4. Study Recommendations

The following chapter summarizes actionable recommendations supported by stakeholders as ways to achieve the study’s goals of developing a safe, welcoming activity center. In general, stakeholders felt that local streetscape quality, character and connectivity; crime prevention; neighborhood identity and quality of life; and sustainability were themes that needed to be pursued. These recommendations were developed in accordance with the existing conditions survey and the input gathered by each of the aforementioned participation methods.

4.1. Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED)

With regard to physical improvements, there are a number of design standards the City can implement to reduce crime and improve the quality of life in the neighborhood. The design of buildings and places has an impact on perceptions of safety and security as well as actual opportunities to commit crime. By applying Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles, the City can promote physical conditions that discourage criminal behavior and aim to make safer places in the community. CPTED is a proactive approach to crime prevention and works by enabling casual surveillance, reinforcing territory, controlling access and managing space. Neighborhood stewardship is promoted through design elements and dwelling layouts that encourage interaction and contribute to a sense of community ownership of public spaces. In addition to physical design considerations, encouraging community engagement and neighborhood activity is a very effective way to encourage a feeling of ownership and a reduction in misbehavior. Programs such as “Operation Safe Corridor”, community policing and the “Midtown Neighborhood Watch” should be continued and expanded. These and other associated safety programs contributed to a 22% decrease in police reports from 2008 to 2009.

The following strategies should be considered by property owners and the City of Albany when designing and/or siting buildings and spaces:

**Natural Surveillance:**
- Avoid landscaping that creates blind spots or hiding places
- Locate open spaces and recreational areas so that they are visible
- Use pedestrian-scale street lighting
- Encourage property owners to keep front porch/stoop lights on overnight
- Promote re(development) that reinforces “eyes on the street”

**Natural Access Control:**
- Limit access without completely disconnecting
- Discourage cut-through and high speed traffic
- Guide visitors through landscape and architectural features
- Locate walkways in safe areas

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3 Parramatta Development Control Plan, 2005
Territorial Reinforcement

- Encourage interaction between neighbors
- Accentuate entrances through design features
- Clearly identify buildings with visible street numbers
- Define property lines

Maintenance:

- Encourage high standards of maintenance
- Enforce City codes

It is important to make property owners, renters, including students, and businesses aware of CPTED principles. A brochure that explains CPTED strategies was distributed to participants at the second public workshop and should be made available to the wider community (Appendix C).

4.2. Transportation and Streetscape

The condition of the street network within the District, both the actual roadway and the streetscape, has numerous and deep effects on quality of life. Traffic, pedestrian and bicycle connections within the District and to local schools and retail centers are imperative to the District’s vitality and viability as a vibrant, mixed-use student enclave. The streetscape – both along residential side streets and commercial cross streets – is the District’s best marketing piece and sets the tone for activity within the area. Improvements must be made to building facades, street trees, and other streetscape amenities in order for the District to capitalize on its potential.

4.2.1. Traffic/Transit/Pedestrians/Bicycles

The Education District is not only at the center of a number of colleges but is geographically in the center of the City. Improving connectivity to the surrounding area is critical to making it an easier place to walk, bike or drive.

The proposed framework for improvements was based on potential mass transit improvements in the area. In addition to the planned BRT service along Central Avenue, CDTA and the City of Albany are looking at future opportunities for BRT along Western Avenue or Washington Avenue. Whether the future BRT service runs along Washington Avenue or along Western Avenue, the BRT stops will likely be at the intersections with Partridge Street, Quail Street and Thurlow Terrace/University at Albany Downtown Campus.

Future pedestrian and traffic improvements, as well as potential zoning changes will be based on the potential locations of future BRT stops, on the current opportunities for commercial revitalization (the soft sites) and on the locations with significant infrastructure gaps. Figure 19 shows a framework for where these pedestrian improvements are proposed. Figure 20 shows a series of improvements that increase pedestrian safety and friendliness and traffic safety as well. They include the following:
4.2.1.1. Pedestrian signal heads

The traffic signals in the study area do not have any specific indications for pedestrians, forcing pedestrians to follow the signal indications for cars. Pedestrian signal heads, preferably with count-down timers, should be installed at all signalized intersections. The countdown timers are especially important along the wider avenues in the area (Madison and Washington Avenues).

4.2.1.2. Intersection neckdowns

Intersection neckdowns are traffic calming tools that widen the corner sidewalks by approximately 6 feet at those locations where pedestrian crossings exist. They have two beneficial effects: they shorten the pedestrian crossing distance, making it easier to cross the streets by reducing a pedestrian’s exposure time to traffic; and they reduce the speed of the cars turning at the corner.

These improvements will result in reduced crashes. The neckdowns have to be designed such that large trucks including fire trucks can safely turn around the corners. This may mean that they cannot be installed at all locations. They also need to be designed so that water evacuation can still be managed. Figure 20 shows some suggested locations for intersection neckdowns. At the proposed BRT stations (Western or Washington Avenues at Partridge, Quail and Thurlow/U. Albany Downtown Campus), neckdowns are not suggested if they preclude the opportunity to install traffic signal queue jumpers for transit vehicles to bypass traffic. Once a decision has been made on the BRT route and its corresponding design features, intersection neckdowns should be considered for any non-BRT station location.

