Downtown Neighborhood Plan

City of Schenectady Comprehensive Plan 2020



Reinventing the City of Invention

Brian U. Stratton Mayor

Introduction



Partnerships with
Metroplex Development
Authority are critical to
downtown's revitalization
and the establishment of
an exciting retail and
entertainment district.

The Downtown neighborhood plan is being developed as part of the City of Schenectady Vision Plan 2020 – the city's first Comprehensive Plan since 1971. Nine residential neighborhood plans have been developed as well as this downtown strategy, a policy-oriented city-wide plan and a series of catalyst projects. In addition, the City is revising its zoning ordinance and other land management tools. Each neighborhood strategy outlines the goals and policies and recommends changes in land use which will guide future livability of the neighborhood.

Located in the central portion of the City, the Downtown neighborhood encompasses approximately 340 acres. Nott Street serves as the northern boundary. Lenox Road and Nott Terrace serves as the eastern boundary. The City line and the Mohawk River (excluding the Stockade Neighborhood) serve as the western boundary of the Downtown. The southern boundary of this neighborhood includes portions of Union Avenue and Broadway.

Community and institutional uses located in the neighborhood include City Hall, County Office Building, Post Office, the main branch of the Library, Amtrak Station, central business district, and Proctor's Theatre. Erie Boulevard, State Street, and Broadway are the major roadways of the neighborhood.

Demographics



Pedestrian amenities
including sidewalks,
handicapped access,
lighting, street crossing
amenities and bus shelters
make it possible for
residents to access
downtown by foot and
through public transit.

According to the 2000 Census, the Downtown neighborhood has a residential population of 3,915 mostly located in the East Front Street and College Park areas. Between 1990 and 2000, this neighborhood experienced a population increase of 12.8%. Minorities comprise 26.9% of the population. The median age of Downtown residents is 24.9 years (youngest among the City neighborhoods); while the median age of City residents is 34.8 years. Among the age groups, school-age children and adults experienced increases in population. School age children had the most significant increase at 143.2%, while the number of adults increased by less than 1.0%. The senior population declined by 27.6% and the number of pre-school children decreased by 26.5%. In comparison, all age groups in the City experienced decline in population, except school aged children (5-19).

According to the 2000 Census, the median household income for the Downtown Neighborhood was \$18,939. Census figures indicate that approximately 66.9% of households in the City in 2000 were considered low and moderate income households and 20.8% of residents lived below the poverty level. Further, 45.8% of households in the City are very low income. In 2000, 82.2% of neighborhood residents were low-income, 60.5% were very low income and 37.6% lived below the poverty level reflecting, in part, the significant number of people living in special needs housing located in the downtown.

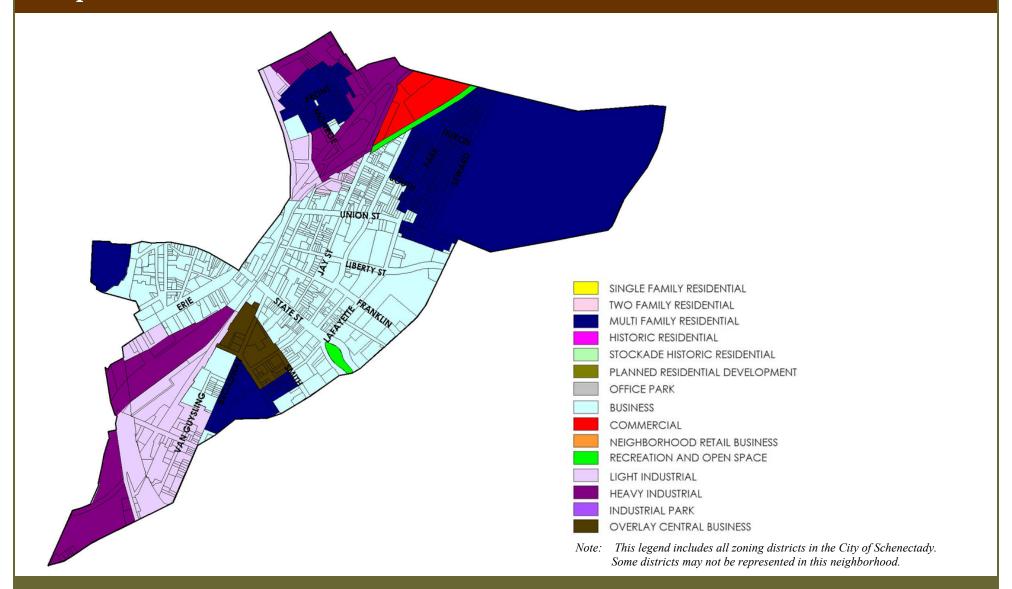
There are 1,520 housing units in the Downtown Neighborhood, a decrease of 24.2% between 1990 and 2000. Owners make up 44.7% of the occupied housing in the City and renters 55.3%. In the Downtown Neighborhood, 12.4% are owner occupied and 87.6% are renter occupied. During the past decade, the percentage of owner occupied housing has declined, while the percentage of renters has increased. The vacancy rates for housing in the downtown in 2000 were very high, with rental vacancy reported at 15.4% and for-sale housing vacancy at 11.2%. The generally accepted standards for measuring availability in a healthy housing market are vacancy rates in the area of 5% for rental units and 1% for purchase housing. The majority of residences are in two family structures (25.7%); followed by 5 to 9 unit structures (16.7%). Downtown housing is slightly older than the citywide average, with 66.6% of structures built before 1940. Median gross rent in 2000 was \$492, while median value of housing was \$102,083.

