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# IV. EXISTING CONDITIONS AND ANALYSIS



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## 1. HOUSING

Throughout much of the City of Cortland's industrial history, it was not unusual for factory workers to live and work in the same neighborhood. This is clearly evident in the East End Neighborhood which still retains much of its industrial identity and original workers' housing. It is also the reason why some of the City's oldest housing exists in this part of the City, with many structures being well over 100 years old. An exception to this is the housing that is located along and near the Tioughnioga River, including such streets as River Street, Peaceful Drive, Redwood and Oakland Streets. This section of the City was an area that typically flooded so it remained undeveloped. The City Historian notes that the Tioughnioga River was widened, at some point in the late 1930's to early 1940's, which minimized flooding. After World War II, since the riverside land was available and cheap, it was attractive for housing development. Many single story, ranch homes were built in the area in a short time period beginning in the 1950's. Many of these housing structures are approximately 50-55 years of age.



The City's increasing low-to-moderate income population, in tandem with an aging housing stock that is not energy efficient, has challenged the average homeowner regarding housing maintenance and/or improvements. The East End Neighborhood's socioeconomic profile shows that it is one of the poorest areas in the City. According to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the Census Block Group that encompasses most of the East End, Block Group 9905-5 has a low/mod rate of 72.2%, which is the highest rate in the City. As mentioned previously, the neighborhood also has a high concentration of rental housing, with homeownership rates at only 36% compared to nearly 44% City-wide.

Surveys and public meetings conducted as part of the ongoing Strategic Plan process revealed that housing conditions rank among the most important concerns of neighborhood residents. It is clear to the City that actions are needed to mitigate these housing problems and reverse the decline of the East End. In 2009, the City pursued and captured HOME funds for the rehabilitation of owner-occupied properties in the East End. The City was also awarded CDBG funds which focused on income properties. In tandem, both programs are addressing a significant portion of the varied housing needs of the neighborhood. Housing rehabilitation efforts should not only address deteriorating housing elements such as roofs, siding, mechanical systems, masonry, etc., but should also concentrate on environmental issues such as lead based paint, asbestos, and radon, and energy efficient measures such as alternative energy materials, appliances, and technology. Historic housing design elements should be preserved. The City's Code Enforcement should support this effort with an emphasis on educating homeowners on improvements meant to make housing units safe, habitable, and affordable.



Prior to the submission of both the CDBG and HOME grant applications, an exterior housing conditions survey of all residential housing structures in the East End, including mixed-use structures, was completed in the winter of 2009. It revealed the area has a high number of substandard housing units (400/491 = 82%) both in owner-occupied and income properties. The definition of substandard is provided by the State for use in many grant applications. The definition is included in *Section VI. Appendices*. Concurrently, an income survey of all owner-occupied residents/property owners in the East End was conducted and revealed a 70% low/mod owner-occupied population.



There are 142 income property structures that contain 355 housing units in the neighborhood. One hundred twenty (120) out of 142 (84.5%) of the income property structures were determined to be substandard including 283 (80%) of the 355 units. 134 of these units were classified as severely substandard and 149 units classified as moderately substandard. Based on information gathered at public meetings and via the mail survey, East Enders feel strongly that strict adherence to code regulations is important for the area's survival.

It was also noted at East End meetings that the City of Cortland suffers from a dearth of housing options. In particular, smaller scale housing that would appeal to empty nesters, young professionals and first time homebuyers is lacking. This occurs in both the owner-occupied and rental markets. Many of the residents of the East End are concerned about the future development of the neighborhood, especially commercial development that is encroaching on traditional residential neighborhoods. Many felt that moderate density housing such as townhouses or upscale apartments could be developed where there is vacant, developable land near the Tioughnioga River on the north side of Clinton Street, for example. This would be a preferable alternative than continued commercial development. It would be a good location for those who may commute on Interstate 81 to get to work. It could also satisfy the growing need, especially for older residents, to downsize and live in housing that has less maintenance issues. Pictured below is a housing option that was appealing to the Steering Committee.



Another housing-related asset that is important to the neighborhood is its walkability. There is a strong network of sidewalks throughout the East End, although, admittedly, some sidewalks are in need of repair/replacement. The ability to walk to residences, businesses, parks, and other sites the East End has to offer is an important part of the East End revitalization efforts. New housing development should be linked to the existing sidewalk network, with appropriate safety appurtenances, such as walk signals, crosswalks, bulb outs, handicap access, etc., included.

## **GOALS AND IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES:**

**GOAL 1.1:** Ensure all dwelling units are in compliance with NYS Property Maintenance Code.

### **IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES:**

1.1.1. Continue to support comprehensive housing code enforcement efforts in the neighborhood to maintain owner-occupied and income property units in standard condition.

**GOAL 1.2:** The City will strive to ensure that substandard housing units in the East End are rehabilitated to standard condition.

### **IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES:**

1.2.1. Seek financing sources, such as State or federal funds, to renovate housing in the East End Neighborhood through rehabilitation programs. Particular emphasis should be paid to homeowners who struggle financially. Income property rehabilitation programs, where the majority of tenants are lower income, should be conditioned on rent subsidy programs or affordable rents.

1.2.2. Partner with Cortland County and other agencies devoted to housing related issues such as lead based paint, radon, energy efficiency, asbestos, and safety issues. The City will be a part of the referral network.

**GOAL 1.3:** There will be units in the East End, existing or proposed, which are affordable and accessible to all income, age, and disability segments of the population.

### **IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES:**

1.3.1. Partner with financing sources to provide financing for developers to create market rate housing. Such housing will be created via new construction or the rehabilitation of existing residential, commercial, or mixed commercial/residential structures.

1.3.2. Work with qualified developers who share a common vision with the City in developing new living units to meet growing needs that are in keeping with the character of the neighborhood.



1.3.3. Consider the development of the north side of Clinton Avenue, near the Grange and along the banks of the Tioughnioga River, for market rate income housing. This area is near the Riverside Plaza and close to I-81. Provide attractive amenities for prospective tenants.

**GOAL 1.4:** Stabilize/maintain homeownership in the East End Neighborhood.

**IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES:**

1.4.1. Seek funding for programs that provide assistance to first time homebuyers.

1.4.2. Regarding properties that are seized for back taxes (in-rem), ensure that, where feasible, residential properties are offered to single family homeowners.

1.4.3. Provide financial incentives through homeownership programs to entice homeowners to live in the East End for a specified time period.

1.4.4. Limit the conversion of single family homes to multifamily through strict adherence to City code.

**GOAL 1.5:** Future housing development, or modifications to existing housing, will be consistent with the size, scale, aesthetics, architecture, character, and historic nature of the East End.

**IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES:**

1.5.1. Enact minimum design standards that include all housing development so that new construction and significant rehabilitation/renovation of existing housing is consistent with the character/architecture of the neighborhood.

1.5.2. Incorporate design standards into site plan review.

**GOAL 1.6:** Become a regional leader in the use of sustainable technology and building practices.

**IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES:**

1.6.1. Promote energy efficiency for new or existing housing units such as green build standards, alternative energy sources, and/or new energy saving technologies.

1.6.2. Promote energy saving or alternative energy appliances, technology, materials, or other apparatus that do not interfere with any neighboring properties and/or will not negatively impact the East End/City environment and quality of life.

1.6.3. Promote housing development that conserves energy, including such measures as higher density development that reduces the need for significant investment in infrastructure.

**GOAL 1.7:** New housing development will be linked and connected to existing development via interconnected sidewalks, roadways, and/or trails.

**IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES:**

1.7.1. Require sidewalks, trails, or multimodal connections in residential areas so that the East End is a walkable neighborhood.

1.7.2. Ensure stricter enforcement of sidewalk ordinance regarding maintenance and snow removal.

**GOAL 1.8:** After complying with all applicable laws and regulations, demolish residential properties not fit for habitation.

**IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES:**

1.8.1. Enlist the Code Enforcement Office in inventorying and identifying properties that are not habitable.

1.8.2. Seek funding to remove blighted housing from the East End.

1.8.3. Work with the Cortland Fire Department to remove properties as part of a controlled burn.



## 2. PARKS, RECREATION, AND OPEN SPACE

### Dexter Park

Survey data and informational meetings indicate that East Enders are particularly fond of the neighborhood's Dexter Park. The overall size of the site is six acres. Programs are managed by the City's Youth Bureau and in 2010, maintenance of the park was assigned to the City's Department of Public Works. From a facilities standpoint, the park includes the following:

- One asphalt basketball court,
- One playground
- One kiddie splash pool (now closed),
- One open space that includes a softball field,
- Two tennis courts,
- One small picnic pavilion, and
- Dexter Park Building which includes an office, storage, and bathrooms.