4.2.1.3. Sidewalk improvements

Figure 20 shows those locations where sidewalks should be improved or installed. The various sidewalk types observed in the field allow for the development of improvements instituted through the replacement of them in-kind on an as-needed, as-scheduled basis with small modifications to the walkway and maintenance bands (Figure 24).

- **Type A** – Replace the sidewalk with the City of Albany standard 5’ wide, 4” to 6” thick concrete slab. The maintenance band should be stamped, colored asphalt or patterned uniform red.

- **Type B** - Require concrete replacement, City of Albany standard 5’ wide, 4” to 6” thick concrete slab. Grass maintenance band should be reseeded and restored.
Type C – Require full replacement of concrete pavement from the ROW line to the curb with City of Albany standard 4” to 6”-thick concrete slab, five to fifteen feet wide as needed.

4.2.1.4. Prohibit parking upstream from pedestrian crossings

In Albany, as in many cities, it is illegal to park within 20 feet of a pedestrian crossing. The reason for this prohibition is that it improves the visibility of the pedestrians at the crossings and therefore improves safety. It also makes it easier for traffic to get through the intersection when there is a significant amount of turning traffic. This can be seen for instance at the intersection of Madison and Main Avenues. If one parking space is eliminated upstream of the pedestrian crossing, through traffic can navigate around the vehicles waiting to make a left turn. Parking is currently prohibited for the last 20 feet prior to the pedestrian crossing at all intersections in the City. It is recommended that this law be the subject of intensified enforcement in the District, as well as an evaluation of design alternatives that can be used to enforce this prohibition.

4.2.1.5. Crosswalks

The coordination of a consistent crosswalk treatment throughout the entire District is important to the development of a sense of “place”. Pavements in crosswalks receive tremendous amounts of wear from traffic. Recently, there have been great advances in the technology for decorative pavement treatments, which allow for the installation of crosswalks that can better withstand the wear imposed by vehicular traffic. There are durable thermoplastic systems, integrated and aggregate reinforced materials that can be inset into the existing asphalt surface to provide longer lasting patterns and colors. They are skid and slip-resistant and comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Some of these types of crosswalks already exist along Central Avenue in Albany. Raised crosswalks with bollards and/or in-pavement lighting could be investigated as a means of improving pedestrian safety in select high pedestrian crossings.
4.2.1.6. **Curb Ramps**

There are some locations where intersection sidewalk curb ramps do not exist or function properly in accordance with the current Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards. The City of Albany has an ADA compliant standard ramp detail that should be added were access is inhibited. The Albany ADA Ramp Standard Detail is shown in Appendix D-6.

4.2.1.7. **Emergency Call Boxes**

Existing emergency call boxes should be maintained throughout the District. The installation of additional call boxes at high-incident locations should also be explored.

4.2.2. **Streetscape Improvements**

Based on the analysis of the existing conditions outlined above and the observances of uses, needs and residents’ activities, the following series of recommendations have been developed for consideration by the City, its institutional partners, businesses and others. A map of crosswalk and furniture improvement opportunities for the District is shown in Figure 21.

4.2.2.1. **Streetscape Revitalization Program**

The City should consider creating a façade improvement program for businesses and property owners similar to Albany’s C-1 Commercial District Revitalization Program (Figure 22). A Façade Design ordinance and/or pattern books would help to establish streetscape and building design standards and consistency. Additionally, a more thorough and detailed sign ordinance would increase the City’s ability to control signage designs and require a preferred storefront treatment with increased window transparency and District-appropriate sign placement and size. Illustrations of preferred storefront applications are shown in Figure 23.

4.2.2.2. **Business Improvement District/Merchants Association**

Business Improvement Districts (BID) or merchants associations can take the initiative in the neighborhood to raise money for needed streetscape improvements. While retail businesses in the District alone may not have the density or contiguity to sustain a formal BID, including commercial rental properties containing three or more units in the BID tax pool may make a local BID viable. This option could be explored to determine if this is the best model for local improvements. A merchants association is an alternative that could provide a medium for local business owners to network and work together to address common issues to strengthen the District.
Institutions within and around the District could promote and help support these groups. Examples of ways to assist are: joining the BID or Merchant’s Association, marketing its benefits, promoting student service or internship opportunities, assisting in the creation of business plans or expansion/relocation for local businesses, purchasing goods from local businesses, enabling acceptance of the institutions’ student cards at local businesses, etc.

4.2.2.3. **Intersection Logos**

A logo developed specifically for the District can be placed in the center of crosswalk areas along Western Avenue to promote neighborhood identity and way finding landmarks. Types of materials can include a durable thermoplastic system that is inset into asphalt pavement with a reheating technology or an advanced coating for colored asphalt.

