The Problems and Potential of Vacant Buildings

A Survey of Vacant Structures in Albany, New York

Planning Studio
Fall 2002

Department of Geography and Planning
University at Albany
State University of New York
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Under the direction of Dr. Catherine T. Lawson
Funding provided by the Historic Albany Foundation

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Executive Summary

Many older, industrial cities across the nation continue to struggle with the problems of abandoned and vacant properties resulting from population loss and economic adversity and leading to overall neighborhood decline. Representing a mix of potential uses, vacant buildings are often located in the oldest and densest neighborhoods and are the first sign of a community in decline. Cities across the country are working to predict, prevent, and resolve abandonment through policy review, data collection, and analysis. The 2002 Planning Studio, comprised of graduate students in the University at Albany’s Urban and Regional Planning Program, contracted with the Historic Albany Foundation to undertake a complete survey of vacant and abandoned buildings within a targeted area of Albany.

This Studio work revealed a number of pertinent findings that impact Albany’s unique vacant building dilemma. These include:

- Within the targeted study area, 840 buildings are vacant according to the field survey.
- 309 or 36% of these 840 surveyed vacant buildings are designated historic buildings.
- These 309 buildings also represent 7.5% of the total 4,184 listed local historic buildings in the City.
- Albany County, not the City, is responsible for the enforcement of tax liens and eventual foreclosure in the City of Albany.
- The County cannot foreclose on properties until the third year of delinquency, as stipulated in the NYS Real Property Tax Law.

Once a model 19th century industrial city, Albany now faces the challenges of restoration, preservation, and reinvention. As Albany rises to meet these challenges, the city’s rich 300-year history and impressive number of historic districts can be assets which can encourage diversity, promote economic growth, and enhance the quality of life for residents.
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Preface

In 1998, Albany’s Common Council considered an ordinance to establish a Vacant Building Registry. The proposal found that “buildings which remain vacant … are unsightly, unsafe and have a negative effect on their surroundings.” The purpose of the proposal was to facilitate the identification of vacant buildings, determine the responsibilities of owners, and speed the rehabilitation of these structures.

Like many major urban areas throughout the Northeast, the City of Albany has a substantial and growing number of vacant and abandoned buildings. Representing a mix of uses, these residential, commercial, industrial and institutional structures are primarily sprinkled throughout Albany’s inner-city neighborhoods. These structures and parcels visually blight neighborhoods, depress property values and invite undesirable and sometimes illegal activities and are the most visible signs of private disinvestment in a community, and they encourage further disinvestment. Absentee landlords and drug trafficking compound the problem and make certain downtown neighborhoods less desirable than others. Yet, the most logical reason for increased vacancy rates is the depopulation of the inner city. According to the most recent census, area suburbs have increased in population, while the Capital Region’s primary cities’ population decreased, leaving fewer residents to fill the existing inner city housing stock. Most retail activity has already moved to the suburban malls, and the region has undergone three decades of de-industrialization.

Last year, Historic Albany Foundation, a private not-for-profit membership organization committed to protecting and promoting the built environment in and around Albany, began to search for comprehensive and creative solutions for Albany’s abandoned properties, beginning a series of meetings and discussions with local officials and policy makers. The short-term goal of these meetings was to initiate a dialogue about abandoned buildings and to explore the opportunities to collaborate on solutions. After the first round of meetings, it became clear that more data and information was needed to understand the patterns of abandonment and begin to work to those solutions.
The City’s Vacant Buildings Registry and other official counts did not tell the whole story. Historic Albany Foundation announced the Vacant Buildings Initiative, planning to work with Albany neighborhood associations to document abandoned buildings. Professor Ray Bromley, Director of the Masters in Planning Program at the University at Albany’s Department of Geography and Planning, contacted the Foundation, and offered the labor and skills of graduate students to do the work as part of their Fall Studio. The result of which was the Foundation’s commissioning the Vacant Buildings Survey with the planning program.

Every year, the Masters in Planning graduates participate in a studio project to prepare them for a career in planning. Under the direction of Dr. Catherine Lawson, Assistant Professor in the Department of Geography and Planning, this survey was undertaken in the autumn of 2002. Seventeen graduate students fulfilled their studio project by conducting a survey of vacant buildings in Albany. The survey covers every structure within a large target area estimated to include about 95 percent of the vacant and abandoned buildings in the city. The students used a variety of sources, including 2000 Census data, the City Register of approximately 160 vacant structures, neighborhood association lists of 100 additional structures, and a comprehensive street-by-street survey to collect exterior conditions data and digital photos of all vacant structures. Using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) mapping techniques, the students produced a database of 840 vacant structures. Coordinating committees have been established so that data can be shared with HAF, the Council of Albany Neighborhood Associations (CANA), the City of Albany, the County of Albany, and other interested groups.

The data generated is a major first step to enable the interested parties to develop strategies to reduce building abandonment and tax delinquency, and to encourage restoration and adaptive re-use in vulnerable neighborhoods. Student developed strategies include targeted code enforcement, selective restoration, matching homebuyers to properties, neighborhood improvement loan programs, selective demolition, tax abatements to encourage homesteading and reinvestment, and the expansion of local land and housing trusts. The learning experience for the students closely resembles the real world challenges in planning.
Students are graded on their abilities to be an effective group member. Key elements in the course include: coordination; cooperation; and production.

During the Spring 2003 semester, a number of graduate students put in additional hours to work with Historic Albany Foundation staff and community members to finalize this document and review the data inputs. This document is a learning tool, based solely on the creative talents and skills of the students who participated in the studio. The University and Historic Albany Foundation are not responsible for any errors and/or omission of the facts as all of the findings, suggestions and recommendations are part of the students’ learning experience.

In the process of gathering information on vacant housing, student collected anecdotal information that identified the following issues that need further investigation.

- Properties purchased as speculative investment properties;
- Properties in a state of suspended animation – boarded-up, but with the owners paying taxes and thinking of them as long-term investments;
- Buildings caught in legal limbo: in estate disputes, or held by elderly owners who are no longer able to maintain them;
- “Problem buildings” which have been purchased at public auction, but whose owners are unable or unwilling to make repairs; and
- Fragmented governmental responsibilities (i.e., Albany County handles the foreclosure process for the City of Albany).

It is important in future studies in this field of analysis to investigate the above concerns thoroughly to identify their contribution to the nature abandonment problems and find answers to solving them.

This survey has far reaching implications. Other Upstate New York cities are considering policies to address vacant and abandoned buildings, but don’t have the data – such as the Vacant Buildings Survey – to inform policies that address not merely vacancies but re-uses of abandoned buildings. Other northeast cities, like Albany, struggle to understand and
address inner city abandonment and the methodology of the Vacant Buildings Survey should be portable and applicable to other areas. More than just a learning tool, the data collected by the graduate students will be used by the Foundation, Albany’s neighborhood Associations and local policy makers to inform strategies to market Albany’s abandoned buildings. A key challenge is to get both governments to develop a coordinated solution to match potential homeowners with vacant properties. Through a joint effort, the properties are more likely to go into the hands of people who are committed to renovating and living in them.
Introduction

Like many major urban areas throughout the Northeast, the City of Albany is struggling with a preponderance of vacant and abandoned buildings. Representing a mix of uses, these structures are usually located in the densest neighborhoods and are the first sign of private disinvestment in a community. Left unaddressed, such structures begin to have a depressing effect on the neighborhood by becoming sources of blight. They invite undesirable and sometimes illegal activities, thus encouraging further disinvestment. Absentee landlords and drug trafficking are often blamed for the problem, but the main reason for high vacancy rates is depopulation of the city. People are moving to the suburbs, leaving fewer residents to fill the housing stock. Once these vacant areas become blighted, it becomes exceedingly difficult to reverse the trend.

The 2002 Planning Studio, comprised of 17 graduate students in the University at Albany’s Urban and Regional Planning Program undertook a complete visual survey of vacant and abandoned buildings within a targeted area of Albany. The Historic Albany Foundation, as part of their vacant housing initiative funded, the endeavor. The survey included the development of a complete inventory of all vacant structures and a structural analysis of each building from the exterior.

The scope of work for the Studio included:

- Compiling all available data on vacant structures from existing sources
  - City directories
  - County and City tax records
- Creating a standard survey instrument to evaluate the exterior condition of each structure and a full deployment of the survey
- Researching the local context to better understand the various issues
  - The relationship between City-County taxing jurisdictions
  - The current manner by which local government addresses vacant properties
  - Long-term planning in the City
- Historic development patterns
- Current zoning regulations

The Studio participants analyzed and used the background information and survey data to develop some specific recommendations. Studio participants drafted twelve case studies. These documents address neighborhood problems relating to vacancy and reflect some recommendations that may provide a benefit to the communities highlighted in the case studies.
Figure 1: Early-stage vacant
Location: 1 Myrtle Avenue
Source: Planning Studio 10/2002

Figure 2: Later-stage vacant
Location: 171 Sheridan Avenue
Source: Planning Studio 10/2002

Figure 3: Mid-stage vacant
Location: Albany, New York
Source: Planning Studio 10/2002

Figure 4: Final-stage vacant
Location: 516 Second Street
Source: Planning Studio 10/2002
History

Albany is one of the nation’s oldest cities and has had many roles in its history. The following historic information has been adapted from Management Plan for the Albany Urban Cultural Park, which sites Jack McEneny’s Albany: Capital City on the Hudson. Section headings were developed by the American History Workshop, are titles for exhibits in the Albany Visitors Center, and mentioned in the Management Plan (1987).

Trading Post: Crossroads of the Empires (1614-1783)

In 1624, an area along the Hudson River was settled by French-speaking Walloons drawn by the promise of prosperity in the fur trade. The first settlement, Fort Orange, located near the base of State Street, and other small communities sprung up in adjacent areas because of the patroon system. In 1664, British troops took control of the area and renamed it “Albany.” In 1686, Governor Thomas Dongan issued the first and only Albany Charter. Albany played a key role in both the French and Indian War and the Revolutionary War, serving as a base for British troops and “staging area for northern campaigns.”

Highway, Canal, Railroad, and River: Albany as Transshipping Crossroads (1783-1865)

By 1783, Albany was the nation’s sixth largest city and continued to grow as a cornerstone in the trade of wheat, livestock, and lumber. Increased trade and travel of westward bound settlers called for improved transportation in the region. The turnpikes constructed at the time have become the foundation for much of the region’s current road system. Steamboats and steam-powered railroad engines also advanced development in Albany. Completion of the Champlain Canal in 1822, and the Erie Canal in 1831, markedly decreased the transportation costs of goods in western New York and led to an increase in agricultural production, development of banking institutions and other industries. Railroad lines were built along both sides of the Hudson and sparked the development of hotels, breweries, distilleries and other industry. It was during this prosperous time that many of the area’s schools and cultural facilities were established.
**Railroad Era: Albany as Microcosm (1866-1920)**
As greater strides were made in rail transport, Albany hit its peak. Union Station, the most modern train station in the country and the pride of the New York Central Railroad, opened in 1900. As an extensive transportation nexus, Albany was well located for new manufacturing industries and became a magnet for immigrants from Ireland, Germany, Eastern Europe, and Italy. In the late 1800s, Albany’s main streets were paved and lined with electric streetlights; electric trolleys had replaced horse cars. In 1899, the State Capital Building was completed.

**Capital City Crossroads: A Livable Community (1920-1962)**
Albany’s recent history is marked by the influence of its strong and colorful leaders. Erastus Corning II, the longest-tenured mayor of any major U.S. city, and Nelson Rockefeller, helped shape the city we know today. Albany’s population reached its height in 1950, at 134,995 residents. However, by the mid-1950s, suburbanization started the slow process of decline. Relocation of state offices away from the downtown district compounded the problems for Albany in the 1960s. In 1962, Governor Nelson Rockefeller undertook a new state capital complex, now known as Rockefeller Empire State Plaza, by condemning almost 100 acres of mostly residential structures next to the former Capital. Over 7,000 people were relocated to make room for this 11-building complex.

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Figure 5: ‘CAPITOL BUILDING’
Location: Albany, New York
Source: Original Artwork by Sreekumar Nampoothiri

Figure 6: Plan of Albany – 1695
Location: Albany, New York
Source: “The Making of Urban America.”
Planning Preservation and Restoration

Construction of the Empire State Plaza was a catalyst for the need to preserve Albany’s traditional neighborhoods, but Albany struggles with a continued population decline and shrinking tax base. The City has drafted several City Plans. The first was completed in 1958, and the most recent, the Consolidated Plan, covers the time period from 2000-2005. Assessments of the City have been numerous. Since the 1960s, a number of plans, programs, reports, and noteworthy organizations concerned with preserving and revitalizing Albany’s built environment have played a role in defining Albany’s urban fabric. Presently both the City and independent organizations are working to preserve and rejuvenate the city of Albany.

The 1968, General Plan for the City of Albany was written during the construction phases of I-787 and the Empire State Plaza. It serves as an analysis of the general issues Albany neighborhoods faced at that time. The plan divided the City into twenty separate neighborhoods, described the physical boundaries, general characteristics, potential, and prospects of each neighborhood. The report contains a classification of current building conditions showing the South Mall, Arbor Hill and North Albany neighborhoods as having the highest rate of deteriorated buildings, as well as the highest number of vacant housing units.

- Albany had a 7.9% vacancy rate, or 3,697 of the 46,271 total housing units.
- Vacancy rates were the highest in the South Mall (23.9%), Arbor Hill (11.1%) and North Albany (10.2%) neighborhoods.
- 14.7% of housing units, or 6,817, were found to be deteriorated.
- There were a concurrent number of high deterioration rates in the neighborhoods with the high vacancy rate.

The Historic Albany Foundation, a private, not-for-profit membership organization, was created in 1974, in order to preserve buildings of historic and architectural significance. For almost 30 years, the Foundation has been involved in public education, provision of design and technical assistance, community projects, advocacy for endangered buildings, publications, tours, lectures and operation of an architectural parts warehouse.
From 1975-1978, the Community Development Program targeted areas for rehabilitation. The South End’s “Pastures Project” was the first large publicly funded preservation effort.\(^2\) It was beyond the scope of this project to compile a complete list of properties that received funding under the Community Development Program, but making it readily available would be of tremendous benefit to any person, group, or agency that is concerned with the revitalization of the City of Albany.

In 1983, newly elected Mayor Thomas Whalen III set out to revitalize Albany. During the 1980s, Albany enjoyed a short-term economic boom and housing within the City was in demand, vacancy rates were low, and the rate of abandonment and demolition permits slowed.

A 1985, report called Albany Ahead: An Historic City's Bright Future, authored by the Strategic Planning Committee, detailed the City’s decreasing population and stagnant economic problems. This included the sharp decline in youth population, decrease in commercial employment and the City’s tax base. The report made thirty-two recommendations for revitalizing Albany. The most startling fact highlighted in the report is that the Capital District Region as a whole did not share the dramatic decline in growth that Albany had. In fact, the region actually grew during this time, yet very little of the growth was benefiting the City of Albany.

In 1986, the Albany Urban Renewal Agency published the Community Development Program Status Report. The report summarizes the budget of the Community Development Program from 1975 to 1985 and describes the various aspects of the program including public services, rehabilitation activities, special projects, and economic development. It highlights successful projects from each section. Investments in some specific properties were mentioned, along with neighborhoods and streets that received funding, but there was not an exhaustive list of treated residential properties.\(^3\)


\(^3\) Our goal was to be able to compare residential structures that had received aid from the Community Development Program with data gathered from the Albany Building Condition Survey to determine whether or not there were any positive or negative relationships. This was not possible because of the incompleteness of the original data.
In 1989, the Strategic Planning Committee wrote a follow-up to their 1985 report called the Partnership to Progress, Realizing Albany's Future. The report served as an evaluation to the City’s performance in implementing the earlier recommendations including: enhanced residential presence, waterfront development, public and private partnership and adequate student housing. Noteworthy in this report is that funding for Housing and Urban Development (HUD) programs dropped from $30.17 billion to $9.97 billion in 1986, creating a greater challenge for Albany in response to the needs of low-income residents.

In the 1990’s, housing abandonment and vacancy increased in Albany reversing the 1980s trend. According to the Albany County Real Property Tax Service Agency, in 1990, 288 residential properties in the City of Albany were tax delinquent and were subject to foreclosure. An estimated 60% of these homes were already vacant. In 1999, the City of Albany Assessors Office recorded 409 vacant or boarded-up residential buildings.

In 2000, the Consolidated Plan was drafted to serve as a comprehensive report of the City’s needs and revitalization plans for 2000-2005. A plan such as this is required by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to apply for funding under the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), Home Investment Partnership, Emergency Shelter Grant and other HUD grant programs. Albany’s Consolidated Plan identifies the main housing problems as affordability, vacancy, and lead paint hazards. These problems are particularly difficult due to the limited availability of funding for rehabilitation, control of lead hazards, historic preservation, disability access and new construction. The majority of vacant homes were located in the Neighborhood Strategic Areas of North Albany, Arbor Hill, West Hill, Capital Hill, and the South End.

The housing section of the Consolidated Plan describes specific housing objectives. One of the main objectives includes: eliminating slums and blight by demolition, new construction, or rehabilitation of vacant/boarded up residential buildings. The program outlined states a goal to “provide financial and technical assistance to private and/or non-profit owners for the demolition, new construction, or rehabilitation of vacant/boarded up residential buildings in neighborhood revitalization areas of Albany. Leveraged financing of public and
private sources shall be utilized in specified project locations within neighborhood
revitalization areas.”

Finally, Albany’s Consolidated Plan provides an analysis of the institutional barriers to
affordable housing in Albany. According to the plan, the building codes and zoning in
Albany do not appear to create a barrier for affordable housing. However, the plan
identified historic preservation requirements as a potential barrier to affordable housing and
economic development. The preservation requirements of historic buildings often require
additional work, and regulatory compliance can cause delays and hinder financial feasibility.
However, a building within a historic district, or listed on, or eligible for listing on the
National Register of Historic Places, may be eligible for federal tax credits available for
restoration and attract further investment.

Efforts are being made to preserve, rebuild, and revitalize Albany, but the result of decades
of urban population decline and disinvestment have taken a toll. By the 2000 Census, there
were 4,400 vacant dwelling units within our study area of the City of Albany. Today,
vacancies plague the city. Whole neighborhoods such as the South End and Arbor Hill,
along with individual streets such as Dana, Hudson, and Lincoln are depleted due to these
vacancies. Albany, once a model of the 19th century industrial city, now faces the challenges
of restoration, preservation, and reinvention. As citizens and institutions in Albany rise to
face these challenges, the City’s rich 300-year history and numerous historic districts should
be considered assets to encourage diversity, promote economic growth, and enhance the
quality of life for residents.
Figure 7: ‘BROWNSTONES ON CLINTON AVENUE’
Location: Albany, New York
Source: Original Artwork by Sreekumar Nampoothiri

Figure 8: Aerial Photo of Downtown Albany
Block Quality Analysis from the 1968 Plan
Location: Albany, New York
Source: City of Albany
Land Use in Albany

An official land use map was not located or developed as a part of this project. The field visits performed as part of the building survey project, participants have inferred a general idea of the land uses throughout the City. Albany has a mix of uses throughout the City. In the area adjacent to the Empire State Plaza that encompasses Madison to Lark, Washington and Pearl Streets, the uses are primarily commercial with some residential. This is the commercial corridor patronized by the workers at the Empire State Plaza. College students from the University at Albany’s downtown campus and the College of Saint Rose also support the surrounding businesses. Near the Hudson River, land use patterns become more commercial/industrial, and include warehouses. This is a natural development pattern due to the close proximity to the river, the former railroad system, and the current Interstate highway system. Towards the “heart” of the City, the majority of land uses are primarily residential with a mix of smaller commercial uses. This is where the greatest concentration of vacant buildings is located.