According to the Director of the Youth Bureau, Dexter Park was originally developed in a piecemeal fashion. Its layout is not conducive to the functional operation of the facilities and programs. The Dexter Park building is also in very poor condition, necessitating a new roof in 2010. The kiddie splash pool does not meet Department of Health standards and did not open in 2010. There are five other parks in the City and most of them have facility needs. Two high priorities of these other parks are the poor condition of the Beaudry Park building which will be addressed in

2010 and the decaying condition of the popular Wickwire Pool located in Suggett Park. A generous donation from the Town of Cortlandville in 2010 will allow the City to patch the pool and have it remain open for the next couple of years. In terms of priorities, it is difficult to prioritize the needs of Dexter Park at this time. The City has been reviewing grant opportunities and making appeals to political representatives for financial assistance to address Dexter Park.

In 2009, the City allowed a newly organized Farmers Market to operate in the park on Saturdays from May through October on an experimental basis. This was a successful partnership and will continue in the near future, with a year-to-year agreement in place. Members of the East End Steering Committee expressed the opinion that the main focus of the park should continue to be geared towards children. The Youth Bureau felt that the Farmers Market was highly successful, includes facilities that can be easily set up and taken down, and the timeframe short in duration, so that the needs of children needing to use the park could still be met. This will be assessed each year that the market operates.



The East End Community Center (EECC) was established approximately five years ago. The EECC operated from leased space in the old Durkee Bakery building on Elm Street. It included a number of community programs such as computer classes, English as a second language (ESL), and a community policing program that included personal safety and home security presentations. A number of community-wide presentations were offered at the center, many of them focused on the cultural heritage of the East End and the City overall. Two of the issues with the space were the lack of full handicap access and the fact that the City did not own the building.



It cost the City approximately \$22,000 per year to operate the EECC and funding was never appropriated in its budget. Funding thus had been secured through legislative member items, community development funds, donations, grants, and fundraisers. It is apparent to the City that it cannot afford to contribute any City funds to the project and that legislative support is waning. In July of 2010, the EECC thought it had found a temporary

home in the City's Armory on Wheeler Avenue, however space at the Armory is at a premium. EECC is currently inactive. Since some of the programs offered at the EECC have been institutionalized and are important to the community and East End, the Youth Bureau is considering the Dexter Park building as the new home for the EECC. Since the park building is not in good condition and there are overall issues with the layout of the park, the City is investigating the development of a master plan which would include options as to whether a new building should be built and relocated within the park, or whether the more economically feasible option is to rehabilitate the existing building. The City is presently exploring its options with respect to funding options for both a park master plan and funding for the Dexter Park building.

## Yaman Park

Yaman Park is not within the boundaries of the East End Strategic Plan target area, however, its close proximity to the East End and its variety of offerings make it a popular recreational asset for this neighborhood. Listed following are the amenities that are found in Yaman Park.

- Beach, swimming area with bathhouse, and concession stand
- Three picnic pavilions
- Eleven (11) individual picnic pavilions
- One playground
- One asphalt surfaced basketball court
- One fenced skateboard park
- One gazebo
- One cartop boat launch
- River shoreline for fishing



Yaman Park encompasses 16 acres, including a 4-acre manmade lake which is used for swimming. It is located on the banks of the Tioughnioga River. It is the sole park in the City that provides skateboarding and is only one of two parks that provides swimming (the other being the Wickwire Pool located in Suggett Park). The City is fortunate that the Yaman family continues to contribute generously to the park and the City has also been fortunate to have received State funding to improve park facilities. A 1997 NYS Office of Parks and Recreation Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) grant allowed the City to develop the skateboard park, improve the concession stand, refurbish the bathrooms/changing areas, and purchase grills and picnic tables. In 2006, the City received funding from the NYS DOS to allow the City to build a cartop boat launch for kayakers and canoeists to access the Tioughnioga River. This project is part of the Blueway Trail that runs the length of the River. The launch was completed in the summer of 2009.

One of the issues that the City must continue to assess is the safety of pedestrians who travel by foot or bicycle to Yaman Park. It is only accessible from the East End via the busy Exit 11 intersection off Route 81 located on Route 13. The City has worked with the NYS DOT to make sure the walk signals are adequate. As the traffic increases in this area, or new curb cuts/traffic patterns are made, this area should be reevaluated with respect to pedestrian safety.

The continued utilization of existing parks and open spaces, and respect for their condition by the public, will only be insured if they are well maintained. With a very limited budget at this point in time, the City is trying the best they can to keep its parks maintained and improved, especially Dexter Park.



## **GOALS AND IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES:**

**GOAL 2.1:** Preserve, maintain, and expand the programs and equipment available at Yaman and Dexter Parks.

### **IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES:**

2.1.1. Develop a master plan for Dexter Park for its land use. Priority should be given to programs and land uses that benefit children.

2.1.2. Pursue funding to obtain new playground equipment, facilities, and amenities at Dexter Park.

2.1.3. Initiate programs offering sports clinics at Dexter Park.

2.1.4. Showcase all City parks by rotating annual festivals among all City parks including Dexter and Yaman.

2.1.5. Initiate community gatherings at Dexter Park such as block parties.

2.1.6. Maintain/upgrade equipment and facilities at Yaman and Dexter Parks. Seek funding sources to finance these projects.

2.1.7. Develop a yearly festival in Dexter Park, such as an Italian Festival.

**GOAL 2.2:** Improve the facilities and infrastructure at Dexter and Yaman parks.

### **IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES:**

2.2.1. Maintain/improve/develop sidewalks and a riverwalk to improve accessibility and safety between Yaman and Dexter Parks.

2.2.2. Remove the deteriorated fence on the north side of Dexter Park and replace with new fencing, sidewalk, and shrubs.

2.2.3. Install garbage cans and doggy pots in park.

2.2.4. Move the East End Community Center to Dexter Park.

2.2.5. Re-build the Dexter Park building.



**GOAL 2.3:** Expand parkland and greenspace and recreational opportunities within the East End.

**IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES:**

2.3.1 Pursue funding to create park or riverwalk and dog run along the Tioughnioga River on the property adjacent to Yaman Park under the I-81 overpass. Connect riverwalk to existing one on Riverside Plaza property. Encourage local hotels/motels and restaurants to provide access from their properties

### 3. COMMERCIAL RESOURCES

The East End is a mixed commercial/industrial/residential neighborhood. As noted previously, a survey of neighborhood businesses identified over 60 commercial establishments. There are also a number of vacant buildings and green spaces. Neighborhood businesses include restaurants, retail stores, offices, hotels, gas stations, and dry cleaners to name a few. There are also a number of industrial facilities, which are described more fully in *Section 5, Industrial Resources*. The neighborhood has two distinct areas that can best be described as “commercial”. These two areas include the “highway commercial” area located near Exit 11 of Interstate 81, and the “neighborhood commercial” area, located near the intersection of Elm and Pomeroy Streets. It is noted that other commercial establishments are scattered throughout the area but not in a concentrated area. These concentrated areas are described in more detail below.

#### Exit 11 Commercial Gateway

Highway commercial areas are typified by auto-oriented development, as opposed to pedestrian oriented development found in traditional downtowns and in neighborhood commercial areas. This type of highway development is usually located along or near major transportation routes, such as a State highway, has detached commercial structures with onsite parking, and often has few pedestrian connections. The Exit 11/Clinton Avenue (Route 13) area of the East End is typical highway commercial development. It also serves as the primary gateway into the City of Cortland and is the first impression many visitors have of Cortland. The Tioughnioga River, and the proposed Tioughnioga riverwalk, bisect this gateway. For purposes of this Plan, this area is referred to as the Exit 11 Commercial Gateway.

The Exit 11 area includes a number of chain and franchise businesses, with at least five fast food restaurants, several quick serve restaurants, five hotels in or near the target area, a grocery store, a gas station, and auto repair and parts businesses. These businesses serve travelers on the interstate, as well providing needed goods and services to City residents.



