it is helpful to compare expenditures within a likely one-mile market area to expenditures in areas similar in size and income. Most retailers along Henry Johnson Boulevard would be attracting customers from the Arbor and West Hill neighborhoods north of Central Avenue as customers south of Central and north of the City line have plentiful retail alternatives. The Market Research Department at the Times Union generously provided 2002 data extrapolated from the 2000 Census by Applied Geographic Solutions about the Arbor Hill / West Hill market area, in comparison to Capital District Communities similar in size and income (see table below):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Arbor Hill</th>
<th>Cohoes</th>
<th>Amsterdam</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2002 Population</td>
<td>17,230</td>
<td>15,204</td>
<td>17,845</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990 Population</td>
<td>19,232</td>
<td>16,825</td>
<td>20,714</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002 Households</td>
<td>7,120</td>
<td>6,871</td>
<td>7,819</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990 Households</td>
<td>7,964</td>
<td>7,133</td>
<td>8,777</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apparel</td>
<td>$3,008.09</td>
<td>$2,934.34</td>
<td>$2,573.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contributions</td>
<td>$1,494.58</td>
<td>$1,554.16</td>
<td>$1,364.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>$1,005.40</td>
<td>$987.21</td>
<td>$860.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Books and Supplies</td>
<td>$149.08</td>
<td>$147.03</td>
<td>$128.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuition</td>
<td>$856.32</td>
<td>$840.18</td>
<td>$731.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entertainment</td>
<td>$2,775.45</td>
<td>$2,786.11</td>
<td>$2,446.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fees and Admissions</td>
<td>$712.08</td>
<td>$725.87</td>
<td>$638.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video/Audio Equip</td>
<td>$1,056.13</td>
<td>$1,025.55</td>
<td>$900.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rec. Equip/ Supplies</td>
<td>$1,007.25</td>
<td>$1,034.70</td>
<td>$907.12</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pet Supplies and Services</td>
<td>$290.27</td>
<td>$292.88</td>
<td>$257.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Recreational Equipment</td>
<td>$716.98</td>
<td>$741.82</td>
<td>$650.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food and Beverages</td>
<td>$8,884.39</td>
<td>$8,848.90</td>
<td>$7,779.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food At Home</td>
<td>$5,275.04</td>
<td>$5,183.99</td>
<td>$4,553.42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Albany</th>
<th>Rensselaer</th>
<th>Schenectady</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Food Away From Home</td>
<td>$3,089.47</td>
<td>$3,133.73</td>
<td>$2,759.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcoholic Beverages</td>
<td>$519.87</td>
<td>$531.17</td>
<td>$466.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gifts</td>
<td>$1,628.39</td>
<td>$1,644.79</td>
<td>$1,442.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Care</td>
<td>$3,266.89</td>
<td>$3,252.38</td>
<td>$2,864.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household Furnishings and Equipment</td>
<td>$2,126.29</td>
<td>$2,153.82</td>
<td>$1,892.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shelter</td>
<td>$8,903.13</td>
<td>$9,294.39</td>
<td>$8,174.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household Operations</td>
<td>$1,601.79</td>
<td>$1,658.56</td>
<td>$1,456.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Misc. Expenses</td>
<td>$614.70</td>
<td>$615.72</td>
<td>$541.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Insurance</td>
<td>$611.48</td>
<td>$625.58</td>
<td>$552.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>$290.17</td>
<td>$290.71</td>
<td>$254.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tobacco</td>
<td>$481.10</td>
<td>$490.67</td>
<td>$430.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>$11,007.72</td>
<td>$11,049.32</td>
<td>$9,731.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilities</td>
<td>$4,372.76</td>
<td>$4,209.71</td>
<td>$3,687.90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Applied Geographic Solutions

One of the interesting facts that emerges from this data is that households actually spend more than their reported income. This is increasingly true across income bands where credit use has become more prevalent, but it is especially true in lower income neighborhoods where more employed individuals are engaged in jobs that provide non-reported income (i.e. waitresses, hair stylists etc.). Thus, it is important to look at total expenditures when assessing buying power. Another fact that emerges from this data is that certain basic goods and services – food, clothing, and health care – must be purchased, regardless of income. Businesses that address these basic needs have historically prospered in lower income neighborhoods (e.g. grocers, medical clinics, affordable apparel chains such as Payless Shoe Stores).

### B. Abandoned Properties Initiative

Any planning effort in Albany’s inner-city neighborhoods must address the deleterious effect of abandoned buildings and vacant lots on the City’s historic neighborhoods. The age of the City’s housing stock (ranging from 100 – 170 years old in Arbor Hill) is at once the City’s greatest asset and its greatest challenge. Unfortunately, weak housing market conditions have not supported the dramatic need for wide scale and constant restoration and rehabilitation of the aging housing stock. Abandoned structures are the result of disinvestment in neighborhoods. When paying mortgages and/or property taxes exceeds the personal measure of value to a property owner, delinquencies begin to accrue. In the course of mortgage or tax foreclosure, after due process is provided, the lender or County takes title to properties with unpaid mortgages or tax bills. Recent windshield surveys have revealed that there are close to 200 abandoned buildings in Arbor Hill and 800 Citywide. Approximately 30% of these abandoned properties are County-owned, with the remainder in lender or other private hands, often on their way to foreclosure. By contrast, New England cities like Boston which also have an aging housing stock, have experienced hyper-inflation and an incredibly strong housing market over the last 20 years that has worked to preserve the historic physical stock while severely limiting affordability. Given the overriding importance of this issue for all City neighborhoods, a subcommittee was formed to focus on the issue. The subcommittee brainstormed about possible actions that could be taken to address the problem. Their input was incorporated when the City’s Department of Development and Planning issued the Abandoned Properties Report attached as Appendix C.

Abandoned buildings are scattered in Arbor Hill south of Colonie Street. The table and map below summarize the results of a visual survey completed in September 2002. Most of the
buildings are rowhouse structures containing apartments. A comparison of ownership in April 2001 and September 2002 found that 74 of the 179 buildings changed hands over that 18-month period. Albany County was party to forty-one (41) of the transfers. The County sold 19 of the buildings to private individuals. The County took ownership of 22 buildings over the period, largely the result of foreclosure actions.

**Survey of Abandoned Buildings In Arbor Hill, September 2002**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Buildings in Arbor Hill planning area</th>
<th>1497</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Buildings identified as Abandoned</td>
<td>179 (12% of total)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land Use</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One Family Residence</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two Family Residence</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three Family Residence</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Containing 4 or more apartments</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ownership</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Individual/Corporation</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance Company</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Albany County</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonprofit (including ACDA)</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Albany</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The expense of renovating an abandoned building can vary greatly. The City pegged costs at $15,000 to $65,000 per unit, depending on the condition of the building. However, the experience of TCB and other organizations that utilize the necessary forms of public assistance that allow for the rehabilitation of the most deteriorated or “shell” buildings suggests that costs can rise to as much as $125,000 per unit. The total investment required to rehabilitate 179 structures would thus be in the range of $7-29 million, resulting in 350 to 500 newly rehabilitated housing units. Since real estate market values are low in the neighborhood, developers face substantial gaps between the costs to rehabilitate buildings and the value of the properties in the rental or for-sale market. This gap translates into a need for subsidy.

The high cost of renovating some of the vacant building stock in Arbor Hill with its resultant draw on scarce subsidy resources speaks to the importance of establishing guidelines for weighing the economic utility of the building against its preservation value. The cost to remove a structure now averages $17,000/building making the cost of demolition of 179 structures approximately $3 million. Such demolition in Arbor Hill would result in scattered plots of vacant land, presumably ready for development, with a cumulative total area of 13 acres.

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2. According to the recent experience of the Community Preservation Corporation.
3. According to Albany Community Development Agency staff.
In addition to abandoned buildings, there are 100 to 150 vacant land parcels in Arbor Hill considered to be abandoned. These are suitable for reuse or ongoing maintenance and are not currently used for parking or yard space, or designated for construction. Most of the lots are owned by Albany County or private individuals. The vast majority of these properties are classified as unimproved, residential lands. These lots are scattered in all areas south of Colonie Street. Many are vacant as a result of demolition.

The Abandoned Properties Report further describes the existing refuse collection, dumping, anti-litter, snow removal and other code enforcement and Vacant Building Registry activities through the Public Safety Department’s Divisions of Fire Safety, and Building and Codes. While the City recognizes the importance of strong code enforcement and the demolition of structures found to be unsound, resources for these activities are limited. Further, the City has recognized that demolition of abandoned buildings in several areas of Arbor Hill – including the Ten Broeck Triangle and along Clinton Avenue - is not desirable. On the contrary, restoring these buildings is a pressing need because these are early urban settlements designated for preservation and lie within historic districts (Downtown Albany District, Broadway/North Pearl Street District, Ten Broeck Historic District, Clinton Avenue District). In these areas, the City desires, when feasible, to stabilize these structures.

The Abandoned Properties Report also describes the property tax collection, lien, foreclosure and disposition processes. Since the disposition of County-owned tax foreclosed properties can have a significant long-term effect on the future of older City neighborhoods, it is critical that the City and County continue to work effectively together to ensure that properties end up in the hands of parties with the resources to properly care for the properties over the long term. The City and County have made this a high priority and their short (Pilot) and long-term plans are further described in the Action Plan (Chapter VI). In addition, the County continues to adjust the auction process to further assist development efforts. For example, the County is seeking to block repeat code violators from bidding and to place deed restrictions on buildings sold at auction and listed on the Vacant Buildings Registry. The County is also working on methods for addressing delinquencies on chronic eyesores. The Abandoned Properties Subcommittee set forth the following goals (see detailed objectives for Goals in Appendix C):

Goal 1. Educate the public about abandoned properties.

Goal 2. Develop and maintain an inventory of abandoned buildings in the city.

Goal 3. Manage abandoned property to secure public health and safety, and to minimize the blighting influence upon neighboring property.