4.2.2.4. **Public Art**

Opportunities for public art should be explored throughout the District, with particular emphasis on exhibiting the talented students of local institutions. Public art would enhance the streetscape while reinforcing the District’s identity and could be incorporated throughout recommendations like branding, bus stops, bike racks and murals.
4.2.3. **Streetscape Amenities**

Streetscape amenities assist in both the functionality of the District and the aesthetic quality of the streetscape. In addition to being useful necessities in a multi-modal neighborhood, they also provide opportunities for branding, public art and creating a cohesive and consistent feel for residents and visitors.

4.2.3.1. **Bus Shelters**

CDTA currently installs bus shelters that are manufactured by Brasco International Inc. of Detroit Michigan. The models and sizes include;

- JREX 510X – 5’ wide by 10’ long
- JREX 515X – 5’ wide by 15’ long

The selection of a particular model depends on the anticipated amount of use and the location of the stop. The Capital District Transit Authority (CDTA) has indicated that it is their intention to continue using this make and model in their inventory and plan on replacing all shelters throughout the City with similar models. According to CDTA the standard Albany shelter color is Brasco International’s “Bottle Green”.

BRT stops to be located within the District will follow CDTA BRT standards, and maintain the color scheme and design of the new BRT line.

CDTA is experimenting with the use of solar powered shelters along Central Avenue. The solar power provides internal night lighting and lighting for advertisement panels. Deployment of these shelters is not planned at this time by CDTA; however, they are recommended and can be installed for the District if funding is made available. Their installation will give the District a progressive character in keeping with locations of higher education.

CDTA is not willing to change its choice of makes and models for bus shelters other than the proposed BRT Bus Shelters, but is willing to consider alternate colors for new shelters. It is recommended that future shelters be colored in accordance with the future branding emblem colors. Bus stops that do not meet the criteria set forth in the program will receive a freestanding metal bench as manufactured by Landscape Forms, model F1035VB.

The option of arranging advertising opportunities or public art rights within and around the shelters should also be explored with CDTA in conjunction with the local branding and aesthetic improvement effort.
4.2.3.2. **Benches**

It is recommended that the backless versions of the DuMor 57 model be used in maintenance strips of commercial sidewalks. The backless versions allow users to orient themselves toward the sidewalk or street if necessary. DuMor’s backless versions of the 57 model include the DuMor Bench 91-80D model with center and end arm rests. This would require custom fabrication since there is no center support for arm rests. Another option is the DuMor Bench 166-80D with included end arms and support for additional center arms as shown to the right. Both are made with Douglas Fir slats.

4.2.3.3. **Trash and Recycling Receptacles**

Trash receptacles are often not considered a significant part of an aesthetic enhancement of streetscapes but in this case it is possible to install unique custom styles to engender a sense of place. Logos and colors can be used to differentiate the District from other parts of the City as shown to the right. Such methods have been successfully used in New York City. A recommended style is the Victor Stanley Model DYN 36 or Model SD-42, both with side door access. It is recommended that receptacles are painted the future branding emblem colors. The City of Albany Department of General Services has also been installing Big Belly solar powered trash compactors and recycling bins in commercial districts. These compactors paired with recycling receptacles should be considered and installed at mixed-use nodes and along major corridors within the District.

Recycling containers would be effective in the District, and should be installed next to trash bins throughout the District. Rental properties in the District should also be encouraged to participate in the City’s recycling program. As a special consideration of the BID, commercial property owners could be required to provide recycling options to their tenants.

4.2.3.4. **Bike Racks**

In 2009 the City chose two new standard bike racks in conjunction with the Bicycle Master Plan, the Dero Bike Hitch, Model BH-FT-GV manufactured by Dero Bike Racks of Minneapolis, Minnesota, and the standard hoop rack. It is recommended that these bike racks be located as indicated in the Site Furnishings Location Plan in Figure 22.
This bike rack is currently installed on Lark Street. Hitch posts are to be installed in narrow right-of-ways. In locations providing ample space, such as parks and parking lots, hoop racks should be installed.

4.2.3.5. Trees and Vegetation

There are numerous benefits that the additions of street trees provide to an urban landscape. They provide an aesthetic curb appeal and help create an overall sense of a higher quality of life, while providing shade and shelter for pedestrians on the sidewalk. Street trees also have the ability to function as a traffic calming device to slow motorized traffic down in areas that are utilized heavily by pedestrians and other forms of non-motorized transportation. Street trees also moderate temperature and improve local air quality. Recommended planting within the District should follow standards established by the City Forester and those listed in Recommended Urban Trees published by the Urban Horticulture Institute at Cornell University. The procedure in urban forestry is to ensure that a mixture of species and varieties are established to prevent disease-related die-offs of homogenous plantings that occurred in the past. Two forms of trees are proposed, major trees for sidewalk maintenance strips that DO NOT have utility lines above them. They grow anywhere from 30’ to 60’ feet high at maturity. And minor trees for maintenance strips that DO have utility lines above them. They grow anywhere between 15’ to 30’ high. There is special attention paid to certain tree species that are considered invasive such as Acer platanoides (Norway Maple) and its hybrids. It is important to note that when street trees are added to the urban canopy it is imperative to keep up with proper maintenance.