Unfortunately, the Exit 11 Commercial Gateway does not provide a good first impression of the community. A new bridge over the Tioughnioga River on Clinton Street was constructed in 2008 and greatly enhances the site. Despite this, nearby development does not take advantage of its riverfront location. Additionally, a long abandoned gas station is located south of the River at the intersection of Clinton Avenue, River Street, and Pomeroy Streets and has been an eyesore (in spring 2010, the owner allowed the City, under a lease agreement, to make this a welcome center for the Jets. The building is newly painted. This has been a significant improvement to the site). Two nearby abandoned restaurants also detract from the character. The streetscape is largely devoid of trees and other landscaping and is cluttered with signs and large paved areas.

Furthermore, the exceptionally tall high-rise signs nearest the exit clutter the viewshed and create a poor impression of the community. The architecture is ubiquitous commercial development found throughout the country, leaving the area with no sense of place and none of the historic character that can be found throughout the rest of the City.

Riverside Plaza, a strip mall anchored by a grocery store and various smaller businesses, dominates this area. This mall, with several outbuildings, is located between Interstate 81 and the north bank of the River. The mall had been in a state of decline for many years, and eventually went into foreclosure. The Plaza was purchased by a private developer in late 2008. Based on conceptual designs developed as part of this plan by C & S Engineers (see Page 33-A), the new owner has subsequently begun investing in the facility and significant improvements were undertaken during 2009-2010. They include installation of landscaped medians in the parking area, removal of excess paved areas, installation of a riverfront walking trail, and needed building maintenance such a roof repairs, painting, and minor façade repairs. More intensive façade renovations are planned for the near future.

The City must work to create a welcoming sense of place for the Exit 11 Commercial Gateway that provides an appropriate entrance for the community. This includes upgrading the streetscape; adopting site plan regulations requiring more greenspace and limiting unbroken expanses of parking; improving the quality of business signs; reducing the height and number of high-rise signs; and developing minimum design standards to upgrade the architectural quality of commercial buildings. The intersection of Clinton, Pomeroy, and River Streets, adjacent to the Tioughnioga River, should be enhanced to create an attractive and welcoming gateway to the City. This gateway should help to brand the City and give the impression of a vibrant, progressive, and modern 21<sup>st</sup> century community.

## **Elm/Pomeroy Neighborhood Commercial Area**

Commercial neighborhood businesses are interspersed in the East End Neighborhood, including restaurants, taverns, bakeries, dry cleaners, and hair salons, and businesses that serve a larger market, such as auto repair shops, plumbers, sign makers, and professional offices. Nearly all of these are individual, locally owned businesses.

A cluster of businesses is located at and near the intersection of Elm and Pomeroy Streets, forming a small commercial area. Some of this area is zoned Service District (SD). This area should be further expanded, with small businesses providing needed goods and services to residents. This presents the opportunity to expand, while retaining the character of the neighborhood, it is recommended that the Service District zoning be expanded westerly to include the four corners of Crandall Street along Elm Street (See also, *Section 6, Land Use and Zoning*).



Typically, smaller businesses have a more difficult time in marketing themselves to customers because of limited resources. This business cluster, in addition to other neighborhood businesses, should work jointly in advertising and promotional activities to maximize the impact of limited resources. They should also work with existing entities, such as the Chamber of Commerce and Cortland County Business Development Corporation, to brand the neighborhood, perhaps along the theme of “Little Italy”. The City should support such efforts by securing funding for small business and microbusiness training and funding in order to assist existing businesses to grow, and for new, small businesses to locate in the neighborhood.

## **GOALS AND IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES:**

**GOAL 3.1:** Establish the Elm Street/Pomeroy Street intersection as a neighborhood commercial area providing essential goods and services to residents.

### **IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES:**

3.1.1. Expand the Service District zoning around the intersection of Elm and Pomeroy Streets westward to Crandall Street to allow more small scale neighborhood businesses.

3.1.2. Develop signage and design guidelines to ensure development is compatible with the balance of the neighborhood.

3.1.3. Limit neighborhood commercial businesses in other areas of the neighborhood.

**GOAL 3.2:** Support the development and growth of small businesses, particularly businesses providing essential neighborhood goods and services.

### **IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES:**

3.2.1. Seek funding to establish a Microenterprise Assistance Program to provide grants, low interest loans, and training to new and existing businesses with five or fewer employees.

3.2.2. Seek funding to assist new or expanding small businesses (five to twenty employees) to establish and expand in the East End.

3.2.3. Work with the Chamber of Commerce to assist neighborhood businesses to establish joint marketing campaigns and to brand the East End neighborhood with an ethnic theme such as “Little Italy”.

**GOAL 3.3:** Improve the transition from Exit 11 highway commercial development to surrounding residential neighborhoods.

### **IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES:**

3.3.1. Work with the City to develop design standards that require all commercial development/redevelopment on Clinton, Pomeroy, and River Street south of the Tioughnioga River to have a



residential architectural style (such as steep gabled roofs, wooden siding, and vertically oriented windows).

3.3.2. Encourage the City to revise site plan requirements for all commercial development/redevelopment on Clinton Avenue, Pomeroy, and River Street south of the Tioughnioga River to include lesser lot coverages, larger setbacks from residential property lines, greater amounts of landscaping, larger trees, and less invasive site lighting.

3.3.3. Seek funding to renovate and maintain existing housing on Clinton Avenue.

3.3.4. Maintain existing zoning districts and deny use variance requests in order to maintain neighborhood character and protect residential properties.

**GOAL 3.4:** Visually improve the Exit 11 commercial areas north of the Tioughnioga River.

#### IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES:

3.4.1. Encourage the City to revise the City sign ordinance for high-rise signs for businesses within 600 feet of a highway Exit to no higher than 45' and reduce the maximum size of the sign. As an incentive to reducing the number of signs, provide additional height allowances for businesses that share signposts. Restrict high-rise signs for businesses outside a 60 foot radius of the exit. An amortization schedule should be adopted to ensure all signs are consistent with the ordinance within 10 years.

3.4.2. Advise the City to revise its sign ordinance to limit primary site signage (not including directional signs or high-rise signs) to monument style signs at the roadway and require that such signs incorporate brick or stone, be landscaped around the base, and be externally lit. Signs should be no more than 8' tall. Internally lit and/or animated signage should be prohibited, as should the number and size of building and site signs. Businesses with shared entrances should share signs.

3.4.3. Work with the City to revise site plan requirements for highway commercial areas to create a sense of place, infuse more landscaping and greenspace into developments, and provide an enhanced gateway to the City. Recommended changes include limiting the amount of unbroken paved areas, including parking lots; requiring curbed and landscaped medians along the edge of the roadway that are of consistent design (similar widths, plantings and trees) along the roadway; limiting paved areas to the minimum needed; requiring landscaped medians for every four or five rows of parking; protection of mature trees; planting of new trees at both the roadway edge and in parking lots, requiring the largest trees that the site can accommodate; and requiring landscaped planting areas around the edges of buildings. Furthermore, all site plans/developments with water frontage should be required to embrace their waterfront locations and to incorporate water access into their site plans.

3.4.4. Seek State and federal funding to undertake streetscape improvements at the Exit 11 area. These improvements should be consistent with one another, and should create a unified appearance along the roadway including new trees, landscaped medians, and attractive lighting in order to create a welcoming gateway to the community.

3.4.5. Work with the City to develop minimum design guidelines for new buildings and major renovations to existing buildings. The guidelines should require pitched/gabled roofs on smaller buildings, stone, brick, or clapboard sidings, and architectural detailing in order to provide a consistent and attractive character to the area.

**GOAL 3.5:** Develop Riverside Plaza as an attractive retail and service center for the City and as a regional destination.

**IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES:**

3.5.1. Support redevelopment efforts, including sponsoring funding applications, to improve the physical appearance and condition of the Plaza and site.

3.5.2. Partner with the Plaza owner to attract retail businesses and restaurants that serve local needs as well as attracting customers outside the community.