Goal 4. Encourage the reuse of abandoned properties.
Chapter IV: Planning Process

A. Neighborhood Advisory Committee

In June 2002, Mayor Jennings reached out to neighborhood stakeholders including those who had been critical of prior plans for Swan Street. The Mayor charged the 23 members of the Arbor Hill Neighborhood Advisory Committee (see Appendix A) with the task of developing consensus amongst stakeholders on an “Action Plan” which makes the best use of resources to improve the neighborhood. Thus, a diverse group of stakeholders participated as Neighborhood Plan Advisory Committee members representing: Arbor Hill residents, homeowners, renters, housing developers, public safety officials, lenders, community advocates, religious leaders, environmental justice advocates, historic preservationists, local economic development representatives, and local elected officials. These committee members and other committed neighborhood activists volunteered hundreds of hours to meeting together, attending public meetings, and reviewing materials and otherwise dedicating their time, energy and talent to help achieve a better future for Arbor Hill.

City staff members who provided technical support to the planning process represented: The Albany Home Store, Albany Community Development Agency, Albany Housing Authority, Department of Public Safety, and the City of Albany Department of Development and Planning. Technical assistance to the advisory committee and the City of Albany was provided through a U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development funded Technical Assistance Provider, The Community Builders, Inc. and its planning and design sub-consultant, Behan Planning Associates, LLC.

The Arbor Hill Neighborhood Plan Advisory Committee met from June 2002 through May 2003. The schedule of meetings was posted on the Internet at the City of Albany website, www.albanyny.org and distributed to all committee members. The meetings were open to the public. Members of the public were invited to sign in, and then given an opportunity to speak directly to the advisory committee. Over time, members of the public became more active in helping to formulate the plan by serving on subcommittees and working with Committee members in regular meetings.

B. Public Meetings

In addition to the open monthly meetings of the Neighborhood Advisory Committee, two public meetings were held:

1. A Project Kickoff Meeting was conducted on June 25, 2002 to inform community members about the planning and public involvement process, introduce the members of the advisory committee, and provide an opportunity at the beginning of the planning process for public input. Sixty residents attended; several residents expressed concern about the quality of life in the neighborhood. Attendees at this meeting expressed some cynicism about the outcome of the planning process since several previous processes had been suspended over the past few years. The Committee invited the public to attend their regular meetings and to stay informed by reviewing Committee meeting minutes. Committee members and planners also offered to attend neighborhood meetings and to spread the work of the Plan through other neighborhood grass roots organizations.

2. On Saturday morning, September 14, 2002, the City, TCB and Behan Planning Associates hosted a hands-on Design Workshop at the New Covenant Charter School. More than 45 residents and stakeholder attended in addition to staff and consultants. The workshop opened
with an introduction to the planning process explaining its goal, followed by a discussion of neighborhood challenges and opportunities, and concluding with ingredients for great neighborhoods.

The second part of the workshop, was a “hands-on” working session. Planners asked participants to break into five groups; each focused on a different geographic area. These areas were: 1. Henry Johnson Boulevard Corridor; 2. Typical Residential Block, with First Street as an example; 3. North Swan Street - between Clinton Avenue and Livingston Avenue; 4) the Ten Broeck Triangle – “Downtown Connections” area; and 5. Neighborhood as a Whole - this group would look at issues affecting the whole neighborhood.

Groups were asked to discuss their vision for the neighborhood, and what strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities they saw for the area they evaluated. The culminating exercise for each group was to mark-up maps with their ideas for physical improvements for revitalizing that area. Each group prepared written notes to accompany their maps with physical and programmatic ideas. The workshop concluded with representatives from each group presenting their collective ideas to all workshop participants for additional discussion.

The workshop was very successful in providing a forum for residents, property owners and other stakeholders to roll up their sleeves and put on paper their positive ideas for what they wanted the community to look and feel like in the future. Ideas like “putting the ARBOR back in Arbor Hill” and celebrating the neighborhood’s African American heritage were put forth with great energy and enthusiasm. Many participants in this September workshop became regular visitors to the Neighborhood Advisory Committee’s monthly meetings or stayed informed about the process through informal or formal contact with Committee members and planners.

From public input at designated public and committee meetings, some key messages were delivered to the neighborhood advisory committee. One strong message was to recognize the great human resource Arbor Hill has in individuals and local, grassroots groups who are passionate about the neighborhood.

Residents and committee members urged that revitalization strategies include ample opportunities for private and not-for-profit entities to be part of the solution. Citizens in the neighborhood are wary of “big projects.” Citizens are seeking diversity in their neighborhood in as many senses of the word as possible: incomes, ethnicities, housing sizes and types, and architectural designs in keeping with the neighborhood context. Residents advocated for a mix of rehabilitation of existing structures with complementary new infill construction. Citizens are also interested in a mix of neighborhood commercial uses and a diversity of cultural opportunities. Citizens are interested in more engagement with existing cultural institutions that want to reach out to and involve the community to a greater degree, as well as grassroots cultural groups and individual artists.

**C. Input on Draft Conceptual Plans**

Based on the public input from the design workshop, advisory committee comments, and other feedback obtained through committee meetings during the Fall 2002, The Community Builders, Inc., with their sub-consultant, Behan Planning Associates, LLC, drafted principles and descriptive conceptual plans for each of the five geographic areas discussed at the public workshop. These concept graphics were meant to generate discussion and debate about alternate physical manifestations of the vision articulated at the Design Workshop, and to...
obtain feedback for further refinement. The ideas obtained at the public workshop were used
to help guide the development of land use concepts and planning principles appropriate for
Arbor Hill. The public comments were also reviewed and evaluated by the advisory
committee and technical advisors to identify specific revitalization projects and programs.
These draft conceptual plans were reviewed by the neighborhood advisory committee at its
December 2002 and January 2003 meetings.

1. The Planning Team developed a “Concept Plan for Arbor Hill” – a big-picture
vision – that was presented to the neighborhood advisory committee on
December 18, 2002. It summarized key principles that the public and the committee had developed to date. The graphic follows. Arbor Hill has
significant assets that serve as foundations for the neighborhood’s revitalization. These include its historic structures, a diverse population that adds richnens to the whole city and region, a beautiful hill-top setting that offers magnificent views
and vistas, valuable institutions and potential for a healthy commercial base. The concept plan was meant to build upon these assets. Thus the four key elements of the vision for Arbor Hill to emerge were:

- Support Homeownership and Rental Housing
- Celebrate Arts, Culture & Heritage
- Support Business and Job Development (Focus Commercial Vitality)
- Strengthen Quality of Life (Create Safe Public Spaces and Design Streets for People)

Other important elements of the vision include the importance of connecting the neighborhood to the greater region, especially to the Riverfront and the Downtown and State Capitol. In addition, there was interest in portraying a positive image of the neighborhood through the establishment of gateways at Henry Johnson Boulevard’s intersections with Livingston Avenue and Clinton Avenue, and at Clinton Avenue’s intersection with Broadway.
CONCEPT PLAN FOR ARBOR HILL

KEY ELEMENTS:
- SUPPORT HOMEOWNERSHIP & RESIDENTIAL RE-INVESTMENT
- CELEBRATE CULTURE & HERITAGE
- FOCUS COMMERCIAL VITALITY
- CREATE SAFE PLACES
- DESIGN STREETS FOR PEOPLE

Landmarks
- Primary Connections
- Regional Connections
- Gateways

ARBOR HILL NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN FOR THE CITY OF ALBANY
Arbor Hill Neighborhood Advisory Committee
Albany Local Development Corp.
U.S. Dept. of Housing & Urban Development

Prepared by: Behan Planning Associates, LLC
With: The Community Builders, Inc.
Scale: 1" = 200'

December 16, 2003

Map not intended for site-specific work.
2. The planning team developed a “Residential Street Concept Plan (Example using First Street)” to show graphically the principles expressed by the neighborhood advisory committee and the public. These include a desire for high-quality homeowner and rental housing, with high-quality streetscapes for pedestrians, and an emphasis on rehabilitation. Historically, Arbor Hill has been a primarily residential area supported by neighborhood commercial uses. The neighborhood developed to serve residents ranging from wealthy to average workers in the nascent industries along the Erie Canal. The following principles summarize a vision of a future “typical residential street” that would be applicable for any residential street in Arbor Hill:

- Recognize and Support Ongoing Investment by Residents
- Fit New Residential Construction to conform with historic districts
- Where feasible, rehabilitate abandoned buildings – if not feasible, demolish blight
- Calm Traffic through Residential Areas
- Perform Streetscape Improvements in Coordination with Future Investments: Sidewalks, Plantings, Lighting
- Explore Creative Solutions for Off-Street Parking

Creative solutions should be explored for increasing off-street parking for existing properties, as well as for new investments. This could mean looking at existing alleys that may need improvements to increase usability and access, as well as installing “paper” alleys shown on historic Sanborn maps and tax parcel maps. Additional planning and design options should be explored for providing outlets for alleys onto streets at new locations, as well as for discussing management issues with involved property owners and the city. Alleys could enhance both the residential and commercial properties they might serve. Safety issues should be explored with the Department of Public Safety. Initial comment from Public Safety indicated that through alleys are preferable to dead-end alleys. In addition, existing institutions, such as the numerous faiths and churches located in Arbor Hill, as well as the commercial properties throughout Arbor Hill, should be invited to discussions of redesigning and improving alleys and access for off-street parking. By expanding the planning and design to include these neighboring uses the opportunities for finding solutions may be greater.

Streetscape improvements should occur with investments. This strategy would help avoid damaging and having to redo any of the improvements. Street trees would be desirable for both sides of the street for any replanting program.

3. The core of North Swan Street from Clinton Avenue to Livingston Street was one of the focus areas of the public design workshop in September 2002. The consultants and planners developed a Draft Concept Plan for this four-block area. The purpose of the graphic was to summarize the public input and refine it into a realistic portrayal based on existing conditions. Given the past controversy about the AHA’s Swan Street project, the plan was meant to capture neighborhood residents’ desire for more of a mix of uses with an emphasis on rehabilitation. The graphic represented a planning level design, and not any specific development proposal. The graphic illustrates the conceptual planning principles for revitalizing this area of Arbor Hill and should be used only as a guide to creating and evaluating future proposals.
One comment on the plan was that conceptual new infill buildings would block the view of two murals that were painted by a local artist in summer 2002. The murals depicting peace and community unity were sponsored by the Social Capital Development Corporation’s Restorative Justice Initiative and were part of a grassroots effort by numerous community organizations, youth and adults. Given these efforts, any future actual development proposal that involves the sites in question would involve the notification of those involved. Another, more general, comment, was that the density was too great as shown on the conceptual plan. This comment was considered and integrated into the Action Plan recommendations as well as a revised graphic depicting the conceptual plans for North Swan Street (included in Appendix E).