Existing trees in poor condition are listed in Appendix D-3. The identified trees should be removed and replaced with the recommended tree species also listed in Appendix D-3.

4.3. Lighting

In each method of public participation, the general ineffectiveness of local lighting was cited as a major concern. Increasing and improving the lighting where necessary in the District is essential to increasing safety and improving physical conditions.

As LED and other energy-efficient lighting options become available, these products should be used to reduce costs and increase sustainability.

4.3.1. Streetlights

Where possible, pedestrian-scale lighting should be installed as this lighting style illuminates the pedestrian realm as opposed to the auto-oriented lighting that dominates the District. National Grid is the primary provider of street lights for the City of Albany. There are several options for decorative lighting within the NG inventory.
through a leasing program arranged with the City Department of General Services (DGS). NG will install the pole and fixture for free. A minor additional cost is added to the monthly electrical bill for a 15 year cost recuperation period. Types of light fixtures recommended include the following:

- Acorn Globe with 16’ Presidential Pole for commercial areas and institutional borders or comparable
- Park Avenue South Arm with Delaware Park Teardrop Fixture for placement onto existing wooden utility poles in residential areas, with Pedestrian arm overhanging sidewalk under tree canopy or comparable.

The recommendations are to enhance the aesthetic attributes of the District and improve the quality of night time lighting for increased security. The key is to provide a greater intensity wattage with the decorative fixtures and provide cut-offs and or shields that deflect glare and reduce light pollution. Recommendations for each street fixture location are listed in Appendix D-7.

Residential and commercial zones should each have uniform lighting intensity and aesthetic standards. A full-scale replacement of lighting will take some time. While in queue for replacement, wattage should be increased to an acceptable level in areas that currently have deficient intensity, and light fixtures should be cleaned in order to maximize their effectiveness.

It is recommended that institutions install the 16’ poles with Acorn Globes or similar pedestrian scale fixtures along the sidewalks at their property lines. These fixtures may vary from the District fixture as long as the pedestrian scale is retained. Poles and fixtures throughout the District should also be replaced. When available and financially possible, materials should be of local, sustainable nature and result in low maintenance and long-term cost. Local, State and Federal sources of infrastructure funding should be sought by all participating institutions to enact these changes. To supplement these grant sources, sponsorship opportunities through local businesses, alumni associations, or other interested organizations could be explored to fund the lighting replacement project.

4.3.2. Lighting of Private Property

In addition to public and institutional lighting, private residential and commercial property owners should be encouraged to install energy-efficient lighting on all porches and stoops. These lights should be kept on overnight, or programmed to stay on throughout the night, to add to the ambient light on the sidewalk. This will also reduce dark places and discourage criminal behavior and property vandalism. Similarly, commercial property owners should be encouraged to maintain some light on the exterior of their property overnight, whether it is an appropriately lighted sign or porch light.
Refer also to the CPTED recommendation 4.1. Maintaining motion detector triggered lighting in side and rear yards that are accessible from the sidewalk is also recommended.

4.4. **Zoning and Redevelopment**

Revising the zoning and corresponding codes in the Education District should be a priority. The area encompasses a unique blend of uses and densities, which require special consideration.

4.4.1. **Re-Zoning/Overlay District(s)**

At the time of this study, the City is concurrently developing its first comprehensive plan, Albany 2030. Following the completion of Albany 2030, a citywide rezoning effort will be undertaken. Permanent changes to District zoning should be incorporated at that time. Until then, adoption of an overlay district or districts should be considered. Form-based or hybrid codes should be considered as a means of reinforcing the essential urban form of the District as opposed to simply regulating land uses.

4.4.2. **Mixed-Use Commercial Districts**

Mixed-use redevelopment should be explored to capitalize on the market potential of this unique District. Existing commercial zones are relatively limited in the study area. The City should consider the expansion of commercial zones in the District to build areas of critical mass that act as District commercial hubs. Focus should be placed on areas that are or have the potential to become important nodes of pedestrian activity (Figure 20) and that include either vacant or underutilized lots and buildings, as well as non-conforming commercial uses.

Rezoning these parcels to appropriate mixed uses could be an incentive for existing building owners to rehabilitate or rebuild their properties, while welcoming new and diverse businesses to the District.

In specified redevelopment zones, zoning language could be amended to (a) allow mixed use buildings to be built up to three stories or 40-feet high and (b) allow specialty retail or grocery stores of up to 30,000 square feet to be permitted as of right or by special permit. Height and density bonuses could be provided based on energy-efficiency criteria, transportation demand management thresholds, the provision of public amenities or attraction of outlined preferred uses. The emphasis here lies on creating flexibility and incentives for appropriate development in the District, which is currently falling below its potential.