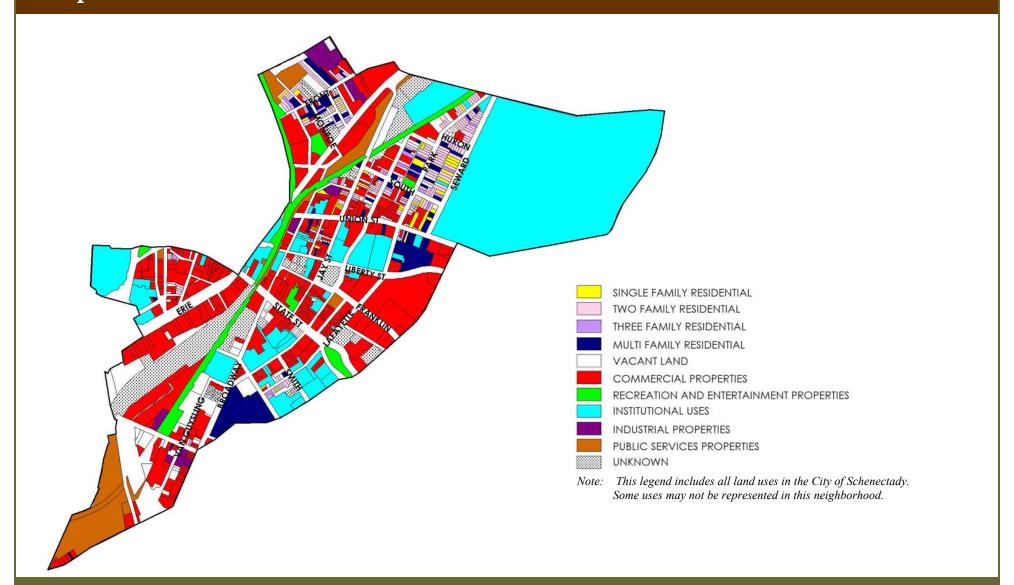
Demographics



Jay Street Studios and other downtown arts organizations amplify the impact of Proctors Theater and create a base for new music venues.

	City 2000	Downtown 1990	Downtown 2000
Population Change 1990-2000	-5.7%	-	12.8%
Minority Population	25.5%	16.7%	26.9%
Median Age	34.8 years	31.3 years	24.9 years
Average Household Size	2.23	2.03	3.39
High School Diploma	77.8%	72.9%	77.5%
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	19.0%	17.9%	18.5%
Median Household Income	\$29,378	\$18,481	\$18,939
Low/Mod Income Households	66.9%	78.6%	82.2%
Very Low Income Households	45.8%	53.7%	60.5%
Housing Unit Change 1990-2000	0.1%	-	24.2%
Owner Occupied Units	44.7%	15.2%	12.4%
Renter Occupied Units	55.3%	84.8%	87.6%
For-Sale Vacancy Rate	4.6%	2.6%	11.2%
Rental Vacancy Rate	9.3%	11.9%	15.4%
Units built before 1940	56.5%	78.0%	66.6%
Single-Family Detached Units	34.8%	5.0%	6.1%
Two-Family Units	33.7%	29.4%	25.7%
Three and Four-Family Units	12.6%	15.5%	15.5%
Median Gross Rent	\$548	\$391	\$492
Rent Burdened Households	42.2%	46.4%	43.9%
Median House Value	\$71,200	\$62,250	\$102,083
Owner Cost Burdened Households	25.0%	27.5%	13.2%
Assessed Value Per Acre	\$365,997	-	\$836,393







Over time the reconnection of Schenectady's waterfront to the Scotia and Glenville riverfronts will create a vibrant necklace of water-related businesses and housing.

The Downtown neighborhood consists of approximately 340 acres. About 69% of the land is tax exempt (highest among the neighborhoods) due to the significant concentration of government, educational, non-profit and special needs housing programs located there. Community service properties account for 43% of all land use. Commercial properties account for 32% of land use in the Downtown. Apartments and public service properties each account for 5% of the neighborhood's land use. Twenty-three acres or 7% of the land is vacant. Small amounts are used for recreational and industrial properties. The Downtown neighborhood comprises 6.2% of the City's land area and generates 6.7% of the City's property tax revenues.

South Avenue Park, Liberty Park and Veteran's Park are located in Downtown Schenectady. Liberty Park and Veteran's Park are both located on State Street and are passive parks with memorials. South Avenue Park encompasses 0.35 acres and includes a basketball court, tot lot and play equipment. Vale Park, with an entrance on Nott Terrace is contiguous to the downtown, but discussed more in detail in the Eastern Avenue and Hamilton Hill/Vale neighborhood plans.