3.5.3. Ensure that a western entrance to the Plaza is retained.





CONCEPTUAL PLAN



# City of Cortland Riverside Plaza Improvements



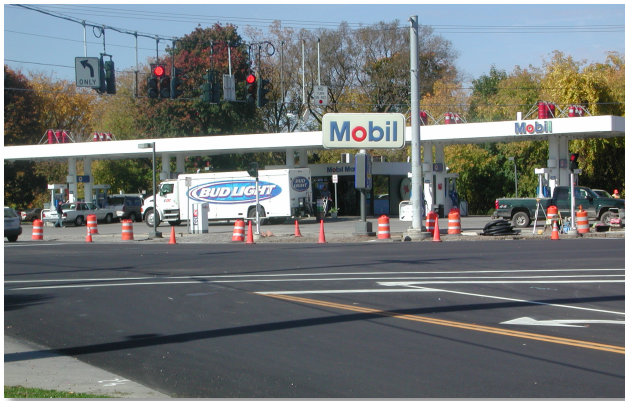


## 4. TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

The East End Neighborhood is well served by a variety of infrastructure and transportation components typical of an urban area. These include State and local roadways, sidewalks, water, sewer, stormwater, natural gas, electricity, and telecommunications.

### Vehicular Network

The roadway network meets the everyday needs of the neighborhood and City. Streets are generally in good condition, and the City remains vigilant in repaving, repairing, or reconstructing streets, as needed, and as funding permits. These efforts should continue to ensure quality streets. Truck traffic to neighborhood industries has been a concern of residents and has negatively impacted quality of life. It also creates heavy wear and tear on streets that



may not be designed and constructed for such use. Residents, industry, and the City have worked cooperatively to designate preferred routes for trucks and to balance the neighborhood's needs with the City's desire to attract and retain business and industry. This effort was apparently successful at the outset, but residents have indicated that problems are beginning to reoccur. Regardless, it is important that defined truck routes are established, maintained, and enforced. Impediments to truck traffic should be removed along

designated routes, while the installation of bulb outs, curbing, trees, and other impediments should be constructed in those areas where the City wishes to dissuade truck traffic. Those streets that will receive truck traffic should be constructed to withstand it.

As detailed in *Section 3, Commercial Resources*, Riverside Plaza has recently changed ownership and is being revitalized. For years, the private parking areas of the Plaza have served as a thoroughfare for local residents via North Street at the Plaza's northwest corner. The new Plaza owner has indicated concern over the traffic patterns from that street, and the current owner of the property adjacent to that section of North Street has asserted that the roadway is not properly located in the right of way. The Plaza owner has proffered the idea of reopening the eastern end of Riverview Avenue, which directly connects to the Plaza site, but this has generated concern among residents and officials. The elimination of a western access would increase traffic on other neighborhood streets, while increasing travel times, as well as reducing visitors, to the Plaza. It is imperative that a western entrance to the Plaza be maintained for the benefit of both neighborhood residents and the Plaza.



## Pedestrian Network

The pedestrian system is in generally good condition, although there are areas of deteriorated, heaved, or cracked sidewalks that can inhibit pedestrian use and/or pose a safety hazard. Individual property owners are responsible for maintaining the sidewalks in front of their property. Deteriorated conditions may be a result of, in part, the inability of lower income property owners to provide proper maintenance. The City does have an annual sidewalk program to assist owners with part of the replacement cost, but this program is typically over-subscribed and cannot meet all needs. There are also gaps in the sidewalk network which require pedestrians to cross the street or walk in the road, most notably around and near Dexter Park. Efforts should be made to ensure all sidewalks are continuous and interconnected.



There are also gaps in the sidewalk network which require pedestrians to cross the street or walk in the road, most notably around and near Dexter Park. Efforts should be made to ensure all sidewalks are continuous and interconnected.

New York State Route 13 through the City is maintained by the City regarding plowing, patching, stormwater issues, etc. The NYS DOT is responsible for major reconstruction projects such as the reconstruction of the bridge in the East End in 2009-2010. The DOT also maintains the pedestrian walk signals and the traffic lights on Route 13. The pedestrian walkway near the Riverside Plaza appears to be dangerous because the walk signal entices people to walk without halting cars coming out of Wendy's and the Plaza. This area includes significant vehicular traffic. The neighborhood and City should work cooperatively with the DOT on all pedestrian safety issues.

Other than traditional sidewalks, there are no other pedestrian or bike facilities currently serving the neighborhood (the Millennium Bike Trail follows Clinton Street, but no special accommodations or facilities for bikes are provided). The proposed Tioughnioga riverwalk, would run through the neighborhood near Riverside Plaza. This project will greatly enhance the quality of life for neighborhood and City residents and provide greater access to the river. This is more fully detailed under *Parks, Recreation, and Open Space* in Section 2.

## Municipal Infrastructure

Water, sewer, and stormwater systems are adequate to serve the current and future needs of the neighborhood, although portions are aging and repairs and upgrades are always needed to ensure continued quality service. The City must remain vigilant in providing a high level of maintenance to these systems. There are several concerns/issues worthy of note:

- Dead-end water mains exist on Regina Drive, Excelsior Street, and Salisbury Street. Dead-end mains require regular flushing to ensure proper disinfection and, with service from only one direction, can result in interrupted water service during water main breaks or other repairs. These dead-end mains should be eliminated by looping to other parts of the water system.

- A box culvert for stormwater control runs along Central Avenue. This culvert is in poor condition and is due for replacement or refurbishment. The deteriorated condition is limiting the ability of the City to undertake needed repairs to the street surface. Although the cost for repair/replacement is high, repairs should be undertaken before further deterioration creates larger problems.
- A number of properties share water laterals and meters. Each building and property should have its own lateral from the City water main into the building and its own water meter.

## Public Utilities

The electric and telecommunications systems are in good condition and provide a high level of service to residents. Electrical service interruptions are relatively rare. The area is also fully served by natural gas and this appears to be adequate for current and future use. Broadband internet service is also present throughout the neighborhood. Residents have noted that service cables are a visual blight on the community. As more and more households have cable TV, internet service, or multiple phone lines, the number of lines has increased in recent years. Burying utility lines can eliminate the visual blight, but is typically expensive. Visual clutter can be eliminated, in part, by burying the service lines to each structure.

## GOALS AND IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES:

**GOAL 4.1:** Reduce the negative impacts to the neighborhood created by commercial truck traffic serving local industries while retaining easy and needed access to such industries.

### IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES:

4.1.1. Maintain designated and signed truck routes to and from major industries in the neighborhood.

4.1.2. Develop traffic calming techniques/features to discourage truck traffic where it isn't desired. These may include raised intersections, narrowed intersections, trees, landscaping, and other features.

4.1.3. Eliminate physical impediments to large trucks on designated truck routes and ensure that roadways are constructed to withstand the types and levels of traffic they receive.

4.1.4. Enforce existing local traffic laws to the fullest extent, and revise/adopt new laws to ensure the ability of local police to address traffic concerns, such as truck weights, as needed.

4.1.5. Develop a proactive and cooperative working relationship between the City/neighborhood and local industry to address issues as they emerge.

4.1.6. Create buffering requirements for large parking lots including curbed and landscaped medians, vegetative screening, and decorative fencing.

**GOAL 4.2:** Maintain a western entrance to Riverside Plaza

IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES

4.2.1. Work with all parties involved to identify a reasonable and cost effective solution to ensure that a western access to Riverside Plaza remains available to residents.

4.2.2. Mitigate potential negative impacts to Riverside Plaza neighbors resulting from any solution that is implemented.

**GOAL 4.3:** Ensure a comprehensive sidewalk system that is well maintained and interconnected.

IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES:

4.3.1. Enforce City codes regarding sidewalk maintenance to eliminate deteriorated sidewalks.

4.3.2. Seek funding to assist residents with the cost of sidewalk replacement and installation.

4.3.3. Install new sidewalks where needed to ensure an interconnected and continuous grid of sidewalks, particularly near Dexter Park.

4.3.4 Work with the NYS DOT to ensure safe pedestrian and bicycle passage, particularly in the area surrounding NYS Route 13 as it traverses through the East End.

**GOAL 4.4:** Work to develop a riverwalk trail from the Riverside Plaza to Yaman Park. Encourage local hotels/motels and restaurants to provide access for their customers.

IMPLEMENTATION MEASURE:

4.4.1. If the County is disinterested in continuing the River Trail project, seek to have grant funds transferred to the City.

