

VILLAGE OF GROTON MAIN STREET CORRIDOR STRATEGIC PLAN

February 2007



Village of Groton Main Street Corridor Strategic Plan

Tompkins County, New York

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VISION FOR MAIN STREET GROTON

Groton's Main Street corridor, the heart of a busy rural community, embraces its historical roots while offering a variety of modern products and services to its inhabitants and visitors. Future development must further enhance the beauty of our surroundings, the comfort and convenience of our residents, the attractiveness to visitors and businesses, accessibility to the handicapped, energy efficiency, walkability, and access to the Owasco Lake Inlet while preserving its small town charm.

INTRODUCTION

I. INTRODUCTION

Subsequent to the Village of Groton completing their intermunicipal comprehensive plan with the Town of Groton, and in recognition of the lack of organization in the community for managing its Main Street corridor, the Village has generated this strategic plan to improve the conditions and atmosphere within the corridor. Collaborative planning processes, such as this strategic planning process, allow thoughts and visions to be shared that may inspire or define new ideas or resurrect dormant ones. This plan provides building blocks for creating a Main Street Corridor that engages the local community in affecting positive change. Moreover, this plan supports and strengthens the Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan and the recently adopted Town/Village Comprehensive Plan.

The strategic planning process allowed the community to identify issues facing the Main Street Corridor today and think about what principles, policies, and actions should be implemented to affect positive change throughout the corridor. This Strategic Plan should be used as a tool to identify specific actions to lead the community to their desired vision. The Plan can be used to better identify current and changing physical, social, political, and economic conditions, as well as to understand the forces behind such conditions and trends. The preparation of this document was useful in serving as the impetus for soliciting public input with respect to identifying the needs, development opportunities, and preferences for future growth; to prioritize attainable goals; and, most importantly, to establish a step-by-step process for achieving a healthy, vibrant downtown that provides basic goods and services to local residents and employees, as well as attracting visitors from outside the area. The benchmarked projects in this document identify opportunities for positive change based upon the priorities identified during the strategic planning process. The information provided in each benchmarked project gives community leaders a guide for implementation and resources. This plan should be continually updated as progress on identified projects is made and issues affecting the downtown change.

A \$12,000 Technical Assistance Program grant from the New York State Governor's Office for Small Cities funded this Strategic Plan project. The Village of Groton provided \$8,000 worth of cash and/or in-kind services as match for the grant. Thoma Development Consultants (Thoma) was hired by the Village to assist in the preparation of the plan. Additionally, Ken Teter, PE, and Cindy Teter, RLA, of K. Teter Consulting, assisted with the project and design elements of this plan.

Work on the Strategic Plan began in the spring of 2006. To assure local priorities were met, it was important to convene a committee of local stakeholders to guide the process. This steering committee provided significant assistance in the development of this Plan through participation in work sessions, assisting in surveys, and guiding the direction of the Plan. Multiple avenues of participation were available to the public to afford full opportunity for citizen participation.

PROCESS

II. PROCESS

STEERING COMMITTEE

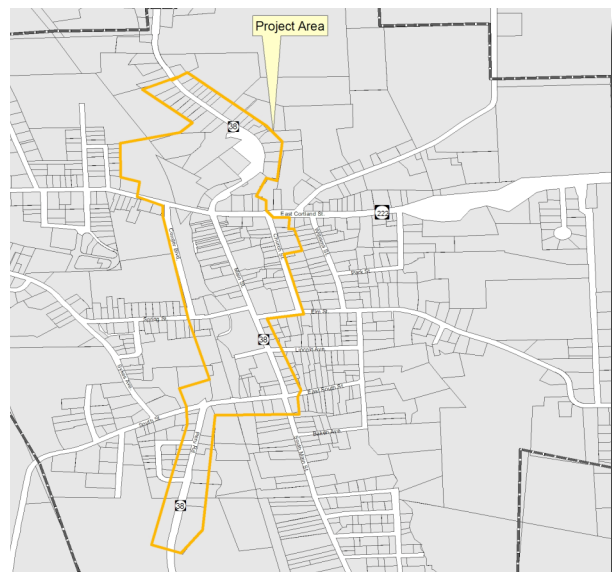
The Steering Committee, created by the local governing body, was composed of political representatives and non-elected community members. It designed the Strategic Plan, in part by guiding the process through consultation, participation, public outreach, discussing and articulating possibilities, and serving as a setting for developing the common objectives and strategies that were ultimately included in the Plan. Membership of the Village of Groton Strategic Plan Steering Committee was as follows:

Kristopher Buchan
Debbie Barron
Betty Conger
Steve Gobel
Frank Heine
Athena Kalandros
Ann Marie Kaminski

Michael Molino
Christopher Neville
Charles V. Rankin
Christy Walpole
Deborah Finton-Crouch
Dale and Karen Lane

STUDY AREA

The Village of Groton's Main Street corridor generally follows New York State Route 38. The boundaries are indicated on the map on the right and include the High School area at the south end of the Village to just shy of the northern Village boundary line on the north. The study area also encompasses Conger Boulevard and a segment of Church Street on the east. The most important section of this corridor in terms of Main Street planning is the segment between the intersection of Main Street and Cortland Street to the intersection of South Street and Peru Road. However, the Steering Committee recommended including other areas, so as not to exclude important fringe areas of the corridor.



PARTICIPATION

An important component of this planning process is to include a review of other relevant planning processes that have taken place, and incorporate the values that are consistent with the goals for the Main Street Corridor in Groton.

The Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan (2004) is a resource for all Tompkins County municipalities, including the Village of Groton. Its main focus is to strengthen County ideals presented in a regional context, allowing the County's comprehensive plan to be used as a reference for local planning projects. There are numerous places where this strategic planning process has benefited from the sound planning work done by the Tompkins County Planning Department. For instance, the County suggests improving the character of the built environment, including visually appealing architectural elements and streetscapes that encourage pedestrian travel. This strategic plan also contributes to another county suggestion of preserving and enhancing distinct identities, such as enhancing public spaces and utilizing waterfront areas as a resource. This plan helps implement the proposed actions and policies recommended in the County Comprehensive Plan. Similarly, this Strategic Plan utilizes and builds off of the inter-municipal Comprehensive Plan assembled for the Town and Village.

Visioning Sessions - The Village of Groton held two Visioning Workshops. One was held on July 19, 2006 and the other was held the following day to accommodate the time schedules of as many people as possible. The purpose of these sessions was to discuss the negative and positive characteristics of the corridor, as well as identify future desirable conditions. Approximately 14 people participated in the visioning exercises. The goal of the meetings was to generate a dialogue to contribute to the vision for the Main Street Corridor.

Participants were asked to list important attributes of the Village Main Street Corridor (positive and negative). Once these lists were generated, participants then voted to indicate which attributes should be considered a priority. The greater the number of votes, the greater its importance to the community. The results of these exercises are:

July 19, 2006 Meeting

Positive Attributes Identified (Including number of votes)

- ◆ Village maintenance and beautification (7)
- ◆ Downtown area is apparent (6)
- ◆ Presence of Owasco Lake Inlet (5)
- ◆ Location - Neutral place between Cortland, Ithaca and Syracuse (4)
- ◆ Stores/Shops/Art Gallery bring in people (4)
- ◆ Clean, family oriented appearance (3)
- ◆ Affordable (3)
- ◆ History and Architecture (2)
- ◆ Bank (1)
- ◆ Library, which draws people (1)
- ◆ Location of senior citizens (1)

In a similar fashion, participants were asked to list the negative characteristics in the Corridor. The results are as follows:

July 19, 2006 Meeting

Negative Attributes Identified (Including number of votes)

- ◆ Poor event coordination, and business communication (7)
- ◆ Buildings in poor condition (select sites) (7)
- ◆ Village perception from outsiders (6)
- ◆ Lack of importance paid to Main Street (4)
- ◆ Parking (4)
- ◆ Route 222 and Route 38 intersection (3)
- ◆ Lack of commercial space (buildings and space) (2)
- ◆ Lack of green landscape - trees (2)
- ◆ Trash on Main Street after the weekends (0)
- ◆ No crosswalks - lack of markings (0)
- ◆ Lack of traffic calming measures (0)

July 20, 2006 Meeting

Positive Attributes Identified (Including number of votes)

- ◆ Small village appeal (6)
- ◆ Centralized location (to Cortland, Dryden, Ithaca, Lansing) (4)
- ◆ Nice sidewalks with brick, lights, benches, and Graves Memorial (3)
- ◆ Owasco Inlet and reserve ponds (3)
- ◆ Village center feel (3)
- ◆ Electric power (2)
- ◆ Nice documented history (2)
- ◆ DPW and maintenance (2)
- ◆ Housing prices are still affordable (2)
- ◆ Schools (1)
- ◆ Green space, aesthetics (0)

July 20, 2006 Meeting

Negative Attributes Identified (Including number of votes)

- ◆ Run down rental properties and businesses in corridor (6)
- ◆ Excessive truck and motorcycle noise; traffic (4)
- ◆ Inaccessible inlet; also dirty and unsafe (4)
- ◆ Multi-unit low income housing units (4)
- ◆ Lack of design standards (4)
- ◆ Lack of business association for corridor; lack of input and time (2)
- ◆ Lack of business services; variety (2)
- ◆ Lack of cohesive promotional services locally and from Tompkins Co. (2)
- ◆ Lack of biking and walking trails (2)
- ◆ Lack of a destination place (2)
- ◆ Lack of commercial space (0)

After considering the positive or negative conditions in the corridor, community members listed desirable features they would like to see in Groton's future. The following are the desirable features that were identified by participants:

Desirable Features (From both visioning meetings)

- ◆ A reliable place to get what you want (services/goods)
- ◆ Wildlife/Ecological Sanctuary
- ◆ Specialty Niche Shops
- ◆ Visitors/Visitors Bureau/Signage
- ◆ Cluster services
- ◆ Develop park and Boulevard
- ◆ Inject technology businesses and develop business park
- ◆ Position for someone to promote Groton and its Main Street
- ◆ Bike trail/ recreation/ connectivity with larger trail systems
- ◆ Trees
- ◆ Groton Academy
- ◆ Uniform signage and improved facades
- ◆ Walking experience: in front of shops, along RR bed/ Inlet; Biking/fishing
- ◆ More specialty shops, open more hours
- ◆ Better business building layout, and keep important services (post office/ fire dept.)
- ◆ Community center: youth, arts, cultural groups
- ◆ One or two unique attractions; interactive museum (replication of vacation destinations)
- ◆ Fill industrial park and industrial space in corridor
- ◆ Housing: choices
- ◆ Better energy technology; keep low electric rates and provide other energy alternatives
- ◆ Blend Conger Blvd. Park with the community
- ◆ Less tractor trailers
- ◆ Successful community events and festivals
- ◆ More outside activities to interact with neighbors such as outdoor cafes

The steering committee then created the following vision statement, which is the focus of the suggested actions in this plan and serves as a shared sense of direction for future community decisions:

Groton's Main Street corridor, the heart of a busy rural community, embraces its historical roots while offering a variety of modern products and services to its inhabitants and visitors. Future development must further enhance the beauty of our surroundings, the comfort and convenience of our residents, the attractiveness to visitors and businesses, accessibility to the handicapped, energy efficiency, walkability, and access to the Owasco Lake Inlet while preserving its small town charm.