In addition to those areas located on the map (Figure 22), special attention should be paid to the numerous large institutionally-controlled collections of parcels. Change in ownership of these large contiguous areas could pose dramatic changes to the District and its revitalization plans. If any of these institutions (Albany High School, the Diocese, or LaSalle School as examples) should choose to relocate or otherwise vacate their properties, an opportunity for a large-scale redevelopment would arise. The City of Albany, University at Albany and The College of Saint Rose have been monitoring these areas closely, in addition to developing campus plans for their
own property in the District. Given the opportunity, these three institutions could collaborate on a mixed use concept that complements the recommendations put forward in this Study for any newly-available large site.

4.4.3. Transit Oriented Development

Due to the number and proximity of bus lines, as well as the future development of BRT, Transit Oriented Development (TOD) could be extremely effective in the Education District. Since this area will have BRT stops, encouraging greater density, rehabilitation of existing sites and activity near the stops will serve to boost bus usage, and increase viable mixed-use commercial space in the District’s commercial core. The study recommends the City modify its zoning to encourage TOD near BRT stops and multi-modal centers. Zoning changes should be made in these areas to support TOD, such as allowing properties 200 feet from future BRT stops to be built to 4 stores or 50-feet high.

4.4.4. Educational Uses

Existing Educational uses should also be taken into consideration. Institutional campuses could be incorporated into a new Educational Facility zoning classification, which would allow for all non-intensive uses typically found on an academic campus. This measure would increase internal City efficiency by reducing the number of variance and special use permit applications and cases that need handled by various departments, as well as better integrate institutional campus planning with City land use classifications.

4.5. Code Modifications and Enforcement

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, college enrollments are projected to increase nationally. As a result, there is the potential that enrollments could outstrip the institutions' ability to provide on-campus housing. There can be a number of problems for municipalities with colleges and universities when there is a large off-campus student population. There are a number of techniques communities use to mitigate the impact of student housing on residential neighborhoods and are generally known as town-gown regulations. Some of the recommendations include rental licensing, municipal inspections of rental housing, and university overlay districts. These strategies are not mutually exclusive. Regardless of the approach taken, consistent code enforcement is critical. Prior to implementing any of the following recommendations, analysis of their fiscal implications should be completed.

4.5.1. Inspections and Residential Occupancy Permits

Participants in public workshops generally supported proposed modifications to the code that would increase standards of maintenance and reduce misbehavior. Recommended code modifications aim to make it easier for owner-occupiers to rent out their properties.
includes a city-wide exemption of all owner-occupied rental properties up to three total units from permit payments. These properties would still be required to have regular inspections and Residential Occupancy Permits (ROPs). The rental property registry should also be reinforced so that non-local rental owners have in-city agents.

It is recommended that City code strengthen maintenance standards and increase enforcement within the District. This could be achieved by:

(a) Modifying Residential Occupancy Permits (ROPs) so they are valid for only 12 or 24 months within the District as opposed to 30 months, and

(b) Increasing fees for inspections and ROPs, and fines for violations to cover the administrative costs of more frequent inspections.

(c) Requiring inspections within the District to be performed during the academic year to accurately gauge level of maintenance and occupancy.

4.5.2. Disorderly House Designation

A potential solution to repeatedly offending properties could be the creation of a “Disorderly House” designation status within the Education District. The “Disorderly House” designation would apply to properties that fail to ameliorate nuisances or continually over an extended period violate a set number of building codes and/or zoning performance standards. Once designated a “Disorderly House,” a property would have increased inspection frequency to one per year, and the owner would have to apply for a Probationary Rental Occupancy Permit. Guidelines would also enable the City to deny, suspend or revoke a license if the owner continued to fail to comply with building codes. Designation as a “Disorderly House” will come with an assessed fine, and inspections will garner an increased fee to offset the cost of increased inspection and administration. Guidelines could also extend this right of denial to any pending municipal permit applications for the owner’s other properties during the term of the designation.

The terms that make up a “Disorderly House” designation must be carefully determined so as not to penalize compliant and responsible owners. The nuisances would have to extend beyond two years, and violations counting toward the designation must be detailed fully with adequate notice given to the owner prior to designation. This designation is meant only to penalize scofflaws.

4.5.3. Grouper Law Assessment

The application of the Grouper Law within the District, whereby no more than three unrelated persons may live in one unit, should be evaluated. The District serves different needs than much of the rest of the City, and the negative implications of the law should be considered. This law affects the rents, condition and character of the District.
Within the District the Grouper Law could be amended or replaced with a more functional method of regulation. These revisions should include new guidelines based on criteria such as number of legitimate bedrooms, square footage, access to light and egress, etc. The goal here is not to allow increased density, but to right-size the occupancy for individual buildings and discourage property owners from adding illegal units or tenants to their properties.

4.5.4. Regulating Bars/Nightclubs

Nightlife is active in the District, specifically throughout the school year. The proliferation of bars and taverns and the concentration of private house parties, are two attractions that contribute to making the District a late-night destination. While nightlife is an asset to the District in terms of the local economy and having eyes on the street at all hours, the compounded effects of this density create negative consequences. Some of these impacts, such as late night congestion, noise and misbehavior, can be curtailed by a number of actions. Establishments operating as only a bar should continue to be allowed through special permit or variance only.

