

# The Revitalization of the South End: Progress Report, 2007-2009

December 2009

## Projects in the South End

Since the completion of the Capital South Plan, in 2007, the City of Albany and South End Action Committee (SEAC) have focused on the stabilization of the South End. This progress report has identified some of the projects that SEAC has contributed to the implementation of the Capital South Plan. The projects are listed by the focus areas: Community Capacity and Quality of Life, Physical Planning, and Workforce and Business Development as well as a section on future projects and hidden secrets in the South End.

## South End Action Committee

Improving the South End is important for government, private investors, businesses, and residents. Implementation is complex and requires multiple funding sources and a lot of collaboration. The South End Action Committee (SEAC) is active committee that works on the neighborhood improvement projects for the South End. For more information contact the Project Manager of SEAC, Katie Bronson at the City's Department of Development and Planning at 518-434-2532.

## What is Capital South Plan: SEGway to the Future

In July 2007, City of Albany and SEAC finalized a plan for the South End called the Capital South Plan: SEGway to the Future. The purpose of the plan was to develop a consensus on strategic actions to revitalize the neighborhood. The triangular shaped primary focus area of this Plan is bounded by Morton Avenue and Lincoln Square on the north, South Pearl Street on the east, connected by a hypotenuse formed by Third Avenue.

This Plan focuses on the South End core and embraces the Mansion and Historic Pastures neighborhoods, recognizing the need to enhance the entire area and build upon its location within the Capital City. Thus this plan is entitled "Capital South" in order to indicate their common interests, and link them to the assets of New York State's Capital City and the larger Capital Region.

This plan is intended to be holistic, tackling difficult challenges and identifying a set of realistic recommendations. The plan was divided into three phases: stabilize (short term), energize (mid term) and grow (long term):

- Stabilize the neighborhood, to provide the foundation for business and real estate market renewal.
- Energize the neighborhood, while ensuring resident participation and equity in market renewal.
- Grow the neighborhood, for the benefit of current and future residents, enhance South End's links with the entire Capital South area and the City as a whole.



South End Core Study Area

Each of the plan's recommendations build upon each other, with the foundation being what can be done within the next two years to benefit the current residents of the South End. The action items are organized into four primary focus areas, which are described below:

- Community Capacity: community organizing, public/private partnerships, and citizen/ government task forces.
- Quality of Life: crime prevention, alternatives to crime,

code enforcement, cleanliness, and community amenities.

- Physical Planning: housing investment, historic preservation and rehabilitation, homesteading, new development, and transportation improvements.
- Workforce and Business Development: access to jobs, transit to employment centers, and business development.

This progress report is a snapshot of accomplishments made by the City, SEAC, stakeholders and residents. After two short years, the South End is becoming a community of choice.

---

## Community Capacity and Quality of Life

### South End Neighborhood Association

In 2007, the Capital South Plan's Quality of Life committee evolved into the South End Neighborhood Association (SENA). The purpose of SENA shall be to preserve and improve the quality of life for all residents in our culturally, economically and racially diverse neighborhoods. SENA will promote the South End neighborhood as viable places to reside, work, and enjoy life. Current projects and events organized by the South End include:

- Neighborhood Watch Program
- National Night Out
- Neighborhood Clean-up

One of SENA's roles in the community is to be an advocate for its residents. This is sometimes accomplished by asking questions that people may not ask for themselves. SENA also writes letters of opposition and support to the Board of Zoning appeals regarding proposals that would have a negative or positive impact on the neighborhood's quality of life issues.

### John A. Howe Branch Library Renovations and Expansion

The 1928 library branch, John A. Howe branch library (Howe Library) is currently undergoing renovations and expansion with the Albany Public Library's first comprehensive infrastructure project. The Howe Library renovations will include an increased space to total 12,854 square feet, handicapped access to the library and toilet facilities for the public. The Howe Library's original oak shelving, woodwork, trim work and the legendary fireplace will be restored. The cost of the renovations and expansion is over \$5 Million. Howe Library is expected to open in spring 2010.