The neighborhood has a number of buildings that are individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Buildings include Schenectady City Hall on Jay Street, the United States Post Office on Jay and Liberty Streets, the Schenectady Armory at 125 Washington Avenue, Nott Memorial Hall on Union College Campus, F.P. Proctor's Theatre and Arcade at 432 State Street, the Hotel Van Curler at 78 Washington Avenue, Central Fire Station on Erie Boulevard, and Foster Building (Foster Hotel) at 508 State Street. In addition, Jay Street, from State Street to Union Street, and the block bounded by Jay Street, Liberty Street, Broadway and Franklin Street became a Historic District in 2006.

Community and institutional facilities serving the Union Street Neighborhood include Union College and part of the Schenectady Community College campus. The Schenectady train station is located on Erie Boulevard between Liberty Street and Union Street. AMTRAK provides regular passenger rail service to and from Schenectady on several of its routes.

Planning Initiatives



Proctors Theater anchors
the City's entertainment
district and has become a
major draw for residents
and visitors following a
successful run of
"Phantom of the Opera"
in 2006.

Downtown Master Plan (1999)

This retail based downtown plan outlined a short term strategy to leverage investment and encourage increased vitality. The plan focused on identifying actions that would bring more people into downtown during the day time and evening hours establishing goals related to mix of uses, historic preservation, arts and entertainment, downtown housing, tourism, and pedestrian amenities.

Canal Square Corridor Redevelopment Plan

This plan outlined a short-term implementation strategy for the 400 Block of State Street known as the Canal Square Redevelopment Area which sought to introduce major office, retail, and entertainment to bring increased activity to the downtown core. Key themes stressed mixed uses, ground floor retail, and a clean orderly appearance. Participants were concerned that the plan support the expansion plans of Proctor's Theatre and preserve existing building facades.

City of Schenectady Urban Bike Route Master Plan

The objectives of this plan are to identify preferred routes through the core of the downtown and adjacent neighborhoods to connect the break at Schenectady in the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail. The Master plan suggests creating alternative trail route through the City that would pass alongside the Mohawk River behind Nott Street Industrial Park, to Riverside Park in the stockade. The Master Plan also proposed four loop systems tied into the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail. Designated as the Scotia/Glenville Loop, the Downtown/Stockade Loops, the Park Loop and the Outer Park Loop. A Schenectady Heritage Tour could be established for each loop. Also included in the Master Plan are design guidelines for bike routes and signage.

Planning Initiatives



The plan addresses the need to shape downtown demographics by attracting new residents to live in new senior housing, market rate housing and loft conversions

The Schenectady-Scotia Waterfront Plan

The Schenectady-Scotia Waterfront plan is intended to lay the groundwork for festive and heritage-rich waterfront development on both sides of the Mohawk River as a destination for Erie Canal boaters, tour bikers, local public and visitors. The plan recommends linkages to from the East Front Street neighborhood to adjacent commercial corridors, parks, historic areas and neighborhoods, and improved connections across the river from the bicycle and blueway trails. The plan provides boat access for large and small craft, waterfront improvements, multi-use trails, overlooks, parks, and restaurants and recommends locations for residential, commercial and retail development. Streetscape improvements including lighting, sidewalks and intersection realignments are also included. Interpretative and way-finding signage, kiosks and a visitor welcome center will be important as are basics such as comfort facilities and parking.

Action Plan



Downtown residents will enjoy well designed public spaces and amenities and the ability to walk to shopping, cafes, and music venues.

This downtown neighborhood plan builds on previous efforts and is base upon a series of focus groups and interviews conducted between October 2005 and May 2006. The detailed list of goals and actions that follows emerged from these meetings and outlines the key steps which will move the neighborhood towards the vision expressed by the residents.

Each of the Schenectady's ten neighborhood plans addresses the City's vision for the future:

"Schenectady is a city rich in history and heritage, and the very birthplace of American technical innovation. Today, Schenectady remains a culturally diverse, yet contemporary community of proud people who believe a brighter future lies within the strengths of their city's many assets, including beautiful parks, dynamic and architecturally unique neighborhoods, and the Mohawk River that flows along its shores. Now, through 2020, Schenectady will actively build upon this foundation of strength to become a highly preferred destination for Capital Region families of all cultures and faiths, who seek quality homes and better schools in safe neighborhoods. They will be joined by businesses both large and small, both cultural and technical, seeking to expand with the benefit of an outstanding and educated workforce, and to thrive within a city poised to continue is proud history of American achievement."

Four vision elements frame the action plan for the next fifteen years:

- Quality City Services Efficiently Delivered
- Great Homes in Safe and Stable Neighborhoods
- Beautiful, Clean and Green Community
- Quality Workforce and Growing Businesses



New cafes, restaurants and bakeries are located within comfortable walking distance of the entertainment district and public parking.

Vision: Quality City Services Efficiently Delivered

Goal One: Code Enforcement

CONDUCT AGGRESSIVE CODE ENFORCEMENT FOCUSING ON PROBLEM PROPERTIES AND NUISANCE ISSUES IN THE DOWNTOWN

Like the City's residential neighborhoods, downtown merchants, business owners and residents are calling for concentrated and assertive code enforcement. Revitalization requires that the downtown buildings be safe and extremely well maintained. The plan must allocate resources staff and financial resources to address code violated properties and incentives to bring commercial structures into compliance. Emphasis on nuisance abatement, especially littering, loitering, and skateboarding have been identified by merchants as priorities.