In 2001, Albany created a new division in the City’s Planning Department to focus on neighborhood revitalization. The Mayor created a C-1 zone that was not previously in the zoning code. This is a special designation for areas promoting economic development and occupancy of vacant buildings. The C-1 zone classification outlines neighborhood commercial districts that include retail stores, offices, churches, restaurants, taverns, banks, and theaters that serve specific neighborhoods. The city currently has 12 different neighborhood commercial districts. Attached to this designation are special funding opportunities as an incentive for landowners and outside developers to purchase, rehabilitate, and occupy buildings. Since 2001, over 50 properties have been improved in the City using C-1 zoning designation.

Presently, the City of Albany supports a number of neighborhood revitalization projects. A South End Revitalization Strategy was initiated in April 2001. The Strategy’s goals include the demolition of high-rise public housing and the construction of more human scale, multi-use buildings, the development of a historic designation and the reuse of abandoned structures, the promotion of owner-occupied housing in some areas as well as improvements
to the streetscape and parking changes in the South End. At present, the Revitalization Strategy supports fifteen different projects including the Pearl Street Reconstruction, which receives Federal, State and local funding and will provide a new roadway, pedestrian oriented sidewalks, streetlights, landscaping and crosswalks. The Pearl Street project also includes infrastructure upgrades to storm sewer systems and fiber optic cabling. Other noteworthy revitalization programs in Albany include the Pastures Townhomes, a newly constructed Albany Housing Authority office building, and the commercial revitalization of Delaware Avenue, the Living History Museum, a Grand Street Project, and the Arbor Hill Neighborhood Plan.

It was important to analyze zoning designations and regulations to understand their influence on vacancy patterns. Sometimes the allowed land use might not be practical or profitable and the building might be left unoccupied. The City of Albany had no electronic version of the land use-zoning map available at the time of this project. Zoning references made during this project are from a hard copy of the City of Albany’s zoning map, from the Albany Planning Department. Small area maps were produced for each case study showing the current land uses allowed. Case study teams strived to understand the influence of the zoning in the dynamics of the individual case study areas.

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5 An Electronic version (Map-Info coverage) was produced by the students in the department of Geography and Planning, SUNY Albany a few years ago. This map, however, is incomplete and did not match with the city parcel map.
Legal Forces at Work

A variety of state, county, and municipal rulings have had significant impact on abandonment and disinvestments in Albany. Along with City laws, such state and federal laws include:

**New York State Real Property Tax Law**

- Sets a minimum standard for municipal and county governments addressing abandoned properties.

- Mandates that foreclosure by a public entity is a minimum two-year process for commercial property and three years for residential property.

**City of Albany Zoning Ordinance**

- *Section 26-1156, Urban Renewal Areas* allows planning in excess of bulk regulations.

- *A Traditional Neighborhood Design* overlay district section, added in 1996, preserves the architectural and traditional neighborhood development, including mixed-use planning. This overlay imposes additional regulations on the rehabilitation of structures deemed to have historic value or important architectural value. When a building is located in these zones, there are limitations on exterior changes that are allowed so as to maintain the surrounding neighborhood continuity.

- 2000 revisions added *C-1 Neighborhood Commercial* zoning. C-1 targets areas that have been identified to consist mostly of residential multi-family areas and commercial zones.

**Historic Resource Commission Ordinance, Chapter 42, Code of the City of Albany**

- Governs designated historic districts and landmarks.

- Requires certificate of appropriateness prior to issuance of a building permit for any exterior alteration, restoration, reconstruction, demolition, new construction or moving of a landmark or a property within an historic district.

- Requires demolition application review.
Building Code, Chapter 133, Code of the City of Albany

- City building inspectors ensure compliance to the Codes of the City of Albany, and State Uniform Fire Prevention and building codes.

- Inspectors are responsible for a thorough review of buildings, in response to complaints or as a part of a property sale, to verify whether or not there are any code violations.

- Inspector may issue a notice to vacate and may declare a property unfit for human habitation.

Vacant Building Registry, Article XI, Chapter 133, Code of the City of Albany, effective July 1, 2000

- Owners are required to register buildings within 30 days of vacancy with the Division of Buildings and Codes, Department of Public Safety.

- Registration requires completing a form and paying $200.00 annually to the City of Albany.

- Owners must maintain vacant buildings.

- Owners can be penalized for not registering vacant buildings.

County Real Property Disposition Plan, Albany County Legislative Resolution 111, March 11, 2002

- Enumerates other laws that guide the county’s disposition of vacant and abandoned properties, including the Albany County Charter, Albany County Local Laws, and County Law Section 215.

- Indicates county will consider private sales of foreclosed properties, but generally auctions off parcels abandoned and foreclosed.

- Auction terms and conditions, as well as suggested frequency, are listed in the Resolution.
How it Fits Together

Albany County is responsible for the enforcement of tax liens and eventual foreclosure in the City of Albany. Under this arrangement, if the City of Albany, collecting taxes on behalf of the County, has not received tax payment from a property owner, it is made whole out of the County proceeds. The delinquent properties are then turned over to Albany County for enforcement. As stipulated in the Real Property Tax Law, the County does not foreclose on properties until the third year of delinquency. Prior to a decision to foreclose, County inspectors from the Departments of General Services, Health and Social Services are sent to visually evaluate the property from the exterior. A Conservation Committee generally determines the viability and value of the property for conservation. In addition, a financial assessment is performed for each property to determine its current value. This information is then forwarded to the County’s Property Manager who is responsible for determining which properties will be foreclosed.

Should Albany County opt to proceed with foreclosure, the foreclosure notice provides the property owner 90 days to respond. At the end of the 90-day period, a judgment is filed with the County Court. Upon signature of the judgment by a judge, the property belongs to Albany County. Past practice shows that the speed in which the County can dispense delinquent property is the priority in the process and there has been little or no consideration for future condition/use or amount of proceeds, as long as the proceeds are equal to or greater than the amount of taxes owed. If it is determined through the inspection that the property is worth rehabilitating, it will be added to the auction list maintained by the County. This list then results in the delinquent properties being auctioned off in the County of Albany’s quarterly auction.

At the discretion of Albany County, a County legislator may ask that the property be sold to either the previous owner or a person currently living on the property. The auction results in the new owner receiving title through a Quit Claim deed.
Real Estate Market Analysis

An analysis of Albany County migration and mobility patterns from 1996 through 2001 reveals that Albany County continues a trend of significant out-migration. On average, approximately 8,200 households a year moved out of the county in the mid to late 1990s, compared to approximately 7,300 households a year that moved in. Many local real estate experts believe that the increase in vacancies has had a tremendous effect on the price of real estate in Albany’s neighborhoods. Many believe the real estate market has reached a standstill and that finding interested and eligible property buyers has become difficult. Despite these beliefs, the City of Albany has experienced a significant number of real estate transactions in the last decade.

Recent property sales data reflects the current state of Albany’s property market. The Multiple Listing Service data of the Greater Capital Association of Realtors research indicates that the housing market activity has seen a recent increase. In addition, the average sale prices grew by 28% from 1997 to 2001. Though an increase in average selling price is a positive indicator, the difference between the listed and sold properties indicate that the average sales activity has not improved as much as it may seem. A further breakdown of real estate information shows more residential property transactions than any other types of property. The Multiple Listing Service Greater Capital Association of Realtors 2001 Real Estate Market performance data reports that single-family houses have been the most active segment of the real estate market. These dwellings tend to stay on the market for the shortest time. However, most available residential properties in the City of Albany are two-family structures. The commercial property market in Albany is almost dormant and, in the last five years, vacant parcels have been on the market for extended periods of time.

Between 1990 and 2002, 26,373 property transactions took place in the City of Albany. Of these, nearly one third were transacted for $10 or less. There are a number of possible explanations for the high percentage of low-cost transactions, including sales to family members and auctions. Close to 10% of the properties were transacted for $20,001 to $50,000, and nearly half of the properties were transacted for $50,001 to $150,000.
Although a look at recent real estate transactions in Albany indicates a moderate increase in activity after at least a decade of a slow market. Area real estate brokers and other industry observers expect that the Albany real estate market will soon undergo a paradigm shift because of the new high-tech companies venturing in the region. Real estate brokers in the area also attribute the recent sales hikes to historically low interest rates, which have prompted people to buy new properties or refinance existing mortgages. If projections are correct, structures now standing vacant in the city of Albany could be in more demand in the near future.
**Vacant Structure Survey**

The surveying process undertaken by the Studio was multifaceted, and included identifying high vacancy areas and developing appropriate maps of these areas. The steps that follow occurred after the initial evaluation of pertinent available data, as described below in the Data Collection and Analysis section.

**Step 1-Pilot Testing:**
The original survey instrument, created by S. Thyagarajan of the University at Albany’s Urban & Regional Planning Program, was pilot tested by eight teams of two to four people in a two-block study area on September 28 and 29, 2002. As a result of this pilot deployment, Studio participants made modifications to the instrument to incorporate more detail on critical survey elements (Appendix A). During this phase, Studio participants discussed requirements for building inclusion and determined to base the survey on observation of external characteristics. Only those building that appeared to be uninhabited from the exterior were to be included in this survey.

**Step 2-Training:**
One student team created a draft survey training manual complete with digital pictures of structures and characteristics to aid in the consistent identification and rating of structural elements (Appendix B). The Studio took part in discussing various grading levels and criteria of building elements.

**Step 3-Deployment:**
The Studio performed a full deployment of the survey of key areas on October 19, 20, 26, 27, and November 2, 3, 2002 (See Mapping, pg. 23). To assist in the deployment, the Historic Albany Foundation sent a letter to neighborhood association representatives to solicit their participation. Groups of students and volunteers employed the revised instrument for visual identification and assessment of 68 structural elements as viewed from the street. Additionally, digital pictures of each property were taken. Survey teams located 840 vacant buildings in the survey area.
Step 4-Database Development:
Survey information was consolidated into a Microsoft Access 2000 database for storage. This program can accommodate easy data entry and can be easily exported into various other data file types, such as Excel and dbase. The database was comprised of 29 data fields that directly correspond to the survey instrument, including a data field for the structure’s photo. The resulting database is a comprehensive automated compilation of the survey results. 840 records are included in the database. The database meta-data is provided in the table below.

Table 1: Survey Instrument and Database Fields

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field Name</th>
<th>Data Type</th>
<th>Pick List Option, If Available</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ID Number</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surveyor Name</td>
<td>Text</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date of Survey</td>
<td>Date/Time</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time of Survey</td>
<td>Date/Time</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Street Address</td>
<td>Text</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use</td>
<td>Text</td>
<td>“Residential, Commercial, Industrial, Institutional, Mix”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Stories</td>
<td>Text</td>
<td>“1, 2, 3, 4, 5, more than 5”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>Text</td>
<td>“Occupied, Vacant, Partially Vacant, Burned, Boarded”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>Text</td>
<td>“Brick, Wood Frame, Stone, Mixed”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any of the Following</td>
<td>Text</td>
<td>“Daylight Basement, Permits, Notices, See Comments”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Street Facing Wall – Wood Frame</td>
<td>Text</td>
<td>“Good, Average, Poor, Deteriorated, N/A”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Street Facing Wall – Masonry</td>
<td>Text</td>
<td>“Good, Average, Poor, Deteriorated, N/A”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Street Facing Wall – Foundation</td>
<td>Text</td>
<td>“Good, Average, Poor, Deteriorated, N/A”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Side Walls – Wood Frame</td>
<td>Text</td>
<td>“Good, Average, Poor, Deteriorated, N/A”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Side Walls – Masonry</td>
<td>Text</td>
<td>“Good, Average, Poor, Deteriorated, N/A”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roof</td>
<td>Text</td>
<td>“Good, Average, Poor, Deteriorated, N/A”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cornice/Eaves/Bracket</td>
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<td>Window Sills/Lintels</td>
<td>Text</td>
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<tr>
<td>Windows – Frame</td>
<td>Text</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Windows – Glass</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Front Entry - Door</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Front Entry - Porch</td>
<td>Text</td>
<td>“Good, Average, Poor, Deteriorated, N/A”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Front Entry – Steps</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exterior Finish</td>
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<td>Chimneys</td>
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<td>Front Yard</td>
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<tr>
<td>Side Yards</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comments</td>
<td>Text</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photo</td>
<td>OLE Object</td>
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</table>
Data Collection and Analysis

The collection and analysis of information relevant to the vacant building survey was an ongoing process that started in September 2002. Numerous public and private organizations and businesses as well as individuals were contacted and interviewed in order to compile accurate information for mapping, surveying, and understanding the political and financial process of property disinvestment and abandonment in Albany.

Mapping

Geographic Information System (GIS) was used throughout the study to compile and analyze data, and create maps. GIS in the strictest sense is a computer system capable of assembling, storing, manipulating, and displaying geographically referenced information, i.e. data identified according to their locations.

A GIS/data team compiled information from a variety of resources in order to create the best working maps for the survey deployment and future analysis. The data and resources included:

- Study Area Boundaries and Focus Area Boundaries from Historical Narratives of those already familiar with the City's housing patterns.
- Roads, railroads, water features, public lands, and municipal boundaries from the NYS GIS Clearinghouse website.
- Census Tract and Block boundaries, population and housing data from the US Census Bureau Website and ESRI Website.
- Historic Districts, National and State Register Historic Sites, and locally significant Historic Sites from NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation and The Historic Albany Foundation.
- Orthophotos and tax parcel data from NYS agencies and through another project being conducted by UAlbany students.
- Listings of registered vacant buildings from Albany County and unregistered vacant buildings from the Neighborhood Associations.

• Scanned images from past City Plans including 1967 Downtown Block Quality, 1970 Building Conditions, and 1986 Areas with poor environmental quality.

Based on the information collected for mapping, the initial number of registered and non-registered vacant buildings in the database was 269.

The GIS/data team also created datasets specific to the Studio needs, including:

• Neighborhood Association boundaries
• Individual Survey group deployment areas
• Modified parcel boundaries used to enter the survey results, and track the progress of the survey deployment
• Case Study areas

Block level Census data was used to identify specific areas to concentrate our efforts on and scanned images from previous City Plans were used to identify areas that had a history of building quality and vacancy problems. From this information, we devised a strategy aimed at completing the survey in the most efficient manner possible.

The survey area was divided into 21 groups for distribution among eight studio teams. A series of maps were produced to facilitate the gathering of data. Each map showed the parcels within the survey group, color-coded to identify the property class and its listed vacancy status. An accompanying spreadsheet was included that listed every parcel in the group along with its physical address, and ID number. The ID was used to join the Survey data, digital photo, and existing parcel data together after the completion of the survey. It became evident early on that the existing vacancy data was incomplete. As work progressed on the Survey deployment, un-surveyed parcels were redistributed among Studio members that had finished their assigned areas. By tracking the progress of the survey deployment using GIS, we were able to verify that all of the properties within the outlined survey area were covered.

After entering the data gathered through the survey into the Access database, vacant buildings were mapped, and further analyzed using GIS. By combining the new survey data with existing historic building information, we were able to reveal that 309, or 7.5% of the
4,184 listed local historic buildings were vacant, and that 36% of the vacant buildings in the survey area are considered historic structures.

Work on the twelve case studies began after the survey was complete. A variety of areas affected by high vacancy were identified and mapped. The data we obtained and developed on our own was examined and summarized to produce a profile for each Study Area. The building permit data for 2001 was used to identify the kinds of investments being made in the various areas.
Figure 9: Resident and student review map
Location: Albany, New York
Source: Planning Studio 10/2002

Figure 11: Discussing route
Location: Albany, New York
Source: Planning Studio 10/2002

Figure 10: Surveying a vacant building
Location: Albany, New York
Source: Planning Studio 10/2002

Figure 12: Preparing maps of area
Location: Albany, New York
Source: Planning Studio 10/2002
Figure 13: Resident and student share a laugh while surveying
Location: Albany, New York
Source: Planning Studio 10/2002

Figure 14: Deciding case study areas
Location: Albany, New York
Source: Planning Studio 10/2002
Figure 15: Concentrating for accuracy
Location: Albany, New York
Source: Planning Studio 10/2002

Figure 16: Hard at work
Location: Albany, New York
Source: Planning Studio, 10/2002
Description of Case Studies

The purpose of this study is to evaluate vacant structures and suggest appropriate reuses. In order to meet this goal, case studies were developed.

The following case studies consist of four small and eight large studies within the targeted area. The Studio identified opportunities for revitalization as the survey was conducted. The proposed ideas were then discussed in class, where a consensus was reached as to which areas would be further explored. The student groups went back to the study area to gather pertinent information, which served as the foundation for the case studies that follow.

The purpose of the case studies is to provide the reader with an array of ideas to address vacant buildings in their neighborhood. To make for easier reading each case study will follow a similar format. The first section will begin with a background section, which is a description of the geographic boundaries for the study area. The second section, community assets, is a description of the positive aspects or advantages within the community. The third section, treatments, details the proposals for each community. The final sections, proposals, are the suggestions that the students made for the area based on the treatments.
Large Case Studies

Arbor Hill
  Sherise L. Gilmore • Vatsal Bhatt • Sheila Keyes • Jason Todd Swaggart

Clinton Avenue
  Jeremy Evans • Susan Olsen • Meredithe Smith • Brian Thomas

Second Avenue
  Brian A. Ross • Sandra Jobson • Chris Kanz • Stacey Pilgrim

North Albany
  Sreekumar Nampoothiri • R. Martin Witt • Jaime O’Neill • Jesse Day
Arbor Hill

Background
The case study area covers four blocks including First, Second, and Third Streets, and Henry Johnson Boulevard (Northern Blvd.) within the Arbor Hill neighborhood. The area is zoned residential with the exception of the parcels lining Henry Johnson Blvd, which are, zoned C-1 (mixed use). The neighborhood is largely comprised of buildings constructed of brick and masonry, though some wood frame structures are present within the study area. There is a mix of older housing, vacant structures and parcels, newly improved housing, and new-buildings. First Street has the bulk of historic buildings, which are in good condition except for a few minor exterior repairs. Moving closer to Henry Johnson Blvd. the houses are less well maintained. Some are boarded, and many have been demolished. On Second Street, the lots are varied in their layout and the design of the buildings. The area has a traditional residential neighborhood design with narrow streets, short blocks, and wide (5 ft) sidewalks. Some of the houses have been built in different time periods. First, Second, and Third Streets are all one-way, which is a traffic-calming tool in a residential neighborhood. Both the streets and the sidewalks could use repair.