In summary, for any specific development proposal on North Swan Street, or throughout the Arbor Hill neighborhood, stakeholders such as directly affected landowners and neighbors, neighborhood associations, and any other involved community group or individuals should be given the opportunity to be involved in the planning and design review process. The guiding principles for the future revitalization of North Swan Street from Clinton to Livingston Avenues that the committee achieved consensus are the following:

- Rehabilitation of Historic Buildings where feasible
- Demolition of abandoned buildings that are not economically feasible for rehabilitation nor of prime historic importance in the neighborhood
- New Buildings Reflect Historic Character
- Mix of Homeownership and Rental
- Attached and Detached Buildings
- Sidewalk Improvements, Lighting, and Trees
- Create Off-Street Parking
- Sunlight to Homes
- Yards and Greenspace
- Consider introducing Access Lanes

In addition, the North Swan Street Concept Plan depicted a land use vision that included the following concepts:

- Commercial Rehabilitation at the Corner of N. Swan Street and Clinton Avenue. Reuse existing buildings for mixed-use commercial at this intersection. A supporting concept for the mixed-use commercial rehabilitation is to allow access and off-street parking behind the buildings, if feasible. Providing access behind the mixed-use commercial would open the possibility, if feasible, for off-street parking in support of the New Covenant Christian Fellowship building, for its use or any other future use. The amount of parking would be determined at the time of actual design for specific development.
- Access Lanes – Alleys behind Clinton Avenue. Improvements of existing alleys, and provision of new alleys behind and through Clinton Avenue properties would enable stronger uses of Clinton Avenue properties for mixed uses and housing as applicable. Alleys would open the possibility to off-street parking options at the rear of Clinton Avenue. This concept would support the proposed rehabilitation investment in the Clinton Avenue housing.
- Study potential for Adaptive Reuse of St. Joseph’s School. Potential options for re-use are: senior housing, private initiative such as an artists’ live-work loft space, educational, etc. However, the limiting factors for any adaptive reuse are the cost of rehabilitation and a future project sponsor’s capacity to leverage funds to pay for such rehabilitation costs.
To the extent adaptive reuse concepts are not feasible in the near term, the options of mothballing or demolishing the building should be considered.

- An improved park space is shown on the site of what is currently a basketball court site in disrepair. The final program and design any improved park space would be determined in the future.
- Rehabilitation of Sound, Existing Residential Structures for Residential Reuse. The concept depicted reuse of most of the residential buildings, while allowing that a few in severe conditions would likely need to be demolished.
- New Residential Infill Construction. The concept is to provide infill housing to match the scale and density of the area.
- Maintain Existing Mixed-Use Commercial from Second Street to Third Street, particularly on the east side of the street. This concept would support rehabilitation of these mixed-use commercial buildings.
- Cultural Connection to Ten Broeck Mansion is depicted by showing a tree-lined pathway from North Swan to the Ten Broeck Mansion. The funding, design and implementation of this concept would need to be worked out with all affected property owners and project sponsors, particularly with the Ten Broeck Mansion.
- Commercial Uses and a Cultural Center were suggested on the North Swan Street Concept Plan between Ten Broeck Place and Livingston Avenue as an opportunity and vision expressed by the public. The exact configuration of such cultural space is dependent upon interested organizations’ ability to secure resources and site control of the buildings.
- An additional vision of a concept depicted on the original plan was the “New Signature Building at the southwest corner of North Swan Street and Livingston Avenue. The design team proposed a significant building be placed there to anchor this highly visible corner site that is visible all along the drive up the hill along Livingston Avenue. This idea was rejected because the density was thought too much for the area. Stakeholders preferred the idea of a dedicated green space, possibly with public art, as a better alternative. No matter what the future use, project sponsorship will be needed, whether it is public or private or some combination
- Finally, an improved pedestrian streetscape is depicted by trees along North Swan Street as well as the side streets.

4. Henry Johnson Boulevard is an unusual commercial thoroughfare: it combines qualities of local convenience shopping with opportunities for capturing the significant drive-through market that passes through the neighborhood. At the public workshop, participants recognized that the street is currently devoted to residential use as well as commercial and institutional uses. The institutional uses include the Department of Public Safety and the North Station for the City of Albany Police. A copy of the conceptual street plan is included in the Appendix E of this report.

Opportunities exist for commercial redevelopment and commercial infill along Henry Johnson Boulevard, primarily at three locations where the properties are publicly held: between Clinton and Second Street (not all contiguous); a small location between Second Street and Third Street on the east side of Henry Johnson Boulevard, and on the west side of Henry Johnson Boulevard between the Department of Public Safety site and the newly opened Family Dollar store at the Livingston Avenue intersection. The area between Public Safety and Family Dollar offers opportunities for the reconfiguration of the space for
introducing potentially a new commercial building, redesigning shared parking and access, reopening Oak Street onto Livingston Avenue, and making traffic lights/traffic safety improvements. New developments would likely develop near core areas of public safety.

To assist in the continued revitalization of the boulevard, improved access and additional off-street parking would be highly desirable. In addition the existing businesses and residents would be supported and benefit from additional access and parking opportunities.

In addition, two close-up concept plans were prepared to illustrate two visions of how commercial opportunities could be developed on the east side of Henry Johnson Boulevard from Clinton Avenue to Second Street in the vicinity of abandoned properties. The intersection of Henry Johnson Boulevard with Clinton Avenue, particularly the northeast corner holds potential for commercial redevelopment. Yet the corner buildings are part of the Clinton Avenue Historic District and thus the historic preservation of these buildings is a value to the community. Thus the planning team depicted on the preferred concept plan: two building masses that would not disturb the corner historic buildings along Clinton Avenue and that would involve shared parking, use of alleys that are coordinated with the surrounding residential neighborhood, vegetative buffering between the commercial uses and the adjacent residential. The second alternative showed presented what would be a more controversial concept of a new corner building at Clinton Avenue and Henry Johnson Boulevard that could only potentially be meritable if the community was to gain an outstanding commercial entity with the highest quality of design – such as a neighborhood grocery store that is so highly desired. Again, notably this alternative would have the burden of proof not only to the community but also to the state historic preservation officer.
Existing residences are concentrated along Henry Johnson Boulevard between its intersection with Sheridan Avenue and Clinton Avenue. From Clinton Avenue to Livingston Avenue, fewer buildings are used for residences, and with this part of the boulevard in the C-1 zoning district, it is likely that future re-use would likely not be new infill residential. Residences along Henry Johnson Boulevard and along the interior of the side streets on both sides of Henry Johnson Boulevard should be shielded from commercial and traffic impacts using such techniques as vegetative buffering, and other constructed elements that protect the privacy of homeowners.

Other concepts for Henry Johnson Boulevard include the creation of gateways at both ends of Henry Johnson Boulevard within the Arbor Hill Neighborhood. Planners have created a vision for the greening of the former Furlani’s garage site as a gateway at the northern edge of the boulevard (see graphic images in Appendix E and Chapter V).

5. The Ten Broeck Triangle – Downtown Connections Concept Plan (see Appendix E) shows that this area has numerous assets to build upon for the future revitalized Arbor Hill. These assets include: St. Joseph’s Church and park, the Ten Broeck Triangle historic district, the Grace Sweet Pilgrim Church, the Palace Theater, the First Church of Albany, buildings to be rehabilitated and used by the Capital Repertory Theater between Monroe and Orange Streets, the remaining section of historic Clinton Square, historic Quackenbush Square that houses the Albany Visitors Center and the Albany Pump Station restaurant and micro-brewery, the economic potential of the Leo O’Brien Federal Building, the historic North Pearl Street, and the Ten Broeck Mansion on the hilltop.

The edge of Arbor Hill at Clinton, Pearl and Broadway is a significant city gateway entrance for residents and visitors arriving from Interstate-787. The concepts for refining this city gateway included:

- Keep a clear view of the Palace Theater and the Salvation Army Building site from the highway exit.
- Create an aesthetically pleasing connection for pedestrians and vehicular traffic from the Albany Visitors Center at Quackenbush Square up to the Palace Theater and its Cultural District.
- Enclose and guide (frame) the view and the excessive openness of the arrival space to the Palace Theater with a new building(s) as edges (“stepped back” as needed) along Clinton Avenue.
- Use streetscape features such as at the Palace, Capital Repertory Theater, and other locations.
- Use year-round lights on trees to create a festive atmosphere.

A summary of the plan’s principles and concepts are listed below:

- Protect the Residential Community
- Support reuse options for St. Joseph’s Church that strengthen the neighborhood. Consider re-use options that are low-impact to neighborhood
- Improve Residents’ Access to Off-Street Parking and continue to advocate for a Residential Parking Permit system so residents are not blocked from parking by downtown workers
- Support Creation of Palace Theater Cultural District that Complements the Neighborhood
- Increase Off-street Parking for Cultural District and Professional Office Uses
- Recognize the Federal Complex and the Salvation Army building as opportunities to Diversity Uses and Support District Revitalization
- Support Infill Development that Complements the Historic Neighborhood Character and Scale
- Expand Opportunities for Residents to Connect to the Waterfront
- Seize opportunity to expand on ethnic retail district building upon proposed Asian market

In addition, specific concepts were developed for consideration in future revitalization within this focus area. For Ten Broeck Mansion the concepts include: enhancing the visibility from the corner of Ten Broeck Place and Ten Broeck Street looking up the hill towards the mansion; and the idea to create a stronger cultural connection to the North Swan Street cultural area (considered at this time to be between Ten Broeck Place and Livingston Avenue) and the Underground Railroad heritage.