- Action 1: Concentrate enforcement on building neglect and property abandonment in the downtown core
- Action 2: Focus efforts on maintaining a safe and clean retail district by continuing the successful Metroplex downtown façade improvement program condition of buildings and facades
- Action 3: Increase enforcement of nuisance abatement regulations addressing noise, loitering, and panhandling
- Action 4: Require merchants to shovel the snow adjacent to their business promptly
- Action 5: Ensure that there is an emergency relocation plan in place if residents are displaced from properties considered by code enforcement to be unsafe
- Action 6: As development projects grow, increase code enforcement ability to certify new building electrical and plumbing



Adjacent to the downtown police substation,

Sportsplex will continue to be a location for youth sporting events for residents and visitors.

Goal Two: Public Safety

MAKE DOWNTOWN A SAFER CITY NEIGHBORHOOD.

If the Proctors entertainment district, the hotels, and downtown housing are to be successful, Schenectady's core must be safe 24 hours a day and 365 days a year. Perception of safety and lighting throughout downtown are critically important to attracting residents and visitors. Police presence, at the Jay street substation, is important and extending coverage into the evening will become even more necessary as new clubs and music venues open.

- Action 1: Increase community police presence in the neighborhood, especially through foot patrols, and address identified public safety concerns including panhandling, skateboarding, loitering and safety of parking areas.
- Action 2: Increase visibility of substation and presence of police officers on the street between 4:00 and 11:00 PM

Goal Three: Infrastructure

IMPROVE AND MAINTAIN RELIABLE INFRASTRUCTURE AND PEDESTRIAN AMENITIES

Schenectady's downtown represents an enormous investment already in place. The City and Metroplex have committed significant funds to water and sewer improvements, curbs, streets, trees, police and fire stations, and the recently completed wireless communication system. Ongoing coordination between Metroplex and the City has resulted in streetscape improvements in the Proctors entertainment district. Extending quality infrastructure along the corridors that link residents to downtown, especially the reconstruction of Erie Boulevard and improvements to Broadway will be challenges for the City over the next fifteen years. The continuation of streetscaping along upper and lower State Street will create new commercial development nodes for the Stockade and for Hamilton Hill and Vale.

Action Plan



The integration of parking areas and the main corridors will be important in linking residential areas such as East Front Street and college Park with the central core.

- Action 1: Extend the State Street streetscape investments to other corridors including Nott Terrace, Broadway, and Erie Boulevard
- Action 2: Evaluate the need for additional and/or improved parking in the downtown particularly to accommodate new residential development and review parking standards to ensure that they are suitable for a downtown environment
- Action 3: Address downtown water, sewer and storm water issues including combined sewer overflow issues in the downtown
- Action 4: Complete the model wireless telecommunications network in the Downtown and extend it to the neighborhoods
- Action 5: Continue positive and close coordination of downtown infrastructure through ongoing meetings with Metroplex and participating developers
- Action 6: Implement night and weekend clean-up, garbage removal and snow removal on Jay Street and in the downtown
- Action 7: Develop a program to replace sidewalks throughout downtown to increase pedestrian connections to residential areas
- Action 8: Develop a strategy to rehabilitate and paint the rail road bridges
- Action 9: Encourage expansion of Union College Trolley to transport residents to and around downtown

Goal Four: Transportation

IMPROVE AND MAINTAIN THE TRAFFIC CIRCULATION SYSTEM IN THE CENTRAL STATE STREET NEIGHBORHOOD

In addition to ongoing improvement to roadways and streetscape it remains a priority to create strong pedestrian and bicycle linkages between the downtown and activity centers including the Stockade, East Front Street, College Park, Little Italy, the library, upper and lower State Street, the colleges and the Nott Street/College Park office redevelopment area. As new businesses and residences return to downtown the city must examine parking requirements being careful to avoid suburban style

Action Plan



Improved downtown
parking, including a new
state-of-the-art parking
garage has addressed
parking shortages and will
play an important role in
encouraging residential
development in the
downtown.

commercial parking standards. Downtown condominiums and senior housing, for example, typically require far less parking than a single family home.

- Action 1: Review pedestrian and vehicular circulation patterns and make improvements to calm traffic, increase livability and walkability of the downtown
- Action 2: Create additional downtown gateways on Erie Boulevard and Broadway
- Action 3: Add new public transit amenities/linkages including commuter amenities and a stronger connection to the airport
- Action 4: Create an intermodal transportation station with bus rapid transit, train and parking
- Action 5: Make Jay Street two-way between Union Street and Liberty Street
- Action 6: Implement design guidelines for bike routes and signage
- Action 7: Enhance way-finding signage to assist visitors to manage the City's one way street system
- Action 8: Ensure that downtown lighting is bright enough for residents to safely walk to downtown in the evening hours
- Action 9: Consider including a tribute to the city's technology history (General Electric and Alco) by locating a steam engine or other icon on Erie Boulevard as part of improvement plan.