Mental Mapping - A mental map is a person's perception of the world or community in which they live. It is an individual's own map of their known world that is drawn through a thought process. There are elements in the natural and built environments that stand out in any person's mind. The Steering Committee participated in a mental mapping exercise to draw objects that evoke strong images or feelings within the corridor. Participants were only allowed five minutes to draw what stood foremost in their minds regarding the corridor. After the exercise was completed, observations of each map were made. Drawn objects were then categorized into paths, edges, districts, nodes, and landmarks. One of the more prominent features frequently depicted by participants



included the portion of Main Street between Cortland Street (Rte. 222) and the entrance to the municipal parking lot at the Graves Memorial. This is indicative that the "district" evokes the strongest images in the minds of the participants. This area of the corridor was also drawn in the greatest detail on most maps. It tended to be visually represented as a pedestrian friendly neighborhood, with building scales being appropriate for foot traffic. Many more businesses were drawn in this area as opposed to other areas of the corridor.

Also, most maps were drawn with an automobile oriented perspective. Though most features are readily recognized by any mode of transportation through the village. Surprisingly, only three out of the seven maps contained the Owasco Lake Inlet, but limited time allotted for the exercise was cited by participants as a hindrance for including more physical and natural features.

Photo Exercise – The Steering Committee also participated in a photography exercise and took pictures throughout the corridor that were a reflection of good places, features, or buildings, as well as visual representations that did not bode well for the corridor or the community. The committee assembled and paired off to organize and present the pictures they felt were best representing conditions and feeling about the corridor. Each pair then presented what was important to them by sharing their pictures and talking about their thoughts and feelings from their own perspective. A few noted detractions within the corridor included buildings in prominent locations needing minor repair and maintenance and vacant storefronts or buildings. Positive features such as the Graves Memorial, street trees, park and school grounds were identified.

Surveys – Thoma conducted three surveys for the Main Street Corridor Strategic Plan. One survey was geared toward Village of Groton residents, and a random sampling of the residents was surveyed. A limited number of demographic questions were asked with more emphasis being placed on Main Street's character, and community/business services. A total of 270 surveys were mailed, and 94 were returned, which is a 35% response rate. Some of the highlights from the survey include: 89% of respondents shop for groceries in Cortland; 71% of respondents feel the Groton Hotel intersection

(Routes 38 and 222) should be improved for pedestrians; and 54 % of respondents feel that most emphasis should be placed on development of vacant sites in the Main Street Corridor strategic planning process. The results of this survey are included in the Appendices.

Another survey was conducted that provided a rough catalog of building square footage, building occupants, and also solicited opinions from building owners and business owners about Groton's Main Street. Common sentiments among the building owners and business owners is that the existing small shops and businesses are valued, but it is difficult to compete with the big box regional retailers. Moreover, they mention the run-down appearance of some storefronts and buildings in the corridor that need attention. There is a desire for economic development and attracting new businesses and restaurants into the corridor.

A building conditions survey was also conducted. The general condition and the appearance of all buildings were ranked on a scale of 1 through 4, with 1 being "poor" and 4 being "excellent". The average building conditions score was 2.5, while the appearance of Main Street buildings averaged 2.2. This indicates that most buildings in the downtown are in fair to good condition, but the attractive appearance of most buildings is not what it could be.

Community Design – In September 2006, Cindy Teter, RLA and Wes Pettee, AICP held a public design meeting where approximately 25 people attended. The meeting focused on existing conditions of the streetscape, building design, sidewalk/curb conditions, and the siting of future development. Information was also presented on the usefulness of site plan review as a tool to implement the Village's goals as described in this Plan and the Comprehensive Plan.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

III. HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

The Village of Groton is located in the Town of Groton which is in the northeast corner of Tompkins County, on the border with both Cayuga and Cortland Counties. Similar to other municipalities in Central New York, the Town of Groton's early settlement roots lie in the establishment of military tracts: payment given to those who served in the Revolutionary War. As time elapsed after the war, these large tracts of land were divided and combined many times over, as the boundaries of New York's counties moved towards stabilization. In the early 1800's, Groton was included in the Town of Milton in Cayuga County which was subdivided and eventually became the neighboring Town of Locke. The story of the name of Groton is most likely derived from the fact that many early settlers were from Groton, Massachusetts and Groton, Connecticut. In 1817, the Town of Division was set off from the Town of Locke. In 1818, the residents of the area petitioned to have the name changed to Groton. The early name of what would become the Village of Groton was Groton Hollow. The strength of this settlement eventually resulted in it being selected as the site of the sole village in the Town.

An 1825 map shows a preponderance of residential structures in the settlement, especially in the northern part of Main Street. The west side of the Owasco Inlet had a number of mills including grist, saw, and fulling mills which utilized the waterpower. The southeast corner of the intersection of Main Street and Rt. 222 shows the Dodge Hotel which eventually was replaced by the imposing and impressive Groton Hotel, built on the site in 1853. There was a general store, school, saddle and harness shop, and a carriage shop. The Groton Academy opened on Main Street in 1837. Its first president and owner, S. W. Clark, claimed the academy was a crucial factor in the growth and importance of the Village.