Community Assets
There are many opportunities to capitalize on within this area to create an urban village. Henry Johnson Boulevard is one of the main thoroughfares through Arbor Hill, connecting it to other parts of the city and to the highway system. It has been designated a Boulevard Improvement District as well as being a part of the city’s C-1 Neighborhood facade improvement program, which allows for further commercial development. The Capital District Transportation Authority (CDTA) provides excellent public transportation.

Also located on Henry Johnson Boulevard at Second Street is the City of Albany’s Police Department Substation. The substation is key in implementing a community-policing unit as well as improving the perception of safety within the area. Currently businesses are concentrated on Henry Johnson Boulevard. There is a Beauty Salon, a Supermarket and the Albany Community Redevelopment Corporation (see figure 4.1). There are also other institutions, which, contribute to the stability of the area.
Although not in the study area, but contributing to the community character are the: the City of Albany Department of Public Safety Fire and Building Codes, Roy’s and Kenneth’s restaurants, and a small corner store, all which are located on Henry Johnson Boulevard.

According to available building permit data, in the last year there has been over $87,000 invested in the area. These investments range from construction of a new residential home to a shed. All this indicates a positive market.

- First Street- New building (residential) $10,000
- First Street- Asbestos removal $3,000
- Third Street- Demolition $14,250 (Some clearing/demolition obvious)
- Third Street- New House $60,000
- Second Street- DHCD Write-up $1400
- Second Street- Shed $380
- Second Street- Permit in the window

**Treatments**

**Alternative 1:**
The first alternative entails making no investment in the area. If there is no investment made in the study area the result will be long-term vacant properties being demolished and additional abandonment.

**Alternative 2:**
The second alternative is to make minimal investment in the area for maintenance. This alternative entails investment in exterior maintenance to prevent violation of code enforcement. This does not take into account improvements or reinvestments in the area.

**Alternative 3:**
The third alternative is a multi-faceted approach utilizing both public and private investment with an emphasis on community. Here is a description of an innovative community-building program.
**Shreveport-Bossier Community Renewal**

Today the concept of community is almost completely lost within many urban neighborhoods. As once thriving communities have been reduced to nothing more than dwellings surrounded by strangers, neighbors no longer know each other, and apathy has taken over neighborhood streets. This can be seen in most areas in the US, urban and suburban, but it is in the urban areas that this decline in the notion of community has caused the most severe problems, as can be seen by soaring crime rates, as well as the decline of the urban fabric.

Many programs have been developed by various groups across the US to correct this problem with various results, good and bad. With this case study the authors would like to propose one such program that is being used in Shreveport, Louisiana. The Shreveport-Bossier Community Renewal (SBCR) program, organized in 1994, is a non-profit organization that attempts to recreate community, one person at a time.

In the past, before the rise of urbanization, people within the village knew each other and shared a genuine concern and respect for their neighbors, that created a safe culture of caring. Mack McCarter, the founder of the organization, says that they attempt to recreate this sense of belonging and community within the new context of living by bringing people together in order to foster new relationships within the area.

The SBCR has developed a three-part strategy: The Renewal Team, Haven House, and Internal care units. With the Renewal Team, the SBCR enlist volunteers who will become visible within their communities under the “We Care” label. Under this label volunteers wear pins, place signs in their yards and put bumper stickers on their cars making potential friends.

Volunteers commit to building friendships on their block under the Haven House Plan. SBCR provides training sessions for volunteers and teaches them how to restore caring relationships among neighbors systematically. The Haven House volunteers also meet regularly to discuss problems and solutions.
The last of the three strategies is also the most intensive. The Internal Care Units are “Friendship Houses” placed in low-income and high crime areas that are staffed by paid SBCR members who live in the homes with their family. These members try to develop special relationships with the people in the neighborhood by providing many different types of programs and activities for all persons. They provide summer and after school programs, have health-care providers visit to treat neighborhood residents, start neighborhood watches and other programs that work to create a greater sense of safety, pride, and stability within the neighborhood.

Preferred Alternative

Alternative three is the preferred approach for revitalization of the area. The proposal is to replicate the SBCR program within the case study area to help foster a stronger sense of community. The first step would be a grassroots organization of neighborhood residents and owners because community mobilization is needed for some neighborhood-beneficial improvements.

These efforts to build community should be coupled with public and private investment as the following details.

Themed Development District-Urban Village

The current layout of the neighborhood, with vacant lots on the corner of First Street and Henry Johnson Blvd., and adjacent vacant buildings and lots provides a unique opportunity for a number of treatments that could bring the neighborhood together. People in general are more likely to invest time and capital into a neighborhood where local or state government is willing to invest. By creating a community gateway entrance on the corner of First Street and Henry Johnson Boulevard this land can be reclaimed. The concept of community gateways is used by the Maine Department of Transportation as a community development tool. The idea is that citizens participate in the design and layout of the gateway sign and landscaping, thereby promoting community ownership.
**Streetscape Improvements**

*Crosswalk:* Introduce a crosswalk at the corner of First Street and Henry Johnson Blvd. Because people tend to look down at a fifteen-degree angle, create a textured crosswalk using brick pavers. A less expensive tactic would be to score the concrete in interesting patterns, add color to the concrete, or a concrete/brick combination; there could be a call to residents for design suggestions.

*Sidewalk repair:* Introduce textured sidewalks, by adding color to the concrete, or a concrete/brick combination; use a consistent format and material. Special attention should be given to the sidewalk along Henry Johnson Boulevard.

*Street paving:* The first priority should be Henry Johnson Boulevard, and then Third Street, Second Street, and First Street in that order.

*Tree plantings:* There are trees planted on Second and Third Streets. There needs to have a uniform system used to place trees and or shrubs on First, Second, Third, and Henry Johnson Boulevard. Special attention should be given to the placing of small shrubs and trees along the fence on Third Street.

*Lighting:* Use pedestrian friendly, human scale lighting to illuminate the streets. Special attention should be given to the gateway sign.

**Market**

*Pavilion/Open market:* Construct a pavilion with bathroom facilities on the corner of First Street and Henry Johnson Blvd to host a market. The pavilion would serve as shelter for vendors, who could rent space in the form of stalls or booths, to sell items. This would encourage small, local business entrepreneurs to enter the market. An information kiosk is also suggested. The kiosk cost could be underwritten by service providers; in this case we suggest CDTA and the Post-office. The CDTA could have a schedule board (similar to the one housed at the University at Albany) and the post office could house a stamp machine. The nearest Post-office is located on Central Ave. and Partridge Street.
Entrepreneurs - Funding for vendors could be secured from Capital District Community Loan Fund, Inc. or from the Albany-Colonie Chamber of Commerce, both of which offer micro-enterprise loans.

Business Development: The study area is a designated Empire Zone. This means that tax incentives are available for businesses to locate in the area. The Albany Local Development Corp., the Albany Industrial Development Agency, and the Albany Center for Economic Success are additional resources available. These entities could be used to identify vendors for the proposed market.

Park
There are a number of vacant lots located on Third Street. These lots could be converted into a park with a basketball court, youth play areas, benches, and landscaping. This park would be beneficial for the Arbor Hill community center, which is adjacent to the proposed area. The Charter School on Lark Street does not have any outdoor play facilities.

Housing: On Second Street, there are properties that are vacant but in stable condition. These properties should be rehabbed and returned to residential uses. In order to maintain the building vocabulary, all new in-fill projects should adhere to historic character of the surrounding structures.

Funding: The SBCR portion of the proposal should be economically feasible because it can begin on a completely volunteer basis. The success of the rest of the proposals is contingent upon substantial public and private investment. All of the proposed streetscape suggestions can be implemented using a portion of the City of Albany’s $6.5 million infrastructure improvement fund, which is part of the 5 year Capital Plan.

The Capital District Habitat for Humanity has been involved in both new construction and rehabilitation efforts within the City of Albany. To rejuvenate Second Street, the City of Albany could demolish unsalvageable properties and then give the land to the Capital District Habitat for Humanity. They could then build new homes on the land.
Funds for the rehabilitation of properties could be secured from the Albany Home Store for owner occupants to do the necessary repairs. This should be used in conjunction with the Homeowner Assistance Program, to bring the property up to code.

To ensure that there is sufficient quality rental property available, the Albany Home Store should send a mailing to all property owners in the study area to inform them of the Tenant Assistance Program. This deferred loan can be used to stabilize properties and limit the number of demolitions necessary.
Figure 17: Beyond repair
Location: 193 Second Street
Source: Planning Studio 10/2002

Figure 18: Albany Community Redevelopment Corporation
Location: Albany, New York
Source: Planning Studio 10/2002
Figure 19: Rehabilitation candidate
Location: 174 Second Street
Source: Planning Studio 10/2002

Figure 20: Proposed use for vacant lots
Location: Albany, New York
Source: Planning Studio 10/2002
Figure 21: Arbor Hill Community Center
Location: Albany, New York
Source: Planning Studio 10/2002

Figure 22: Daycare center
Location: Albany, New York
Source: Planning Studio 10/2002
Clinton Avenue

Background
Many of the structures within the Clinton Ave. study area (between North Pearl and South Swan) were constructed in the late 1800's. The neighborhood is largely comprised of buildings constructed of brick and masonry, though some wood frame buildings are present within the study area. Many of the existing buildings exhibit beautiful historic and architectural detail, particularly in the cornice and eaves of the roofs and around openings in the facades. On average, the structures are three stories in height and built very close to the property line.

The predominate land use among existing buildings is residential, though small commercial uses do exist on the ground floor of several buildings within the study area. The viable businesses along this section of Clinton Avenue appear to be small and focused primarily on neighborhood commercial/retail.

It appears that several building demolitions have occurred within the study area over the past several years, as there are occasional vacant and abandoned lots in the middle of a dense building fabric. These lots give the street a gap-toothed building frontage.

The public right-of-way, (ROW), is noticeably wider than many of the other thoroughfares within the Arbor Hill neighborhood of Albany. Though not clearly defined, the paved ROW features two-travel lanes in either direction. On-street parking is plentiful on both sides of the street with little to no limitations. Traffic is heavy, particularly during peak periods, given the proximity of the study area to nearby government offices. Pedestrian traffic is also significant, accommodated largely by a wide sidewalk despite the lack of other pedestrian amenities.

Community Assets
The eastern terminus of the study area is within a few hundred yards of the road improvements recently completed on North Pearl Street. These improvements, including pedestrian light standards, sidewalks, landscaping, and paving treatments, combine to define
a particular character for North Pearl Street. Consideration should be given to extending these standards west along Clinton.

A key to this connection at the eastern end will be the development of the Salvation Army properties. This two-story brick structure and the generous open space that surrounds the building distinguish this property from the others along the thoroughfare. Adaptive reuse of this building and the incorporation of the adjacent open space will be essential to the redevelopment of surrounding properties.

The expansiveness of the public ROW offers additional opportunities. Modifications to the street design can help to create a different environment and atmosphere for the entire thoroughfare without minimizing the capacity of the roadway.

**Treatments**

**Alternative 1:**
The first alternative entails making no investment in the area. Without significant public investment or establishment of appropriate incentives, private investment at a level necessary to realize significant change is unlikely. As such, long-term general decline of the neighborhood is to be expected. Property abandonment will likely continue at the current pace, requiring demolitions to protect the health, safety, and public welfare. These demolitions will further detract from the streetscape and diminish property values along the corridor.

**Alternative 2:**
The second alternative is to make minimal investment in the area. This alternative entails investment in exterior maintenance to prevent violation of code enforcement. This does not take into account improvements or investments in the area.

**Alternative 3:**
The third alternative calls for public investment in the infrastructure and utilizing the zoning in the area to spur commercial development.
Preferred Alternative

Clinton Boulevard

Clinton Avenue has long been an important east-west thoroughfare and was designed to accommodate large volumes of traffic. However, the excessive width of the street may be a factor that has hindered the revitalization of this historic neighborhood. Today, residents along Clinton Avenue must endure the constant noise and danger created by hundreds of vehicles traveling at excessive speeds. As one part of a comprehensive strategy to revitalize Clinton Avenue we recommended that significant funding be dedicated to creating a pedestrian-friendly and aesthetically pleasing “Clinton Boulevard” stretching from downtown at the beginning of Clinton to Henry Johnson Boulevard.

We recognize that the most profound changes come to communities and neighborhoods through the actions of private individuals and organizations and this will certainly be true of any revitalization of Clinton. However, it is important not to underestimate the positive influence of public investment. Private individuals and organizations recognize the stabilizing effect that public investment can have in a neighborhood. People in general are more likely to invest time and capital into a neighborhood where local or state government is willing to invest.

Along Clinton, the City of Albany could initiate a comprehensive renovation of the streetscape and traffic pattern. Although expensive, there are numerous sources of outside funding with which the city is already familiar. These could be used to help finance the projects. The city already has some experience with streetscape improvements through its C-1 revitalization program. Areas along New Scotland Ave. and Madison Ave. have most recently been recipients of significant streetscape improvements.

While primarily a residential street, there are a substantial number of commercial uses along Clinton Avenue. As mentioned previously, it receives far more traffic than a normal residential street. Its heavy pedestrian and vehicle use, combined with noise and safety issues, make Clinton Avenue a perfect candidate for major streetscape improvements. Recommended improvements (all of which are approved for use by the NYS Department of Transportation) are described below:
**Roundabouts**
Modern roundabouts are an effective traffic-calming tool for reducing vehicle speed, intersection accidents, and traffic: they actually improve traffic circulation. By reducing vehicle speed, roundabouts increase pedestrian safety, and when attractively landscaped, improve the aesthetics of the street. Traffic studies would determine where roundabouts are appropriate on the proposed Clinton Boulevard.

**Speed tables (Crosswalks)**
Speed tables are vehicle and pedestrian friendly speed control devices. They are designed to slow traffic to the speed limit but they do not jar the vehicle or driver like speed bumps. Speed tables are often used at intersections for crosswalks. Being raised above street-grade, they gain the attention of drivers and help pedestrians feel safer crossing streets.

**Neckdowns**
Used at intersections, neckdowns improve safety by reducing the distance between curbs that pedestrians must travel when crossing the street. By reducing the width of the street at the intersection, neckdowns can have some influence on vehicle speed although they are mainly used to improve pedestrian safety.

**Median barrier**
A median barrier down the center of Clinton Boulevard could serve many purposes. It would reduce unsafe U-turns by vehicles and it would reduce the real and perceived width of the street, which would help slow traffic. It would provide a pedestrian safety zone between lanes, and conceived correctly with extensive landscaping, would drastically improve the aesthetics of the street.

**Smaller lane widths**
The City of Albany should consider reducing the travel lane width along Clinton Avenue. Narrower striped vehicle lanes help to reduce travel speed.

**Bike lanes**
Clinton is wide enough to easily accommodate bicycle lanes on both sides if, in the future, the City of Albany develops a bicycle plan.
Other Public Space Improvements

The city already has significant experience installing streetscape improvements such as textured sidewalks and crosswalks (using brick pavers), decorative pedestrian-scaled light fixtures, benches, and street trees. These treatments have been used immediately east at the beginning of Clinton in the Quackenbush area and we recommend that Clinton receive these same improvements. Energy should be given to recreating vacant parcels for either historically appropriate in-fill or interesting public spaces with city art and fountains. Empty parcels don’t necessarily have to look abandoned and unused. Sometimes gaps between the buildings allow more sunlight to shine through and can provide spectacular, urban landscape views of the rest of the city.

No single program will revitalize Clinton Avenue but public investment in infrastructure improvements is an important part of the solution. With careful planning, the improvements that have been completed on Clinton Ave. between Broadway and North Pearl Street in downtown Albany can be successfully extended and expanded along the length of Clinton to Henry Johnson Boulevard. Improving the aesthetics and increasing pedestrian safety on the proposed Clinton Boulevard should be a priority of any revitalization efforts.

Grocery/Farmers Market

Most of Clinton Avenue is residential with some mixed use and community service. At the lower end of the street (across from the Palace Theater) are several vacant properties owned by the Salvation Army but currently on the market for sale. There are two buildings among these properties as well as parking lots and green, semi-public spaces. This set of properties is situated in a central location near downtown but also among various residential uses. We believe this is an ideal location for a regional grocery to serve the existing residents, downtown commuters, and to entice potential homeowners to relocate to the area.

There is already a small local grocery on N. Swan. This local grocery could use a makeover but effort should be made to keep it from going out of business if this Salvation Army building becomes a larger, regional grocery. Possibly a partnership between the two could prevent such a mishap.
The Salvation Army building in figure 27 could be used for office space on the second and third floors or leased out to small firms. The first floor could be used as a year-around farmers market with seasonal activities (holiday/craft markets). During the summer, the market could expand out to the green space with eateries.

The second Salvation Army building up for sale could serve as the main grocery market, retaining the outside facade but refitting the interior to better suite the needs of a store. The type of grocery would be up to the community – whether a chain such as Price Chopper, Hannaford, ALDI’s, or a community food cooperative. Either way, a substantial grocery store is a necessity for any healthy neighborhood. Along with the initiatives for St. Joseph’s church and school, and those along North Swan, this grocery would provide yet another anchor for the community.

**Business Investment**

Investment in existing businesses is an essential component of neighborhood revitalization. On Clinton Avenue, several businesses exist which could foster further economic growth and neighborhood employment for residents. Within the Albany Consolidated Plan for 2000-2005, several economic programs are outlined which would be ideal to stimulate existing businesses and enhance the commercial activity on Clinton Avenue.

The economic goals of the plan relative to commercial expansion of Clinton Avenue include:

- Job retention.
- Establishment, stabilization and expansion of small businesses.
- Availability of mortgage financing for low-income persons at reasonable rates using non-discriminatory practices.
- Access to capital and credit for development activities that promote the long-term economic and social viability of the community.

Many institutions currently in place within the City of Albany are capable of assisting economic programs on Clinton Avenue. The Consolidated Plan outlines several of these programs, and how they can be used in achieving the economic goals of the plan. Such programs applicable to Clinton Avenue are:
- **Albany Economic Development Zone**: Created to stimulate economic growth in distressed areas. Through the Albany Local Development Corporation (ALDC), a variety of financial incentives are offered including tax credits, property tax exemption, utility rate reductions, and other tax refunds. Appropriate for all businesses – chain grocery.

- **New York Business Development Corporation (NYBDC)**: NYBDC targets areas with high poverty levels, unemployment and commercial vacancies. Its goal is to provide loans to small and medium sized businesses that are otherwise unavailable from the banking industry. Appropriate for smaller businesses – cooperative grocery.

- **Capital District Community Loan Fund (CDCLF)**: The CDCLF works to provide equitable access to capital and economic opportunities in low-income areas and disadvantaged communities using loans from public and private institutions. The CDCLF has specific goal for the next five years including financing at least 175 community development projects and enterprises with over 75% in distressed markets. This program is an essential vehicle for the restoration of Clinton Avenue and the entire City of Albany. Appropriate for smaller businesses.