SENA: National Night Out, 2009

Maintaining a dialog through partnerships with organizations like Albany Police and Fire Department, City Planning Office, Albany Public Library, Trinity Institute, South End Improvement Corporation, and the Albany Housing Authority is one way to raise the level of awareness regarding quality of life issues in the South End Community. Regular monthly meetings are providing residents a forum where they can raise issues and freely discuss concerns but more importantly sometimes receive an answer or response during the meeting or at subsequent meetings.



John A. Howe Library

## Grand Street Community Arts: Youth Organics Program

Located at Third Avenue and Hawk Street, the People's Garden is located on Albany Housing Authority property and cultivated by Youth Organics (YO!). YO! is a seasonal program that introduces youth to organic gardening, food education, and community food. This year we are working with a senior-level marketing class at Siena College to help put YO! on a more sustainable financial footing and expand our entrepreneurship opportunities.

The mission of YO! is to provide people in the neighborhood with increased access



to fresh, locally grown vegetables, provide meaningful and valuable experiences for young people, and connect youth to their local environment. This is accomplished through maintaining our gardens, demonstrating food-growing techniques in small growing areas, and providing skills and empowerment training for young people in the neighborhood.

During the 2009 growing season, 20 Albany teens attended the spring and summer programs about gardening, nutrition and cooking. They learned about food security and making good choices and cooked with Chef Noah Sheets at the Governor's Mansion. YO! donated more than 500 pounds of produce to local food pantries, most of it going to Trinity Institution.

### Trinity Institute: Trinity Garden

This past summer the residents of the South End enjoyed a wonderful variety of community gardens in full bloom. The South End locations included the corner of Plum and Franklin Streets, the corner of Elizabeth and 3rd Avenue, the corner of South Pearl and Schuyler Streets, Sand Street next to Frisbee Avenue, and Trinity Place. The staff of Trinity Institution, numerous volunteers, and residents helped with the planting, weeding, and harvesting raised gardens. Along with the assistance of staff, volunteers, and residents; the City gardener provided a lot of assistance to the Trinity Gardens. The beauty, joy and functionality of a garden, provided the community not only with flowers and vegetables, but with transforming the block.

## Physical Planning

### South End Revitalization Project:Phase I

In December of 2008, the South End Revitalization Project Phase one completed 52 housing units, spearheading neighborhood revitalization in the South End. In partnership with the City of Albany, Albany Housing Authority and OMNI Housing Development rehabbed 42 units at Eagle Court along Morton Avenue and constructed 10 lease-to-own units at Jared Holt Mews. This housing project is an initial component of a multi-phase neighborhood renewal plan that will help transform housing in the South End.

#### South End Phase I: Jared Holt Mews and Eagle Court: 52 units

- Private funding: \$10.2 million
- Public Funding: \$1.98 million

The funding came from: Key Community Development Corporation, New York State Housing Trust Fund, Community Preservation Corporation & Federal Home Loan Bank of New York

South End Revitalization Phase II and III are described in the future projects section of this progress report on page 6.



Jared Holt Mews



Eagle Court

## Capital District Habitat for Humanity

For more than 20 years, Capital District Habitat for Humanity has been dedicated to building simple, decent and affordable housing for low-income families. During its early years, it worked to perfect the Habitat model involving volunteers in house construction and renovation averaging about one house a year.

Over the past decade, with more than a thousand volunteers prepared to offer their time and talents, the building pace has accelerated. Throughout the Capital Region, forty-four homes have been built to date. The focus now is on Albany historic



The City of Albany House

South End. Ten homes have built there by Habitat, with two more under construction. Many of the homes are concentrated on Odell Street. Over the next year, the major construction emphasis for Habitat will be around the intersection of Stephen Street and Third Avenue.