Whether or not the success of Groton could be attributed solely to the academy, in just over 25 years an 1853 map of the Village of Groton's downtown area indeed showed incredible growth. The number of residences and roadways significantly increased, particularly north of Spring Street on Main Street and to the east of Main Street, in and around Church and Cortland Streets (NYS Rt. 222). Again, the area south of Spring Street and the area on the west side of the Owasco Inlet remained more business or "industry" oriented. The Village of Groton incorporated in 1860 and included a population of 596 persons.

The Village's first major industry was the Groton Carriage Works. Since 1820, the local Williams family had included a relative engaged in the carriage business, primarily near the intersection of Main and Spring Streets. In 1876, the carriage manufacturing plant of Ashley Williams was acquired for the sole purpose of continuing the business. By the time the company liquidated in 1908, it produced 5,000 carriages per year. The development of the automobile brought an end to the carriage business and the carriage site eventually became the home of the Standard Folding Typewriter Company. The location of this large industrial site paved the way for the southern portion of the Village, including the southern portion of Main Street, to remain largely industrial in character.

Other industrial concerns existing in the Village during the mid-to-late 1800's included the Groton Bridge and Manufacturing Company, which was the chief manufacturing company in Groton. Originally the company made iron trusses and bridges, and eventually added steam engines, grain elevators, and heaters. Groton bridges were used all over the country until they were replaced by those of concrete and steel. Many still exist today. A portion of one of the Groton-built bridges is included in the municipal park on Conger Boulevard. Other Village industries included cheese factories, several mills and smithies, a clothing manufacturer, and a sash and blind maker. The Main Street area included service businesses such as banks, drug stores, grocers, and milliners. There were also several churches. As the wealth of the residents continued to rise, simple, early settlement homes and commercial structures were replaced by larger, more architecturally significant buildings.

By the beginning of the 20th century, the Village of Groton was a prosperous, progressive community. It had industrial employment opportunities; a railroad, the South Central Line which connected the Village to Owego and Auburn and beyond; and Village-owned water and electric departments. In 1921, the Groton School building was erected on the corner of Main and Elm Streets. Competition closed the Groton Bridge Company in 1901, but by then owners Jay and Benn Conger were already interested in the manufacture of typewriters. Benn Conger was a State senator at the time. The Standard Folding Typewriter Company was established in the vacated Bridge Company building. A series of mergers and the purchase of patent rights resulted in the company becoming the L. C. Smith and Corona Typewriters, Inc. (Eventually the company was known as Smith Corona Marchant or SCM). By 1928, there were Smith-Corona plants in Syracuse, Groton, Cortland, and Illinois. In its heyday, the Groton Smith-Corona plant employed some 1,200 persons and was the keystone of the Groton economy.

The Village of Groton's industrial peak occurred during the 1950's and 1960's. Smith-Corona was far and away the economic driver of the Village. Other major industrial concerns were a Finger Lakes Honey producer (site of the present senior citizen housing complex/nursing home/health center), and Empire Culvert, a culvert manufacturer (located on both sides of Route 38 in the general vicinity of the present Dollar Food Store). Most housing in the municipality was single family. There was and still is a volunteer fire company and a paid police department. There were two supermarkets on Main Street, a pharmacy, a number of small clothing shops, a furniture store, a 5 and 10 cent store, barber shops, a Western Auto Store, and a hardware store. In 1955 a new high school building was erected on the Peru Road (Route 38) and a new elementary building was completed in the early 1960's on Elm Street Extension. Smith Corona used the vacated Groton School building for offices until 1967. In 1967, Smith Corona donated the building to the Tompkins Cortland Community College (TC3) as a temporary start up site. TC3 remained in Groton until a new campus was established in the Town of Dryden in 1974.

In 1983, Smith Corona ended its presence in the Village of Groton. The company had been gradually downsizing its local workforce and eventually consolidated the company in nearby Cortlandville in Cortland County. Its Groton buildings were razed in 1985. Not only did this severely affect the Groton economy, the contamination of the site by Smith-Corona made it impossible for further development without clean up. The

clean up effort was completed in the late 1980's and now the site is occupied by a Mobil Mart and pizzeria. While other smaller sized companies have started up or relocated into the Village since 1983, none compares to the size of the SCM workforce. The loss of SCM and the concurrent development of nearby shopping malls also affected the stability of Main Street area businesses, many of which closed.

Today the Village of Groton is primarily a bedroom community. Its downtown includes some basic local services such as pizza shops, restaurants, a gas station, professional offices, a car dealership, a bank, and a number of specialty shops. Today the original Groton School building is listed on the State and National Registers of Historic Places and houses apartments for seniors and people that are mobility impaired. The Groton Hotel still maintains its distinction as one of the most significant structures on Main Street. While many of Groton's 19th century buildings have withstood the test of time, a number of fires and demolitions resulted in an infill of more modern buildings and parking areas. This is most obvious in the portion of the Main Street Corridor area south of Spring Street, where newer development has resulted in the construction of buildings with varying setbacks and architectural features. This has impacted the "sense of place" found between one end of the Village's commercial district and the other end.

The ability of the Village of Groton to access Technical Assistance funds from the Governor's Office for Small Cities allows the people of the Village of Groton to examine their history, preserve what is important to them, and to better position themselves for the changes yet to come.