Ten Broeck Street provides an opportunity with its specific width and setting – for slowing traffic and improving its pedestrian character. One option for strengthening pedestrian character is to widen sidewalks. Another option to consider is addition a double row of street trees on both sides of the street. Yet another option would be a center green space median. Any such option would require sponsorship for funding and additional planning and design processing involving the neighborhood.

Wilson Street lends itself to the concept of improving its aesthetics and utility by strengthening the connection between Ten Broeck Street and parking facilities on North Pearl Street and below. The potential benefits of looking more closely at Wilson Street may be more apparent in the future as a potential part of solving the need for more off-street parking to service both the neighborhood residential uses as well as the rehabilitation and re-use of St. Joseph’s Church. Recognized issues concerning Wilson Street that must also be factored in are its substantial steepness, as well as its active use for vehicular travel and specifically for garages and some other current limited off-street parking.

Increasing the economic potential of the Leo O’Brien Federal Complex conceptually would consider improving the public parking access in the immediate future, as well as exploring revitalization options such as retail and corporate offices with street-level shops and restaurants. Another consideration for this site would be to locate additional parking garage levels at the south end, above an active ground floor use.

Another important area in establishing strong connections to downtown and the State Capitol is the Sheridan Hollow area. The topography tends to isolate the neighborhood, but overtime, key building projects meant to service downtown’s Washington Avenue area could also be important in providing a better visual and pedestrian link between the neighborhood and downtown. The view shown below is meant to convey potential concepts for improved connections to downtown Albany and Capitol Hill government offices and places of employment. Road improvements help create a slightly wider “boulevard” feeling with a green median lined with street trees. The image also depicts pedestrian amenities such as street trees on both sides of the street, pedestrian-scale lighting, and improved pedestrian access up the hill via an elevator tower (in this case with a public observatory) accompanied by a well-designed staircase. The view also shows rehabilitated historic buildings along the improved streetscape connections.
D. Subcommittee Meetings and Efforts

In late January, the Neighborhood Advisory Committee decided to break into Subcommittees formed around the leading topical themes that were emerging from comments on the Planners’ work. The goal of these subcommittees was to achieve consensus around the guiding principles and Action Items in the four thematic areas: Support Homeownership and Residential Reinvestment, Celebrate Unique Culture and Heritage: People and Places, Expand Business and Job Development and Strengthen Quality of Life. The Subcommittees invited public participation in their meetings, thus widening the circle of ideas that emerged from the planning efforts and making broader grassroots connections with people who care about the neighborhood.
These groups met numerous times, both during the regular Neighborhood Advisory Committee meetings and in supplementary meetings during the days and evenings of February and March 2003. The individual groups made great progress and presented their ideas back to the whole advisory committee. The Project Planning team took the consensus ideas from the subcommittees and used this work as a basis for this Plan, its conceptual graphics and Action Plan Outline, as described in Chapter V.

**E. Final Public Meeting**

Before finalizing the Plan as described in this report, the planning team solicited input from the Neighborhood Advisory Committee during the month of April and from public during the month of May, 2003. The final results of this effort were presented to the public at an evening meeting on June 10, 2003.
Chapter V: Action Plan: Guiding Principles and Revitalization Recommendations

A. Action Plan Summary and Map

This chapter outlines the consensus Action Plan for Arbor Hill through the narrative outline below, the attached graphic, and the Action Plan Grid. The following map illustrates where key actions will occur. The background base color of light brown is shown to depict that residential land use is the core land use for Arbor Hill. The intent of the graphic is to highlight certain important action items – it is not meant to be inclusive of all the proposed future actions and initiatives for Arbor Hill. For example, many programmatic initiatives are not amenable to graphic depiction. Labels on the map highlight special land use ideas for particular areas, although the purpose of the map is not to show comprehensive land uses. Below is a list of the concepts depicted on the map:

Key Actions Shown on the Map

- Abandoned Properties Initiative, Residential Rehabilitation & Infill Development
- Clinton Avenue Residential Rehabilitation. Palace Theater Renovation.
- Re-Open Child Care Center.
- Connections to “Downtown” and Capitol Hill.
- Commercial Infill Opportunities on Henry Johnson Blvd.
- Three gateways are indicated on the map as dashed, gray-colored circles.
- Lark Street Improvements.
- Potential Park/Playground Sites near School.
- Business Incubator Expansion
- Overlook Park Near Housing Reinvestment.
- St. Joseph’s School – Feasibility Study.
- Adaptive Reuse St. Joseph’s Church
- Cultural Connection: Ten Broeck Mansion to N. Swan St
- Capital Repertory Theater: Actors Housing & Performance-Educational Space.
- Visitors Center – Increase Neighborhood Links.
- Support Research on Underground Railroad Locations
- Historic Ten Broeck Triangle Area
- North Pearl Street and Broadway Revitalization:.
- Rehabilitate Salvation Army Building and Redevelop Site for Commercial / Cultural Uses.
- Safe Connection to School.

The sections following the map describe more fully the Guiding Principles and Revitalization Recommendations agreed to by the Arbor Hill Neighborhood Advisory Committee. These principles recommendations are broken into the four core topical areas: Homeownership and Rental Housing, Arts, Culture and Heritage, Business and Job Development and Quality of Life. The Action Plan Grid in the final section lists the recommendations with associated costs.
B. Homeownership and Rental Housing

Guiding Principles:

- Support new lower density housing. Expand affordable home-ownership opportunities. Create and attract new homeowners to strengthen families and the neighborhood as a whole.

- Rehabilitate existing housing and build compatible infill housing. Increase investment, both public and private, in the neighborhood in an effort to restore a workable real estate market. This residential reinvestment strategy is a vehicle for improving private market conditions and as a strategy to redevelop vacant buildings and lots.

- Provide a variety of housing types for all ages and family sizes and incomes. Develop Arbor Hill as a community of choice whose residents are comprised of a full spectrum of families economically, racially, chronologically, etc..

- Use high quality designs and materials that fit the neighborhood context. New homes should respect the historic context of existing structures, neighboring uses and scale. Infill housing should be built around intact, sound existing housing in order to achieve long term success and catalyze private investment.

- Support existing homeowners. Improve the quality and affordability of housing stock for Arbor Hill and City residents. It is important to note that the improvements must come in the form of development of new and rehabilitated housing as well as providing support for existing homeowners and with quality of life improvements and homeownership and rehab funding opportunities.

An Elevation View of a Typical Residential Street in Arbor Hill: This image reflects the following guiding principles for the rehabilitation of existing housing, new infill construction that complements the residential character; and the addition of street trees to provide shade. In addition, at the far right, the edge of a neighborhood park is indicated to convey the importance of complementary investments in the pedestrian streetscape and parks as residential reinvestment occurs.
A Visionary Plan View of a Residential Street in Arbor Hill: This drawing illustrates principles to guide future residential area re-investment in Arbor Hill. Attached and detached houses are shown on lots slightly larger than standard Arbor Hill lots. Alleys show opportunities for off-street parking in rear garages or on parking pads as an option, in addition to off-street parking through individual driveways. Depending on economic feasibility, garages may be desirable in a future housing market, so some garages are shown. Through-way alleys are preferable from a policing and safety perspective than dead-end alleys. While the concepts described above are replicable to other blocks, this drawing of First Street includes an “overlook park” concept at mid-block because of the unique views available from that elevated First Street site which affords great views of the downtown skyline.

Recommendations: The recommendations comprise existing housing programs as well as planned and ongoing real estate developments as follows:

1. The most important housing initiative is the Abandoned Properties Initiative. This effort will further the other residential reinvestment goals. The Abandoned Properties Initiative is taking shape on two important parallel tracks:

a. In the short term, the City, planners and Advisory Committee members felt it was important to move immediately to launch a pilot program to move available buildings and vacant lots from the County’s Auction list into responsible hands that will support the residential reinvestment strategy. So as not to lose the opportunity to quickly implement recommendations coming out of this planning effort, The City asked the County to hold approximately 30 buildings that would otherwise have been auctioned off to the highest bidder in December, 2002 for potential transfer to the City. The County agreed to this request and subsequently worked with the City to organize a tour of these buildings. City staff and a group of neighborhood stakeholders, historic preservation advocates and private and non-profit developers evaluated the redevelopment potential of these County-owned properties. The tour revealed that by the time many properties are foreclosed by the County, they have suffered very significantly from disinvestment by prior owners. Some of the properties had been through previous foreclosure cycles and were structurally unsound and deemed infeasible for redevelopment. However, there were 13 buildings and 45 vacant lots that the City and Neighborhood Advisory Committee asked the County to consider...
transferring to the Albany Community Development Agency. The County agreed to the request and will transfer the properties for the redevelopment opportunities described below. The planners and Neighborhood Advisory Committee consider this transfer critical to the success of the residential reinvestment strategy because it will allow for a coordinated and thoughtful reinvestment strategy. The group has already preliminarily evaluated which buildings and vacant lots will likely be best candidates for homeownership opportunities. The Request for Proposals for the properties (draft attached as Exhibit D) is scheduled to be widely marketed after the County transfers the properties during the summer, 2003. Given the interest expressed so far, the City expects great response from committed and experienced non-profit groups as well as private investors and potential homeowners. Responses to the Request for Proposals will be evaluated by ACDA staff and key stakeholders to ensure that respondents’ plans for the buildings or lots will conform to the Plan’s Guiding Principles and that respondents have the experience and financial capacity to complete proposed development efforts. The Albany Community Development Agency has agreed to commit funds for limited stabilization and maintenance of the properties so further deterioration can be avoided pending transfer and development. The City intends to deed the properties to successful respondents with a reverter clause that will allow the properties to be re-taken by the City if a respondent does not complete their redevelopment effort on a timely basis.