Habitat homes on Odell Street

In partnership with the Albany Community Development Agency and the Albany Housing Authority, Capital District Habitat is undertaking a rehabilitation of an existing property. Given the nature of the partnership, the project has been named "The City of Albany House." If expectations are met with regards to this rehabilitation, it is anticipated that Habitat will become a major player in the rehabilitation of existing properties throughout the City of Albany.

Capital District Habitat remains committed to playing a central role in the renewal of Albany's South End and providing decent and affordable housing to Albany's low-income families.

---

## South End Improvement Corporation (SEIC)

The South End Improvement Corporation (SEIC) was formed in 1978 through the efforts of community activist, Elfrieda Textores, and her neighbors – members of the South End Concerned Citizens, to:

- Access federal funds for housing rehabilitation and public improvements made available through the Community Development Block Grant Program,
- Focus the City of Albany's attention on the needs of the South End
- Voice South End residents' concerns in City decisions and take a place at the table in decision-making affecting their neighborhood
- The mission of the SEIC is to improve housing conditions and the quality of life in the South End of the City of Albany, thereby preserving the residential character of its unique neighborhoods and encouraging city living

In its 31 years of operation, SEIC has been able to leverage small donations and grants to make a positive difference in lives of the people of the South End through its various

grant programs and activities. SEIC was and continues to be a grassroots not-for profit advocacy group dedicated to housing and socioeconomic equity.

SEIC has been working diligently to assist homeowners with all three of this grant programs. Since the completion of the Capital South Plan in July of 2007:

- 94 South End homeowners were assisted with minor repairs to their homes through the Security and Home Improvement Program (SHIP). At least 45 more units will be assisted during the next program year.
- 55 senior citizens living in the City of Albany were assisted with emergency home repairs through its RESTORE program, and SEIC expects to assist at least 10 more this coming program year.
- 11 units in the South End have undergone substantial rehabilitation with two more units currently under construction under the Homeownership Rehabilitation Program (HARP). Moreover, ten units are expected to receive substantial rehabilitation under SEIC's newly awarded HARP II Program during the next few years.

# Workforce and Business Development

## CDBG-R and South End Phase 2

The City of Albany is providing Community Development Block Grant-Recovery funding (CDGB-R) to the Albany Housing Authority (AHA) for the purpose of implementing a training and employment program in conjunction with the rehabilitation of a vacant property. AHA and its developer partner Omni Housing Development intend to plug the program into the 43-unit South End Phase 2 project, which will begin construction in Spring of 2010.

Approximately 10 individuals will be recruited from the South End to participate in intensive basic work-skills training provided through the Building Bridges program offered by the

Capital Region Workforce Development Institute.

Prior to the start of construction, trainees will also receive instruction by the Capital Region BOCES in basic construction skills. One or two historic buildings on Morton Avenue will be subcontracted to an experienced contractor, who will hire the trainees and oversee them during the rehabilitation process. Construction will be completed by the end of the 2010 year and the skilled trainees will be placed into permanent employment positions.

It is hoped that this demonstration project will be replicated throughout the city.

## T.H.E. Center

The Technology-Help-Education (T.H.E.) Center provides access and opportunities that lead to self sufficiency for AHA residents and Housing Choice Voucher participants. The services currently provided at the T.H.E. Center include access to an employment counselor and the full service employment center. In addition, clients have access to a variety of computer, GED, and literacy classes as well as resume writing services, and a Work Experience Program.

Recently, T.H.E., AHA, and Community Technology Initiative forged a partnership with the Hampton Inn in downtown Albany to provide a program that entails two weeks in class working on basic job expectation and then the class transfers to the Hampton Inn. With a job coach on-site, the students are trained on all aspects of the hotel job from breakfast buffet to housekeeping to laundry to maintenance. The program is run twice a year, and the class is capped at five students to allow individual attention while onsite. Through the past year and a half the program has proven to be very successful as shown by the graph below.