EXISTING CONDITIONS
AND ANALYSIS

IV. EXISTING CONDITIONS AND ANALYSIS

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Main Street Groton has several distinctive characteristics that make it a unique place. The most prominent segment of the Main Street corridor is the pedestrian scaled streetscape to the south of the main intersection of the Village (NYS Routes 38 and 222). The State routes are the primary means of accessing the Main Street corridor utilizing automobiles. A sidewalk network is also prominent along most streets, allowing for delineated pedestrian access. There are a number of distinctive buildings that contain businesses that suit a downtown environment.

In contrast to the pedestrian scaled part of Main Street is the area that is now catering more toward the vehicular traffic that travels the State routes. This area is defined by the current Wilson Farms and Mobil station, which are set back a great distance from Main Street. New development has occurred in a way that reflects a nationwide preference for traveling in one's own automobile.

The Peru Road area of the corridor projects an unkempt image and isn't an inviting entrance to Main Street Groton. Dilapidated and unmaintained buildings or properties on the east side of the road detract from any positive elements within that area. These structures detract from the well-maintained Groton Middle/Senior High School building and portray a negative first impression to visitors to the community. It should be noted, however, there is some investment along that stretch of road that bodes well for the future.



BUSINESSES AND SERVICES

Building Conditions - The Main Street corridor in Groton includes a collection of commercial buildings of various ages and architectural styles. Preservation of the historic character of a downtown is an important part of any revitalization effort. Unfortunately, while most structures in the Downtown are well preserved and maintained, some are in various states of disrepair or neglect, and their intrinsic architectural beauty hidden behind inappropriate signage and facades. Downtown design and site plan guidelines would provide a framework to guide the reuse of existing buildings, new development, and public investment in a manner that strengthens the fabric of the Main Street Corridor. Basic design guidelines could address such issues as the location of buildings, types of signs, and the materials used in building renovations. The main goals of the guidelines are to facilitate quality design and reinforce the character of Main Street.

As part of the downtown inventory, the general condition and the appearance of all buildings were ranked on a scale of 1 through 4, with 1 being “poor” and 4 being “excellent”. The average building conditions score was 2.5, which indicates that most buildings in the downtown are in fair to good condition. Only 6% of buildings were considered “poor”, and 8% were considered to be in “excellent” condition.

The appearance of many buildings in the downtown is poor, and gives the area a feeling of neglect. This is reflected in the average score for “appearance” in the inventory, which was only 2.2. This score indicates that more attention has to be paid to the physical appearance of downtown structures in future years. The lack of attention to quality design and basic maintenance has not gone unnoticed by the public. The poor appearance of buildings was cited by resident survey respondents as a major weakness in the area. The need to upgrade the appearance of buildings was also noted most often in the Business Owner Survey.

Business Mix - The Main Street Corridor is home to over 50 businesses and services. The businesses are predominately retail businesses. A review of the type of businesses allows for an estimate to be made regarding the primary market area for each business. The primary market area for 55% of the businesses is local residents; 32% of the businesses serve both local residents and visitors; and 9% of the businesses serve primarily non-local customers.

Both the residents survey and residents participating at the public meetings clearly identified the need for a full service grocery store and a pharmacy. Respondents to the Business Owners Survey and business owners that attended public meetings expressed a need for new businesses that will attract new shoppers to Main Street. A grocery or pharmacy will bring people to the downtown area, however, most shoppers will be local. The business community appears to be looking for new businesses that will attract day visitors, such as restaurants and specialty shops. The development of a niche, which typically focuses on one segment of the retail market, would be beneficial to Main Street businesses. A niche could also relate to an historical, cultural, or recreational activity.

Vacancies - The inventory of corridor buildings showed that there were few first floor vacancies. Residential units are the most prevalent use found in the second and third stories of downtown buildings. The vacancy rate for upper floors is much higher than the street levels. These vacancy rates were determined primarily through an exterior observation only, and may be even higher. While the overall vacancy rate in the downtown is low, many second and third stories of older commercial buildings are underutilized or completely vacant. There are a number of presumed reasons for these vacancies. These include the high cost of bringing upper floors into compliance with existing building codes to allow for use, the lack of strong demand for additional residential, office or retail space, and the lack of affordable financing. There are a number of businesses utilizing first floor spaces that might be better placed on upper floors leaving first floor space open for new shops.

Housing - Based upon the Building Conditions Survey, commercial buildings are in better condition and have better appearance than the residential buildings. Owners often cited the inability to charge a high enough rent as the reason for the condition of residential properties. There is a desire for higher-end, market rate apartments, although it appears likely that most downtown residents have lower incomes.

The location of several substandard residential rental properties in the prime commercial district is a concern to the business owners and the public. As mentioned above there is some housing on second and third floors over commercial spaces. An interior conditions survey was not conducted so the condition of those apartments is not known. The remainder of the housing in the corridor is on the north and south end and for the most part the buildings are in a standard condition.

TRANSPORTATION NETWORK

The Village's Main Street corridor is generally made up of State and local roadways, but New York State Route 38 is the Village's Main Street. This is the case in numerous small upstate New York communities, so the Village experiences some of the very same opportunities and challenges presented in other communities. In total, there are 2.4 miles of New York State routes within the Village, and the Department of Transportation (DOT) owns all 2.4 miles of the roadway. There are also 10.5 miles of locally owned roadways within the Village.