### Residential Revitalization

Given the fact that the predominate land use along either side of the study area is residential, the revitalization of residential properties must be a high priority if redevelopment of the entire corridor is to be successful. With much of the building fabric in place, rehabilitation of existing structures should be the primary goal. However, in-fill development on the scattered vacant and abandoned lots will improve the building frontage and streetscape. New construction will also provide a mix of building ages and may help to draw moderate and higher income persons to the study area, thereby providing for a mixed income neighborhood.

To facilitate increased renovation and building construction for residential uses, the various neighborhood groups and associations should consider forming a Community Housing Development Organization (CHDO). Formation of a CHDO has several benefits. CHDO’s are recognized by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and receive priority in funding eligibility. The City of Albany receives in excess of six million dollars in entitlement funding from HUD through programs like Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), Home Investment Partnerships (HOME), Emergency Shelter Grants (ESG), and Housing Assistance for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA).
Establishment of a successful and productive CHDO would ensure that a portion of these funds is devoted to this neighborhood annually. Furthermore, a CHDO would be eligible to seek additional funding through the Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program, thereby increasing their ability to achieve real change in the neighborhood through renovations and new construction.

To encourage residential rehabilitations in a largely low and moderate-income neighborhood, it is incumbent upon the City of Albany to offer some financial assistance. This assistance could be made in the form of low-interest loans, grants or some combination of the two. The loan program could be structured in such a way that it is forgiven if the homeowner resides at the property for a certain number of years after the completion of the improvements. This would encourage homeownership, and some neighborhood stability. Some amount of private participation on the part of the property owner should be made part of any successful program. A program of this type is eligible to receive a share of the City’s CDBG or HOME funding.

Although preference should be given to preexisting structures in need of rehabilitation, new in-fill construction on the various vacant and abandoned lots should also be encouraged through incentives. The establishment of a CHDO could assist in this endeavor, as well, by utilizing their funding to participate in the new construction. New units could be owned by the CHDO as rental units or lease-to-own, if so desired, thereby providing a revenue stream to recoup the construction financing debt, perform regular maintenance on the structure, and capitalize funds for improvement projects elsewhere along Clinton.

The burden of property taxes on newly constructed buildings is often a primary concern that steers prospective owners, particularly first-time homebuyers, to consider purchasing existing buildings. To address this, the State of New York recently enacted a tax abatement program for first-time homebuyers of newly constructed residential structures. This incentive provides for an abatement of 50% of the property taxes for the property in the first year, decreasing by 10% for each of the next four years. Though it requires enactment by each taxing jurisdiction, the savings can be significant and may be a way for the City to encourage
in-fill construction. As such, it is recommended that the City, County, and School Districts consider enactment of this incentive.

Finally, if new construction is to be encouraged and financed within older neighborhoods, it is imperative that the zoning for those areas be written such that the architectural and historic character of the existing buildings is not compromised by the new construction. Therefore, instead of the standard lot and building height, size, and bulk regulations, the zoning ordinance for such sections of the City should include design guidelines for all new construction. Alternatively, a complete and separate design ordinance should be legislated. Such design guidelines should require matching the surrounding properties by building to the lot lines with zero setbacks, using similar exterior materials, and matching levels/sizes of windows, doors, and roofs. This type of regulation ensures compatible development, which increases historic value.
Figure 23: Opposite Palace Theatre
Location: Albany, New York
Source: Planning Studio 10/2002

Figure 24: Salvation Army’s property
Location: Albany, New York
Source: Planning Studio 10/2002

Figure 25: Looking northeast along Clinton Avenue
Location: Albany, New York
Source: Planning Studio 10/2002
Figure 26: Opposite of entrance to Ten Broeck from Clinton Avenue
Location: Albany, New York
Source: Planning Studio 10/2002

Figure 27: The old Salvation Army
Location: Albany, New York
Source: Planning Studio 10/2002

Figure 28: View between the buildings as seen from Clinton Avenue
Location: Albany, New York
Source: Planning Studio 10/2002
Figure 29: Example of Brick pavers
Location: Bellingham, Wa.
Source: C. Lawson, 2002

Figure 30: Example of a Bike path
Location: Portland, Or.
Source: C. Lawson, 2003
Figure 31: Example of a Median barrier
Location: Eugene, Oregon
Source: C. Lawson, 2002

Figure 32: Example of Neckdown
Location: Bellingham, Wa.
Source: C. Lawson 2002
Second Avenue

Background
The study area covers 2nd Avenue, between Broad Street and Sloan Street within the South End neighborhood. The area is zoned primarily R-2A which is one- and two-family residential, with scattered C-1 in the form of neighborhood commercial corner stores. The most significant buildings in this case study are the “Our Lady Help of Christians” Church (occupied) at 64 2nd Avenue, and Public School Number 17 (vacant).

The neighborhood is adjacent to the on-going improvements on South Pearl St. (see South Pearl Street Case Study). It is also in proximity to historic residential neighborhoods that have suffered from blight for the past forty years.

The disinvestment is very noticeable when observing the street condition. Both the roads and sidewalks are worn down. Potholes, cracks, dirt and salt all plague the pavement. Therefore, all motorists, cyclists and walkers suffer from the poor pavement conditions.

The blight has infected numerous buildings, which have been boarded, none of which are demolished, which means there are no empty lots. For the neighborhood, the residential vacancy rate is low. The vacant buildings are plagued with poor foundations and boarded up windows and doors. This area has a history of vacancy. Some buildings seem to have been vacant for long periods. This is evident through the severe conditions of the buildings. However, others are still in adequate shape, which might indicate that they have recently been abandoned.

Community Assets
The biggest community asset is “Our Lady Help of Christians” Church. The church is still active and still provides a key role in the community. In addition, the building is in immaculate condition and is architecturally stunning. It dominates the skyline of the neighborhood and provides a terminating vista in some areas. It is built to the street corner, and provides a warm, welcoming feel to visitors. Other assets include the narrow street that bends at the intersection of Elizabeth Street. This provides a warm and unique feel to the
community, which might be the reason why this community is less vacant than their neighboring ones.

The biggest opportunity is Public School 17. The building is still in very good shape and is a huge structure that helps dominate the neighborhood. The building could become a community center, or something even more innovative such as a flea market.

Other opportunities include the proposed footpath Second Avenue would provide to South Pearl Street from Western Albany via Whitehall Road. This opportunity is dependent, however, on the improvements made to South Pearl St.

**Treatments**

**Alternative 1:**
The first alternative is the No Build Alternative. This provides for only continued maintenance of the existing corridor as it is. This alternative does not provide for any proposed improvements or reinvestments be made to the corridor.

**Alternative 2:**
The second alternative is the Residential Use Alternative. This provides for improvements to be made to the corridor consistent with residential use only. This alternative would require the property and surrounding roadways be rehabilitated for residential use only. In addition, this alternative will provide for rehabilitation on an individual building basis rather than as a corridor.

**Alternative 3:**
The third alternative is the “Main Street” Redevelopment Alternative, that proposes the transformation of Second Avenue from a strictly residential strip into a corridor that is mixed-used with small business, offices, and residences. One of the key elements of this alternative will be to encourage the redevelopment of buildings whereby first floors are used for businesses and upper floors used for residences. The development scheme fits well with the existing architecture and roadway section.

This “Main Street” Redevelopment Alternative is consistent with the City of Albany 2001 neighborhood revitalization initiative, in which various locations across the city (including
the Second Avenue corridor case study area) were rezoned in to C-1. The C-1 zoning
district is a special designation for areas in the City to promote economic development and
reduce building vacancies. C-1 is a residential neighborhood commercial district that allows
for retail stores, offices, churches, restaurants, taverns, banks, and theaters. Consequently,
the existing zoning regulations implemented in 2001 along the Second Avenue corridor
support the “Main Street” Redevelopment Alternative.

The “Main Street” Redevelopment Alternative also proposes streetscape improvements.
Improvements to the corridor would include improving sidewalk surfaces, providing street
trees, sidewalk extensions at intersections, pavers in pedestrian crosswalks, improving
pedestrian signalization, street furniture, period lighting, trash receptacles, adequate transit
stop facilities, and bicycle racks. Although the primary focus will be on developing a
“pedestrian friendly” shopping area in Albany’s South End, parking areas will also be
developed and situated to the rear of the business lots. This will allow for commuters to
park in a central location and walk to nearby shopping areas.

This alternative proposes the City of Albany invest in the Second Avenue corridor
infrastructure and encourage mixed-use development by private developers. A variety of
investment tools should be investigated for use in this neighborhood. In addition to the
2001 neighborhood revitalization initiative, Community Development Block Grants,
Historic Preservation Tax Credits, Housing Tax Credits, and the New Markets Tax Credits
should be investigated to determine their viability in this area. Other economic development
incentives may also be available to businesses in this neighborhood.

Preferred Alternative

The preferred alternative is the “Main Street Redevelopment Alternative.” This alternative
provides for the best opportunities for improvement of Second Avenue within Albany’s
South End. By encouraging the creation of a Main Street in this neighborhood that suffers
from economic decline and some vacant structures, the area could be revitalized and turned
into a viable business area. Businesses and residences in a pedestrian-friendly environment
will encourage the residents to remain in the neighborhood and may encourage the
relocation of others into the neighborhood.
Figure 33: Our Lady Help of Christians Church
Location: Albany, New York
Source: Planning Studio 10/2002

Figure 34: Public School 17
Location: Albany, New York
Source: Planning Studio 10/2002
North Albany

Background
The area of this case study lies to the north of the Amtrak rail line, West of Interstate Highway 787, East of Broadway, and South of North Ferry Street. In total, the area covers three large commercial blocks.

This neighborhood does not contain any residences. It is populated almost exclusively by non-residential uses, including many offices and warehouses. There are also a considerable number of open lots in this area, some of which are currently used as parking facilities.

In general, the larger buildings appear to be structurally sound. Some of the businesses in the neighborhood are in poor condition, but are small enough where they would not require much additional monetary commitment to improve.

The neighborhood infrastructure is in need of improvement, with some of the existing sidewalks having fallen into disrepair, and no sidewalks being present on other blocks. In addition, lighting is limited and improvements would have to be made as part of the revitalization process. There is a need for future upgrade to the existing sanitary and water systems in the area to support an increase in daily use as a realization of this plan. It is possible to find sources of funding in conjunction with redevelopment of this area to upgrade the infrastructure in the future.

Fiber optic cabling and additional telephone lines may need to be installed depending upon what types of businesses relocate into the warehouses. Many of the companies today are “high-tech” with minimal heavy equipment and infrastructure needs other than some cabling.

With one exception, everything in this area is zoned as M-1, or “General Industrial”. The one exception is a Charter One Bank office complex located at 833 Broadway, as the westernmost structure of the study area. This office complex is zoned CO, or “Commercial Office.”
The length of time that the warehouses have been vacant is unknown. Upon site visit, the warehouse that advertises storage available had someone going in and out of the door on the side of the building. That indicates that there is some type of activity still taking place in the building – perhaps an office, or a security officer. Based on some of the unkempt side yards and front yards we can determine that a couple of the warehouses have been vacant for at least a few years. An attempt was made to contact the owners of these properties by using the numbers on the sides of the buildings to get an idea of the cost for rental or purchase of the properties. We were unable to speak to anyone regarding this matter.

**Treatments**

**Alternative 1:**
The first alternative entails making no investment in the area. If there is no investment made in the study area the result will be long-term vacant properties being demolished and additional abandonment.

**Alternative 2:**
The second alternative is to demolish the existing structures. The cleared land could then be sold or given to a private developer to create a new community.

**Alternative 3:**
The third alternative is to develop it solely as an industrial area. Utilizing the connectivity to Interstate Highway 787, the nearby rail lines, and the waterfront area, encourage economic investment in rehabilitation of existing industrial uses and structures. These industrial uses could include warehouse storage, technological development, and research activity. A model for such development could be the UAlbany east campus, which combines academic activity with for-profit research and development such as bio-chemical engineering.

**Alternative 4:**
The fourth alternative is to develop it as a commercial area. Create a pedestrian mall running parallel to Broadway, running the length of Crown Terrace – from Livingston Ave extension to North Ferry Street. This street has a vacant lot and a large warehouse on one end and another warehouse and gas station on the other end. The area in between includes a number of two- and three-floor buildings on either side. These smaller buildings can be redeveloped
easily into walk-up shops. The vacant lot can be used as parking lot for people coming to the mall. The side streets allow movement of service vehicles into the buildings without disturbing the pedestrian movement. There would need to be a connection developed between the nearby residential neighborhoods to bring in people easily. This can be achieved through connecting the nearby Arbor Hill neighborhood by redeveloping the Colonie Street that was separated by the introduction of Broadway as well as the railroad. The connection can be redeveloped through an overpass or underpass across Broadway and railroad. Transit connections also need to be developed with major parts of the city.

**Alternative 5:**
The fourth alternative is to develop it as regional recreational center. The location of the study area next to the Hudson River provides an excellent opportunity to develop the site as a regional recreation center, which is lacking in the capital district. A marina on the waterfront combined with parks and playgrounds (outdoor as well as indoor) would be an ideal activity in this area. The area can be connected to the waterfront by the existing but under-used Colonie Street and can be integrated with the Corning Preserve. The large warehouses can be developed into indoor sports complexes (basketball, pool, and bowling) open spaces can be developed for tennis and other activities. This needs to be supported with development of “green space.” This would mean growing trees along I-787, Broadway, and the railroad in the study area to screen the pollution. This alternative could become a revenue generating activity for the city.

**Alternative 6:**
The sixth alternative is to develop it as a mixed-use neighborhood. Considering the potentials of commercial and recreational facilities in the area, the most probable scenario is to develop it with a mix of different activities. The activities include residential, commercial, and recreational. At present there are hardly any residences in the area. Any activities proposed would be successful only if there are enough people to support them. Many of the commercial and recreational facilities can bring people from other parts of the city. However, the presence of a living population in the area can make any proposal a real success. The following activities need to be developed:
• Redevelop the large warehouse on the southern edge as condominium.

• Redevelop Crown Terrace as a pedestrian mall with third floor of the buildings as residences.

• Redevelop the large warehouse on the northern edge as a recreational complex with sports facilities such as tennis and basketball courts as well as video arcades and other amenities.

• Develop a marina on the water edge and make pedestrian and bike connections between the study area, the waterfront, and Corning Preserve.

• Connect the Arbor Hill neighborhood with the area either by overpass above the railroad or by underpass below Broadway along Colonic Street.

• Redevelop the large building on the corner of Water Street and Ferry Street as a multiplex theatre.

• Create a buffer area between major transit corridors and the newly developed community. Specifically, a buffer area needs to be created along I-787, Broadway, and railroad.

Preferred Alternative
Alternative 6 is the most attractive and beneficial development strategy that we have explored. It combines improvements in the residential, commercial, industrial, and recreational character of the neighborhood, effectively creating a thriving successful integrated community where once vacant buildings stood.

The City of Albany may want to undertake zoning changes in this general area to foster the idea of rehabilitating and revitalizing this portion of North Albany. Currently the zoning is commercial and industrial which allows for the offices, gas stations, and warehouses that are already present in this study area. The city may want to use a special zoning designation to allow for, and encourage mixed-use development and utilize the area’s high visibility by the major highways, waterfront, and close proximity to State Government Offices. The mayor could also consider adding this area as a C-1 Zone, Neighborhood Commercial District Revitalization Program which he has already implemented on parts of Broadway heading west. This could potentially allow for some funding from the city in accordance with the C-1 program already in place. Property owners can receive funding for portions of façade treatment, as well as other exterior upgrades to the buildings.
Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG) also could serve as a funding source and potential implementation tool. This program provides funding for certain rehabilitation projects dealing with housing for low to middle-income households. The City of Albany also has an Industrial Development Agency that sometimes supplements the funding given by the state with funds and tax abatement programs. The projects that often receive this funding are redevelopment and rehabilitation of properties for residential and commercial uses.

Organization of property owners in the target area can enhance the outcome of the implementation strategy. By assembling a group of stakeholders, the rehabilitation/revitalization process has a series of checks and balances to make sure that the project is progressing in a cohesive manner to reach common goals.

Once an alternative is selected and funding is being sought, the mayor may want to appoint a redevelopment committee that is comprised of property owners, tenants, business people and a government liaison from the planning department. This committee would be responsible for the implementation strategies for the North end. This committee could make recommendations regarding project phasing, and land acquisition suggestions to the city council.
Figure 35: Partially vacant warehouse
Location: North Albany, New York
Source: Planning Studio 10/2002

Figure 36: Vacant warehouse
Location: North Albany, New York
Source: Planning Studio 10/2002
Figure 37: Partially vacant warehouse
Location: North Albany, New York
Source: Planning Studio 10/2002
## Community Assets-SWOT Analysis for North Albany

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strength</th>
<th>Weakness</th>
<th>Opportunity</th>
<th>Threats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Industrial Buildings</strong></td>
<td>Good exterior structural condition.</td>
<td>Poor maintenance has resulted in unknown interior condition.</td>
<td>Potential conversion to numerous residential uses.</td>
<td>Further deterioration can lead to public safety problems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Commercial Buildings</strong></td>
<td>Good exterior structural condition.</td>
<td>Lack on connectivity between services.</td>
<td>Increased activity from local residents.</td>
<td>Poor maintenance could lead to utilization of properties for unlawful/undesired activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Road &amp; Sidewalk Conditions</strong></td>
<td>Adequately maintained in many areas.</td>
<td>Completely lacking in some areas.</td>
<td>Can serve as a means of connectivity between North Albany &amp; surrounding communities.</td>
<td>Public Health issues associated with living under a highway.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other Infrastructure</strong></td>
<td>Existing lighting network and power lines</td>
<td>Inadequate street lighting and possible lack of piping in large warehouses.</td>
<td>Expansion of existing systems is easier than creation of new systems.</td>
<td>Increased infrastructure would increase the maintenance cost associated with the area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Green/Open Spaces</strong></td>
<td>None</td>
<td>City of Albany Dept of Water and Sewer use the obvious area for a debris dump.</td>
<td>Development and improvement of open lands is possible without demolition of existing structures.</td>
<td>Pollution, undesired rail activity, and a lack of public surveillance could be a deterrent to public use.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Transportation Linkages</strong></td>
<td>Regular Service on the outskirts from CDTA.</td>
<td>CDTA routes pass by the area, but do not go into it.</td>
<td>Expansion of existing CDTA network would be feasible if the rider ship existed.</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Waterfront Access</strong></td>
<td>Close proximity to Hudson River.</td>
<td>Interstate 787 acts as a barrier between the river and the city.</td>
<td>Provide pathway to the waterfront.</td>
<td>Children drowning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other Considerations</strong></td>
<td>Existing offices and businesses can help contribute to the critical mass needed for commercial expansion</td>
<td>Little incentive exists for workers to stay in area during lunch/after work; no residential activity in the immediate vicinity</td>
<td>Conversion of industrial warehouses into relatively low-rent housing could act as revitalization tool.</td>
<td>No guarantee of return on financial investment in the neighborhood.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Case Study - North Albany Commercial

Legend
- Parcel Boundary
- Case Study Parcels
- Surveyed Vacant

Overview Map
1 inch equals 228 feet
Small Case Studies

Mansion Neighborhood
Stacey Pilgrim • Sandra Jobson

South End
Brian A. Ross • Jason Todd Swaggart

Dana Avenue
Chris Kanz • Don Meltz

McPherson Terrace
Sreekumar Nampoothiri • Jesse Day

Grand Street
Meredith Smith • Jeremy Evans

North Swan Street
Susan Olsen • Brian Thomas

West Hill
Vatsal Bhatt • Sheila D. Keyes

Livingston Avenue
R. Martin Witt • Sherise Gilmore • Jaime O’Neill
Mansion Neighborhood

Background

In the heart of Albany’s Mansion neighborhood are two large warehouses that could be adaptively reused. The two buildings, located at the corner of Trinity Place and Arch Street, are large white elephant structures located in a predominantly single-family residential neighborhood. The two properties are zoned C-1, Neighborhood Commercial, which is a commercial district located adjacent to a residential area.