Goal Five: Historic Preservation

PROTECT AND ENHANCE THE CENTRAL STATE STREET NEIGHBORHOOD'S HISTORIC RESOURCES

Schenectady's downtown historic buildings provide a distinctive market identify for the community. Landmark properties such as Proctor's Theatre or the Parker Inn make it a one-of-the-kind place, unlike any other community with a cohesive core of buildings which reflect the district's evolution over time. The city's distinctive identity and character, including the Jay Street Historic District, will help to attract strong locally owned businesses, which generally return a higher percentage of profit to the community, employ local people and purchase goods from other local companies. Ongoing support for commercial building improvements including the downtown façade program will be important aspects of

Action Plan



Historic elements
including fencing, light
posts and tree grates
should be extended along
key downtown corridors
including Nott Terrace,
Union Street and Lower
State Street.

the plan. New buildings and infill construction should respect the existing character with regard to height, mass, scale, setbacks, etc.

- Action 1: Continually evaluate changes to historic district boundaries that impact downtown
- Action 2: Provide historic district overlay protection for important buildings and places including Proctor's Theatre
- Action 3: Adopt downtown design guidelines as design standards which ensure that new buildings compliment existing structures and represent excellent modern construction
- Action 4: Create inventory of vacant properties and "moth-ball" buildings such as the Foster Building for future use

Vision: Great Homes in Safe and Stable Neighborhoods

Goal Six: Housing

CREATE NEW DOWNTOWN HOUSING INCLUDING TOWN HOMES, CONDOMINIUMS, MARKET AND AFFORDABLE APARTMENTS AND LOFTS

Developing a diverse supply of modern housing types is critical to Schenectady's economic revival. Expanding downtown living options will be a central focus over the next fifteen years. Immediate opportunities include housing development adjacent to the Stockade, the East Front Street Town Home project, conversion of upper story uses, artist space and rental apartments. Creating a safe downtown and a heightened sense and perception of safety will increase the "feet on the street" and the attractiveness of downtown as a place to live. New housing projects must be carefully designed to fit within the downtown's historic character and be attractive to specific markets such as young professionals, artists and empty-nesters. At the same time it is essential that the City discourage gentrification and the loss of affordable and special needs housing in the downtown.

Action Plan



The College Park
neighborhood is enjoying
the development of small
stores and cafes as well as
new development including
the YMCA on Nott Street.

- Action 1: Identify locations with the greatest potential for adaptive reuse as housing as part of a mixed use development initiative. Target properties include the Robinson building, Foster Hotel building, State Street between Clinton and Jay and the Whitbeck building
- Action 2: Create financial and land use incentives that will encourage housing development
- Action 3: Create downtown senior housing
- Action 4: Complete development of East Front Street Town Home project
- Action 5: Adopt tax incentives which encourage the conversion of non-residential properties to mixed use
- Action 6: Develop relocation strategy for the YMCA, reducing the dense concentration of special needs housing in the commercial core
- Action 7: Pursue a mixed use redevelopment strategy for waterfront properties (including the ALCO property) which includes a variety of housing for various markets
- Action 8: Encourage universal design in all downtown housing projects
- Action 9: Define downtown market profile, targets and strategy focused on young professionals and empty-nesters
- Action 10: Pursue mixed use development project with market rate upper story residential development on Jay Street
- Action 11: Support ongoing improvements and livability measures in the Stockade, College Park and East Front Street neighborhoods which are and will be the downtown's primary residential areas
- Action 12: Identify locations for downtown student housing, with emphasis on meeting the needs of Schenectady Community College students and Union College post graduate students
- Action 13: Encourage formation of a working group to address real and perceived tension between the human service community and the business community as both try to develop excellent services in the same urban core
- Action 14: Improve the physical connection between SCCC and the downtown



The Stockade is the downtown's primary residential resource and its preservation and improvement will play an important part in ongoing downtown revitalization.

Goal Seven: Enhance the College Park Neighborhood

FOCUS QUALITY OF LIFE IMPROVEMENTS IN THE COLLEGE PARK RESIDENTIAL AREA BOUNDED BY ERIE BOULEVARD, UNION STREET, SEWARD PLACE AND NOTT STREET

The College Park neighborhood plays an important role in connecting downtown and the waterfront to the Union College campus. It is one of three primary residential areas providing foot traffic and retail spending for downtown. Current and planned development opportunities such as Nott Street redevelopment of the Big N property as Office Park, Little Italy and the reconstruction of Erie Boulevard represent a force for improvement in the neighborhood. College Park shares the concerns and needs of the city's bigger neighborhoods for aggressive code enforcement, reduction in absentee ownership, traffic enforcement and park and open space enhancement. The neighborhood's ability to maintain the positive relationship they have cultivated with Union College is an asset to the city and the college.