The New York State highways in Tompkins County are a critical component of today's living standards. These are the most utilized routes for people traveling to and from work, as well as for moving and distributing goods that are in demand both locally and regionally. They are also the main arterials for visitors to the Finger Lakes Region. Users of these highways can often be looking to move about a region in a quick, efficient manner. As is the case in Main Street Groton, the regional traffic is mixing itself with the local traffic of Main Street. As was noted numerous times in the residents survey, heavy-truck traffic is a prominent feature on Main Street and can be disruptive to the local lifestyle of neighborhood residents and businesses.



Vehicular Traffic/Safety - Generally, the street network within the corridor is easily navigated by automobile. However, the area of greatest concern is the intersection of Routes 222 and 38. This is the main intersection in the Village, which handles a considerable amount of traffic. The topography of the land immediately adjacent to the intersection is the root cause of some confusion amongst motorists and danger at the intersection itself. It is not clear whether the intersection is a four-way stop, especially to those approaching the intersection from the east. It is also very difficult to determine if on-coming traffic from either direction of Route 38 is going to stop. The intersection's

drop off to the north on Route 38, combined with the curve in the road, severely limits visibility for both pedestrians and other automobiles that utilize the intersection.

Pedestrian Traffic/Safety - Main Street Groton is very pedestrian friendly, however, there is room for improvement. The scale and location of the older buildings near the main intersection provide a level of comfort for those who walk Main Street. The older buildings front on the sidewalk and are geared toward servicing those on foot. Where newer development has occurred, pedestrian safety has been compromised, as building design and placement has catered to the automobile. This is the case with Wilson Farms, the Mobil gas station, and, Groton National Bank. These are destinations



that provide exclusive access for vehicles on their sole site, even though they also allow for pedestrian access. The exclusive access to individual businesses and buildings requires more curb cuts that allow a greater number of vehicles to cross the pedestrian path. Other sites in Groton's traditional Main Street area contrast this newer development by relying on curbside, on-street parking or a common parking area to service automobiles, thereby reducing the number of locations along the sidewalk whereby automobiles cross the pedestrian path.

Clearly marked crosswalks are also needed to meet the needs of pedestrians. There are few places along Main Street and intersecting streets and driveways where marked crosswalks are provided. An essential service for downtown is the post office, and the Groton Post Office is located at a site that is across the main intersection from where the rest of Main Street operates. An extensive span of asphalt separates the post office from the rest of Main Street, and there is a great need for a marked crosswalk at all points in this intersection.

Another critical intersection needing a crosswalk is where South Street intersects with Peru Road and Route 38. Groton Middle and Senior High School students utilize a number of different avenues to get to school, but not having a marked crosswalk for pedestrians and students who walk to school on the Village's busiest route creates a dangerous pedestrian atmosphere. Since beginning the strategic planning process, however, a pedestrian crossing sign has been installed between the two travel lanes of West South Street where it intersects with Route 38.

The condition of sidewalks along the Main Street Corridor varies from place to place. On the north end, sidewalks are inconsistent, as they sometimes do not connect to other areas of pedestrian infrastructure. The Main Street Area between East Cortland Street and South Street has sidewalks that are in fairly good condition, but there are several obstacles in the pedestrian path at various places. For example, there is an occasional temporary, or "A"-frame sign placed on the sidewalk advertising in front of some businesses. Along the east side of Main Street, between the Groton Hotel and the

liquor store, there is a driveway that projects a concrete curb into the pedestrian walkway. This is a tripping hazard for pedestrians, and is a difficult object for seniors and handicapped people to get around. The curb, however, likely controls storm water drainage to some degree. The sidewalk along Peru Road from the intersection of South Street to the high school is in poor condition for the most part, and lacks proper curb cuts in various places.

Sidewalks and pedestrian pathways need to be free and clear of obstacles and tripping hazards such as uneven and cracked sidewalks. Good quality pedestrian environments that encompass a variety of features geared toward a pedestrian are essential in strong, walkable communities.

Parking – Free, on-street parking is available on Main Street. There are a total of 56 marked on-street parking spaces along Main Street between the Groton Hotel and Main Streets intersection with West South Street. There are also 23 marked on-street parking spaces on East Cortland Street that are within the study area. The Village owns and maintains three public parking lots.

Public Transportation – Tompkins Consolidated Area Transit (T-CAT) serves the Village of Groton with year-round bus service, both on weekdays and weekends. The primary pick-up and drop-off point is on Main Street, at the corner of Main and Railroad Street. There is another bus stop location on Conger Boulevard. Bus route 40 provides service on weekdays and weekends, while bus route 44 provides service only on weekends. These routes provide service connections to such places as Freeville, Etna, Pyramid Mall, Guthrie Clinic, McLean, and the Ithaca Commons, to name a few. Fares are relatively inexpensive for a single ride, costing \$1.50 for an adult. Options such as passes and cards are available for a number of days, months, or rides, giving users flexibility in using the system. T-CAT also provides a Park and Ride lot across from the Groton Town Barn on Conger Boulevard.

DOWNTOWN COORDINATION

The Village of Groton's Main Street/Central Business District is not managed by the local government nor is there a paid downtown manager. Rather, the Village community has had a business membership organization, the Groton Business Association (GBA), for some 40 years. Currently the active membership is approximately 45 members which includes business and building owners, members of the Town and Village government, and individuals. Originally comprised of solely Village businesses, in an attempt to increase its membership, the organization expanded to include the Town of Groton. The membership dues vary depending on the size of the business and range from \$25 to \$100 dollars annually, although businesses may be solicited during the course of the year for extra funds for special events. The organization is not incorporated as a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit.