Approximately one block east of these structures is the main thoroughfare of South Pearl Street. This predominately commercial area serves Albany’s South End. To the south of the structures is one of the city’s public housing complexes and to the north and west is the Mansion Neighborhood consisting of one- and two-family dwellings. Also within the neighborhood are a large park and smaller commercial buildings, churches, and community gardens. By far, these two warehouses are the largest vacant structures in the neighborhood that provide the most potential for rehabilitation and reuse.

Each of these warehouse buildings is constructed of brick and is four stories tall with an exposed basement. These buildings appear to be structurally sound and the majority of the buildings’ elements are intact. Built at around the turn of the twentieth century, the buildings display the simple design style of many warehouses of that era including large industrial steel sash windows, simple brick lintels and sills, and few decorative elements.

127 Arch Street has simple arched brick lintels and decorative brick quoins on the corners of the building. This building’s windows are no longer intact, but they could easily be replaced with similar steel sash windows.

95 Trinity Place has much larger steel sash windows with the majority of the frames still intact. Some of the panes have been broken, but they could be easily repaired. This building has relatively few ornamental features and is much simpler in style than its counterpart at 127 Arch Street. Arched windows and some decorative keystones and lintels mark 95 Trinity Place.
Community Assets
Currently, this neighborhood is included in the city’s South End Revitalization program, which includes projects in the adjacent Pastures Neighborhood, South Pearl Street, and portions of Grand Street in the Mansion District. One of the key strategies is the rehabilitation of large unused or underutilized warehouses. Additional information about the South End Revitalization Project is available from the City of Albany’s website at www.albanyny.org.

Treatments
Alternative 1:
The first alternative is the No Build Alternative. This provides for only continued maintenance of the existing site as is. This alternative does not provide for any proposed improvements or reinvestments be made to the site.

Alternative 2:
The second alternative is The Warehouse Use Alternative. This provides for improvements to be made to the site consistent with the original use. This alternative would require the property and surrounding roadways be rehabilitated for modern day heavy warehouse use.

Alternative 3:
The third alternative is the Compact, Pedestrian Oriented Redevelopment Alternative. This proposes the conversion of the warehouse into a development scheme that fits well between the single-family neighborhood to the west and the high-density commercial streets to the east.

Preferred Alternative
The third alternative, the compact, pedestrian oriented redevelopment, would be the best option, which proposes multi-level, market-rate, owner occupied, loft style co-ops, with commercial space on the first floor. The proposed first floor uses would include a grocery store, shops, and a restaurant. Additional amenities would include widening sidewalks, providing street trees and bicycle parking, active storefronts, and improved streetscape. The condominium corporation (owners) would have land rights. The development would be designed as a transition between two different neighborhoods.
This alternative proposes a partnership between the City, the State of New York, and a private developer to construct and offer these loft style condos to State workers who might otherwise live in one of the surrounding suburbs. A financial incentive could be offered to State employees who decide to invest and commit to living in the condominium development for at least five years. Many would gain from such an approach besides for the obvious benefits offered to the State employees. These benefits include less strain on the transportation system because employees can walk to work, improved air quality with less commuters, less office parking needed, improved appearance and vitality of the City’s vacant properties, and an increase in the City’s tax revenue, to mention a few.
Figure 38: Vacant warehouse in the Mansion neighborhood
Location: 127 Archer Street
Source: Planning Studio 10/2002

Figure 39: Vacant warehouse in Mansion neighborhood
Location: 95 Trinity Place
Source: Planning Studio 10/2002
South End

Background
The case study area is located on South Pearl Street, between Alexander Street and Fourth Street in the South End neighborhood. This analysis will concentrate on several structures in the area. These structures are the commercial buildings located at 359, 363 and 373 and the mixed-use buildings at 367, 369, 375, 377, and 379. All the buildings in this case study are vacant. In addition, the buildings are depleted with poor foundations, poor facades and boarded up windows and doors (see database). In addition, vegetation has grown to overtake the buildings. The severe conditions of the buildings make it obvious that the buildings have gone through long stretches of vacancy. Very little money has been put into these structures in the last several years.

The St. John’s Anne’s Church and its parking lot surrounds these eight structures on one side while a gas station is one block south, and a Rite Aide is one block north. To the west are primarily residential areas; while to the east along Highway 787 are some residences and institutions.

In terms of the street condition the roads and sidewalks are worn down. Potholes, cracks, dirt, and salt all plague the pavement. Therefore, all motorists, cyclists, and pedestrians suffer from the poor pavement conditions. However, currently construction is being done in the area. Therefore, the street has some sealed off holes and is temporarily one way southbound.

Community Assets
The community has a plethora of opportunities. For one, the streets are still flooded with people even though there are many shortcomings from the streets and buildings. Throughout the day, many people from within the community, along with people from outside the community, are seen walking around the area. Part of this is due to some of the facilities around the community. The first is the St. John’s Anne’s church, which appears to be holding weekly services. In addition, there is a well-designed newly built Rite Aid. The building has some of the great features planners and urban designers strive for today – built to the street, street-facing windows, fits into the architectural rhythm, and easy access for the
pedestrians. Finally, there are many institutions throughout the neighborhood, which provide services ranging from childcare to substance abuse to medical assistance.

An additional asset for the area is its close proximity to Downtown Albany, Lincoln Park, and the Waterfront. Yet what is even more compelling as a tool for revitalization is the topography. The topography is such that South Pearl Street is downhill from most of the residential units. This makes traffic patterns flow down to the street, thus creating more activity on South Pearl Street than on any other neighboring street. It clearly is an access arterial, yet it isn't wide and is unfriendly to cross.

These are primarily the reason why we picked this site. However, what made us realize that this site has true potential is the fact that South Pearl Street is already undergoing substantial investment. Under the South End Revitalization Strategy the City has already begun reconstruction of Pearl Street between Madison and McCarty Avenue. This $12 million federal, state and local investment will provide new road, pedestrian oriented sidewalks, street lighting, landscaping, and crosswalks for South Pearl Street, as well as replacing underground sewer and storm sewers. Hopefully this is the start of something special for this neighborhood.

Despite the above revitalization efforts, very few realize the potential viability of this neighborhood; and as mentioned above, their neglect has lead to a condition in which the neighborhood is commonly known as “run-down”.

The proposed eight buildings constitute a portion of the block within the boundaries of the South End Revitalization Strategy. It is important to reiterate that the authors are aware of the objectives and strategies of the South End Revitalization Strategy. The following treatments and recommendations are an effort to foster the revitalization of the South End, by making it a better place to live, work and visit.
The South End Revitalization Strategy has developed several key strategies, which are as follows:

- Demolish high-rise public housing and replace with low-rise housing and other uses.
- Reuse abandoned warehouse and row houses for housing, commercial buildings or open space.
- Establish a residential parking permit system.
- Improve access to the Hudson River from the South End neighborhood.
- Develop a major historic destination (such as a museum).
- Improve South Pearl Street and Morton Avenue with streetscape, parking, and infill housing.
- Add owner occupied housing in stable residential areas around Second Avenue, Delaware Avenue, and Krank Park.
- Add daycare and youth programs.

The following treatments and recommendations are smaller in scope than the South End Revitalization Strategy, since they only pertain to a few lots. Although the lots were at one time zoned for light industrial, and commercial activities they are presently zoned for commercial and mixed use (commercial/residential).

**Treatments**

**Alternative 1:**

The first alternative would be to make no investment in the area. If nothing were to happen to this portion of South Pearl Street, then the buildings would continue to deteriorate compounding their threat to the public welfare and safety, as well as decreasing the overall aesthetic appeal of the surrounding area. If left in its present state the buildings would also diminish the efforts of the South End Revitalization Strategy, which began in 1999.

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7 “South End Revitalization Project Update,” available from [http://www.albanyny.org/pdfs/south%20end%205-3-02.pdf](http://www.albanyny.org/pdfs/south%20end%205-3-02.pdf); Internet; accessed April 30, 2002.
Alternative 2:
The second alternative calls for demolition. Because of the buildings present conditions, rehab will most likely cost more than any developer is willing to incur, so the first proposal is to demolish all structures on the block strip. If the city is willing to pay for the demolition and removal of debris and trash on the lots, then the lots will be more attractive to developers who will be relieved of the removal burden, and will be able to concentrate on development.

Preferred Alternative
The city of Albany presently has a program, which is well suited for this block strip. The C-1 Neighborhood Revitalization Program is a multi-agency effort between the City, the Central Business Improvement District, and other neighborhood groups to provide public improvements, encourage owner investment in commercial properties, and to create jobs. City agencies involved include General Services, Economic Development, Planning, Housing and Community Development, Police, and Code Enforcement.

C-1 is a zoning designation, which describes a commercial neighborhood. Adjacent to residential areas, C-1 neighborhood characteristics include retail stores, offices, churches, restaurants, taverns, banks, and theaters. This leads to the second proposal, which is to incorporate the eight buildings into the city’s C-1 Neighborhood Revitalization Program with one minor deviation, which is to keep present zoning in order to allow mixed use.

Site Recommendations
- Demolish the existing infrastructure
- City should finance demolition and cleanup
- Implement well designed mixed use buildings
- Efforts should be financed by the C-1 Neighborhood Revitalization Program
- Design Code: Designed to enhance the local neighborhood character
- Maintenance of the current improvements being done
- Redevelopment should be funded by private developers
- Mixed income housing (affordable housing mixed with high end housing)
Figure 40: Residential structure in the South End
Location: 369 South Pearl Street
Source: Planning Studio 10/2002

Figure 41: Vacant structures on South Pearl Street
Location: Albany, New York
Source: Planning Studio 10/2002
Dana Avenue

Background
The study area consists of the length of Dana Avenue lying between New Scotland Avenue to the west and Knox Street to the east. This block consists primarily of two- to four-family homes built between 1900 and 1930, a time when much of southwestern Albany was urbanizing. Typical of their times, many of the buildings have a zero lot line or a narrow alley leading to a small yard in the rear. The simple facades are characteristic of homes that were built for people of modest means.

Census 2000 data indicates the neighborhood remains true to its modest roots. The study area falls within census tract 21-block group 1, a group of similar low-income residential streets. The median household income of $22,841 for the block group is nearly half the citywide median of $40,772. The neighborhood's median gross rent of $570 is identical to the citywide median. Eighty four percent of the residents live in rented units. The area has not experienced a decline in census population since 1990.

The 46 parcels fronting the Dana Avenue block are zoned 1- and 2- family residential (R-2A). Most of the buildings exhibit signs of haphazard maintenance provided by absentee landlords or owner occupants who approach their buildings as a short-term residence and a long-term source of income. At times a small amount of work may be performed to prepare a building for sale or to attract more reliable tenants. In the absence of routine maintenance, some of the buildings will become dilapidated, and possibly reach a point where repairs are not feasible.

Seven of the 46 parcels facing the block contain vacant structures and other buildings are in danger of becoming vacant due to neglect. Some of the vacant buildings are under repair and will likely be sold or occupied in the near future. Other vacant structures are unusable without expensive repairs or replacement with infill housing. Some structures have been demolished, exposing the unfinished sidewalls of adjacent buildings. Three empty lots contribute to the aura of decline that permeates the street.
The block of Dana Avenue is showing the signs of neglect typical of many of Albany's low-income neighborhoods. Most of the buildings are in a marginal state of disrepair that place them in jeopardy of becoming abandoned. The streets and sidewalks receive minimum maintenance and none of the street ornamentation that characterizes other desirable residential neighborhoods of Albany is present. The block is devoid of trees, grass or vegetation of any kind.

**Community Assets**

The study area provides low-income housing opportunities in a neighborhood that does not have the same degree of socioeconomic isolation as other large low-income neighborhoods.

Although the block itself is showing signs of neglect, adjacent commercial streets are doing well. Numerous small businesses serve community needs along New Scotland Avenue. The popular Quintessence Diner attracts patrons into the area. A busy Stewart’s convenience store occupies a new infill building. Signs of investment indicate that the business community is committed to the neighborhood.

Large employers in the vicinity such as Albany Medical Center, NYS Department of Health and several teaching institutions ensure a mix of people are ever present along the commercial streets and provide low income residents access to employment without transportation barriers. Proximity to Washington Park and Lark Street further enhance the livability of Dana Avenue.

Because of its advantageous location, the street will continue to have a demand for housing. While the general condition of housing remains low, landowners have demonstrated a willingness to invest in the street. Certain properties are receiving significant investment in repair and maintenance.

The investments of a few individual property owners are not enough to disrupt the cycle of decline in the housing stock. The block will remain on the edge of social and economic collapse until investment momentum takes hold and elevates the housing stock from the brink of abandonment. The threat of further abandonment within the aging housing stock and the aura of neglect that dominates the streetscape inhibits property owner investment.
Treatments

Alternative 1:
The first alternative is to continue the status quo. Due to its attractive location, the study area has a good chance of becoming revitalized if the demand for urban housing continues to expand outward from Center Square. Further decline in the short term could stymie revitalization in the future.

Alternative 2:
The second alternative involves public investment in the infrastructure in the area. This could be done by building on the strength of pockets of neighborhood revitalization in the vicinity of the Avenue. Persuade the City that the blocks are a worthwhile recipient of City resources for street maintenance and beautification. A tree-planting program would improve the appeal of the street.

Neighborhood green spaces - Empty lots are unlikely to be filled with new buildings for some time. In the meantime, the many small children living on the block frequently use them. The City should obtain at least one of these parcels to create a neighborhood space. A simple grass planting would provide an outdoor area for residents and a low fence would fill the void in the streetscape.

Alternative 3:
The third alternative necessitates community involvement and re-investment in the area through landowner cooperation. The formation of a cooperative organization of landlords is the first step to this proposal. This organization could then advocate neighborhood interests, and develop strategies for preventing buildings from becoming uninhabitable.

Alternative 4:
The fourth alternative involves two of the existing buildings on the block that have declined past the point of repair. These buildings adjoining New Scotland Avenue merit special treatment to avoid the creation of another empty lot. They have been foreclosed on and are now in the possession of a bank. With rezoning to commercial use, the properties have a chance of being replaced with infill if a funding mechanism is found to cover the cost of demolition.
Preferred Alternative

If regional economic growth coupled with the emerging trend of young professionals returning to the city stimulates an increased demand for urban housing, Dana Avenue will likely become a housing choice for lower income residents displaced from Central Square due to rising rents. The increased interest in Dana Avenue would drive public and private investment in the street's revitalization.

Absent a significant shift in demand for urban housing, Dana Avenue will continue to provide low-income housing opportunities. The street’s advantageous location will avoid the worst consequences of urban depopulation and therefore the risk of directing public investment into a neighborhood that cannot be saved without a reversal of broad demographic trends is limited. The street is an opportunity to elevate the housing conditions of Albany's low-income residents and provide more low-income housing opportunities in a neighborhood with less socioeconomic isolation.
Figure 42: One of two adjacent structures that are beyond repair
Location: 99 Dana Avenue
Source: Planning Studio 10/2002

Figure 43: The restored Quintessence Diner exemplifies the resiliency of the neighborhood.
Location: Albany, New York
Source: Planning Studio 10/2002
Figure 44: A detached house that is being prepared for occupancy.  
Location: 73 Dana Avenue  
Source: Planning Studio 10/2002

Figure 45: A convenient store occupies a new infill building.  
Location: Albany, New York  
Source: Planning Studio 10/2002
McPherson Terrace

Background

McPherson Terrace is a small section of Clinton Avenue between Judson Street and North Lake Street. It starts on the corner of Judson Street and extends to 505 Clinton Avenue. The Terrace takes on a different feel as you move on Clinton Avenue. The buildings are narrow and tightly packed with ornamental roof gables and accentuated bay windows.

The building condition varies along McPherson Terrace. There are four vacant structures in the terrace. They are:

- 2 Judson Street
- 3 McPherson Terrace
- 4 McPherson Terrace
- 505 Clinton Avenue

2 Judson Street is on the corner of Judson and Clinton, 505 Clinton is on the other end of the Terrace, with the other two falling in between.

2 Judson Street is a large two story abandoned building. It is structurally sound and needs only a small expenditure in terms of repair.

3 and 4 McPherson Terrace are narrower but in the same genre as 2 Judson Street in terms of repair status.

505 Clinton Avenue is also structurally sound but needs more repair work. This is due to the fact that the building was in a fire and the windows and door are broken.

The zoning in this section is R-2B, which signifies a one- or two-family residence. The housing stock between the east and west end of McPherson Terrace is in very good condition. This is valuable for the marketing capabilities of the study area.

The infrastructure of roads, sidewalks, and streetlights are in good condition. The neighboring blocks however are fairly blighted and will need targeted rehabilitation.
Community Assets
Because this study area contains a nice core of well-built and maintained structures, the benefits of fixing the periphery structures will only increase the speed at which neighboring property values will increase and nearby blight will be suppressed.

This residential area works well as it is, and no change of zoning is recommended. Many of the houses are owner occupied and the quality of the housing reflects their commitment to maintenance.

The Capital District Transportation Authority (CDTA) provides public transportation for residents in the area. The closest bus line is on Route 8, which runs from Arbor Hill to Mt. Hope via downtown Albany. The nearest bus stop is two blocks away to the west on the intersection with Quail Street.

Treatments
Alternative 1:
The first alternative of no investment in the area would result in continued decline. This would lead to an increase in the number of structures that need to be demolished.

Alternative 2:
The second alternative is to help the owners to redevelop the property. Inquire and assist the current owners of the two blighted parcels to assess and plan for revitalizing the buildings. The Historic Albany Foundation or the Neighborhood Association should talk to the owners and encourage them to develop the property. This would mean making them aware of the possible financial aids from city, state and federal authorities, as well as educating them about the need for revitalization. An emphasis should be placed on creating a partnership to ensure their participation with the neighborhood association.

Alternative 3:
The third alternative puts the onus on the municipality to force owners to redevelop the property. One possibility is to change the tax structure to land-value taxation. This would encourage the owners of parcels to fix up their buildings without getting penalized by higher
tax assessments. Enforce and change the building codes to compel owners to fixing their buildings so as not to bring down neighboring parcel values.