**GOAL 4.5:** Ensure adequate water, sewer, and stormwater systems.

IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES:

4.5.1. Eliminate dead-ended water mains on Regina Drive, Excelsior Street, and Salisbury Street.

4.5.2. Replace the deteriorating box-culvert under Central Avenue

4.5.3. Eliminate common water laterals where they occur.

**GOAL 4.6:** Mitigate the visual intrusion of overhead utility lines.

IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES:

- 4.6.1. Require new development and construction to bury service connections.
- 4.6.2. Investigate the burying of utility lines as part of other major infrastructure projects.
- 4.6.3. Work with utility providers to relocate services to the rear of properties where feasible.



## 5. INDUSTRIAL RESOURCES

The East End is home to a number of Cortland's largest industries. These include Marietta Corporation, a packager of personal care products for the health, food, and hotel industry and the City's largest industrial employer; Cooper Tools, an iron and steel forging plant; and Cortland Cable, designers and manufactures of high-tech electro-mechanical cable and synthetic ropes. Other smaller industrial facilities include Central New York Vault Company, and Overhead Door Company. Other companies are located nearby the target area.



**Marietta Packaging creates large truck traffic through the East End**

These industries are not clustered together, but are interspersed among the neighborhood's residences. These industries provide the benefit of good jobs and needed tax base, but the close proximity of industrial and residential uses creates some problems. The most pressing of these problems include visual blight, dust, noise, and truck traffic, all of which were noted in the Residents Survey. There have been a number of community meetings regarding large trucks using side streets to access neighborhood industries. Although solutions have been determined, more recent complaints seem to indicate that the identified solution is either

ineffective or is not being followed. There are also ongoing concerns with dust from unpaved parking lots, although negotiations between some industries and the City have resulted in mitigation actions.

The strength of the City's economy is dependent on the presence of these businesses. Tax and/or job losses resulting from these entities relocating outside of the City would be a severe blow to the community. At the same time, neighborhood residents deserve to live in a safe and peaceful area. Therefore, the City must work to balance the needs and concerns of the local industries with the needs and concerns of the residents. It is important to foster positive dialogs between the two so that problems and concerns can be addressed in an atmosphere of mutual respect and cooperation. This includes working closely with local industry to ensure they remain financially viable and profitable, while identifying cost-effective ways to reduce their impacts on the neighborhood.

### Brownfields

According to the NYSDEC, nearly every community in New York State is affected by contaminated and/or abandoned properties, known as brownfields. Brownfields are sites of underused or abandoned commercial and industrial facilities. Some, but not all, brownfield sites are contaminated with toxins. Left untouched, brownfields pose environmental, legal, and financial burdens on a community and its taxpayers. However, after cleanup, these sites can



contribute to the economic welfare of the community by providing jobs, tax revenues, and housing. There are a number of vacant and underused properties within the East End on former commercial and industrial sites, some of which may be contaminated.

The Brownfield Opportunity Areas Program, managed by the New York Department of State, may be a suitable option for the City in addressing the revitalization of brownfield sites. The BOA Program provides municipal participants with assistance to complete revitalization plans and implementation strategies for brownfield sites on an area-wide basis. BOA Program participants are given access to planning services, expert environmental and economic analysis, and environmental site assessment for strategic redevelopment of parcels. Fostering public participation and public-private partnerships are integral aspects of the BOA Program.

The BOA program also provides an economical approach to redevelopment and revitalization of brownfields.

## **GOALS AND IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES:**

**GOAL 5.1:** Mitigate the negative impacts of neighborhood industries on nearby residential development.

### **IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES:**

5.1.1. Encourage/require decorative fencing (masonry, wooden, vinyl, and aluminum) in place of chain link fencing, or screen chain link fencing with landscaping. Install new screening fencing where needed.

5.1.2. Work cooperatively with industries to install landscaping screening, including earthen berms, shrubbery, small and large trees (including conifers where appropriate) at the sidewalk line, the property interior, and around parking lots.

5.1.3. Sponsor funding applications for tree planting and landscaping improvements on and near industrial sites.

5.1.4. Require landscaping and screening improvements as a condition of local, State, or federal economic development funding.

5.1.5. Work cooperatively with local industries to eliminate the negative impacts of their operations, including dust, noise, and site clutter and debris. Establish local ordinances only if cooperative efforts fail to mitigate concerns.

**GOAL 5.2:** Support the continued presence, economic sustainability, and job growth of existing industries.

### **IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES:**

5.2.1. Work proactively with neighborhood industries to leverage resources for expansion, modernization, training, and other needs.

5.2.2. Work in a cooperative manner to address the physical and financial needs of neighborhood industries.

5.2.3. Seek funding for environmental hazard identification and remediation as needed.

5.2.4. Provide needed infrastructure (water, sewer, gas, telecommunications, and roadways) to support continued and expanded operations.

**GOAL 5.3:** Entice the redevelopment and reuse of vacant industrial sites with new-job creating uses that are compatible with the neighborhood.

**IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES:**

5.3.1. Re-zone currently vacant, industrially zoned sites to restrict heavy industry.

5.3.2. Seek funding, such as Brownfield Opportunity Area (BOA) designation to identify and foster remediation of brownfield sites.

5.3.3 Work with the Cortland County Business Development Corporation to create a strategic plan/policy to encourage the location of sustainable industrial uses within the East End.

## 6. LAND USE AND ZONING

### Commercial Development

One of the major catalysts for initiating the East End Strategic Plan process was development pressure occurring at the Interstate 81 Exit 11 area. This is further detailed in *Section 3, Commercial Resources*. As mentioned previously, interest in highway commercial development in this area has been a source of tax and new job growth for the City. It also provides many services for I-81 travelers, the City at-large, and the East End Neighborhood.

Eager to capitalize on this area's development opportunities, but hampered by a lack of design guidelines; better defined site plan review; and a plan, or vision, to guide development; this area has been allowed to develop without creating a sense of place, without sufficient greenspace, with little regard to pedestrian and bicycle safety, and, most importantly, with a heightened interest in rezoning residential properties to General Business. This situation has forced the City to now take a look backwards, see how it wants to maintain the residential character of the East End while going forward, while providing new business opportunities.

Two recent commercial developments proved to be somewhat controversial for the East End: the construction of a new Advance Auto Store in 2006 on the corner of Pomeroy and River Streets (and also fronting Cleveland Street), and the construction of a new Tim Horton's Restaurant on the corner of Clinton Avenue and Cleveland Street in 2008. Advance Auto was not new to the neighborhood. It once occupied commercial space in the Riverside Plaza under the former owner. When it decided to move out of the plaza, the City granted a zoning text amendment from R-2 to General Business. The project included the demolition of three residential properties and moved business development nearer to east side of Cleveland Street which was previously residential. Some nearby property owners felt this development devalued their properties and were upset that the developer did not offer to purchase their adjoining properties. It was also a growing concern to property owners on the north side of Pomeroy Street that commercial development would grow southward.

The Tim Horton's site included the demolition of two residential properties. It is open 24 hours and, as with any commercial development open all day, requires commercial lighting. It also has a drive-thru window which fronts on the property's south side adjacent to a residence. Fencing is provided as a buffer but there is no greenspace on the south side due to lot size limitations. Though properly zoned, the developer was allowed to construct a building that, to some, did not complement the residential character of the area.



**Tim Horton's is open 24 hours and abuts residential neighborhood**



While some people view these two developments as a step in the right direction, some see them as an intrusion into neighborhood life. Having seen the impact of these types of business development, and the continued expansion of the Exit 11 commercial area, the East End Strategic Plan Steering Committee believed it was important to set some parameters for future development. Visioning sessions and Steering Committee meetings produced the following recommendations for business development:

- Encourage the re-use of existing commercial buildings such as the empty Bob Evans restaurant and for sale vacant properties along River Street.
- Provide for more buffering and greenspace when developing commercial properties, especially those that abut residential properties. This is accomplished by supporting the City in developing new, comprehensive design guidelines.
- Do not increase the General Business zoning district in and around the Exit 11 area, except for converting the Saunders Construction parcel from Industrial to Commercial (see following)\*



**Example of poor industrial buffering**

\* It should be noted that there is a uniquely situated parcel in the target area: the 11.9-acre Saunders Construction Company site. Presently zoned Industrial, over time this site, which is excavated, has been completely surrounded by commercial construction including a Perkins Restaurant and a new Holiday Inn Express hotel. In addition, there are two existing hotels in the immediate vicinity and a residential area. The construction company is for sale. The Steering Committee is recommending that this site be rezoned to General Business from Industrial in order for future uses to be congruent with surrounding properties. Per DEC regulations, the excavated land must be reclaimed. The Director of the Cortland County Planning Department states that DEC reclamation requirements are “basic” and may provide challenges in reuse of the property.