The City could also consider instituting an earlier citywide curfew for bars. It should be noted, however, that shortening the operating hours of bars only within the District would be counterproductive. Increasing trips out of and into the District between 2:00 a.m. and 4:00 a.m. should not be encouraged. Ultimately, the curfew should be legally changed at the Albany County level to ensure a level playing field for business owners. While it is being explored, the financial implications of this recommendation must be taken into account.

4.5.5. Café Permits

Establishments that provide positive activities such as restaurants, bistro's and cafes should be encouraged. The possibility of waiving the fee for outdoor café permits, or requiring an application only once every three years for establishments in good standing should be considered. Encouraging outdoor cafes in the area would increase positive pedestrian traffic and reinforce vibrant neighborhood activity.

4.5.6. Parking

Parking can be a challenge in high density urban environments, but if properly managed, can actually support reinvestment and redevelopment. A Comprehensive Parking Management Strategy should be considered for the Education District. Well rounded parking management strategies consider alternatives to driving alone such as increased transit options, an improved walking environment, a mix of land uses to encourage walking, etc., all of which are recommended as part of this study. In addition, the alteration of parking regulations and paid parking at strategic locations are also strategies to be considered to manage parking. A parking permit system and metered parking are just two examples of such strategies. The Albany Parking Authority should be engaged as a major partner in the evaluation of such strategies.
A parking permit system could reduce automobile congestion and would free up spaces for local residents. However, creating a permit system in this area alone may simply disperse students from the District into surrounding neighborhoods. This issue must be studied more closely prior to determining its appropriateness for the District. A parking study could be considered which evaluates the supply, existing parking regulations, occupancy and users through a license plate type survey.

Metered parking should be considered in commercial areas, as it is important for many businesses to have turnover in parking.

Structured parking should be encouraged to maximize parking in the limited space provided by the District. This study recognizes the high cost of parking garage development, which will prohibit the construction of structured parking in many cases within the District. However, partnership among institutions and the Albany Parking Authority could be explored for a parking structure somewhere within or adjacent to the District.

As happens frequently already within the District, local institutions and businesses should be encouraged to find shared parking solutions in existing and proposed lots. This could ease the burden on on-street parking and, where possible, reduce the number of new spaces that need to be created. Also, see recommended enforcement of no parking 20 feet or less from the crosswalk in section 4.2.1.4.

4.6. Parks and Open Space

District parks include Washington Park at South Lake Avenue, Pine Hills Park, Beverwyck Park, and the Albany High School Athletic Fields. Overall, these parks should be well programmed for events and activities and be open to the public for use. The two public parks wholly within the District, Pine Hills Park and Beverwyck Park, have specific recommendations. The recommended improvements for improving use and access to parks from the District are included in Appendix D-5, which includes a pictorial matrix that illustrates recreational facilities included in each park.

4.6.1. Pine Hills Park

This study recommends that the Pine Hills Park be re-evaluated with the goal of maximizing its potential to be a multi-generational facility. One possible improvement could be the addition of two lighted pavilions for more passive use with appropriate signage to discourage loitering after dark.

4.6.2. Beverwyck Park

The playfields at Beverwyck Park are a major asset to the area. The ball fields, however, have worn backstops which need to be upgraded or replaced. The ball fields should be upgraded to encourage additional league use. The open space provided by Beverwyck Park offers
opportunities for increased programming like hosting community events, farmers markets and other low-intensity uses.

4.7. **Institutional & Public-Private Partnerships**

The Education District’s nature creates diverse challenges, but also poses unique advantages and opportunities. The number of institutions with a direct tie and strong interest in the District creates the potential for natural partnerships to address core issues. While the University, the College, the City, businesses, and other local institutions may take on projects individually, collaborations will be key to the District’s revitalization. These partnerships could take the form of joint funding for infrastructure and incentives, shared staff and administrative support of programs, commitment to marketing efforts, combined grant applications, student projects and open communication and collaboration regarding future plans. Partnership opportunities would be subject to fiscal constraints and available resources. The following general recommendations for partnered efforts should be further explored and refined by the City of Albany, the University at Albany, The College of Saint Rose, businesses, non-profits and other appropriate partners.

4.7.1. **Homeownership Program**

The original Midtown Homeownership Program, including its Employer Assisted Housing element, was an extremely successful venture, generating real estate investment and creating an influx of new homeowners. This program phased out in 2010, providing an opportunity to re-think local homeownership and develop an incentive to support the goals of the Education District Enhancement Study.

In concert with the recommendations developed throughout this Study’s process, the City of Albany developed a new citywide homebuyer pilot program, Choose Albany, that makes up to $15,000 no-interest loans available to anyone purchasing a home with a purchase price up to $200,000 in Albany. The City is encouraging local employers to partner with the Choose Albany initiative and offer an additional customized incentive for employees of their organization. The goal is to entice those employed in Albany to also make Albany home. Employers can name their own terms and guidelines for this program, including geographic boundaries for their portion of the incentive.