The strength and outreach of the organization has waxed and waned over the years. Currently the GBA is trying to do "more with less". Its membership dues primarily fund programs to bring in speakers, sponsor social events, annually honor a business

entity with a recognition award, and undertake surveys of their membership or downtown market. They do not undertake Village-wide community events on their own; rather, they assist other organizations in sponsoring community events. The GBA has recently been given permission by the Village to construct a business kiosk on municipal land in the downtown, and the project is just getting started. The GBA would like to update its business brochure which consists of a map and wayfinder information.

The GBA often provides support for major community-wide events, along with other sponsors. *Old Home Days* is one of the community's oldest events and this is held the third week in August each year. There is a separate committee established to manage it. The Groton Recreation Department sponsors two events: *Winterfest* which is held in February and *Art and Wellness* which is held in July. The Town and Village both finance the Recreation Department budget. An independent committee hosts an event called, *Apples, Arts, and Antiques*, which is relatively new. Each year, the Groton School District's Alumni Association has an *Alumni Picnic* that is held at the Groton Rod and Gun Club. Downtown Village merchants will typically have photos and other memorabilia available for viewing in their stores and other places of business. This event is typically held on the first Saturday in August.

The weekly *Shopper* newspaper has continued a tradition of grouping its Village/Town of Groton business advertisements in the center of the newspaper. Even though this is not prompted by a Town or Village entity, it gives the impression that businesses have a unified advertising strategy.

On a County-wide level, the Ithaca/Tompkins County Visitor and Convention Bureau is a strong advocate for promoting tourism opportunities for all County municipalities. Their most recent County travel guide was published in 2006 and includes a brief description of the uniqueness of the Village of Groton and also includes a listing of places for lodging and eating. This information is compiled by the marketing staff of the County Visitor and Convention Bureau. The guide is mailed to some 130,000 entities including major gateway sites of the Finger Lakes Region, local and regional hotels, consumer shows, and mail requests for the guide, just to name a few. It is also available on their website, www.visitithaca.com. Tompkins County is also a member of the Finger Lakes Tourism Alliance and the state-wide *I Love NY* campaign.

The Village of Groton recently applied for and received grant funding from the Tompkins County Strategic Planning Tourism Board, an arm of the County's tourism bureau. Tompkins County uses a portion of its occupancy tax funds for a competitive grant program whereby eligible entities submit concept papers on how they plan to advance tourism. This is a 50/50 match program. The Village was awarded \$2,500 to develop, design, and print a Village brochure. Eventually the Village would like to use these same funds to design and sponsor its own website.

The Tompkins County Historian is also using grant funds to develop brochures for historic interpretation in each of the County's towns. The Town of Groton brochure will contain information on the Village.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND UTILITIES

As in any municipality, there is a wide variety of infrastructure elements that play a significant role in both establishing the conditions within that community, as well as determining the potential for improvements and change. For purposes of this plan, these elements have been categorized into five primary groups: water supply, wastewater disposal, fuel sources, storm water management, and electricity/telephone/TV.

Water Supply - The Village of Groton public water supply primarily serves the residents and businesses within its limits, and to a limited extent also serves users outside of the Village (upper Elm Street – 12+/- users and upper Clark Street – 6+/- users). The source of the water is from two distinct locations within the Village. The primary source (the Morton Supply) is from a group of shallow wells (12 to 20 feet deep) located on the hillside along Clark Street. Their production capabilities range from 160,000 to 300,000 gallons per day (GPD). These wells gravity feed a 500,000 gallon storage tank (Aquastore 1994) located near the St. Anthony's Cemetery. Also located at the storage tank area is a recently completed Membrane Filtration Plant (April 2006) which provides the gas chlorination and additional filtration to the water so as to comply with all applicable federal and State regulations. In addition to this primary source and storage system, water is also pumped from this location into a 250,000 gallon concrete storage tank (1987) located along Elm Street Extension. This tank feeds a totally independent pressure zone (referred to as the "High Zone") in and around the upper portion of Elm Street to an area just below Hillside Place. To supplement this source (Morton), there is a group of groundwater wells located along Conger Boulevard, which assist the shallow gravity wells in maintaining an adequate supply in the storage tank on Clark Street. They are particularly useful in the dryer season of the year, typically June to September. The two wells used for this purpose are both 12" in diameter, are 110 and 115 feet deep respectively, and pump at 250 gallons per minute (GPM) each. They are manually alternated so as to balance their use. The water from these wells is gas chlorinated at the well site and then fed into the distribution system via a 24" main to insure adequate contact time. Both wells were redeveloped in 2001 to bring them to their present capability.

The average daily flow rate for the Village is typically 350,000 gallons per day (GPD). As such, the available storage now in place (750,000 gallons) is more than adequate and allows for additional usage. Due to the varying topography of the Village, the range of pressure in the system is significant. From the Clark Street tank, the downtown area typically sees 100 psi. The size of the network of piping through the Village varies from 4" to 12" and in general fire flows are adequate. The distribution system piping is primarily ductile iron and there is only one area of the system where corrosion is a problem. The corrosive soils seem to be mostly located in the southern end of the Village and consequently, any replacement work done in that area utilizes stainless steel bolts. There are approximately 750 total services (75 of which are in the commercial/industrial/institutional category) and the entire Village is served by the public water system.