Alternative 4:
The fourth alternative calls for community control. The neighborhood association should acquire the property from the owners and redevelop them. Apply for Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and other funding resources via the neighborhood association. Purchase the blighted buildings and perform building revitalization and street reconstruction on bordering and adjacent blocks to encourage rehabilitation in neighboring areas.8

Preferred Alternative
We recommend that alternative four be pursued. It would provide the best results, but will also require the most work. There is significant HUD money available through the CDGB program. We recommend that the neighborhood association apply for this grant. To implement the fourth alternative the following steps should be pursued:

1. Approach owner for cooperation.

2. Prepare Consolidated Plan, which includes:
   a. Background of the project
   b. Framework for a planning process
   c. 3-5 year action plan
   d. Application form.

3. Acquire buildings and premises and rehabilitate.

4. Install planting strip, curb bulb-outs and ornamental streetlights.

5. Put the property on the market for sale.

8 http://www.hud.gov/progdesc/cdbgent.cfm
Figure 46: Building is in good condition, and worth the investment  
Location: 505 Clinton Avenue  
Source: Planning Studio 10/2002

Figure 47: Stately mansions  
Location: 2 Judson Street  
Source: Planning Studio 10/2002
Figure 48: Sound building next to a well kept occupied structure
Location: 3 McPherson Terrace
Source: Planning Studio 10/2002

Figure 49: Must be salvaged to prevent spread affects
Location: 4 McPherson Terrace
Source: Planning Studio 10/2002
Grand Street

Background
Grand Street is within the Mansion Historical District, which was placed on the National Register in 1982. The district is also part of Albany’s South End Neighborhood. The district is bound by Park Avenue, Eagle, and Hamilton Streets. The architecture in the district features Greek Revival, Italianate and Federal Style buildings. The neighborhood derives its name from the wealthy landowners who built mansion style housing here until the 1830’s when the growth of downtown Albany caused landowners to subdivide their land. The majority of the houses on Grand Street were built from the 1850’s-1870’s. Grand Street is primarily a residential street with only a few businesses. The street is two-way with on street parking on both sides. Mature trees line the street but there are gaps present where trees have been removed. Most of the buildings in the study area are in average to good condition although there are several vacant and deteriorated structures. The street and sidewalks are in average condition.

Community Assets
Adjacent to the study area is Madison Avenue where several businesses are located. Albany’s bus station is within walking distance from the neighborhood. Grand Street has a unique location near downtown Albany and the Empire State Plaza. It is a relatively stable area of the South End, and is close to Madison Avenue, which is active and busy. In 2001, the South End Revitalization Plan was completed in an effort to develop strategies for redevelopment of the South End including buildings on Grand Street.

Building on this activity, the proposed treatment entail investment in St. Anthony’s Church and 106 Grand Street.

Treatments
St. Anthony’s Church
Alternative 1:
The first alternative, no investment, would mean this valuable community asset will remain underutilized. Long-term vacancy will lead to eventual decay and destruction.
Alternative 2:
The second alternative is to increase activity at the church. In keeping with the South End Revitalization Plan, reopen the Church as a community center with youth programs and day care.

Alternative 3:
The third alternative could develop the Church as a historic destination starting point. The Church would in effect be Albany’s Cultural Museum, and a starting point for a Mansions Historic District walking tour.

Alternative 4:
The fourth alternative calls for the Church to be developed into a community theatre.

106 Grand Street

Alternative 1:
The first alternative of no investment in the area. Doing nothing means the building will remain vacant and boarded.

Alternative 2:
The second alternative calls for additional investment by the colleges and universities in the area. It is proposed that local colleges be pursued to purchase the townhouse for graduate student off campus housing or other activity.

Alternative 3:
The third alternative is to retrofit the building with small offices in the first floor and basement levels of the house.

Alternative 4:
The fourth alternative is to re-sell the structure as a single-family home.

Preferred Alternative

St. Anthony’s Church

Work with the community leaders, city officials, non-profits, and residents who were instrumental in the South End Revitalization Plan to develop Alternative 2. This alternative is attractive because the church is one of the buildings to be renovated as part of the South
End Revitalization Plan *Grand Street Project* that will rehabilitate 11 vacant buildings. The project was awarded competitive state funding and tax credits to provide high quality rental housing. Community Builders Inc is currently constructing the project.

If additional funds are needed to create our proposed community center and day care, they can be sought from several sources such as: the National Endowment for Humanities, NYS Council of the Arts, and The Albany Institute of History & Art, the Institute of Museum & Library Services.

**106 Grand Street**
Implementation of Alternative 3 is recommended. Because Community Builders, Inc. is the developer for other projects in the area, it is suggested that they construct first floor and basement level offices. By creating offices, daytime activity will increase and bring more people into the neighborhood.

The City of Albany efforts to establish a relationship with the Albany Housing Authority, Albany Economic Development Authority, and the South End Action Committee should be continued.
Figure 50: Three story vacant residential structure, in average-fair condition. The building features stone siding and a slate roof. Built in 1860.
Location: 106 Grand Street
Source: Planning Studio 10/2002

Figure 51: Former St. Anthony’s Church
Location: 68 Grand Street
Source: Planning Studio 10/2002
North Swan Street

Background

This case study includes St. Joseph’s church and school as well as fifteen vacant buildings on both the East and West sides of North Swan Street. Beginning with St. Joseph’s school at the corner of Second St. and N. Swan, the area stretches to the corner of N. Swan and Livingston, with 36 N. Swan as the last vacancy.

Neighborhood services are needed to insure success and long-term change. To revitalize this area, vital neighborhood functions need to be reintroduced into the district, which can act as anchors for community building. An active multi-denominational, community-oriented church, vibrant magnet, arts high school, and the creation of an arts/neighborhood, mixed-use district will further generate interest and attract new residents/homeowners. This process in turn will aid in the reoccupation of many vacant residential units within the area.

Based on a review of available records, most of the structures within the case study area of North Swan Street between Second Avenue and Livingston were constructed in the 1860’s. The buildings are largely comprised of brick and masonry structures, many of which have exquisite details, particularly in the roof eaves, cornices, and details around the windows as well as the entry doors.

Though most of the ground floor space is vacant, it appears from the facades of the various structures that this area was historically a mixed-use neighborhood. The ground floors appear to have been used for retail and commercial operations, while the upper floors served multi-family residential purposes. The remaining businesses appear to contribute to the neighborhood commercially and include a barbershop and a small grocery store.

Traffic along this section of North Swan Street, both vehicular and pedestrian, is generally moderate to heavy. For the most part parking is accommodated on both sides of the street.

From the vacant parcels, it is obvious that demolition has occurred on selected sites. Many of these lots are overgrown and underutilized.
Community Assets
The architecture of the buildings within the study area and the historic mixed-use nature of the area lend itself well to a revitalization of mixed uses. The existing vacant and abandoned buildings are still intact and could be easily and quickly renovated with the proper amount of concern and funding. The buildings offer a combination of retail, commercial, office, and residential space. Investment in retail and residential could potentially be an impetus for development of commercial and office space and vice-versa.

Vacant Structures along N. Swan, between Second Street and Livingston Avenue were once in jeopardy as they were almost leveled for new low-income housing. Vocal residents who were opposed to this action, petitioned against it, thus saving a bit of Albany history.

Located at 56 Second St. at the corner of N. Swan and within the Ten Broeck Historic District, St. Joseph’s School was also in danger of demolition not too long ago. Now vacant, this structure was used as a school for most of its life and just a few years ago housed a boxing center. It is still owned by St. Joseph’s Church, Albany.

Treatments
St. Joseph’s School
Alternative 1:
This alternative calls for the re-use of the building to spur economic development. Development of the retail, commercial, and office uses will largely be dependent upon the adaptive reuse of the former school located at the corner of North Swan and Second Avenue. If the school were to become an activity generator once again, the study area would likely experience increased interest for retail, commercial, and office use again. With an appropriate amount of such available services, vacancies within the residential space along North Swan and throughout the surrounding neighborhood would likely decrease and the homes and apartments would be upgraded.

Alternative 2:
The second alternative is to redevelop St. Joseph’s school into housing. The school could be remodeled as condominium units.
Alternative 3:
The third alternative for St. Joseph’s school is as repository for historic artifacts of Albany. The building would need to be renovated in order to maintain specific temperatures with humidity control. Also as with Peebles Island, round-the-clock security may be needed – in which case the officers may become the “beat cops” for the street. Although a live-where-you-work incentive is preferred, with parking for the employees.

Alternative 4:
The fourth alternative for St. Joseph’s school is to update it and re-open it as a high-tech, Visual and Performing Arts Magnet High School. This is in line with current community opinion for creating an arts district along N. Swan as now seen with the mural project. As an anchor and community builder, the school would give existing community members a vehicle of expression, hope, and opportunity and would act as an incubator for attracting new homeowners to the neighborhood. A live-where-you work incentive would further induce homeownership. In rehabiliting to meet the standards of the American Disabilities Act, elevators could be installed to stop at the main floors and ramps could be used to adjust for movement to the semi-elevated levels along the main floors.

Preferred Alternative
Clearly, if any investment, public or private is to make a difference within the North Swan Street study area, successful adaptive reuse of the former school must be a priority. Such reuse will make this area a destination point for residents throughout the neighborhood and the surrounding region. In addition, the reuse will be a generator of activity upon which other uses like retail neighborhood commercial and residential can build and grow.

Once a reuse strategy is implemented for the former school, economic development assistance must be provided from the City of Albany to owners of property within the area. Such assistance may be in the form of low-interest loans or grants for new business startup or expansion of existing businesses. These grants or loans could be funded through the City’s Community Development Block Grant, CDBG, and entitlement as the Arbor Hill neighborhood is a low to moderate-income area and any job creation could be targeted at low and moderate-income residents. Additionally, the City should consider a facade improvement program whereby property owners are provided incentives in the form of
grants or forgivable loans to make improvements to the commercial portion of their property. Such a program would probably require matching funds from the owner, and could be funded with CDBG funds as well.

The City should also consider improvements to the public right-of-way in support of the neighborhood revitalization efforts. As a commercial district for the neighborhood, improvements like better paving and new sidewalks, complete with landscaping would induce further private investment. If possible, the City should consider expanding those improvements and add decorative luminaries, which will provide better street lighting as well as benches, trash receptacles, and some differentiation in paving standards at crosswalks – as is currently the case in Quackenbush Square and the Theater District.

Finally the vacant lots that remain after demolition result in a gap-toothed building fabric within the study area. If not already in place, appropriate property tax incentives to encourage in-fill development (with matching materials / design features) should be instituted among all taxing jurisdictions. For instance, the State of New York recently established a property tax abatement program that provides 5-year abatement for up to 50% of the property taxes paid by first-time homebuyers on newly constructed homes. This incentive can be powerful in urban areas with high tax rates.

**Vacant structures**

The following includes more specific information and ideas for reuse of several of the vacancies in the case study area. The buildings included are representative of the rest of North Swan Street.

The structure in figure 52 was built in 1862. A classic mixed-use structure, this building has the capacity for two residencies on the second and third floors and commercial use on the bottom floor. Next to an occupied building to the north and near St. Joseph’s school and Bethany Baptist Church around the corner on Second St., its secured location is one of its many strengths. In line with an artist district and near the Visual and Performing Arts Magnet, this would be a prime location for a music store with sheet music, instruments, and electronic equipment.
The structure at the corner of N. Swan and Ten Broeck Place, was built in 1862. As with most of the buildings on this street, this structure lends itself to commercial on the bottom floor and residential on the second and third floors. Appropriate commercial uses might include community or art district services such as a small restaurant, collectibles shop, florist, comic book shop, used bookstore, pharmacy, or community healthcare clinic with basic services.

The structure in figure 59 has several possibilities. These include reclaiming the historic exterior by stripping the existing siding and rehabbing at least the facade. As the building stands now, it has the potential for two residencies. This setup could be maintained or the bottom apartment could be reused as commercial. Commercial uses might include any of the following: coffee shop, art gallery, bakery, or deli.

Next to the previous building, 48 N. Swan (figure 55) also has great potential. As with the previous building, it is suggested to strip down the current siding to reclaim the historic facade. This building has the capacity for a residential unit on the top floor and a commercial use on the bottom. To serve the needs of community residents, the bottom floor of this building could be used as a video rental with a wide variety of offerings from up-to-date and older films to art and foreign films.

Although the buildings 44 N. Swan and 46 N. Swan have two different addresses, the construction suggests a single building. As of late November 2002, they were up for auction. This historic property was built 1862 and is set mid-block between Second Street and Ten Broeck Place. Unsure of its past usage, we suggest residential uses for the second floor and a community daycare for the entire first floor in both buildings (joining the first floors with a doorway). This daycare could be a function of the multi-denominational congregation at St. Joseph’s church and would provide a much needed community service.

The stylish building at 36 N. Swan St. was formerly a bar. This would make a great jazz/blues club. However with late night music, residential uses on the top two floors may be less feasible. In this case music and art studios for the top floors or office space (such that daytime and nighttime uses do not interfere) would be ideal.
Yet another irreplaceable building is shown in figure 54. The property was formerly a wine/liquor store with residential up on the top two floors. Some suggestions for the commercial space include a diner, computer repair store, stray dog/cat rescue and adoption service, newspaper/magazine/card store, or beauty parlor.

Although not located on North Swan, the garage in figure 57 is just around the corner off Swan, diagonally across from St. Joseph’s school. This property is owned by the County of Albany. A suggestion from Helen Black is that this could be a bicycle repair and apprentice shop.
Figure 52: A classic mixed-use structure built in 1862
Location: 56 North Swan Street
Source: Planning Studio 10/2002

Figure 53: Community artwork
Location: Albany, New York
Source: Planning Studio 10/2002
Figure 54: An irreplaceable structure
Location: 41 North Swan Street
Source: Planning Studio 10/2002

Figure 55: Building has great potential
Location: 48 North Swan Street
Source: Planning Studio 10/2002
Figure 56: A very stylish building
Location: 36 North Swan Street
Source: Planning Studio 10/2002

Figure 57: This garage has unexplored potential
Location: 51 Second Street
Source: Planning Studio 10/2002
Figure 58: An appropriate commercial vendor with vision is needed.
Location: 42 North Swan Street
Source: Planning Studio 10/2002

Figure 59: This building has several possibilities.
Location: 50 North Swan Street
Source: Planning Studio 10/2002
West Hill

Background
This case study covers a block of Sheridan Street between Robin Street and Lexington Avenue in the West Hill neighborhood of Albany. The primary concern of this study area is the region immediately surrounding the Our Lady of Angels School site, a parcel that spans Sherman and Sheridan Streets (see figure 60). The address of the school is 145 Sherman Street but the back of the current school building opens onto Sheridan Street. The three-story school building and grounds are vacant and four of the 12 buildings on that side of the block are also vacant: 378, 386, 412 and 436 Sheridan Avenue. The area’s zoning designation is R2, which is one- and two-family residential.

The Our Lady of Angels Convent School building was built in 1916 and used as a Catholic school until 1986. After 1986, the building was leased by the Albany City School District to house the Harriet Gibbons High School, which educates students with behavioral problems. In 2002, Harriet Gibbons was relocated and the school building closed. It is currently scheduled for demolition.

Down the block from the school property is a large concrete parking lot, flanked by two boarded up houses. There is some limited commercial activity on the street facing the school, although this appears to be more garaging or small warehouse activity with no actual storefronts. The infrastructure in this area is in need of improvements; roads are predominantly cracked and potholed; sidewalks are narrow; and the streetlights are distantly located and not all currently working. This block of Sheridan is relatively quiet and traffic generally moves slowly.

Community Assets
This West Hill neighborhood contains a variety of business activities and services including churches, schools, health facilities and a Head Start program building. Christian Memorial Church activities enliven the area a couple of days a week. Additionally, West Hill is particularly walkable and has an enjoyable, historic character. The short walk to businesses on Clinton, Central, and Lexington Avenues provides the foundation for a mixed-use
community in the area. Although not a busy street, this block of Sheridan is well used. It benefits from its location and proximity to area businesses and services.

Although one-third of the residential buildings on the school building side of Sheridan are vacant, there is some indication of pride in the area. Investment in area properties, according to the City of Albany Department of Development and Planning 2001 building permit data, included some exterior improvements to properties as well as one building that underwent some substantial internal renovations. This building is associated with the Christian Memorial Church and is mainly used for the church-related activities. The non-residential buildings across the street from the school property are all well kept, there is little graffiti, and the vacant lots have been relatively free of debris during site visits.

**TREATMENTS**

**Alternative 1:**
The first alternative involves the re-use of the historic structure. The current historic building should be retrofitted to some other use. Additional area improvements are recommended.

The School District recently purchased the building from the Albany Diocese and plans to demolish it, according to School Board Officials. The School District has already invested $3.7 million into the property. Construction of the elementary school was to begin this fall with an anticipated opening date of September 2004, but the Our Lady of Angels school building still stands. It is supposed to be replaced by a new school building that will educate 450 K-5 students from the Philip Schuyler Elementary School.

**Alternative 2:**
The second alternative involves the construction of new school. The new school building should be placed on the parcel to allow for the best use of the space for the children attending the school and the families in the neighborhood. It should be a low-level building, no more than three-stories, to fit the neighborhood style and be of human scale. The school should be accessible from a number of directions, as the current building is and should be surrounded by appropriate green space. Playgrounds and tot lots or playing fields should be safe for the schoolchildren but also open to the public. These areas should be well lit,
out in the open, but should be comfortable and park-like. The open space around the new school could provide an area for the community to gather. If the construction of the new school fits the neighborhood design, it could become a landmark and focal point that fosters a greater sense of community.

**Alternative 3:**
The third alternative involves the school as an impetus for community development. A new school in this space will undoubtedly have an impact on the block, but the block will also have an impact on the children and families associated with the school. The structures currently neighboring the new school are of concern. The vacant housing should be revitalized, and possibly rezoned, to allow after school childcare options. The City of Albany and the school district have an opportunity to create a program that can aid in training for and support appropriate after-school programs and childcare. The school could be a resource for people who agree to move into the neighborhood and provide certified care. These people could receive assistance in purchasing and remodeling the homes, as well as a tax break on the properties. This could be done in conjunction with a welfare-to-work program.

Additionally, the businesses and non-residential uses occupying parcels across the street from the school should be encouraged to be "eyes on the street" during school hours. Financial support for building renovations that would put in front windows on these buildings combined with encouraging extended hours of operation would create an atmosphere for more neighborhood activity, especially during morning school arrival time. Changes could be made to the zoning of the area to allow for additional small business development as well. Finally, additional neighborhood design features could have an impact on the feel of the neighborhood, including more street lighting, better crosswalks, and a requirement to better screen the large, mostly empty parking area down the street towards Robin Street. A row of trees in the lot on the side facing Sheridan would lend to the uniqueness of the block. These treatments in combination would provide for a more comfortable, safe environment for grammar school children and residents of Sheridan Street.
Alternative 4:
The fourth alternative involves re-using the school, a historic structure, as a community center. As the School Board has yet to demolish Our Lady of Angles school building, and as budgets throughout New York State will continue to be tight in light of events on September 11, 2001 and considering the turbulent upstate economy, options should also be sought to reuse the current school building. The site is appropriate for the education of older children, as it has been put to this use until the recent relocation of the Harriet Gibbons High School. It could be opened as an educational facility again, most likely with minor adjustments, catering to pregnant and school-aged parents. A program that provides the proper encouragement, education, and support of teen parents will only benefit Albany in the future. School-age parents may be required to do some volunteer work in the school or in the community as a part of the curriculum. Facilities for infant and childcare could be set up in the school building and places in these facilities not filled by children whose parents attend the school could be opened to the community as a source of income for the program. Parenting classes as well as household and life management classes could be offered, again with the possibility of opening slots not filled by teen parents to others in need of bettering their skills. The current school grounds are more than adequate for the construction of tot lots. Additionally, the vacant residential structures flanking school grounds could be renovated to provide housing for teen parents in need of homes or homes close to the school.