Our recommendation is that the City and County implement this first phase of the pilot program and replicate this effort as the next County foreclosure list is published – such replication should allow the City to place a pipeline of properties in the hands of entrepreneurs who are able to redevelop properties on a streamlined basis. As currently planned, the program calls for the transfer of 30 buildings over a three-year period. These buildings will be rehabilitated with a combination of private funds, and existing ACDA resources from the Tenant Rental Assistance Program (TARP), Home Owners Assistance Program (HOAP) and the Lead Assistance Program (LEAD). Buildings in significantly deteriorated condition will require that additional state, federal, or foundation resources also be leveraged.

b. The City is also looking beyond the Pilot program to replicate the success cities such as such as Rochester, Cleveland and Chicago have had in bringing the program to scale. The City of Chicago has seen dramatic success with its program, which it calls “Tax Reactivation” both from a residential reinvestment and tax base perspective. Thousands of housing units as well as commercial development and cultural sites have been developed in that City’s inner-city neighborhoods since the program was launched 15 years ago. This has resulted in improved housing markets and far less tax delinquency - in some neighborhoods, instead of almost universal tax delinquency in the late 1980s, it has been hard to find tax foreclosed properties since the year 2000.

Similarly, The Enterprise Foundation, a national non-profit community development organization, has helped the City of Rochester administer a $10 million public/private financing pool. The Rochester Housing Development Fund Corporation is a partnership of the City, private lenders, Enterprise and non-profits. The Fund holds title to HUD-foreclosed properties, organizes the properties into rational clusters and prepares financing packages and rehabilitation specifications to ensure that approximately 300 properties expected in the pipeline are redeveloped. Enterprise has agreed to provide similar assistance to the City of Albany in order to create a long-term strategy to enable the Pilot program described above to be sustained over time and spread to other City neighborhoods. We recommend that the City place a very high priority on this work.
2. As shown on the summary map, the center of the Arbor Hill neighborhood is targeted for very significant public, private and not-for-profit reinvestment. The yellow color on the map shows the area east of North Swan Street across to east of Henry Johnson Boulevard, and north to Colonie Street and south to about Clinton Avenue. The core area housing plan will leverage over $20 million in public and private investments in housing and mixed-use buildings with and up-front investment of $5 million in HOPE VI capital funds. The Neighborhood Advisory Committee endorsed the work of the housing subcommittee in adopting the following Core Area Residential Reinvestment strategy:

- The Residential Reinvestment strategy would rely on various sponsoring entities from the community to further portions of the plan. ACDA would oversee the initiative with AHA focused on certain core components of the plan.

- A three-phase investment strategy will focus on the areas between Swan Street and Henry Johnson Blvd. Each phase will include rental and for-sale housing. Development by the Albany Housing Authority under its HOPE VI initiative will proceed along a parallel path at the same time as properties are redeveloped through the RFP process described above by non-profits, experienced and reputable private investors and potential homebuyers.

- The redevelopment of parcels will be focused on those currently publicly owned and/or abandoned (see map of properties currently publicly owned in Appendix E). Redevelopment will take place in rational clusters along First, Second, Third, Lark, Swan and Colonie Streets. The locations and clustering will be designed to create critical mass and momentum that will support private investment rather being scattered too widely or concentrated on any one block.

- Density of units will be an important consideration with an average of two new housing units per lot and no more than three new units per lot in specific instances. If at all possible rehabilitation of buildings should strive to achieve unit reduction. For example, certain historic 3-story townhomes could be redesigned as a duplex two or three bedroom unit over a smaller flat.

- Attention should be placed on making units that serve modern families. This includes designs that contemplate off-street parking through driveways, garages or alleys.

- A mix of home ownership and rental housing. The Plan contemplates nearly 190 units of housing with 90 units being targeted for home ownership. From a building perspective, this would mean approximately 90 buildings for home ownership and perhaps 40 buildings for rental housing. Achieving this mix will depend on accomplishing very successful, very high quality rental and for-sale housing in the first phase so that private market activity is catalyzed to support far higher sales activity than has occurred in the neighborhood in recent years.

- The income levels of the occupants would be tiered. Although the subcommittee acknowledged the importance of safe, decent and affordable housing, it was also noted that the effort shouldn't concentrate poverty or persons of a particular income strata. Therefore, it was important to create developments that allowed for families of many different economic circumstances. The subcommittee proposed that, if possible, any new development create a significant number of the units at market.
• The proposal has a concentration of both new construction and renovation. The current break down assumes that 40-50% of the buildings in the core housing area redevelopment will be the renovation of existing structures.

The subcommittee stressed that the above initiative should have opportunities for all developers whose plans meet the guiding principles. There should be a mechanism to foster both public and private development in the neighborhood. Toward this end, the subcommittee stressed the importance of strategically deploying the City's resources to meet the goals of the neighborhood and achieve the greatest impact.

3. Other Neighborhood Initiatives. The subcommittee discussed the other initiatives and acknowledged that certain developments were also of specific importance:

a. The Clinton Avenue redevelopment/stabilization of 216 apartments. The Clinton Avenue area is highlighted on the summary map to indicate a specific public/private funding initiative of approximately $3 million to rehabilitate residential properties along Historic Clinton Avenue. Although not shown on such a large-scale map, the concept of improving the alleys on both sides behind Clinton Avenue (existing or future alleys between Orange and Clinton, and likewise, between Clinton and First Street) would help support the revitalization of these historic structures over the long-term, as well as help to improve the residential side street conditions of Orange and First Streets.

b. Capital Repertory Theater: Artists lofts at the corner of Orange and Monroe Streets; see more complete description in Arts and Culture section.

c. Feasibility testing regarding the potential redevelopment of important, but difficult to develop, historic structures such as Saint Joseph's School and Church, 41 Ten Broeck Street and the King Building, among others. The recommended first action to evaluate the potential adaptive re-use of the historic St. Joseph’s School is to perform a feasibility study that would tie into a market analysis for adaptive reuse. Many ideas have been discussed, but before any vision can be realized, economic feasibility must be assessed. Any future re-use should consider in synchronization – the creative opportunities for providing off-street parking and improving / redesigning the park space across the street. The City could also solicit ideas about the feasibility of adaptively reusing this structure by issuing an Request for Proposals that asks respondents to prove project economic feasibility.

d. Continue efforts to create more homeowners through the services of the Albany Home Store and other programs such as Habitat for Humanity, Quality Affordable City Homes, Rehab America, The Land Trust, etc. To make the homeownership component successful, the subcommittee stressed the importance of sound new-homeowner counseling both before, during and after purchase with an emphasis on outreach to existing Arbor Hill residents. Specific focus should be placed on credit readiness and other financial counseling.

e. The subcommittee identified the need to support and expand the landlord training program offered by the Albany Housing Coalition at the Albany HomeStore. Marketing could be targeted to Arbor Hill landlords. The program assists with a myriad of rental property issues from feasibility to purchase and ultimately to management issues.
f. Seek financial incentives for property owners to rehabilitate their properties, e.g. through support of the pending NYS Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit, municipal programs such as the Residential-Commercial Urban exemption and 421f Residential Improvements exemption.

In addition to these direct housing recommendations, the planning team and Neighborhood Advisory Committee also recommend that:

- Infrastructure investments in the neighborhood should be targeted to support the strategic residential reinvestment program in a way that will leverage investments. For example, providing parking and a quality streetscape, in some cases by building or rehabilitating alleys, will both improve housing values in the neighborhood and improve quality of life by providing for more attractive forms of parking and utility placement. New and rehabilitated alleys could be designed and located behind new residential and commercial development as well as behind existing residential and commercial areas.

- City agencies and the developers, non-profits agencies and entrepreneurs implementing housing improvements should ensure that extensive outreach and linkages to training are provided so that minority firms’ and local residents’ participation in the contracting and construction work force opportunities are maximized.

Finally, the Neighborhood Advisory Committee and housing subcommittee recommend that a more permanent committee be formed to guide, support and oversee implementation of the Plan.

B. Arts, Culture and Heritage

The Arts, Culture & Heritage subcommittee was guided by the following statement: culture is shared. The expression and appreciation of culture and arts must have a place, and individuals must have opportunities for participation in both creative endeavors of arts and culture, and knowledge of the resources in the community.

“Arts can channel energy into positive quests for better education, stronger family life and rich community” – Jane Alexander, National Endowment for the Arts.

Guiding Principles:

- Preserve the historic integrity of the neighborhood by maximizing the reuse of historic buildings.
- Support cultural institutions’ applications for grant funding within or about Arbor Hill.
- Promote Arbor Hill as a place for arts, culture and heritage, recognizing the neighborhood’s rich history, including the African American experience.
  i. Strengthening neighborhood ties to city and regional arts & cultural organizations and institutions.
  ii. Increasing opportunities for neighborhood youth and adults to participate in arts and culture programs.
  iii. Promoting the neighborhood as a regional arts center and place of historic significance.
Recommendations:

1. Creation of Arbor Hill Arts & Culture Committee and strengthening ties to cultural organizations throughout the City of Albany. Arbor Hill residents feel the growing arts and culture momentum building throughout the City. By building ties to artistic, cultural, and heritage organizations in Arbor Hill and other parts of the city, residents will have greater knowledge about and involvement in new and existing arts programs. Arbor Hill is one of Albany’s earliest intact historic districts. The committee recommended that a concerted effort be made to make the fullest use of the neighborhood, especially in terms of matching physical and financial resources to the human resources that want to save Arbor Hill’s rich past and its huge potential for future growth.

Since it is valued for its heritage, documentation should be a key goal for the preservation and development of Arbor Hill. Through this process, the historic value of structures can be assessed. By keeping the neighborhood intact, cultural organizations will have the material to work with in deepening an appreciation of its value. The public library, Ten Broeck Mansion and the Albany Visitor’s Center will maintain an information area where Arbor Hill residents can obtain literature about arts and culture activities offered in the area. Ongoing support and networking are important for many groups.

2. Support reuse of historic buildings where possible. Notable buildings include St. Joseph’s Church, 41 Ten Broeck Street, St. Joseph’s School on North Swan, the Salvation Army Building on Clinton Avenue, The King Building at 27-29 N. Swan, and Holy Innocents Church on North Pearl Street. Major emphasis should be placed on the stabilization of St. Joseph’s Church. A feasibility study should be undertaken to evaluate the potential reuse of St. Joseph’s School – the option of its potential use for arts and cultural purposes should be explored. Historic structure reports should be undertaken for the King Building on Swan and 41 North Swan Street in order to assess the potential for reuse. The disposition of architecturally and historically significant buildings in historic districts should be open to the public. The process should involve stabilizing the buildings, publicizing the availability and suitability of abandoned buildings and their potential for reuse. The process should include arts and cultural organizations and individuals.