- Action 1 Complete the Little Italy project including development of a catalyst project for cityowned land and ensure ongoing communication and coordination with the College Park Neighborhood Association.
- Action 2: Improve the South Avenue Pocket Park by repairing and fixing swings and painting play elements, clean-up, mulching, landscaping, installing benches and regularly emptying garbage receptacles. Add new lighting to deter crime and loitering.
- Action 3: Control traffic in the neighborhood including slowing traffic along Seward, adding a sign at Nott Street and Park Avenue indicating that Park Avenue is a one way street, and removing the right on red at Seward Place and Nott Street
- Action 4: Repair Seward Place improvements including street sweeping when the students are away, top coating the street, and adjusting light fixtures so that they illuminate the street rather than second story windows
- Action 5: Prepare reuse plan for the Schenectady County Department of Social Services site on Nott Street

Action Plan



New waterfront
development in East Front
Street Neighborhood,
including the planned
Town Home project will
provide new mixed use
development and tax base.

- Action 6: Improve lighting in the neighborhood to deter crime and repair or modify the fixtures so that they illuminate the sidewalk rather than the tree canopy
- Action 7: Aggressively enforce codes to address problem properties including those at 225 Seward Place, 136 Park Avenue, 110 Park Avenue and "the triplets" at the corner of Huron Street and Park Avenue
- Action 8: Implement a façade improvement program along lower Nott Street between Van Vranken Avenue and Seward Place
- Action 9: Complete and promote redevelopment of the "Big N" site including commercial and retail expansion and development of the YMCA as a strong asset for the neighborhood
- Action 10: Open connections through the viaduct from Erie Boulevard to North Jay Street creating stronger linkages between the Stockade District and downtown

Goal Eight: Enhance East Front Street Neighborhood

FOCUS QUALITY OF LIFE ENHANCEMENTS IN THE EAST FRONT STREET NEIGHBORHOOD

The East Front Street neighborhood was the focus of the City's waterfront plan which outlined a broad vision for revitalization that hopes to lay the groundwork for festive and heritage-rich waterfront development on both sides of the Mohawk River as a destination for Erie Canal boaters, tour bikers, local public and visitors. The plan outlines park and recreation improvements, streetscaping and roadway changes, trail linkages and new mixed use development. The East Front Street Town Home project has broad support and will be an important early downtown housing success. Erie Boulevard reconstruction will make it easier for East Front Street residents to walk to downtown, while waterfront development, both in the Stockade and on the ALCO property will reinforce its riverfront village appeal.

- Action 1: Complete the East Front Street Town Home project
- Action 2: Implement the Schenectady-Scotia Waterfront Plan

Action Plan



The Stockade's park
resources are an important
resource for downtown
residents and visitors.

Action 3:	Coordinate Erie Boulevard improvement with overall neighborhood enhancement.
	Increase the ease of crossing Erie, making the neighborhood's location close to downtown
	a greater advantage

- Action 4: Create amenities to attract Erie Canal boaters, tour bikers, local public and visitors including berthing, boat access, boater services and crew facilities
- Action 5: Create linkages to adjacent commercial corridors, parks, historic areas and neighborhoods, and improve connections across the river from bicycle and blueway trails
- Action 6: Improve the appearance of Erie Boulevard businesses including the laundry, Grossman's and the National Grid (NIMO) substation
- Action 7: Create a waterfront bike trail with connections to other activity centers and trail segments along Erie Boulevard and the waterfront
- Action 8: Save some of the Alco buildings for civic use or perhaps a museum
- Action 9 Coordinate tourism marketing strategy with the neighborhood association
- Action 10: Improve the appearance of the rail road bridge
- Action 11: Recruit a downtown or near-downtown grocery store
- Action 12: Provide aggressive and consistent code enforcement which encourages reinvestment by local people, addresses absentee ownership and maintains standards
- Action 13: Address neighborhood transportation issues including:
 - Limit cut through traffic on Front Street
 - Address difficulties turning onto Jefferson from Front Street
 - Add signalized turn arrow to turn onto Union Street
 - Improve snow removal along narrow streets needs, some of which are impassable for buses and emergency vehicles in the winter
- Action 14: Address combined sewer overflows in the neighborhood and along the waterfront
- Action 15: Implement streetscape improvements including lighting, sidewalks and intersection realignments, and interpretative and wayfinding signage



Increasing access to the waterfront for boaters, bicyclists and pedestrians is a focus of the plan including implementation of the Schenectady Urban Bike Master Plan.

Vision: Beautiful, Clean and Green Community

Goal Nine: Parks and Recreation

CREATE NEW RECREATION FACILITIES AND MAINTAIN EXISTING PARKS AND GREENSPACE

The downtown is enhanced by its parks, plazas, event locations and other recreation amenities. Implementation of the Urban Bike Route Master Plan and new waterfront trail development will add to the rich amenities available to downtown merchants and residents. As the ALCO site is redeveloped it will be important to plan and construct public gathering spaces and recreation facilities that bring the public and visitors to the mixed use area. Development of waterfront recreation, including boat launch, small craft and crew facilities, and marine provisioners will increase access to the city by recreational boaters and provide more opportunities for local residents to get on the river. Bike and pedestrian connections and greenway links between downtown residential areas and nearby neighborhoods will maintain property values. Linkages between downtown, Vale Park and Central park through the planned greenway will tie the city's resource together in a continuous loop.