Preferred Alternative
Our Lady of Angles Convent School building is an attractive historic structure that currently fits well with the neighborhood. It was very recently abandoned as an educational facility by the Albany City School District and is not in a terrible state of disrepair, yet. The building undoubtedly requires some renovations but the cost of required changes cannot equal that of demolition and replacement. The demolition and construction of a new facility on the site is already behind schedule and this building can be put to use, quite possibly as a place where teens who would normally drop out of school can receive the education they need to be good citizens, employees and parents.
The authors recommend maintaining the parcels identity as an institutional use, making some minor design changes to the street and encouraging owners of neighboring non-residential structures to create an opportunity for more activity and interaction on the street by opening their building fronts to the street. Moreover, this block specifically, and the neighborhood in general, provide for the unique opportunity for the placement of new in-home childcare facilities that could link to after-school programs if Albany constructs a new grammar school on the site. The facilitation of appropriate before and after-school childcare in such close proximity to the school and potential places of work in the commercial districts in the area could benefit those living in the neighborhood and potentially attract others to the immediate area.
Figure 60: Our Lady of Angels Convent School
Location: 145 Sherman Street
Source: Planning Studio 10/2002

Figure 61: Vacant building in West Hill
Location: 436 Sheridan Street
Source: Planning Studio 10/2002

Figure 62: Vacant building in West Hill
Location: 412 Sheridan Street
Source: Planning Studio 10/2002
Livingston Avenue

Background

This case study area includes the portion of Arbor Hill bordered by N. Swan Street, Lark Street, Livingston Avenue, and Third Street. The building fabric in the study area consists of both brick and wood frame structures. The housing type is largely single-family detached, which has been newly constructed and it is in very good condition. There is also a small portion of housing that is adjoined row houses. This is also in good condition.

The four types of housing in the area include:

- Maintained 19th Century Housing
- Deteriorated 19th Century Housing
- Deteriorated Housing from the Early 20th Century
- Newer (Post 1970) Maintained Housing

Figure 68 is an example of 19th century housing in our study area that is still maintained and utilized today.

The two houses shown in Figure 63 and 64 on Third Street were built in 1927 and 1900. The structure on Figure 63 is surrounded by a vacant home (19th century) on either side, while the house on Figure 64 has occupied homes built in 1986 to the west (left in picture), and a similar vacant home to the east.

Each of these homes was built in 1986, and is located up the street from some of the Vacant Housing built in the early 20th Century. There are two somewhat distinct styles of home, the main difference between the two being the presence or lack of a garage. In the photo on the right, the parking in the foreground is for the New Covenant Charter School, which will be discussed later.

In our case study, many of the inhabited homes are recently constructed structures. Of the 165 tax parcels within our case study area, 40 homes have been built in the last 30 years. Since there are 46 lots currently without structures, this means that over 1/3 of the current
homes have been built since 1974. Unfortunately, the remaining 2/3 of the homes and businesses have fallen into disrepair, and so there is a striking contrast between the two sides of a given street, a fact which will be illustrated in the following photos.

Some of the homes on Livingston Avenue, between Lark Street and North Swan Avenue have been built in the past 30 years, while others in 19th century.

**Community Assets**

There are a number of community assets making this study area appealing. They include:

- The New Covenant Charter School
- The Arbor Hill Church of God in Christ.
- The Third Street Community Garden
- The Arbor Hill Community Center, Inc.

Located on the southeast corner of Third Street and Lark Street, the New Covenant Charter School is an aesthetically pleasing building and could act as a community focal point.

The Arbor Hill Church of God in Christ is located on Lark Street between Livingston Ave. and Third Street.

The Third Street Community Garden is flanked on the left by a vacant lot, and on the right by an inhabited two-story home. It is open to members of the community as part of the City of Albany Community Gardens Program.

Although the Arbor Hill Community Center, Inc. is not within the boundaries of this study area, it is nevertheless an asset to the people who live in the area. The services provided include an after-school program for children, an evening program for local teens, and an emergency food pantry. It is located across the street from the New Covenant Charter School.

This neighborhood is unique for a variety of reasons. There has recently been some capital investment in a new school on the corner of Lark Street and Third Street. There could be a potential population interested in living near where they send their children to school. This being the case the vacant houses in the area may become assets to meet this new demand.
This neighborhood has a large community garden, which is fenced in, and displays a large City of Albany sign to denote it is a community garden. This would allude to some level of neighborhood cohesiveness and initiative to be a community. There are two other vacant parcels in this neighborhood that could be used as public space rather than infill areas, possibly a Community Park or another garden.

The new homes that have been recently constructed in 1986 is an indicator of possible development and real estate interest in this area.

**Treatments**

**Alternative 1:**
The first alternative would be to make no investment in the area. In doing this the empty lots and vacant buildings in the neighborhood would remain, and possibly lead to further abandonment.

**Alternative 2:**
The second alternative would be to use infill to take back the vacant lots where there was once a structure and designate the street as a revitalization neighborhood.

**Alternative 3:**
The third alternative would be to renovate the vacant structures in the same manner that the newly renovated houses are to promote neighborhood continuity and make them more attractive to homeowners.

**Preferred Alternative**
It is recommended that this neighborhood fully examine possible funding sources for infill development. Development of the vacant lots either as homes, as demand requires, or as public space would be an asset to the street. Installing street furniture such as lighting, benches, and garbage cans may encourage outdoor activity and community interaction. Sidewalks are already established. Linking them to a public space will encourage its use.
Figure 63: House built in the 1900s
Location: Albany, New York
Source: Planning Studio 10/2002

Figure 64: House built in 1927
Location: Albany, New York
Source: Planning Studio 10/2002
Figure 65: Community Garden  
Location: Albany, New York  
Source: Planning Studio 10/2002

Figure 66: Residential development near the new school  
Location: Albany, New York  
Source: Planning Studio 10/2002

Figure 67: New homes constructed in the last ten years  
Location: Albany, New York  
Source: Planning Studio 10/2002
Figure 68: Diverse housing stock available on this street.
Location: Albany, New York
Source: Planning Studio 10/2002

Figure 69: Abandoned car in yard of vacant house
Location: 190 Livingston Avenue
Source: Planning Studio 10/2002

Figure 70: New Covenant Charter School
Location: Albany, New York
Source: Planning Studio 10/2002
Future Uses of the Data

There is still much that can be done with this information. After the data is tested for completeness, and accuracy, other layers that we were unable to obtain or generate because of the time constraints of the project can be added to the GIS. The vacancy rates for the 2000 Census can be compared to what we found in the field. Bus routes can be added to see if vacancy rates correlate with mass transit availability. The City’s zoning map can be digitized to help make decisions regarding changes in allowed land uses. An interactive mapping application can be developed using Arc View so those interested in particular sites have easy access to all of the information we have on that building.

The database information developed as a part of this Studio for Albany can also have policy implications for the City of Albany. This data can help in the construction of an “early warning” system on vacancy, along the lines of those developed elsewhere. Additionally, a surveying system in conjunction with other City and County resources can assist in tracking specific problematic properties and neighborhoods.

Information compiled as a part of this Studio project can also be of assistance in identifying specific programmatic and financing needs for some city neighborhoods. The financing of projects in this neighborhood could be accomplished in a number of ways. Private investment is probably the most common type of funding for renovation and preservation projects, but can be supplemented by various federal programs. By utilizing investment tax credits and grants, a private investor could make a contribution to the neighborhood and still benefit through various incentives.

---

9 Chicago, for example.
Conclusion

Our goal was to provide the Historic Albany Foundation with useful information to aid in preserving and restructuring urban Albany’s historic built environment by developing an accurate, consolidated information on vacancy in many of Albany’s struggling historic neighborhoods.

We fulfilled our studio project by conducting a survey of vacant buildings in Albany. The survey covered every structure within a large target area estimated to include about 95 percent of the vacant and abandoned buildings in the city. We used a variety of sources, including 2000 Census data, the City Register of approximately 160 vacant structures, neighborhood association lists of 100 additional structures, and a comprehensive street-by-street survey to collect exterior conditions data and digital photos of all vacant structures. Using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) mapping techniques, we produced a database of 840 vacant structures.

In analyzing the data we found that:

- Within the targeted study area, 840 buildings are vacant according to the field survey.
- 309 or 36% of these 840 surveyed vacant buildings are designated historic buildings.
- These 309 buildings also represent 7.5% of the total 4,184 listed local historic buildings in the City.
- Albany County, not the City, is responsible for the enforcement of tax liens and eventual foreclosure in the City of Albany.
- The County cannot foreclose on properties until the third year of delinquency, as stipulated in the NYS Real Property Tax Law.

As part of this project we completed twelve case studies with photos, maps, and suggested treatments. The individual case studies were designed to serve as target areas for funding based on the facilities present and the existing urban fabric of the case study area. As a result of our efforts, we hope the City and Historic Albany Foundation will be better suited to seek grant money for these, and other, restoration projects.
Appendix A
Albany Building Condition Survey Form

Instructor: Professor Lawlor

Note: All Information collected on each building based on external inspection only. Please do not attempt to enter building/property.

Note: Please review carefully the instruction sheets provided prior to filling out information below.

1. Use: Residential/ Commercial/ Industrial/ Institutional/ Mix
2. Number of Storeys: 1/ 2/ 3/ 4/ 5/ more than 5
3. Construction: Wood Frame/ Brick / Stone/ Mixed
4. Any of the following: Daylight Basement/ Permits/Notice (list below)
5. Activity: Occupied/ Vacant/ Partially vacant/ Boarded/ Burned

Note: Circle the number indicating your evaluation of the condition under each of the following items:

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<th>Selected Exterior Elements:</th>
<th>Good (10)</th>
<th>Average (6)</th>
<th>Poor (3)</th>
<th>Deteriorated (1)</th>
<th>N/A* (0)</th>
<th>Weight WS</th>
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*Not Applicable
**Score Ratio = Weighted Score/Max. Score

Comments

Form Completed Date: 
Signature of Surveyor: 

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Appendix B
Real Estate Expert Interviews

The following Albany Real-Estate experts were contacted to know their perspective on the dynamics of the market.

- New York International Real Estate Corporation, Jake Sinisgalli
- T.L. Metzger & Associates, Tracy Metzger
- Greater Capital Association of Realtors, Jim Ader
- CB Richard Ellis, John W. Wheatley
- Prudential Manor Homes Realtors and Prudential Blake Atlantic, (telephonic interview)
- Coldwell Banker Commercial Prime Properties, (telephonic interview)

Interview 1: New York International Real Estate Corporation, Jake Sinisgalli

Problem areas:

- 80% houses are renters occupied in the problem areas.

- Renters are from a specific segment, which don’t have good jobs, can’t pay high rents; don’t have good recommendations to get a house in a good locality, they have to go the deteriorating localities.

- Few pockets exhibit high crime rates, so people migrate out of those neighborhoods, to earn revenue from the houses, they rent it out.

- Anti-social elements occupy these areas, and don’t let owners access their homes for the occasional maintenance, so houses deteriorate.

- Such owners stop paying city taxes, so the city annex the property and puts it up for the auction.

- Buyers from these auctions invest some money in to the building for refurbishment and again rent it out, these kinds of houses are less preferred for the owner occupation.

- With the renter occupying the house, again the same cycle repeats as mentioned above, the expert termed it as a ‘Vicious Cycle’, which is nearly of 8-10 years.
**Improvement areas:**
- Create home ownership programs and to provide special training to renters
- Increase city participation
- Increasing policing of the hot-spot districts
- Provide tax incentives for the buyers in such areas with specific responsibility sharing

**Property rates in his opinion:**
Residential: Arbor Hill and South End (Unit of 400-500 square feet):

- Sales: $3000-15000 per unit
- Rentals: Class 1: $1000-1500 per unit, Class 2: $600-800 and Class 3: $300-500 per unit

Commercial: CBD

- Sales: $50-75 per square feet
- Rentals: $12-17 per square feet

**Interview 2: T.L. Metzger & Associates, Tracy Metzger**

**Problem areas:**
- High crime rates, drug trading and excessive noise in specific areas
- Lack of number of quality schools is a significant criterion
- Renters don’t prefer to take up a property and investors don’t see that as a good investment

**Improvement areas:**
- Special Government grants for the development of old, dilapidated buildings
- Façade improvement programs
- Special set of building byelaws with incentives for the conversion of these types of buildings to commercial buildings
- Create home ownership programs
- Special Government programs of no interest mortgage loans for buying and improving such buildings
- School district to be involved to improve the situation
• City should provide enough infrastructures in such areas like, enough streetlights and walk able sidewalks

**Positive areas:**
• Albany’s development as a tech city

**Interview 3: Greater Capital Association of Realtors, Jim Ader**

He provided access to the Multiple Listing Services’ yearly reports

**Interview 4: CB Richard Ellis, John W. Wheatley**

**Issues:**
• Two short years ago, available office space in the city’s CBD market experienced a record high overall

• Convergence of several factors including slow leasing activity, aging inventory, a decrease in attractively priced sublease offerings and a generally sluggish economy

• The Albany CBD is holding steady at an 8.9% vacancy rate, which compares favorably to the most recent national CBD rate of 12%

The range of asking rental rates for Class A and B office space is essentially unchanged since the Fall of 2001. Asking rental rates in the suburban market are slowly showing some erosion due to increased vacancy and pressure from the competing suburban sublease market which has grown to over 215,000 square feet. Subleases are frequently priced at a significant market discount to enable quick recovery of unwanted lease obligations.

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<th>SUBURBAN MARKET</th>
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</table>
Appendix C
## Appendix C

### GIS Maps and Data

#### GIS Maps Produced and Used for the Project

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Map/Project Name</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1– Albany_Vacant_Buildings_Study.mxd</td>
<td>Used as a starting point to develop new maps and edit data.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2– AVB_Study_Boundaries.mxd</td>
<td>Shows the preliminary outlines of the areas the survey should concentrate on.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3– AVB_Block_Vacancy_Rate.mxd</td>
<td>Shows the number of vacant units divided by number of housing units by census block</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4– AVB_Block_Vacancy_Rate-v2.mxd</td>
<td>Similar to 3, but separates blocks with no housing units, and categorizes vacancy rates differently.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5– AVB_Vacant_Units_per_Block.mxd</td>
<td>Shows the number of vacant units for each census block, grouped into 5 categories.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6– AVB_Vacant_Units_per_Block-Spatial_Analyst.mxd</td>
<td>Shows the density of vacant units. (Vacant units per acre) Using the Spatial Analyst Extension for ArcView, an elevation value was calculated for varying vacancy densities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8– AVB_Survey_Parcels.mxd</td>
<td>Used to edit the parcel boundary data, and develop survey deployment maps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9– AVB_Neighborhood_Associations.mxd</td>
<td>Shows Neighborhood Association boundaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10– AVB_Survey_Groups.mxd</td>
<td>The first attempt at categorizing parcels into survey deployment groups, and identifying the most efficient routes for surveying vacant structures. (not used)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11– AVB_Survey_Deployment.mxd</td>
<td>Shows the parcels categorized by property class and vacancy registration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>File Name</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12-AVB_Survey_Completion.mxd</td>
<td>Divides parcels into 21 groups, and maps them for survey teams to use in the field.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13-AVB_Historic_Districts.mxd</td>
<td>Identifies those areas that were not completed by the initial wave of survey teams, and redistributes them to other groups. Also used to track completion of the survey over the course of the deployment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14-AVB_Building_Permits.mxd</td>
<td>Shows the Historic District boundaries, Structures on the National and State Registry, and properties listed as historic by the Historic Albany Foundation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-AVB_CaseStudies.mxd</td>
<td>Used to analyze building permit activity for the city.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-AVB_CaseStudies–for_jpegs.mxd</td>
<td>Shows the 12 Case Study areas selected for further analysis and treatment recommendations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17-AVB_CaseStudy–Permit_Data.mxd</td>
<td>Used to produce graphics of the Case Study areas for use in the final document.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-AVB_Analysis–Historic_Properties</td>
<td>Identifies building permits issued in 2001 near the Case Study areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AVB_Geo-reference.mxd</td>
<td>Identifies buildings that are listed as historic by the Historic Albany Foundation, and were surveyed as vacant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AVB_Orthophotos.mxd</td>
<td>Used to geo-reference the scanned images from old plans.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AVB_Roads.mxd</td>
<td>Shows aerial photos of the study area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AVB_Roads.mxd</td>
<td>Shows roads in the Albany area.</td>
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## GIS Data Sets Used to produce the Maps

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<thead>
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<th>Data Set/Layer</th>
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<tr>
<td>City Boundary</td>
<td>NYS DOT &amp; ESRI census tracts</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roads</td>
<td>NYS DOT</td>
<td>Complete (Names need editing)</td>
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<td>Railroads</td>
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<td>Water Features</td>
<td>NYS DOT</td>
<td>Complete</td>
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<td>Not Done</td>
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<td>Coastal Zone Boundary</td>
<td>NYS DOS</td>
<td>Raw Form–needs refining</td>
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<td>100 Year Floodplain</td>
<td>US FEMA</td>
<td>Raw Form–needs refining</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inactive Hazardous Waste Sites</td>
<td>NYS DEC</td>
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<td><strong>Census Data</strong></td>
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<td>ESRI Website</td>
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<td>Housing Data by Block</td>
<td>Census 2000</td>
<td>ASCII Form</td>
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<td>Vacancy Rate by Block</td>
<td>ESRI and Census 2000</td>
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<td>Parcel Data–City of Albany</td>
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<td>Unregistered Vacancies</td>
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<td>Albany Office of Real Property?</td>
<td>?</td>
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<td>Albany Water Department</td>
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<td>In progress</td>
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<td>Federal Properties</td>
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**Old Plans**

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<td>?</td>
<td>Hardcopy Text</td>
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**Project Area Boundaries**