3. Support ongoing Underground Railroad research and other research pertaining to the African-American Experience in Arbor Hill. Link this research to the long and rich history of the many cultures in Arbor Hill, past and present. Culture and heritage should be used to promote a shared sense of community and history in Arbor Hill. Supporting the many small organizations that contribute to this sense of community is important. Existing green spaces should be maintained and improved as necessary. These include Van Rensselaer Park, S. Joseph’s Park, the grounds around Ten Broeck Mansion and surrounding lots, and St. Joseph’s School playground. All these spaces act as the green “ribbon” that ties the neighborhood together.

4. Support new library services in Arbor Hill.

5. As shown on the neighborhood plan graphic, the “Key Gateway” at Clinton Avenue’s intersection with Broadway and North Pearl is a major “entrance” to the City of Albany, and is an area where revitalization efforts are underway. Wayfinding signage in the “Downtown Albany BID” is slated to reach this gateway area and points within the Arbor Hill neighborhood. Pedestrian improvements were recently installed along North Pearl from Sheridan Avenue to Livingston Avenue. This gateway welcomes not only residents, but many visitors to the area and should reinforce the linkages between Arbor Hill’s cultural gems and the City as a whole.
The Neighborhood Advisory Committee’s Arts, Culture & Heritage subcommittee found great value in networking with others in the arts community. To promote the neighborhood in this way, it is important to review existing activities as follows:

Reuse of St. Joseph’s Church: Following the City of Albany’s expenditure of $150,000 to stabilize this historic landmark built in 1860, the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation committed $300,000 (which must be matched) for further stabilization work. After decades of neglect, the property has been transferred to the Historic Albany Foundation. The Foundation has launched a public planning process for the Church’s reuse, which will be documented, on the web at www.historic-albany.org. The Foundation would like to do slideshows and link the Church site to existing Underground Railroad walking tours during the summer of 2003.
**Underground Railroad History Project:** In addition to providing walking tours of Albany sites, including 10 Lark Street, 168 Third Street and 198 Livingston Avenue in Arbor Hill, the Underground Railroad History Project is conducting ongoing research and lectures to document and interpret sites related to the Underground Railroad. The Capital Region was visited by thousands of fugitives seeking freedom in the years prior to the Civil War. Important figures in the Underground Railroad and Abolitionist movement like Stephen Myers were based in and near Arbor Hill. The map below illustrates locations that were involved in the Underground Railroad movement.

During Black history month in February 2003, the Ten Broeck Mansion and the Albany County Historic Association hosted lectures by The Underground Railroad Project and a NYS Museum fellow and community organizer on the history of Albany’s Rapp Road settlers from the Great Migration. In addition, the Mansion displayed an exhibit by an Arbor Hill resident and photographer entitled “Arbor Hill Portraits: Putting a Human Face on My Neighborhood” These efforts are part of the Mansion’s ongoing work to be a more active partner in the neighborhood. The 3-acre site of the Ten Broeck Mansion is owned and operated by Albany County Historic Association. Attendance at the Mansion increased from 2,000 visitors in 2001 to 7,000 visitors in 2002. The Mansion is building on its ongoing field trip programs for 3rd and 4th grade students tied into school curriculums. In addition, the Mansion is involved in an ongoing photography program for Arbor Hill Elementary students with a local photographer who has recently had a book published of images of Arbor Hill buildings and streetscapes. There is a plan to expand the photography program to focus on portraits of people in Arbor Hill. In 2004, the Mansion plans to focus on programming around “Baseball and Breweries” – which will include the Arbor Hill neighborhoods’ history of African American baseball in the city, with items on loan from Cooperstown. The Mansion is also currently focusing on three capital improvement projects: the rehabilitation of the spiral staircase, restoration of the second floor hallway and creation of additional gallery/exhibition space.
Neighborhood activists are also calling for physically and thematically linking the history of the Mansion to grassroots arts and cultural activities on the block of Swan Street between Third Street and Livingston. Over the past two years, neighborhood residents and a local artist worked with the Social Capital Development Corporation on a successful mural project on North Swan Street. The artist believes kids need a place “off the streets” where they can be nurtured and given opportunities to grow and express themselves under the guidance of dedicated African American role models. Outreach to community youth was conducted by Restorative Community Justice, Cozz Cottontails, and Youth Development Services. There is local interest in developing space dedicated to the arts in Arbor Hill.
A colorful public mural created by a local artist with the help of neighborhood youth in 2002 welcomes residents and visitors at the corner of Livingston Avenue & N. Swan Street.

Other grassroots arts activities include Poetry Happenings at Clayton’s, the Arts Center on Central Avenue, and a dance program, which is currently using space at the Firehouse on Quail Street. In addition, the youth drum group, Chocolate Thunder, served 65 students in 2002 from neighborhoods throughout the Capital District, including Arbor Hill. The groups’ leader is interested in spreading the word about his group both to improve the image of the neighborhood and to attract more students to the positive activities, especially during after-school hours. The group’s website is www.chocolatethunder45@hotmail.com.

Neighborhood artists expressed an interest in performing at local venues such as the refurbished Palace Theater. Located at the nexus of Arbor Hill, Downtown and I-787, the Palace is a critical asset for the neighborhood and Capital District as a whole. During 2002, the City-owned theater completed Phase I improvements including new seats, painting, mechanical and electrical repairs at a cost of $3 million. Phase 2 improvements are slated for 2003 to include a new marquee and air conditioning and electrical improvements. The Board of Directors has considered expanding programming with special local interest including the recent and successful Gospel Night at the Palace. They are also considering a movie series for the Palace – which many stakeholders believe would be a great benefit to neighborhood residents, especially in the summer months.
Renovations to the Palace Theater are in progress. With interior restoration completed, the next phase is a new marquee to welcome concertgoers and city visitors.

The Capital Repertory Theatre, located at 111 N. Pearl, is also at the edge of Arbor Hill and currently serves Capital District residents, including Arbor Hill families through:

- Programs geared for high school students within Albany and at other area high schools
- A school tour program for younger kids – tours go “on the road” directly to the schools
- Star (for youth 12-18), and Starlight (for youth 8 to 12) programs at Capital Rep and The Egg
- Intensive programs:
  - A residency program at Harriet Gibbons High School, the alternative high school for the City of Albany. Lessons are based on the theme of a particular play.
  - Art Break (February vacation break program)
- A career day workshop
- Private performances and receptions for fundraisers for not-for-profits
- Making space available to other groups

Staff leadership and the board of directors are keen on implementing the theater’s community mission and are willing to make space available for other groups’ activities. The group has a strong interest in developing an after school program. They are also in the process of planning, designing and constructing improvements to 60 Orange/23 Monroe (former city arts building), a 36,000 square foot, 4-story warehouse-type elevator building. Reuse plans call for:

- Top 2 floors: housing for actors.
- Ground floor: lobby, rehearsal space, education department, conference rooms, telemarketing space, restrooms
- Second floor: second performance space for theater, off Orange Street entrance. Large room planned to seat 100 – 125 people. Could be used for alternative performances, avant garde. 3,200 s.f. of open space could also be made available to other groups for use. This space would be
available to Arbor Hill groups at reduced rates. Also on the second floor would be rehearsal space, classrooms, and conference space.

- Within 3 to 6 years, the organization plans on building a new theater with a larger performing space at a location to be determined.

C. Business and Job Development

Guiding Principles:

- Support Henry Johnson Boulevard as the neighborhood’s primary commercial corridors with Clinton Avenue as an important site for mixed-use commercial and key nodes at important intersections.
- Promote the growth of quality small businesses which serve and employ neighborhood residents.
- Support the development of marketable retail sites.
- Build upon the emerging cluster of ethnic restaurants and grocers.
- Make streetscape and other enhancements to improve the image of Arbor Hill’s commercial corridors.

The subcommittee devoted to Commercial Vitality quickly came to consensus about action items that would best support commercial vitality in the neighborhood. There was strong interest in Small Business Development Workshop where existing small businesses located in the neighborhood and small business service providers would discuss their programs and services with interested members of the public. It was agreed that the Albany Center for Economic Success (ACES) would be the appropriate organization to facilitate such workshops and to act in the ongoing capacity as a neighborhood resource for small business development. With the City’s help, the Arbor Hill Business Institute, a seven-week series of business development workshops was launched in July, 2003 and will run through August 2003. The group determined that the best business building approach in the neighborhood would be to work with the existing businesses to encourage their expansion and growth. A concerted effort has been made to reach out to existing businesses to attend the workshops. Workshop topics include Credit Repair, Business Plans, Establishing a Business, Business Location, Record Keeping, Workforce Development, Financial Resources and Business Empowerment (public safety and quality of life).

Workshop elements are directly tied to the expressed needs of local entrepreneurs. For example, a local entrepreneur currently employed by Price Chopper has expressed a desire to open a neighborhood grocery – workshop participants could help with technical assistance and practical advice. The workshop hosts and trainers expect to introduce existing and potential entrepreneurs to the larger network of supports in the Capital District, including loan funds, credit repair supports, Individual Development Account (IDA) opportunities, etc.
The Action Plan includes the idea of holding small business workshops to support existing businesses such as this business on Henry Johnson Boulevard.

The group felt that nearby downtown development projects could help foster connections between the neighborhood and the vibrant downtown district and could potentially create service and employment opportunities. The group indicated strong support for the Asian Market project on North Broadway and the ACES Expansion project that would bring the “face” of the Orange Street incubator up to Clinton Avenue with store frontage for incubating small retailers. The group supported the work of the Abandoned Properties Initiative as it applies to obtaining and stabilizing properties on commercial strips to ensure their proper maintenance prior to redevelopment.

**Recommendations:**

1. **Foster small business development:** Rather than creating new organizations, efforts should be focussed on supporting, publicizing, and coordinating existing businesses and small business support groups such as ACES and the Capital District Community Loan Fund. The Arbor Hill Business Institute has been organized to acknowledge the fact that entrepreneurs who have already made the decision to locate in the neighborhood are more likely to expand their businesses, start up new businesses, or know other like-minded entrepreneurs who are likely to locate in Arbor Hill. Building off existing knowledge of the neighborhood is far likelier to produce success than “fishing” for general interest.