**Saunders Construction Company site**

## Clinton Avenue Zoning

As shown in Map 3, following, there is a Professional Office zoning district located on the north side of Clinton Avenue. This zoning district is viewed as an area of opportunity for expanding neighborhood type businesses and creating more housing choices.

As noted in the Appendices, the Professional Office zoning district allows for, among other uses, single, two-family, and multifamily dwelling units, and mixed-use buildings. In order to maintain the existing residential appeal of the north side of Clinton Avenue, it is recommended that large existing houses either remain as residential or be converted to mixed use buildings that could accommodate small businesses and/or professional services that would



Mixed-use development option for Clinton Street

primarily cater to the neighborhood. It is recommended that the Professional Office zoning district remain as is and not rezone the area to General Business, as has happened on the south side of the street. This is seen as a means to encourage small business growth while not encouraging more highway commercial development. When reviewing projects under the Special Use Permit section of the Professional Office zoning district, the City's Planning Board and the Zoning Board of Appeals should consider the neighborhood's desire for smaller scale development.

If the opportunity presents itself, this Plan also recommends the development of more housing choices in both the Professional Office zoning district and the adjacent R-4 zoning district on Clinton Avenue's north side. The East End Neighborhood is strategically located next to Interstate-81, a re-emerging mall (Riverside Plaza), and the many goods and services that the East End has to offer. This area provides development opportunities for new housing for both young professionals and empty nesters, which are identified needs in the City. *Section 1, Housing* includes an illustration of a townhouse option that was acceptable to the Steering Committee.

It is also recommended that the R-4 zoning on Clinton Avenue's north side be preserved with the same desires for future development as stated above for the Professional Office district for mixed use development and more housing that provides choices not currently available or lacking in the City.

## Service Zoning District

The present Service District zoning in the East End begins at the Pomeroy/Elm Street intersection and proceeds southerly to Central Avenue in the study area. It extends a half block west and one block east to Excelsior Street.

This area is viewed as a continuing opportunity for small business development. It is recommended that the Service Business zoning district be extended westerly to the four corners of Crandall Street. If the East End desires to brand itself as “Little Italy”, this commercial area could serve as the neighborhood hub.

## Industrial Zoning

After much discussion, it was determined that the existing Industrial zoning districts be maintained in the East End. This part of the City has traditionally been an area where industry and residences have co-existed. Industrial uses are usually supportive of commercial enterprises in terms of procuring goods and services, e.g., patronizing local restaurants.



Recent problems have occurred with truck traffic accessing residential streets, particularly traffic associated with Marietta Packaging and dust that accumulates on industrial parking lots and then blows through the neighborhood. While the City has tried to work with management, there has not been a permanent solution. Another issue is that greenspace and buffering is lacking on some of these industrial parcels. The City’s site plan review requirements are aimed at all development other than single family

housing. There seems to be a difference in interpretation as to when site plan review is applicable when an industrial use changes. In order to insure that new industrial uses mutually co-exist with the neighborhood and minimize, to the greatest extent possible, issues such as noise, odors, traffic, environmental issues, etc. that have the potential to disrupt the calm and peace of the neighborhood, the City should adhere to a policy of reviewing any changes in industrial use under site plan review. Since the City is recommending changes to site plan review regulations to include more greenspace and landscaping, this would provide an opportunity to address properties that may be presently grandfathered from making changes.

## Vacant Gas Station

The vacant, former gas station centrally located at the Route 13, Pomeroy/River Street intersection has long been a community eyesore and has received much attention from the press. It is a blighting influence and poor first impression of the City. It is further discussed in *Section 3, Commercial Resources*. Ownership of the property remains in doubt, with the former owner’s attorney believing he has control of the property. This person indicated that he is at a point where selling the building is in the near future. It is this individual who also executed an agreement with the City in 2010 to allow the City to lease the property and make leasehold improvements. Painting the building has been a step in the right direction. The illustration provided on page 45-A shows how landscaping would dramatically add to this new coat of paint.





Cynthia Teter, RLA

## Vacant Gas Station Rendering





Gas station before and after

Assuming the site does become available for sale and redevelopment, the size of the lot, per setback and other requirements, would in all likelihood provide a challenge for future redevelopment if the building were to be demolished. Suggestions for future use have included using the site for a welcome center or encouraging the Ramada Inn to purchase the property for additional parking or greenspace. It is recommended that high priority be given to keeping the parcel on the tax rolls. Another high priority is that any future use consider the prominence of this property as a gateway into the community and that suggestions for aesthetic improvements be developed. It is recommended that a public/private partnership be forged to make this parcel attractive for future development. This could include, but not necessarily be limited to, seeking grant funds to entice the sale and subsequent purchase of the property.

## DEFINITION OF HOME OCCUPATIONS

Home occupations are ever increasing in the United States, especially given the ability to telecommute from home offices. The City's definition of home occupations is vague and needs to be better defined. While this is more of a City-wide issue than one exclusive to the East End, better defining the definition of home occupations, while not disturbing the residential character of the East End, is viewed as a positive business opportunity for this area of the City.

## GOALS AND IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES:

**GOAL 6.1:** Maintain the character of the East End Neighborhood while creating more business development opportunities.

### IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES:

6.1.1. Maintain the boundaries of GB zoning district as it currently exists at the intersection of Clinton and Pomeroy Streets.

6.1.2. Maintain the existing zoning districts on Clinton Avenue (within the project area) and encourage mixed use and townhouse development, as allowed by Professional Office and R-4 district zoning.

- 6.1.3. Maintain the existing Professional Office zoning on Clinton Avenue within the project area.
- 6.1.4. Expand the Service District zoning on Elm Street westward to included the four corners at Crandall Street.
- 6.1.5. Rezone the Saunders Concrete Company, a/k/a Cortland Ready Mix, Inc., located at 6 Locust Avenue from Industrial to Commercial.
- 6.1.6. Adhere to zoning code to provide for heightened scrutiny when considering variance or other zoning requests that cause commercial or industrial encroachment into residential zoning districts.
- 6.1.7. Support the City’s review and revise, as appropriate, the definition of “home occupation” in the zoning code.
- 6.1.8. Develop procedures for permitting home occupations that expands opportunity but protects residential neighborhoods from incompatible uses.
- 6.1.9. Support the City’s development of new design guidelines.
- 6.1.10. Support the City’s review and revise of site plan review.