<p>| Study Area Boundary                      | ESRI census blocks and Prof. Bromley       | Complete    |
| Survey Area Boundary                     | ESRI census blocks and Prof. Bromley       | Complete    |
| Primary Focus                            | Prof. Bromley &amp; Historic Albany            | Complete    |
| Secondary Focus                          | Prof. Bromley &amp; Historic Albany            | Complete    |
| Neighborhood Association Boundaries      | CANA Website                                | Complete (Needs to be Checked) |
| Building Permits issued for the City of Albany in 2001 | City of Albany Planning Department |            |</p>
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<td>US Census Bureau</td>
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<tr>
<td>ESRI tiger readme.html</td>
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<td>NYS OPRHP</td>
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<td>orps metadata.html</td>
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<td>Q3 flood hazard zone codes.doc</td>
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<td>FEMA</td>
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<tr>
<td>r1hyd_metadata.doc</td>
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<td>NYS DOT</td>
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<td>roads metadata.txt</td>
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<td>NYS DOT</td>
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<tr>
<td>tiger 2000 documentation.pdf</td>
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<td>US Census Bureau</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tiger readme.html</td>
<td></td>
<td>US Census Bureau</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Census 2000 Block level data lookup table.xls</td>
<td>A list and short description of all of the Census data fields available at the block level</td>
<td>US Census Bureau</td>
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<tr>
<td>City of Albany Neighborhood Association Members—not current.doc</td>
<td>From the CANA Website, lists Neighborhood associations, their boundaries, and contacts.</td>
<td>Website</td>
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<td>Parcel Data Attribute Report~10–1–2001.xls</td>
<td>A description of the completeness of the parcel data attribute table</td>
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<td>Project data as of 11–11–2002.doc</td>
<td>Description of the state of the data sets as of 11–11–2002</td>
<td>Developed by Studio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Document Name</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Source</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey Deployment – Parcel Report.xls</td>
<td>List of parcels with their street addresses, and ID numbers. Grouped by deployment teams for use in conjunction with deployment maps.</td>
<td>Developed by Studio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vacant Building Registration Information–page 1.xls</td>
<td>Original Excel file containing listed vacant buildings</td>
<td>Developed by Studio</td>
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<td>Project data as of 12-16-2002.doc</td>
<td>This document</td>
<td>Developed by Studio</td>
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<td>Survey Completion – Parcel Report.xls</td>
<td>Used to distribute Un–surveyed Parcels to new groups after the initial deployment</td>
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<td>ABANDONEDINVENTORYSEPT27.xls</td>
<td>List of abandoned buildings in Arbor Hill, provided by the city</td>
<td>Other Consultant</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vacant Final.xls</td>
<td>List of abandoned buildings in the South End, provided by the city</td>
<td>Other Consultant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progress Report for 11–5 Presentation.doc</td>
<td>Outline of GIS work as of 11–11–2002</td>
<td>Studio</td>
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<td>Census 2000 Block level data lookup table.xls</td>
<td>A list of all of the data attributes available in the 2000 Census SF1 data file</td>
<td>US Census Bureau</td>
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<td>Case Study Groups.doc</td>
<td>Identifies members of the 12 Case Study groups</td>
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<tr>
<td>Document Name</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Source</td>
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<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<td>11–15 Report–Presentation to Upstate APA.doc</td>
<td>Handout–Summary of Studio progress for the APA presentation</td>
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<tr>
<td>C:\Documents and Settings\Don\My Documents\U Albany\Courses\PLN 681 Planning Studio\Studio Data\Final Photos</td>
<td>This folder contains all of the digital photos taken during the Survey deployment, and subsequent field trips</td>
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<tr>
<td>Case Study Permit Data–2001.xls</td>
<td>Identifies all of the Building permits issued within 1000 feet of the center of each case study for the year 2001</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MainDatabase with photos.mdb</td>
<td>The final Access database with all completed surveys, and associated digital photos</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey.xls</td>
<td>Excel spreadsheet exported from MainDatabase with photos.mdb</td>
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<tr>
<td>Survey–No Photos.xls</td>
<td>Extracted from Survey.xls to identify those Survey records without an associated digital photo</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Document Name</td>
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<td>Source</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>SurveyWeightedScore.xls</td>
<td>Extracted from Survey.xls to produce a building condition score for each vacant building identified</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX – D
VACANT BUILDING SURVEY MANUAL
STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK AT ALBANY

FALL 2002 PLANNING STUDIO

COMPLETED UNDER THE DIRECTION OF DR. CATHERINE T. LAWSON
WITH FUNDING FROM THE HISTORIC ALBANY FOUNDATION

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Sheila D. Keyes
Stacey C. Pilgrim
Brian A. Ross
Sreekumar Nampoothiri

Jason Todd Swaggart
Jesse Day
Sandra D. Jobson
Don Meltz
Jaime O’Neill

Meredithe Smith
Jeremy Evans
Chris Kanz
Brian Thomas
Susie Olsen
R. Martin Witt
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Street Facing Wall Wood</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Street Facing Wall Masonry</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Street Facing Wall Foundation</td>
<td>14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Side Walls Wood Frame</td>
<td>19</td>
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<td>Side Walls Masonry</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roof</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cornice/Eaves/Brackets</td>
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<td>Window Sills/Lintels</td>
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<tr>
<td>Windows Frames</td>
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<td>Window Glass</td>
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<td>Front Entry Door</td>
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<td>Front Entry Porch</td>
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<tr>
<td>Front Entry Steps</td>
<td>64</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exterior Finish</td>
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</table>
INTRODUCTION

Like many major urban areas throughout the Northeast, the City of Albany New York is struggling with a preponderance of vacant and abandoned buildings. Representing a mix of uses, these structures are usually located in the densest neighborhoods and are the first signs of private disinvestments in the community.

Left unaddressed, such structures begin to have a depressing effect on the neighborhood by becoming sources of blight. They invite undesirable and sometime illegal activities, thus encouraging further disinvestments.

Absentee landlords and drug trafficking are often blamed for the problem, but the main reason for high vacancy rates is depopulation of the city. People are moving to the suburbs, leaving fewer residents to fill the housing stock. Once these vacant areas become blighted, it becomes exceedingly difficult to reverse the trend.

The 2002 Planning Studio, comprised of graduate students in the University at Albany’s Urban and Regional Planning Program, was contracted by the Historic Albany Foundation to undertake a complete survey of vacant and abandoned buildings within a targeted area of Albany.
The survey included the development of a complete inventory of all vacant structures and a structural analysis of each building from the exterior.

Before the survey process could begin preparatory work had to be completed. A standard survey instrument to evaluate the condition of each structure had to be designed as well as the survey crew had to be trained on what structural elements they were to analyze.

After the survey instrument was designed, the survey crew was sent out on an initial pilot survey in order to test the survey instrument. Upon completion of the pilot survey the crew met and discussed the survey instrument and procedure to alleviate any problems that may have arisen.

Because the observation and categorization of buildings is not an exact science and is ultimately subject to the surveyor’s subjective opinion, the following week the survey crew met again to view photos of all buildings in the pilot survey. The group was asked to analyze and categorize each photo after it was shown in an attempt to build consensus within the survey crew.

The goal of this manual is to provide assistance to those who would like to conduct a vacant building survey in their community. It is designed to fulfill the process that the original survey crew was involved in by providing visual examples of each building element within each category (Good, Average, Poor, Deteriorated) found on the survey instrument.

The survey instrument, which is the basis of this manual, can be found in the appendix. It is important to have each person who will be involved in the survey to study the survey form and this manual, and that the survey group be

* Chimneys, Front Yards and Side Yards are not covered in this manual
given the chance to discuss their observations as a group in order to build consensus.

Again it is important to understand that there can be no precise classification of a building from just observing it from the street without thorough professional training. Many may not agree with the categorization of some of the elements found in this manual, but it isn’t meant to be exact but just a helpful guide to get things started.
STREET FACING WALL
WOOD
Buildings found in this category should appear structurally sound. That is the building should not be leaning to one side or have any major cracks, buckles or bulges, but appears straight and sound. It can however have minor surface imperfections, which will be found on all buildings.

Street Facing Wall – Wood Frame: **Good** (plumb, sound)
Like buildings found in the previous category (good), these buildings seem structurally sound, but there may be slight signs of structural deterioration. Small to medium surface cracks may be detected, however the building should not be leaning or have any buckles or bulges.

Street Facing Wall: Wood Frame: *Average*
(plumb, slight defect)
Buildings found in this category will seem to be loosing structural integrity. There will be noticeable defects such as leaning, buckles, bulges as well as small to large surface cracks. The area circled in red denotes where leaning is detected.

Street Facing Wall – Wood Frame: **Poor** (leaning, defects)
Buildings in this category will appear structurally unsound. There can be considerable leaning, buckling, bulging as well as small to large surface cracks and other damages such as rotten spots and or missing material.
STREET FACING WALL
MASONRY
Street Facing Wall – Masonry: **Good** (plumb, sound)

Buildings found in this category should appear structurally sound. That is, the building should not be leaning to one side or have any major cracks, buckles or bulges, but appears straight and sound.
Like buildings found in the previous category (good), these buildings seem structurally sound, but there may be slight signs of structural deterioration. Small to medium surface cracks may be detected, however the building should not be leaning or have any buckles or bulges.
Street Facing Wall – Masonry: Poor (crumbling spots, defects)

Buildings found in this category will seem to be loosing structural integrity. There will be noticeable defects such as leaning, buckles, bulges as well as small to large surface cracks.
Buildings in this category will appear structurally unsound. There can be considerable leaning, buckling bulging as well as small to large surface damages such as cracks, rotten spots and or missing materials.

Street Facing Wall – Masonry: Deteriorated (crumbling areas, missing material)
STREET FACING WALL
FOUNDATION
Street Facing Wall – Foundation: **Good** (plumb, sound)

Foundations in this category appear structurally sound and should have no major or minor cracks, buckles or budges. There sometimes will be plant growth but it should not extrude from cracks in the surface.
Street Facing Wall – Foundation: *Average* (slight defect, plumb)

Foundations in this category are for the most part structurally sound. They should not have any major cracks, but may have some minor cracks. They may have minor to extreme superficial damage such as peeling paint, graffiti, and plant growth. In this example the foundation looks structurally sound but there are some areas where the brick have begun to separate forming very tiny cracks and there is an area with peeling paint (circled in red).
Foundations in this category can have medium to large size cracks as well as buckles, bulges. There will sometimes be crumbling spots causing where material is lost.

Street Facing Wall – Foundation: Poor
(crumbling spots, defects)
Foundations in this category have lost much of its integrity in appearance and will have noticeable material separation. There can be medium to large cracks, crumbling areas, buckles or bulges.

Street Facing Wall – Foundation: **Deteriorated** (crumbling areas, missing material)
SIDE WALL
WOOD
Side Walls – Wood Frame: **Good** (plumb, sound)

Like buildings found in the previous *Street-Facing Wall (Wood Frame)* category, buildings in this category should appear structurally sound. That is, the building should not be leaning to one side or have any major cracks bulges or buckles, but appears straight and sound. It can however have minor surface imperfections, which will be found on all buildings.
Side Walls – Wood Frame: **Average** (plumb, slight defect)

Like buildings found in the previous category (good), these buildings seem structurally sound, but there may be slight signs of structural deterioration. Small to medium surface cracks may be detected, however the building should not be leaning or have any buckles or bulges.
Side Walls: Wood Frame: **Poor** (leaning, defects)

Buildings found in this category will seem to be loosing structural integrity. There will be noticeable defects such as leaning, buckles or bulges as well as small to large surface cracks.
Buildings in this category will appear structurally unsound. There can be considerable leaning, buckling, bulging as well as small to large surface cracks and other damages such as rotten spots and or missing materials.

Side Walls – Wood Frame: **Deteriorated** (rotten spots, missing material)
SIDE WALL MASONRY
Side Walls – Masonry: **Good** (plumb, sound)

Buildings found in this category should appear structurally sound. That is the building should not be leaning to one side or have any major cracks, buckles or bulges, but appears straight and sound.
Side Walls – Masonry: **Average** (plumb, slight defect)

Buildings found in this category, should appear structurally sound, but there may be slight signs of structural deterioration. Small to medium surface cracks may be detected, however the building should not be leaning or have any buckles or bulges.
Side Walls – Masonry: **Poor** (crumbling spots, defects)

Buildings found in this category will seem to be loosing structural integrity. There will be noticeable defects such as leaning, buckles, bulges as well as small to large surface cracks.
Side Walls – Masonry: **Deteriorated** (crumbling areas, missing material)

Buildings in this category will appear structurally unsound. There can be considerable leaning, buckling bulging as well as small to large surface damages such as cracks, rotten spots and or missing materials.
ROOF
Roof – Good (level, intact)

Roofs found in this category should appear level with no buckles or bulges, which are signs of severe damage. The roofing material should be complete with no missing material such as shingling. In the close up view above the roof seems warped but in reality is not, but is only an image distortion.
Roofs found in this category should appear level with no buckles or bulges, which are signs of severe damage. There may be minor imperfections such as loose shingling indicated in the picture above.
Roof: **Poor** (slight sagging, missing material)

Roofs found in this category will appear to be losing its structural integrity due to slight buckles or bulges. There will be areas with considerable loss of material. The circled area above has lost much of its roofing material allowing water to enter, which can rot underlying material. This is why the roof seems to buckle.
Roofs found in this category will appear to have lost most of its structural integrity and have considerable sagging, buckling and or bulges present. Other than missing materials such as shingling there may also be present gaping holes that expose the framing.
CORNICE/EAVES/BRACKETS
Cornice/Eaves/Brackets: **Good** (complete)

Cornice eaves and brackets found in this category should not be missing any materials but appear complete. They should also be void of any surface damages, such as peeling paint, chipped material or rust.
Cornice/Eaves/Brackets: **Average** (surface damaged)

Cornice, eaves and brackets found in this category should not be missing any materials but appear complete as those found in the previous category (good). However there will be minor surface damage.
Cornice/Eaves/Brackets: **Poor** (missing materials: burned)

Cornice, eaves and brackets found in this category will not only have surface damage but can be burned. There will also be missing material as in the example above.
Cornice, eaves and brackets found in this category will appear to have lost their integrity and rotten due to prolonged exposure.

Cornice/Eaves/Brackets: **Deteriorated** (Rotten)
WINDOW SILLS/LINTELS
Window Sills/Lintels: **Good** (Level, Complete)

Windowsills and lintels found in this category should be complete with no missing materials, and level.
Window Sills/Lintels: **Average** (Level <20% Cracked)

Windowsills and lintels found in this category should be level but there will be noticeable cracks such as in the example above.
Windowsills and lintels found in this category will not only have noticeable cracks but will have begun to lose its structural integrity. Because of these cracks and prolonged deterioration the window will begin to sag as shown in the example above.

Window Sills/Lintels: Poor (Sagging <50% Cracked)
Window Sills/Lintels: **Deteriorated** (rotten, more than 50% cracked, burned-missing)

Windowsills and lintels in this category will have medium to large cracks. They can also have deteriorated to the point that it is rotten. There can also be missing materials.
WINDOW FRAME
Window frames found in this category should be level and complete. There should be little to no surface damage present.
Widow frames found in this category may not be completely level. There will be some surface damage but no more than 20% of the surface should be damaged or cracked.

Window Frame: **Average** (mostly level)
Window Frame: Poor (considerable sagging)

Window frames found in this category will not be very level with considerable sagging. There will be quite a bit more surface damage than that found in the previous category (average), with at least 50% of the frames being cracked or damaged.
Window Frame: **Deteriorated** (rotten, more than half cracked, burned-missing)

Window frames found in this category will have deteriorated to the point that they have begun to rot, and or may be completely absent. Cracks and other surface damage will cover at least 50% of entire surface area.
WINDOW GLASS
Windows found in this category should be completely intact. There should be no missing pains or cracks. In both the examples above all windows are complete and void of any cracks or other surface damages.

Windows – Glass: Good (intact)
Windows found in this category should be mostly complete but may have less than 10% of glass missing or cracked. In the example above there is only one noticeable crack found (circled), which is found in on the first floor, to the left of the center door.

Window Glass: **Average** (mostly intact)
Window Glass: **Poor** (almost a quarter broken)

Windows found in this category will have at least 20% of its glass missing or cracked as seen in the two examples above.
Window Glass: **Deteriorated** (more than half broken/uncovered/boarded/burned)

Windows found in this category will have more than 50% of its glass missing and or cracked as seen in the two examples above.
FRONT ENTRY
DOOR
Front Entry – Door: **Good** (level, complete)

Front entry doors found in this category should be level and complete. There may be minor surface damage such as graffiti, but there should be no missing material.
Front Entry – Door: **Average** (level, slightly damaged)

Front entry doors found in this category will be level, just as those found in the previous category (good), but there will be minor surface damage such as missing material, and or scratches and cracks. The area circled in red indicates where doorknobs are missing.
Front Entry – Door: **Poor** (skewed, patched, broken)

Front entry doors found in this category can be skewed, missing materials, broken and or patched as in the above example.
Front Entry Door: **Deteriorated** (rotten, boarded)

Front entry doors found in this category will be skewed, rotten with missing materials, or completely boarded.
FRONT ENTRY
PORCH
Front Entry Porch: **Good** (level, complete)

Front Entry porches found in this category should be level and complete. There may be minor imperfections such as peeling paint and or other small surface damages.
Front Entry Porch: **Average** (level, slightly damaged)

Front entry porches found in this category should be level, but there may be minor damage such as broken planks or railings as in the picture above.
Front Entry Porch: **Poor** (sagging, broken)

Front entry porches found in this category will have a multitude of detectable problems such as sagging, broken and missing material.
Front entry porches found in this category will most likely be unusable due to considerable deterioration. It will appear un-level, damaged with missing materials and rotten spots.
FRONT ENTRY STEPS
Front Entry Steps Wood/Masonry: **Good** (complete)

Front entry steps found in this category should be complete and appear level.
Front Entry Steps Wood/Masonry: **Average** (slightly damaged)

Front entry steps found in this category will be slightly damaged and can appear slightly un-level.
Front entry steps found in this category will be cracked, broken and un-level.

Front Entry Steps Wood/Masonry: Poor (cracked broken)
Front entry steps in this category will be missing materials, rotten and unusable.

Front Entry Steps Wood/Masonry: Deteriorated (rotten)
EXTERIOR FINISH
Unlike the first category, Street Facing Wall, observations in this category are concerned only with the exterior finish. Buildings found in this category should have an overall maintained appearance.

Exterior Finish: Siding Painting: **Good** (maintained)
Exterior Finish Siding Painting: **Average** (faded)

Buildings found in this category will have an exterior that is overall intact and sound; however, the finish will appear faded.
Exterior Finish Siding Painting: **Poor** (chipped, missing)

Buildings found in this category will have an exterior finish that is not only faded but has begun to chip. Buildings found in this category may also have vegetation growth.
Buildings found in this category will have exterior finishes that have deteriorated to the point that they resemble buildings found in the previous Street Facing Wall Deteriorated category.

Exterior Finish Siding Painting: **Deteriorated** (exposed material)
Appendix E
Appendix E
Case Study - Grand Street

Legend
- Parcel Boundary
- Case Study Parcels
- Surveyed Vacant

Overview Map

1 inch equals 112 feet
Case Study - North Swan Street

1 inch equals 120 feet

Legend
- Parcel Boundary
- Case Study Parcels
- Surveyed Vacant

Overview Map
Case Study - North Albany Commercial

Legend
- Parcel Boundary
- Case Study Parcels
- Surveyed Vacant

Overview Map

1 inch equals 250 feet
Case Study - South End

Legend
- Parcel Boundary
- Case Study Parcels
- Surveyed Vacant

Overview Map

1 inch equals 79 feet