2. **Support the expansion of ACES and the work of the Capital District Community Loan Fund.** ACES provides inexpensive start-up space at its incubator on Orange Street and technical assistance to residents of the incubator and other small businesses. The subcommittee recommended support for ACES’ proposal to expand its space to Clinton Avenue. This expansion should make the group more visible and more able to support businesses that need storefront space. Technical assistance is also readily available from the Small Business Development Center and the Capital District Community Loan Fund. The Loan Fund, a $5 million community fund located in the Orange Street incubator, targets financing to small and micro businesses including many in Arbor Hill (child care, accounting services, security firm, etc). The Loan Fund sees a steady flow of applications from neighborhood businesses and has...
been able to significantly increase capital available for lending in recent years due to the infusion of federal CDFI (Community Development Financial Institutions) funds. The group is working with Albany County to finalize a $400,000 HUD contract that would be dedicated to financing businesses with strong job development potential. Staff members at the loan fund also offer a small business training course at a very nominal fee in cooperation with a business professor at the College of St. Rose.

3. **Build upon emerging ethnic restaurant and grocery theme.** With the Caribbean restaurants on Henry Johnson Boulevard and the proposed new Chinatown Plaza at 329 North Pearl Street, Arbor Hill may have an exciting opportunity to emerge as an appropriate, affordable and well-located area for ethnic restaurants, grocers and related products. While the base is small, the immigrant population of the City is growing and efforts should be made to capitalize on the existing businesses and proposals. Chinatown Plaza (see graphic image below) is a very large and exciting catalyst project that should leverage other activities. A group of investors are currently seeking financing to support a 85,000 square foot Asian-themed shopping center at North Pearl and Colonie Streets. Space in the center is reportedly 95% leased and among other activities, the $9 million project will include a restaurant and both retail and wholesale groceries. The Plaza is expected to serve the regional Asian market as well as local Arbor Hill residents with its mix of specialty goods and staples such as fruits, vegetables, fish and meats.

![Graphic image](https://example.com/chinatown_plaza.png)

**Graphic image courtesy of Nine Dragons City Center LLC**

4. **Market potential commercial sites on Henry Johnson Boulevard.** The planners have prepared an overall concept plan for Henry Johnson Boulevard (see Appendix E). In addition, two conceptual site plans were developed for a specific site on Henry Johnson Boulevard from Clinton Avenue to Second Street (see preferred plan on page 21). As discussed above, the planning team believes City planning and economic development staff should strategically target marketing of the sites to high quality, highly needed commercial uses. Sites should be bundled to allow for the best possible reuse rather than allowing disparate attempts prior to the time the surrounding residential neighborhood market is able to support the type of businesses any neighborhood wants and needs (grocery, drug store, bakery, bookstore, sandwich shop, etc.)

Commercial activity on Henry Johnson Boulevard should complement and support higher property values in the neighborhood. As shown on the accompanying graphics, streetscape improvements and landscaping should buffer commercial activity from neighboring residences. Given the high visibility of Henry Johnson Boulevard, with its significant traffic counts, it is important for the future of the City as well as neighborhood residents that quality retailers be attracted to the street. On the neighborhood plan graphic, two circles are located along Henry Johnson Boulevard: one at the intersection with Sheridan Avenue, and the other at the...
intersection with Livingston Avenue. These two gateways are important as residents and visitors approach the neighborhood. Improvements such as cleaning up the brownfield associated with each area, providing well-designed landscaping, signage and fencing treatment, and opportunities for locating public art or memorials may be appropriate in some combination for these two locations on Henry Johnson Boulevard. Green spaces should be accommodating and inviting to pedestrians. Connecting to nearby existing green spaces, particularly the Livingston Avenue/Henry Johnson Boulevard gateway with Department Of Transportation property, offers an opportunity for creative reconsideration of the traffic configuration and green space. Each site will require additional site planning and design by sponsors and neighborhood partners.

**Vision of a Gateway.** This image shows one concept for an enhanced gateway welcoming visitors and residents. The intersection of Livingston Avenue and Henry Johnson Boulevard could be designed with an improved greenspace, welcome to the neighborhood sign, and attractive pedestrian features such as street trees, benches, and fencing. The area could support a piece of public art.

The Henry Johnson concept plan can be used to evaluate future project proposals. Abandoned properties and vacant land in public ownership are highlighted as potential commercial infill opportunities. All future redevelopment along Henry Johnson Boulevard needs to be sensitive to the street’s continued residential land uses, especially the segment between Sheridan and Clinton Avenues. Likewise, a major action espoused by the Arbor Hill Neighborhood Plan Advisory Committee is to strengthen the existing housing “core” east of Henry Johnson Boulevard as well.
as the historic residential and mixed use structures on Henry Johnson Boulevard. Thus, the
cornerstone depicted also include streetscape improvements including new and improved
crosswalks.

5. The graphic map also shows the location of the former Robin Day Care Center on Second Street. Re-opening of the Center would be an important support for job creation as access to quality day care is a proven factor in job retention for adults with children. The Albany Housing Authority is anticipated to be a future partner in the proposed re-opening of this day care facility through its HOPE VI funds.

6. Finally, the area of the neighborhood near the intersection of Clinton, Pearl and Broadway is ripe for revitalization. The mixed-use North Pearl and Broadway district near downtown and the Palace Theater holds great potential for private reinvestment in mixed-use, cultural and commercial reuses. Through flexible zoning, the City should continue to support the lively mix of offices for cultural programs, professional offices, and market-rate housing that co-exist in the area. There are also several notable larger development sites in this area, such as the Salvation Army building and lots near the Quakenbush Square area. Ideally, these sites would be reused for job-creating commercial uses and uses that support the area’s emerging arts and entertainment theme.

D. Quality of Life

Guiding Principles:

• Foster understanding, cooperation and trust between the community and the police department to improve public safety.
• Make physical improvements to enhance public safety.
• Support efforts to clean and beautify Arbor Hill.
• Improve existing and develop new neighborhood green spaces.
• Calm traffic and make other improvements to make Arbor Hill more pedestrian friendly.
• Give priority for on-street parking to residents, particularly where off-street parking options do not exist.
• Encourage stronger physical connections to downtown.

This Plan supports the idea that quality of life improvements must work hand-in-hand with physical housing and commercial development efforts. As mentioned above, these concerns are most important to existing and prospective neighborhood residents. Demand for quick action with regard to these items is understandable but in order for these quality of life improvements to be sustainable, careful and strategic implementation of the planned housing and commercial developments is needed so that they will ultimately produce a mixed-income community of choice. Recent improvements that contribute to quality of life in the neighborhood include the positive collaboration between the Department of General Services and neighborhood residents in cleaning up four lots and planting tulips on Livingston Avenue last summer and the ongoing Lark Street Improvement Project, including streetscape, sidewalk and lighting improvements from Madison Avenue to Clinton Avenue that will be complete by fall, 2003.

Recommendations:

1. Support the Public Safety Committee formed by members of the Quality of Life Subcommittee, a
group of Neighborhood Advisory Committee members and Public Safety officials. In early
April, 2003, the public safety subcommittee circulated a neighborhood-wide petition for support
of a public safety declaration attached as Exhibit F. The purpose of the declaration is to increase
understanding, cooperation and trust between the community and police department through education and interaction to achieve quality of life goals outlined in the Declaration. The subcommittee hopes to get a large number of signatories on the petitions attached to the Declaration. They are also asking stakeholders to display the Declaration broadly in the neighborhood to send a message throughout the community that there are many who wish to improve the quality of life in Arbor Hill and that there is a neighborhood watching. The subcommittee hosted a kickoff event in early April that will serve as the first of regularly scheduled events to promote the education and cooperation process. Future events will focus on Education. The subcommittee plans to hold quarterly forums to present information on the broad topics included on the Declaration and to give opportunities for dialogue on related issues, they plan to collaborate with the current Community Police Council (CPC) to update their brochure to include information on these topics and contacts, and they plan to explore other current written information on topics and make available where applicable. The subcommittee also plans to look for opportunities to expand and reinforce youth programming and crime prevention and to provide coordination among the following efforts:

a. A Community Accountability Board for Arbor Hill, comprised of people from the community, comes up with alternative justice for misdemeanors committed by community members, e.g. certain number of hours of community service – working with seniors, cleaning up vacant lots, etc. The assistant district attorney decides which misdemeanors are eligible for review by the board.

b. Another alternative justice program works with troubled children (as young as 7 or 8 years old). This program offers a “one time break” for children in trouble and works closely with the parents to achieve results. This program stems from the work of the Albany African-American Clergy United for Empowerment, which meets every other Tuesday

c. Operation Peer Pressure is a group of six residents who go to neighborhood ball fields and other recreational areas to exert pressure on youth to stop negative behaviors like smoking.

2. Other Public-Safety-oriented recommendations include:

a. Improve Lighting and/or Provide Electronic Surveillance in Targeted Areas
e.g. better lighting on the south side of Sheridan Avenue from Dove down which serves as a transition area between downtown and Arbor Hill. Consider asking NYS to install camera for public safety for steps up from Sheridan to Elk.

b. Clear Vegetation in Targeted Areas to Increase Visibility

c. Improve Traffic Flow and Safety: The clear priority of the group was Henry Johnson Blvd though concern was also expressed about slowing cars on 3rd Street near the New Covenant Charter School. The subcommittee recommended that a traffic study be conducted with the goal of improving traffic flow on Henry Johnson Boulevard while facilitating pedestrian crossings over the boulevard. The study might consider the following:

- Diverting traffic headed for downtown from the boulevard bridge onto Clinton Avenue perhaps through new signage and/or signal adjustments. This could help alleviate bottleneck at the bridge where the street narrows to two lanes.
- Consider the addition of signals on Henry Johnson Boulevard, e.g. at 3rd Street.
- Consider the consolidation and improvement of pedestrian crossings to provide safer crossings.
- Review the design speed of the street. Perhaps a design speed of 40 mph could be reduced to 30 mph.
- Add more crossing guards for school crossing hours.
• Add a “Do Not Enter” sign for cars heading west on 3rd Street prior to reaching intersection with Swan Street.
• Improve the timing of the traffic light by the firehouse (Lark/Manning; it is very slow).