**GOAL 6.2:** Develop a plan of action to redevelop the gas station property on Clinton Avenue.

**IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES:**

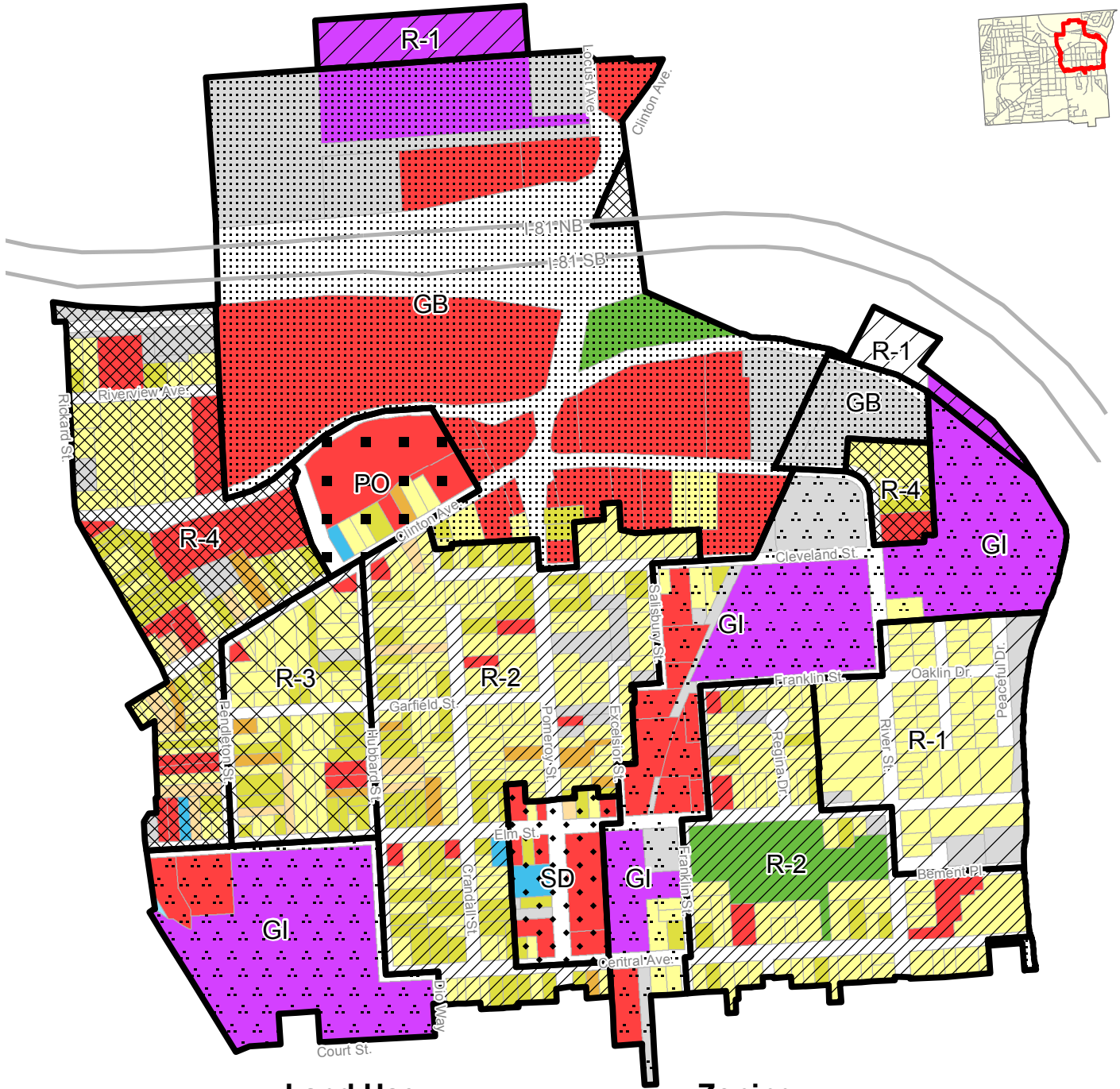
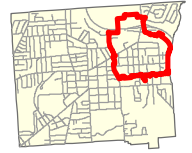
- 6.2.1. Determine the best use for the property based on current zoning.
- 6.2.2. Develop a master plan for redevelopment of the property, including the provision of greenspace and/or gateway improvements.
- 6.2.3. Strive to create a public/private partnership to facilitate redevelopment of the site, with preference given to development that keeps the property on the tax rolls, while providing needed greenspace at the intersection.

**GOAL 6.3:** Promote light, clean, and sustainable industry in the East End.

**IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES:**

- 6.3.1. Support all provisions in the current zoning code that relate to industrial uses and revise to prohibit heavy industry or any industrial uses that emit any odor, noxious fumes or degraded air emissions, smoke, or degraded water quality, noise, heat, vibration, glare or radiation, that is detectable at the property line, or that release toxins into the soil due to any operation, storage, or receivables, or that produce significant truck traffic through the neighborhood.
- 6.3.2. Support industrial zoning district regulations to allow clean light industrial uses such as research and development, high technology, light manufacturing and assembly facilities.

# MAP 2: LAND USE AND ZONING

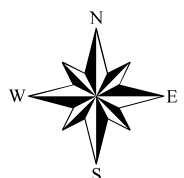


## Land Use

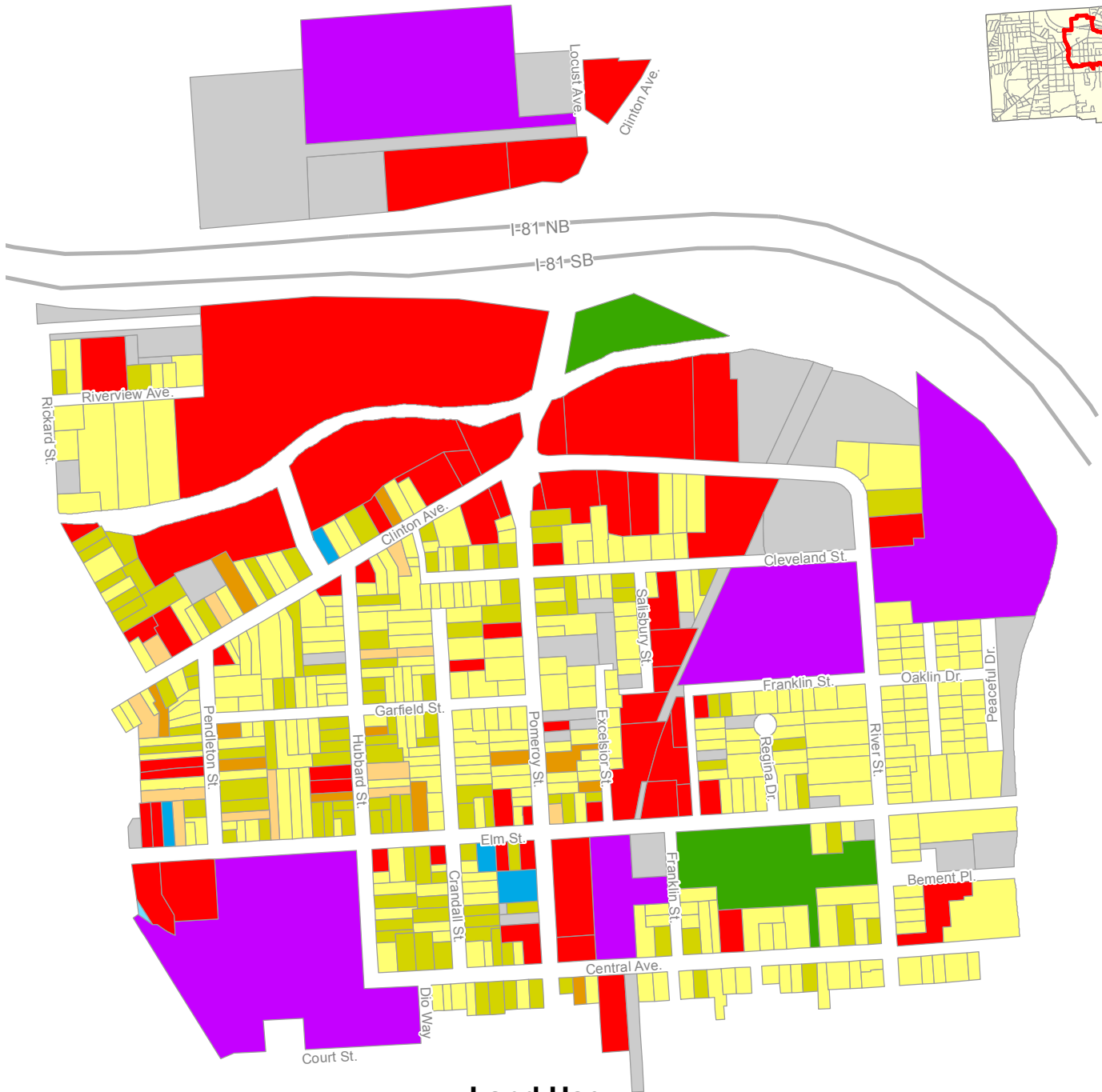
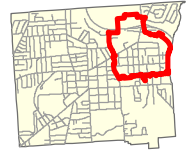
- Agriculture
- Single Family Dwelling
- Two Family Dwelling
- Three Family Dwelling
- Multi-Family Dwelling
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Recreation and Entertainment
- Public Service
- Community Service
- Forest and Conservation
- Vacant

## Zoning

- R1 - Residential 1
- R2 - Residential 2
- R3 - Residential 3
- R4 - Residential 4
- PO - Professional Office
- SD - Service Business
- GB - General Business
- CB - Central Business
- GI - Industrial



# MAP 3: LAND USE



## Land Use

- Agriculture
- Single Family Dwelling
- Two Family Dwelling
- Three Family Dwelling
- Multi-Family Dwelling
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Recreation and Entertainment
- Public Service
- Community Service
- Forest and Conservation
- Vacant





## 7. NATURAL RESOURCES AND THE ENVIRONMENT

The East End's most prominent natural resource is the Tioughnioga River which is the target area's northern and eastern boundaries. Much of the riverbank area remains in its natural state, with very little manmade improvements and limited river access. An exception is the improvements the new owner of the Riverside Plaza has made in developing a riverwalk on the southern portion of the Plaza's property. This is the only commercial property in the East End that has taken advantage of its riverside location (Note: there is a boat launch in Yaman Park outside the boundaries of the East End).