Encouraging homeownership in and around the study area is essential. Particularly crucial is stabilizing the neighborhoods on the perimeter of the District and preventing that housing stock from becoming either off-campus housing or disinvested.

The City of Albany has chosen to provide a grant towards downpayment and closing costs for City employees in addition to the Choose Albany loan. Both The College of Saint Rose and University at Albany have readily signed on to this initiative, offering grants to eligible employees specifically targeting the Education District and its surrounding areas. This commitment will drive up the percentage of homeowners in the area, stabilizing the District and its periphery.
4.7.2. District Events

A major goal of this study is to define the District and create a strong positive identity as a vibrant and welcoming student enclave. Official events are a good way to reinforce this message while providing information and a sense of belonging to residents who call the District home. Institutions along with the City, businesses and other organizations should partner to host these events, large and small, throughout the year, and to promote other events occurring within the District.

One such event could be a welcome street fair at the beginning of the fall semester every school year. This event could include entertainment and refreshments from local businesses to draw local residents and make them aware of what local commercial districts have to offer. In addition to these activities, the City and institutions should set up information tables to make new residents aware of their rights and responsibilities as City residents as well as the resources available to them at each of the institutions. Campus groups can also be invited to encourage participation in student life.

This event will supplement the already strong efforts that the University at Albany, The College of Saint Rose and the City are making to keep local residents informed.

4.7.3. Community Service

There is an opportunity to cultivate a positive culture of student social responsibility in the Education District through volunteer opportunities and community service. Neighborhoods, businesses and the City can help by identifying and working with the University and The College of Saint Rose to publicize opportunities to improve the district’s quality of life. Many students and clubs are interested but need help in finding out what is available and needed. This could be done through the web tool described in 7.5 below.

Many students participate in Pine Hills Neighborhood Association clean-ups. The study partners could expand this effort by collaborating with local neighborhood associations on a specific annual volunteer clean up of the District and by including all partners in the already established community involvement days. Examples are the “Reach Out Saint Rose” September event which has the participation of more than 500 students, or local clean-up days which draw dozens of UAlbany students several times a year.

A spirit of belonging to a City and neighborhood community as well as a campus community should be cultivated among local students. The numerous efforts made by students at both the University at Albany and The College of Saint Rose should be highlighted, and efforts should be made to introduce local students to other residents as neighbors.

4.7.4. Fundraising and Shared Costs
The infrastructure improvements recommended by this study alone are estimated to total more than $5 million. At the time of this study, like the rest of the country, all public and private institutions are facing stringent financial constraints. Resources should be pooled and creative funding methods should be developed and sought in order to advance the recommendations of this study. Institutions should program funds wherever possible and partner on grant and appropriation requests that make this District a priority.

4.7.5. District Media and Services

This study has indicated the need for collaboration on information sharing and local services. While local groups – particularly the Committee on University and Community Relations – have been making great strides in this area, technology is an opportunity for growth. The partners should explore collaboration on creating and maintaining a web tool and social media specific to the District. This presence would carry the District’s brand and provide current information for those living in and visiting the District. The web presence should take full advantage of social media and phone applications – including linking to popular and already-functioning applications and sites.

Some information that should be included:

- Local events
- Community service opportunities
- Off-campus housing resources
- Public safety updates
- Snow emergency updates
- Bus schedule
- Local business listings
- Important City and institution contact information
- A District map
- Local parking and bike amenities
- Legal resources

4.7.6. Student, Student Organization and Class Projects

Students at both the College and the University are extremely active in programs and projects throughout the City of Albany and the Capital Region. This spirit of involvement is a keystone of both institutions. The energy and expertise of these active students could be more highly targeted toward activities in the District. Whether in conjunction with a specific course or student organization, or an institution-wide focus on the District, the area could directly benefit from the expertise, creativity and forward-thinking of the student body. Opportunities abound from public art installations, community engagement, and event programming to District branding, off-campus relations and local business assistance.

4.7.7. Student Housing
Stabilizing the District and preventing a dispersion of off-campus students into outlying neighborhoods requires a strong institutional presence and diverse student amenities and services within the District. Official off-campus housing could act as an anchor for better residential development and increased commercial development. This type of new off-campus housing project could be owned and operated by an institution, or sponsored by an institution and owned and managed by a private developer. In both of these cases, the housing and its residents would be supervised and act as a model for off-campus housing in the area. A housing project of this type, when done on a large scale, could open up opportunities for a major retailer and spin-off services. Feasibility would depend on issues such as funding and location.

Both the University and The College should continue their nationally recognized efforts with the Committee on University and Community Relations. This partnership creates and maintains relationships with local landlords and opens a dialogue about common issues and opportunities for collaboration.

In addition to official off-campus housing, informal student housing – where students may be renting, but is unaffiliated with an institution – should also be closely monitored for safety and quality, as indicated in the Code Modification and Enforcement section of this document.