3. The Quality of Life subcommittee recommended that the eventual entity to implement the City’s Abandoned Properties Initiative have a community participation process and its governance structure have representatives from the neighborhood. The subcommittee identified poor visual appearance, abandoned buildings’ frequent use for nefarious purposes and fire hazards as quality of life issues related to abandoned buildings. Additionally, the subcommittee felt that vacant lots were a concern because they are often poorly maintained and provide a space for criminal activity and egress. Thus the committee felt the strong need for such lots to be placed in responsible hands.

4. Green Spaces

The subcommittee recommended the following actions:

a. Improve playground on Swan Street by St. Joseph’s School.
b. Develop a gateway park at Henry Johnson and Livingston Ave. Include public art/sculpture.
c. Improve playground on Colonie Street.
d. Examine feasibility of turning the southeast corner of Lark and Clinton (which may be a brownfield) into a landscaped buffer zone between Henry Johnson and the residential neighborhood.
e. Consider placement of a playground near the New Covenant Charter School. The School is adjacent and connected to the Arbor Hill Community Center, but currently has no provision for adequate outdoor play space for school children. In concert with the core area housing reinvestment strategy, playground space near the school should be identified and set aside for the potential use of the school.
5. Overlook Park – Arbor Hill’s hill-top location offers fantastic views of the surrounding city and natural areas. Locations in Arbor Hill, like the one shown below on First Street just west of Swan, offer opportunities for consideration of an “overlook park” as re-investment in the residential areas occurs. Park improvements support existing neighborhood investments as well as future residents and visitors.

The park or green space could serve the immediate neighbors with a few “outdoor rooms:” an active play area, a quiet sitting area that may be desirable by elderly residents, and an overlook area for all ages to enjoy the city’s views.

6. The Neighborhood Advisory Committee and planners strongly endorse a residential permit parking system for the area. The quality of life and desirability of the residential neighborhood would be enhanced if the State would allow a residential parking permit system. Neighborhood residents are currently forced to compete with commuters for scarce on-street parking spaces in Sheridan Hollow and Ten Broeck Triangle. The State OGS is currently planning a $25 million parking garage to be located between Elk and Sheridan on the downtown edge of the neighborhood. Neighborhood residents have expressed concern about the environmental impact of the garage. They have asked that the state ensure that the garage has a positive net impact on area parking issues and that the garage is architecturally sensitive to its location as a “bridge” between the residential neighborhood and the high-rises on Washington Avenue.
Action Plan for Arbor Hill Key Elements
CITY OF ALBANY – ARBOR HILL NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN

Prepared by: Behan Planning Associates, LLC
With: The Community Builders, Inc.
U.S. Dept. of Housing & Urban Development
Albany Local Development Corp.
Arbor Hill Neighborhood Advisory Committee

Note: This concept plan illustrates the planning principles for revitalizing this area of the Arbor Hill neighborhood and should be used as a guide to create and evaluate future proposals.

April 11, 2003 Not to Scale
## ARBOR HILL NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proposed New Actions</th>
<th>Estimated Leverage Budget</th>
<th>Est. City Funds Needed</th>
<th>Notes / Other City Support Needed</th>
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*Prepared by The Community Builders, Inc.*

*With Behan Planning Associates*

*Funding through a technical assistance grant from the US Department of HUD*
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<td>Cost to be determined</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 City-sponsored events at the Palace Theater: ideas for new events</td>
<td>In-kind</td>
<td>$3 million in Phase I improvements completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Encourage cultural performances in parks by St. Joseph’s Church</td>
<td>In-kind</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Visitor Center displays on Arbor Hill, on African-American experience</td>
<td>$25,000</td>
<td>Seek additional outside funding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Participation in Downtown BID wayfinding signage project</td>
<td>$250,000</td>
<td>Cost is for entire trail - Arbor Hill is a key component of whole</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Arts/Culture Workshop: coordination of artists/historians in the community – understand needs and identify potential partners; integrate arts/cultural with needs of youth.</td>
<td>In-kind</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Support adaptive reuse of St. Joseph’s Church</td>
<td>$5,000,000</td>
<td>$250,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Include a cultural component developed by neighborhood for the HJB/Livingston Gateway (see brownfield below)</td>
<td>$10,000</td>
<td>Cost depends on scope - includes demo, remediation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Pedestrian access &amp; Improvements to Ten Broeck Mansion from Swan Street</td>
<td>$40,000</td>
<td>Seek additional outside funding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Support reused of St. Joseph’s School, 41 Ten Broeck, Salvation Army Building (Clinton Avenue), The King Building (27-29 N. Swan), and Holy Innocents Church (North Pearl)</td>
<td>$50,000</td>
<td>Public Improvement Funds from City and State; cost depends on scope</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Support reuse of St. Joseph’s School, 41 Ten Broeck, Salvation Army Building (Clinton Avenue), The King Building (27-29 N. Swan), and Holy Innocents Church (North Pearl)</td>
<td>$1,500,000</td>
<td>Re-use driven by market forces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Support new library services in Arbor Hill</td>
<td>In-kind</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 Develop a Culture &amp; Heritage subcommittee to Arbor Hill Implementation Committee</td>
<td>In-kind</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>III Business and Job Development</th>
<th>$12,100,000</th>
<th>$20,000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Prepare and maintain HJB Commercial development sites for development</td>
<td>$20,000</td>
<td>Annual Cost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Host Small Business Development Workshop</td>
<td>In-kind</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Host Developers’ Workshop to garner interest in available sites</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Improve interaction between existing businesses to help grow existing businesses and attract new businesses</td>
<td>In-kind</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Support SEFCU-Arbor Hill Credit Union Partnership - provide banking in neighborhood</td>
<td>In-kind</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Reuse the Salvation Army Building on Clinton Ave. to complement Theater Arts District and neighborhood</td>
<td>$1,500,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Expand ACES incubator to frontage on Clinton Avenue</td>
<td>$1,200,000</td>
<td>Fundraising underway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Expand CDCLF Micro and Small Business Lending</td>
<td>$400,000</td>
<td>HUD grant thru County; funds county-wide but can be specially targeted to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Support development of 64,782 sf Asian market at 329 North Pearl Street</td>
<td>$9,000,000</td>
<td>Funds and zoning secured</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Develop a Commercial subcommittee to Arbor Hill Implementation Committee</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Prepared by The Community Builders, Inc.
With Behan Planning Associates

Funding through a technical assistance grant from the US Department of HUD
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Quality of Life</th>
<th>$</th>
<th>$</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IV</td>
<td>Abandoned Properties Initiative: Long-term</td>
<td>110,000</td>
<td>305,200</td>
<td>City has up to $500,000 in bond funds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Establish good community participation process</td>
<td>In-kind</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Evaluate buildings for demolition or stabilization</td>
<td>In-kind</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Capitalize an entity focused on abandoned properties</td>
<td>To Be Determined</td>
<td></td>
<td>Syracuse ($5 M), Rochester ($10 M)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV</td>
<td>Public Safety</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Public safety committee: actions; coordination with other entities dealing with crime</td>
<td>In-kind</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Lighting improvements and/or public surveillance in targeted areas</td>
<td>To Be Determined</td>
<td></td>
<td>City funds for public buildings, NIMO for Streets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Clear vegetation</td>
<td>In-kind</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Green space recommendations</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Improve existing playgrounds/green space (select locations)</td>
<td>In-kind, $</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Swan Street</td>
<td>$20,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Colonie Street</td>
<td>$20,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Arbor Hill Gateway: HJB/Livingston (a/k/a Felani’s Garage)</td>
<td>$150,000</td>
<td></td>
<td>See also costs in Arts/Culture; funds from brownfield remediation, site control from Albany County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>By New Covenant Charter School: the school had funds for this purpose</td>
<td>$80,000</td>
<td>$20,000</td>
<td>Split between City and School TBD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>HJB between Sheridan and Orange</td>
<td>$50,000</td>
<td></td>
<td>Potentially brownfield remediation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Overlook Park on First Street</td>
<td>$30,000</td>
<td></td>
<td>Potentially part of HOPE VI project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Improve Traffic Flow and Safety</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Slow cars on 3rd Street near school via use of Driver Feedback System</td>
<td>$24,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Conduct a traffic study to improve traffic flow and facilitate pedestrian crossings on HJB.</td>
<td>In Kind, $</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Residential Parking Permit Programs</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Transitional zones, i.e. Sheridan Hollow and Ten Broeck Triangle</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Other</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Arbor Hill Brochure (part of citywide effort to market neighborhoods)</td>
<td>$1,200</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Develop a Culture &amp; Heritage subcommittee to Arbor Hill Implementation Committee</td>
<td>In-kind, $</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Leveraged Improvements</td>
<td>Cost</td>
<td>Notes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>New streets and/or sidewalks: DGS approved Street Resurfacing</td>
<td>$305,200</td>
<td>Also eligible uses for Bond Fund</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1st Street/Ten Broeck to Swan</td>
<td>$50,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Ten Broeck Pl/Ten Broeck to Swan</td>
<td>$170,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Sidewalk Reconstruction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Lark/Livingston to Colonie, west side only</td>
<td>$37,200</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Lark/intersection with Dove, all corners</td>
<td>$30,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Sheridan/intersection with Swan, NE &amp; NW corners</td>
<td>$12,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Sheridan/intersection with Swan, NE &amp; NW corners</td>
<td>$6,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Traffic signal improvements on HJB and near new OGS garage</td>
<td></td>
<td>Plans and costs to be determined</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>New off-street parking, e.g., Lots or alleys</td>
<td></td>
<td>Plans and costs to be determined</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>C-1 Bond Money: targeted investments - mixed use on HJB or Swan</td>
<td></td>
<td>Plans and costs to be determined</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SEE ATTACHED APPENDICES

A - G