- Action 1: Improve connections to Vale Park from the downtown and linkages between Vale and Central Park
- Action 2: Develop new recreational facilities, including perhaps a pocket park, as part of waterfront development and through greenway linkages to other parks and recreation amenities
- Action 3: Improve recreational amenities in the neighborhood. Implement 2005 Park Rehabilitation List in the downtown
- Action 4: Plan and implement greenway connections through the downtown to take advantage of the Mohawk Towpath Scenic Byway and advocate for adoption of the Revolutionary Trail byway
- Action 5 Evaluate and restore identified brown field sites in the downtown



Ongoing expansion of technology businesses, particularly along a reconstructed Erie
Boulevard will distinguish the City as a location for new economic development.

Action 6: Implement the Schenectady Urban Bike Route Master Plan to create an alternative trail route through the City that would pass alongside the Mohawk River behind Nott Street Industrial Park, to Riverside Park in the Stockade. Develop four loop systems tied into the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail, designated as the Scotia/Glenville Loop, the

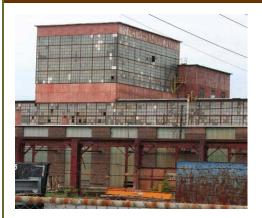
Goal Ten: Landscaping, Gateways and Streetscaping

ENSURE THAT THE DOWNTOWN IS VISUALLY ATTRACTIVE WITH WELL MAINTAINED LANDSCAPING AND STREET TREES

Downtown/Stockade loop, the Park Loop and the Outer Park Loop

The downtown has benefited from recent streetscaping efforts that have planted trees and designed public landscaping. As the streetscape work stretches out along connecting corridors and throughout upper and lower State Street it will be important to maintain emphasis on intensive tree planting, landscaping and the development of new urban greenspaces and pocket parks. As new construction occurs and infill development is planned the City should work aggressively to require that beautiful landscapes compliment beautiful buildings and that these investments are maintained over time. Gateways to the downtown should be attractive and clearly defined by archways or other design elements that consistently define entry into the entertainment and retail core.

- Action 1: Improve landscaping in the downtown including landscaping and seasonal plantings
- Action 2: Improve lighting in the downtown to highlight stores and restaurants and deter loitering
- Action 3: Create and enforce landscaping planting and maintenance codes and requirements
- Action 4: Plant, maintain and trim trees throughout the downtown especially along Erie Boulevard
 - and from Freemen's Bridge Road to Union Street alongside the Alco properties



The mixed use redevelopment of the former ALCO property will significantly expand residential options and expand the downtown tax base.

Vision: Quality Workforce and Growing Businesses

Schenectady's downtown can be a haven for small locally-owned businesses. If efforts can keep rents affordable and create incentives for commercial space revitalization, more start up businesses with strong entrepreneurial drive can be attracted. Schenectady's downtown can be a natural incubator for small businesses and arts enterprises. Retail continuity, long a challenge on State and Jay Streets, is improving, but retail recruitment and retention are critical tasks in the years ahead. Filling in the missing mix and stretching the impact of downtown along lower and upper State Street will make important connections to residential markets, especially the Stockade, East Front Street and College Park.

Goal Eleven: Economic and Business Development

ADVANCE MAJOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES IN THE DOWNTOWN TO SIGNIFICANTLY EXPAND THE BASE OF COMPANIES AND JOBS

The City of Schenectady's very future depends upon the accomplishment of a broad economic development strategy focused on creating work and wealth for local residents and companies. Growing and stabilizing the City's tax base demands growth retail, commercial, and industrial sectors. Some of this growth will occur on sites identified in the nine residential neighborhoods and along commercial corridors such as Union Street, Broadway, Upper State Street, Albany Street, Nott Street, Brandywine Avenue and Van Vranken Avenue. But the core for new economic investment is the City's downtown and the Erie Boulevard corridor. Building upon significant recent success including recruitment of Utech Products, the Hampton Inn, and Bowtie Cinemas, Metroplex and the City should continue their effective partnership to expand retail, attract small technology companies to the downtown, build-out the Erie Boulevard corridor and technology parks. Over time partnerships with General Electric should result in significant addition acreage for large scale economic development and tax base enhancement.

Action Plan



There remain many
locations for new
downtown entertainment
uses including music clubs,
performance spaces and
artist galleries and studio
space through infill
development and
rehabilitation.

- Action 1: Accomplish Erie Boulevard redevelopment and the recruitment of high-technology business as anchor tenants. Secure funding for Phase Two of Erie Boulevard reconstruction
- Action 2: Ensure development of a compatible Lower State Street commercial area that is supportive of the Stockade neighborhood and the needs of Schenectady County Community College
- Action 3: Design and implement a mixed use redevelopment program for the waterfront ALCO properties
- Action 4: Continue successful industrial and commercial development including the Broadway Commerce Park and College Park
- Action 5: Improve the commercial offerings along the Union Street Corridor which connects the Stockade to Union College, both untapped markets for downtown businesses
- Action 6: Continue cooperative relationship with General Electric to encourage site clean-up and redevelopment
- Action 7: Promote and continually improve the existing small business support framework for entrepreneurial development and provide services including training, technical assistance, marketing support and access to grant and loan capital
- Action 8: Develop a sympathetic business zone or an "Old Town" adjacent to the South and East of the Stockade district (State Street between Washington Avenue and Erie Boulevard.
- Action 9: Make every effort to attract a grocery store to downtown to support residential development.
- Action 10: Redevelop the Alco site and encourage location of an interpretative facility or museum focused on the City's rail road history
- Action 11: Encourage development of living wage jobs, creating opportunities for Schenectady's low and moderate income residents



Jay Street will remain the backbone of the City's retail district with concentrated code enforcement and incentives available for commercial building and façade improvements.