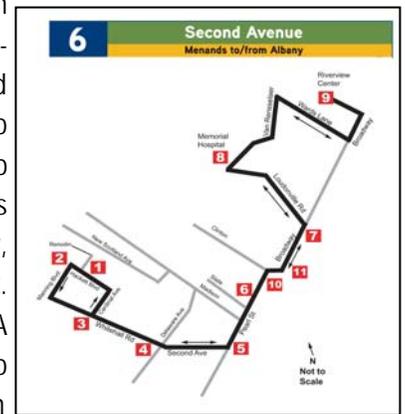
Class	Enrolled	Graduated	Employed	Retained
1	5	3	3	3
2	4	2	2	2
3	4	4	4	n/a

## Business Survey

One of the primary goals for Workforce and Business Development is to find ways to support existing South End businesses. In collaboration with the SEAC, the City of Albany Department of Development and Planning and Trinity Institute, a survey was developed and distributed to businesses in the South End.

## CDTA: Bus Route 6

Another recommendation from the Plan identified the need to provide access to employment centers for the South End residents. There are a number of employment centers surrounding the South End, but topography and highways hinders access to these centers. In May of 2009, CDTA expanded and improved CDTA Bus Route 6 to provide transportation to two of the three hospitals in the City of Albany, Albany Memorial and St. Peter's Hospital. CDTA continues their efforts to improve transportation services to the South End neighborhood.



CDTA Bus Route 6

## ProTech Systems Expansion

Located in the South End, ProTech Systems, the designer of vent systems for residential and commercial heating equipment announced in October of 2008 its opening of its new 24,000 square foot manufacturing facility. The facility is now fully developed and leased to Simpson Dura-Vent, the company that acquired ProTech Systems. It features a total of 64,000 square feet of office, manufacturing, and warehouse space on a four-acre property.

During the first quarter of 2009, three additional production lines will be brought into the Albany location for the purpose of manufacturing DuraPro and DuraTech, well-established Class A chimneys. ProTech currently has 80 employees and plans to hire an additional 20 employees.

## Future Projects

### South End Revitalization Project: Phase II and Phase III

The City of Albany, Albany Housing Authority (AHA), and Omni Housing Development, LLC are aggressively implementing the Capital South Plan, a comprehensive revitalization plan for Albany's South End neighborhood. Phase II of the South End Revitalization Project, resulting in 43 additional housing units, will begin construction in the first half of 2010. Phase II will be a mix of new construction and rehab work on scattered sites. There will be nine lease-to-own units, three bedroom single family homes that will be constructed on Catherine, Clinton and Board Streets and 34 one and two bedroom apartments that will be rehabbed or built along Morton Avenue. Phase II will be completed in mid-2011.

Phase III of the South End Revitalization Project will continue the team's efforts to acquire vacant lots and derelict buildings for the purpose of developing dignified, modern and safe affordable housing using public-private mixed-finance sources of funding. Recently, the City was awarded \$96,224 HUD



South End Revitalization Project Phase II Renderings

EDI funds to help acquire a series of contiguous vacant lots, referred to as "The Knitting Company" site, a site key to revitalization efforts in the South End.

The AHA and its developer-partner, Omni Housing Development, LLC, intend to secure the site for the purpose of developing affordable housing with possibly commercial space on the ground floor level. The project would fill a gap in the streetscape of South Pearl Street's, one of the city's most traveled mixed-use corridors, and, perhaps more importantly, would help satisfy the neighborhood's need for decent affordable housing and essential goods and services.

### Radix Ecological Sustainability Center

Radix Ecological Sustainability center is a not-for-profit educational and research facility dedicated to the development and promotion of low-cost, human scale sustainable systems and technologies that are applicable in an urban environment. The planned center is located at 153 Grand Street and will provide an education center to teach self-reliance and environmental sustainability. An emphasis will be placed on issues of food security, health and remediation of contaminated soils.