4.7.8. Education District Non-Profit Organization

Many thriving off-campus areas throughout the country utilize a non-profit organization to undertake local revitalization and quality of life projects – from streetscape improvements and maintenance to major events and large-scale redevelopment projects. This group could also play a role in enhanced quality control of the local housing stock. This concept, built from models like the University City District in Philadelphia, the University Park Alliance in Akron, OH, and Campus Partners in Columbus, OH, could be explored as a vehicle for improvements in the Education District. In each of these examples, local institutional partners have led the way to developing these organizations and supporting their missions.

4.8. Branding and Placemaking

Branding is a familiar, all pervasive, business tool used to sell products, services and ideas. To quote a well-known branding practitioner, “A Brand is the promise, the big idea, and the expectations that reside in each customer’s mind about a product, service or company. People fall in love with brands, trust them, develop strong loyalties to them, buy them and believe in their superiority”.

A brand can:

- Express the kind of organization you are
- Reassure the public that you are who you say you are
- Connect your organization to images and ideas
- Serve as the thread for equity building over time
- Provide consistency over communication channels
But a brand cannot:

- Make people act in a certain way
- Change people’s minds
- Make new friends
- Embody every message for everybody
- Respond to current events

Outside of the world of big branding, the world of Coca Cola, Apple and Nike, branding (or identity) is also used nowadays by non-profits, institutions and even communities by way of organizations such as business improvement districts and groups of community-minded individuals.

An improved streetscape with pedestrian friendly sidewalk amenities can greatly improve the perception of a neighborhood. Developing a recognizable brand or “identity” for a neighborhood can also have a significant impact on a community’s image, enhancing and completing an area’s placemaking efforts. Brand building in a built environment is most successful when it employs an integrated approach in which the community, officials and design professionals work together to distill the community’s shared values and determine a collective vision. Only after that level of strategy and discovery, can an identifier and nomenclature be designed that can begin to express the hopes and desires of a particular community.

4.8.1. The Branding Process

Discovery

In this phase, the goal is to learn as much as possible about your neighborhood, businesses/residents, its competitive positioning and any known strategies for the future. This is achieved by research through interviews that gather information and define objectives.

Strategy & Naming

Here one pinpoints the total requirements for the development of a successful brand by determining key messages for target audiences and distilling key attributes. Naming opportunities will be explored and then vetted for legal appropriateness. Target audiences will be tested for reaction to chosen names. Typically, a district’s naming will be inspired by common usage, based on a significant thoroughfare, an acronym or attributes that the area might be known by. In New York City, SOHO (South of Houston Street) is an example, so is Cobble Hill (a realtor-inspired name to make South Brooklyn attractive) and DUMBO (Down under the Manhattan Bridge Overpass).

Attributes of the Albany Education District include a lively, youthful student population with two campuses within the district; an easily understood street plan with two major intersecting streets and an evening ambience as a result of its many restaurants and bars. In addition, the district is situated in the middle of the City of Albany. All or any of these attributes readily suggest concepts and ideas upon which to build a brand.
4.8.1.1. Identifier Design & Management

A mark or icon plus a logotype equals the Identifier. This is an easily recognized shorthand depicting the brand. Most importantly, this can be the starting point for building a program. Additional tools include typography, color, texture and materials.

4.8.1.2. Application Design

The selected identifier is then applied to a range of visual applications, two & three dimensions and virtual. Typical applications include: stationery, printed collateral and promotional materials, website, email blasts, blogs, social media and most importantly, signage and wayfinding that might include gateway markers, banners, street name signs, pedestrian and vehicular directionals, street maps and recognition markers.

4.8.1.3. Implementation & Documentation

This ensures that the branding is properly produced for immediate and all future applications. To do this design guidelines are established that provide oversight to ensure brand compliance.

4.8.2. The Albany Education District

The educational institutions within the District display their own brands to a certain degree., Figure 25. The living brand may be seen in streetscape amenities such as street signage, vehicular and pedestrian directionals, gateway identifiers and banners from other communities, Figure 26. In the Albany Education District, Figure 27 illustrates potential locations for branding opportunities. The branding can also reside within the virtual realm of blogs, websites, email blasts, social media sites and also within printed collateral such as posters, area maps and newsletters.

One outcome of a successful branding program is that it can create a sense of energy among residents and outsiders that encourages active participation within the boundaries of a district. Creating a sense of cohesion and definition in a neighborhood may aid in stimulating positive growth such as decrease in crime and economic benefits, making it easier to attract new residents, investors and enterprises.
The following diagram illustrates how a branding program might represent the various participants (and beneficiaries) of the Albany Education District. It is important that a defined entity take ownership of such a program to initiate, promote and maintain its continuity.

As acknowledged by participants in the second public workgroup, branding is not the most important priority for improvement of the Albany Education District, nor is it a solution by itself. However, combined with other efforts, strategic branding has enormous power to create a distinctive character for the neighborhood and has had proven tangible results in similar situations.

We believe that initiating a branding program will help to define this community and create a distinctive sense of place. The results of this initiative will create a visual vocabulary that will express the District; and be applied to a range of materials which, when applied consistently, will build equity and understanding, even pride, among those who live, work, study and just enjoy themselves here.