Goal Twelve: Downtown Entertainment and Retail

CONTINUE THE SUCCESSFUL DOWNTOWN ENTERTAINMENT AND RETAIL STRATEGY

The Proctors Entertainment District is a jewel in the region. The completion of the Proctors expansion and development of ancillary arts spaces and groups such as Jay Street Studios have created an anchor for downtown revitalization. As the entertainment strategy matures with additional clubs, venues and restaurants the City will need to maintain the physical environment and ensure that public safety services are visible. In addition Schenectady will be called upon to address downtown issues related to retail recruitment and retention. These issues include clustering to achieve critical mass, attraction of specific store types, marketing directly to targets such as Proctors patrons and downtown employees, packaging discounts and other promotional efforts and an overall sense of security.

- Action 1: Implement the next phase of downtown Proctors Block Entertainment District improvements including expansion of restaurants, small retail on Jay Street, and development of small clubs and music venues
- Action 2: Relocate and encourage the expansion of the Schenectady Museum including integration of the Edison Exploratorium or similar technology museum
- Action 3: Continue successful recruitment of high technology companies to the downtown core which do not compete for retail space and generate foot traffic all day long and into the evening hours
- Action 4: Support and encourage expansion of the downtown farmers market and perhaps a new weekend market on Jay Street
- Action 5: Create an antiques district on lower State Street
- Action 6: Encourage development of small businesses in the neighborhood by providing grants and technical assistance to formulate successful business plans
- Action 7: Provide rental subsidy funds to encourage new retail start-ups and consider requiring a fixed percentage of ground floor retail

Action Plan



The expansion of arts and arts-related businesses compliments the significant enhancement of Proctors Theater.

- Action 8: Create linkages to other retail clusters including Little Italy, new waterfront commercial development and the Nott Street corridor development
- Action 9: Build upon the historic downtown core and assets like Proctors and the nearby Stockade district to promote heritage tourism
- Action 10: Encourage merchants to maintain evening and weekend hours
- Action 11: Encourage more festivals and events in downtown year-round
- Action 12: Encourage additional development of subsidized arts spaces and galleries
- Action 13: Actively recruit a downtown grocery store

Goal Thirteen: Marketing and Management

FOCUS ON PROFESSIONAL DOWNTOWN MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT OF AN EFFECTIVE MARKETING CAMPAIGN

Marketing and management of downtown revitalization are shared among a number of partners: The Downtown Schenectady Improvement Corporation, the Jay Street Merchants Organization, Metroplex and the City of Schenectady. The organizations have significant capacity but if they are to be most effective they must clearly define their common vision and goals as well as their individual responsibilities. Professional management focused on the basics such as cleanliness and safety should be the top priority. Marketing programs, including initiatives underway by Metroplex will only be successful if the "product" – the physical downtown environment is clean, accessible and safe.

- Action 1: Provide ongoing support for professional downtown management with a clear focus on cleanliness, safety and retail recruitment
- Action 2: Provide ongoing support for the successful downtown façade improvement program
- Action 3: Increase emphasis on retail recruitment and maintain incentives for new retailers
- Action 4: Design and implement a downtown marketing and branding strategy



The development of shared downtown parking for retail and residential uses should be pursued in addition to additional parking garages.

Goal Fourteen: Zoning

IMPLEMENT APPROPRIATE ZONING AND STANDARDS TO MAINTAIN AN ATTRACTIVE AND VIBRANT RETAIL AND COMMERCIAL DISTRICT.

The downtown will function best when it has a mix of housing, offices, retail, entertainment, government and small industry. The City's land use policies need to encourage the dense concentration of economic uses either in a contained area such as the downtown or along dense corridors. For downtown to succeed it needs to be the easiest place to locate a business, rehabilitate a commercial space, or develop a new infill project. Codes need to make it feasible to create upper story residential uses and other mixed us combinations. Design review needs to be streamlined and business-friendly. Parking standards need to be appropriate and on-site parking requirements need to be examined to require the most reasonable supply. While downtown design guidelines can ensure consistency, they should not be so prescriptive as to dampen the historical creativity evident when downtown buildings often offered the most design innovation.

- Action 1: Define retail district between Erie, Clinton, Jay and Union
- Action 2: Enforce merchandise and window display coverage requirements in both occupied and unoccupied spaces
- Action 3: Adopt a waterfront overlay district
- Action 4: Evaluate feasibility of retail overlay requiring a percentage of ground floor retail
- Action 5: Adopt downtown design guidelines as design standards