Information provided by attendees of both public and Steering Committee meetings reveals that the neighborhood is supportive of a pathway or linear park along the Tioughnioga River. This is also discussed in *4. Transportation and*

*Infrastructure*. Neighborhood residents also expressed an interest in maintaining the East End's "walkability", be it via the sidewalk system, walking paths, bicycle paths, or an interconnected combination. These non-motorized means of travel should be well-maintained, easily identifiable, and, to the greatest extent possible, accessible by all.

Since this is a neighborhood where industry, commercial establishments, and residences coexist, it is vital that greenspace be preserved and created. This includes, but is not limited to, limiting the amount of paved surfaces; requiring green medians, trees, shrubs, and flowers for new commercial and industrial development; and requiring adequate buffering between conflicting land uses, e.g., a residence and new commercial structure/parking area. As more fully detailed under, *Section 6, Land Use and Zoning*, the City's Site Plan Review process needs to be updated and reflective of the City's need and desire to preserve greenspace in the greater Cortland community, particularly in the East End. In addition to bolstering its Site Plan Review requirements, the City's Zoning Board of Appeals should strictly adhere to maximum allowable lot coverages and let variances be the exception rather than the rule.

It is understood that the City government cannot accomplish all of the stated goals in the Strategic Plan with its own manpower and resources. The East End neighborhood may want to create a Beautification Committee to assist the City in implementing the activities stated in this plan. This committee may be most effective in outreach to existing businesses that are grandfathered from creating additional greenspace on their properties. Sometimes a well-worded letter from a neighborhood association may alert a company to a situation they were not aware of. They may react positively because they want to be perceived as good neighbors.





The Committee would want to educate itself on appropriate shade trees, green buffering methods, and creating grassy medians in parking lots. The Beautification Committee may also want to be involved in the creation of a community garden or planting beds in prominent locations in the neighborhood. In addition to the obvious health and aesthetic benefits of such gardens, they can also be an additional means of drawing the community together.

As mentioned in *Section 5, Industrial Resources*, there are potential brownfields sites located within the boundaries of the East End. Currently, the City's Noss Park is the sole recognized brownfield site. As also mentioned, once cleaned up, these sites can contribute to the economic welfare of the community by providing jobs, tax revenue, and housing. The City is encouraged to consider pursuing Brownfield Opportunity Areas (BOA) Program funding. BOA Program participants are given access to planning, environmental, and financial experts for strategic redevelopment.

## **GOALS AND IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES:**

**GOAL 7.1:** Encourage non-motorized modes of travel.

### **IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES:**

7.1.1. Identify appropriate areas and develop pedestrian pathways, sidewalks on at least one side of the street, and bike lanes throughout the City and the East End.

7.1.2. Encourage non-motorized commuting by studying commuting patterns, the availability of safe pedestrian and bicycle commuting thruways, allowing residents to travel safely from the East End to other areas within the City.

**GOAL 7.2:** Preserve, maintain, and expand the vegetative cover within the East End.

### **IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES:**

7.2.1. Develop and adopt a landscape code.

7.2.2. Create a civic interest group to work with industry to install landscaping (flowers, shrubs) along unbroken fence lines, in medians, and elsewhere as appropriate to beautify industrial properties located within in the East End and to mitigate the negative impact and aesthetic associated with large parking areas, long fence lines, and large building footprints.

7.2.3. Seek grant funding to beautify street corners with flowerbeds.

7.2.4. Identify appropriate location for a community garden within the East End; pursue funding for such.

**GOAL 7.3:** Eliminate contaminated brownfields from the East End.

**IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES:**

7.3.1. Request proposals from qualified firms to provide planning services associated with the development of a Step 1 Pre-Nomination Study for a Brownfield Opportunity Area (BOA) Program application for former industrial locations throughout the City that have not already been remediated or otherwise addressed.

7.3.2. If BOA participation is not pursued, create an inventory of all possible brownfield sites within the East End, to enable landowners to apply for clean up funding, and to redevelopment these sites for various types of infill development.

7.3.3. Identify parcels that are currently in use that create environmental hazards and develop plan to mitigate or eliminate such hazards.

**GOAL 7.4:** Encourage employees of neighborhood industries to live in the neighborhood.

**IMPLEMENTATION MEASURE:**

7.4.1. Develop incentive programs, in concert with local businesses and industries, to entice employees to live within walking distance of work.

## 8. HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

The East End's cultural groups have included those of Irish, Polish, Lebanese, and Italian heritage, to name a few. The most prominent have been those of Italian descent. There is no place in the City where heritage has been celebrated more than the East End. This is due to two primary outlets: the East End Community Center and St. Anthony's Festival.



Dukes of Abruzzi

The East End Community Center became a repository of cultural artifacts at its inception. Over the years, there have been presentations held at the Community Center which focused on Cortland's immigration and the contributions these persons made to the City. These were very well attended events.

St. Anthony's Feast Day, established by St. Anthony's Catholic Church, is celebrated annually on the weekend closest to the feast day, June 13. This is usually a three-day event that includes religious observances, a parade, food vendors, crafts, and various forms of entertainment. For many years the religious observances associated with St. Anthony's

Feast Day were held at the church on Pomeroy Street and the entertainment and food offerings were held at the Paduan Youth Center on Denti Way in the City's South End Neighborhood. The church sold the Youth Center a number of years ago, necessitating the need to hold the entire celebration in the East End. It has grown considerably in popularity over the years.

As the East End tries to brand itself, many on the Steering Committee felt that one of its assets was its cultural heritage. It was recommended that the East End may want to be known as "Little Italy", or some other name related to ethnic heritage, and continue to build on this designation by encouraging more annual events with a heritage theme, or encouraging more businesses, restaurants, for example, in the East End as a means of building its economy.

Information culled from Steering Committee sessions also indicated that the industrial past of the East End would make for an interesting walking tour since many of the original buildings are still in existence. A brochure would be developed so that a self-guided tour would be available. Since the East End includes major hotels, the brochure could be made available at the Exit 11 area. Perhaps an entity such as the Chamber of Commerce could help with its distribution.



The Grange Museum is located within the boundaries of the East End. As the neighborhood works to revitalize its cultural offerings, it may want to include the museum as a place of interest to visit.

Since the East End is also home to the City's industrial past, there are certain buildings in and around the neighborhood that are architecturally significant and/or play an important role in the City's history. An example would be the railroad buildings located on Pendleton Street. These architectural jewels need to be preserved so that future generations may enjoy and learn from them.

## **GOALS AND IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES:**

**GOAL 8.1:** Recognize the unique place of the East End in Cortland's history.

### **IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES:**

8.1.1. Develop an informational brochure for distribution by the City, the Chamber of Commerce, commercial establishments, and other institutions detailing the history of and historic resources of the East End.

8.1.2. Identify a route for an East End historic walking tour.

8.1.3. Develop a brochure describing the East End Historic Walking Tour for distribution by the City, the Chamber of Commerce, commercial establishments and other institutions.

8.1.4. Design and purchase historic markers for placement on buildings and sites within the East End.

8.1.5. Seek funding for historic marker program for historic sites in the East End.

**GOAL 8.2:** Maintain an annual festival celebrating the ethnic heritage of East End residents.

### **IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES:**

8.2.1. Identify immigration patterns in East End.

8.2.2. Develop a festival that celebrates the heritage of ethnic groups who immigrated to the East End.

**GOAL 8.3:** Enhance visibility and patronage of the Grange Museum.

### **IMPLEMENTATION MEASURE:**

8.3.1. Seek grant funding or conduct fundraising for development and distribution of promotional materials and more signage for the Grange Museum.