- The center will teach Albany South End residents, and especially its youth, practical skills that can be applied to create community self-reliance and environmental sustainability.
- In addition to beautifying a vacant lot, the center will offer hands-on workshops and tours not only to area school groups, but to interested citizens throughout the Northeast.
- The center will also compliment the Capital South Plan by creating a more green space in the South End and the City's commitment to becoming a more sustainable community.



Radix Ecological Sustainability Center

### Vacant Lot Stabilization Program

The City of Albany is in the process of developing a Vacant Lot Stabilization program to address the vacant parcels around the City of Albany. The City of Albany would like to see all of our vacant parcels become improved open spaces, providing the community with places to plant flowers, vegetables or simply a place to relax and enjoy nature. The City is reaching out to community-based organizations and neighborhood organizations who wish to take on vacant properties to developing and maintaining community open space.

## Hidden Secrets

With all the progress SEAC and its partners have made, SEAC would like to highlight a few places in the South End, which are important resources for the residents of the South End, the City and visitors. Two of the hidden treasures are described below: Lincoln Park and Public Bath #2, but there are a number of other resources should also be mentioned. This includes but not limited to Island Creek Park, Cherry Hill, Krank Park, and Schuyler Mansion.

Take some time to check out the hidden treasures in the South End as well as all the progress the South End has made in just two short years.

### Lincoln Park

Lincoln Park is Albany's second largest park, featuring an outdoor swimming pool and ample green spaces. Created in 1917, the park is a central location to the neighborhoods in the South End: Mansion, Historic Pastures, South End, and Lincoln Park Neighborhood Associations.

During the 1980s and 1990s, while many amenities such as the playing fields and the enormous Lincoln Park Pool saw steady use, the overall use of the park declined. Yet the neighbors of Lincoln Park continued to use and cherish our wonderful urban green space. The variety of activities and exceptional views of the downtown are just some of the amenities of Lincoln Park.



Lincoln Park

In the early 2000s the City government began to recognize how passionately the neighbors loved their park and how much it is an integral part of life in the South End. As the City has renovated and made improvements to facilities, both neighbors and visitors have responded by making greater use of the park.

With the new multi-use path and as the walkways have been replaced, the park is being traversed daily by a growing number of runners and bikers searching for health. The Martin Luther King Memorial has become a significant monument in the City, and the new community gardens have become a regular focus of activity. More than ever before the grassy areas are the location for picnics, family gatherings and impromptu events. And on hot days Lincoln Park Pool and the newly renovated pool house are crowded to capacity.

### Public Bath #2

With recent renovations to the building, Public Bath #2 is a 1903 building and provides swimming throughout the year to all City residents. Located at 90 Fourth Avenue (at the Corner of South Pearl Street and Fourth Avenue), Public Bath #2 is open Monday through Saturday, providing times for lap swim, senior swim and open swim throughout the day.

The pool dimensions are 51 feet by 50 feet with a shallow end of three feet three inches and a deep end of five feet seven inches. The building provides handicapped access to building and showers. On street parking is available around Public Bath #2. For more information call (518) 434-2656.

#### Public Bath #2 Schedule

Hours of Operation	
Monday, Wednesday, Friday	7:00 A.M. - 8:00 P.M.
Tuesday and Thursday	7:00 A.M. - 4:00 P.M.
Saturday	8:00 A.M. - 2:00 P.M.
Closed on recognized City holidays	
Cost	
Adults	\$1.00
Seniors	\$0.75
Teens	\$0.50
Kids	\$0.25
Schedule of Swim, Monday to Friday	
Lap Swim*	7:00 A.M. – 10:00 A.M. 12:00 P.M. – 3:00 P.M. 5:00 P.M. – 8:00 P.M.
Senior Swim	10:00 A.M. - 12:00 P.M.
Open Swim	3:00 P.M. - 4:40 P.M.
*No lap swim on Tuesday and Thursday from 5PM-8PM	
Schedule of Swim, Saturday	
Open Swim	8:00 A.M. - 2:00 P.M.