Concerning the condition of the system and quality of the water provided, the Groton Public Water Supply is in good condition and serves the public with water of good

quality. While there are no issues of great urgency, there are several projects that will need to be addressed in the future. Some of the more important concerns are located in the vicinity of the south end of the Village. They include: (1) the replacement of the existing 6" main along Route 38 serving the High School, (2) the replacement of undersized mains along Hamilton and Corona Streets including the opportunity to loop the mains and (3) planning for the increasing demand that will likely occur. All of these issues must also be viewed in light of the anticipated growth patterns that are being discussed in the Village and the necessary planning that should be conducted to meet those potential future demands.

Wastewater Disposal - The Village is presently served by a central wastewater treatment plant (secondary treatment) located at the northern end of the Village adjacent to the Owasco Inlet and includes a collection system throughout most areas of the Village. At present the treatment plant is permitted for a maximum flow capacity of 350,000 gallons per day (GPD). During wet weather conditions (typically the spring), the daily flows will spike up to as high as 500,000 gallons.

There is one area within the Village limits that is presently not served by public sewer. There is a group of approximately 9 houses located at the south end of the Village along Route 38 where, due to the topography, the only means of serving this location would require the installation of sewage pump station. Due to the availability of additional vacant land in this vicinity, increased development pressure may necessitate the construction of the pumping facility. The collection system ultimately delivers the wastewater to the 12" main collector trunk line which is located within and immediately adjacent to the Inlet itself as it passes through the Village. Due to the high potential for infiltration into the collection system, the manholes located in the Inlet are routinely inspected and pointed to insure that they remain watertight. The vast majority of the collection system is either vitrified clay or asbestos cement pipe. With no recent internal inspection of these pipes, it may be prudent to consider initiating a program of videoing the pipes to detect leaks, failed joints and lateral connection conditions.

The most pressing issue for the Village is the need to improve the treatment plant itself. A NYS Department of Environmental Conservation Consent Order has been signed which mandates that the Village address and remedy two significant issues. They are: (1) increasing the capacity of the plant to a permitted limit of 500,000 GPD and (2) improve upon the treatment system to address elevated concentrations of phosphorous. The Village is actively moving ahead with the project and concurrently studying various options to implement an interim treatment methodology for the phosphorous. The proposed plant upgrade is slated to go to construction in June of 2008.

Fuel Sources - At present the Village is served by a network of natural gas piping provided by NYSEG. Consequently all homes and other establishments are connected to the system and do not rely on any combination of fuel oil, propane gas, coal and/or wood as the primary source of fuel energy.

Storm Water Management - Like so many other small villages in central New York, Groton is located in the valley bottom. In this instance, Groton is situated around

the Owasco Inlet that runs northerly towards Owasco Lake. The Inlet is relatively small but of sufficient capacity to handle the storm water runoff from the area.

The collection of storm water runoff in the Village is accomplished through a combination of both a closed system and open ditches. In general, the more highly developed downtown corridor and adjacent streets are served by a system of catch basins and inlets which ultimately discharge to the Inlet. The piping associated with this system ranges in size from 6" to 24" in diameter. As you go further out towards the perimeter of the Village, much of the runoff is collected into open ditches along the roadside.

As a result of routine flooding in the past, a series of four detention ponds have been constructed in the area of Spring Street. One is located part way down Spring Street, two are located behind Sykes Park and the other is near the senior housing/health care complex. The area of the Village which still experiences flooding problems is located in and around the north ends of both Williams and Church Streets. With runoff accumulating in the upgradient areas, the storm water is then confined to a limited space and piping system that will frequently overflow and cause flooding through the neighborhood. Often the culprit is the accumulation of debris on the culvert grates which blocks the free flow of the water. Regardless, this area remains problematic.

While adequate, the management of storm water runoff in the Village is at times not fully functional. Two priority projects would be: (1) to routinely replace undersized culverts and collection pipes with new pipes of adequate capacity and (2) address and remedy the periodic flooding problem in the area of Church and Williams Streets.

Electricity, Telephone and Cable TV - The Village is served with telephone and cable TV by Verizon and Time Warner respectively. There does not appear to be any unique problems or particular issues with either service. For electric power, the Village of Groton is unique in that it owns and operates its own electric utility.

The brief history of electrical power in Groton begins with the original generating plant that was constructed in 1896 and served 150 properties. For a brief period (1917 – 1933), the plant was leased but then the Village again resumed operation and responsibility. At that time the Village began purchasing the power from NYSEG and the power provided switched from DC to AC. Over the span of many years a wide range of improvements have been incorporated in the system (1998 substation upgrade, etc.), and at present the overall condition and capability of the electrical system is very good.

LAND USE AND ZONING

A large area encompassed by the Main Street corridor is the Village's commercial center, and is appropriately zoned as a High Intensity zoning district. The High Intensity zoning district begins just north of the NYS Route 222 and NYS Route 38 intersection. The district continues southward along NYS Route 38 and Main Street, and follows Route 38 as it bends and proceeds toward the high school.

Allowable uses in this zoning district include one-, two-, and multi-family dwelling units, rooming houses, parks, clubs, indoor recreation such as bowling and theaters, funeral homes, motels, tourist homes, offices, banks, retail services, convenience marts, restaurants, automobile sales and services, building supply stores, utility stations, handcrafters, industrial and manufacturing, and agriculture equipment sales. Other uses allowed in the district that require a review by the local planning board before they can operate are veterinary hospitals, home occupations, government buildings, churches, hospitals, clinics, nursing homes, bed-and-breakfasts, convenience marts, drive-in restaurants, car washes, adult entertainment services, gas stations, and special design developments such as cluster housing.

Some of the previously listed uses are compatible with the traditional scale of downtown Groton. This portion of downtown is pedestrian oriented, and there is a feeling of comfort in how people relate to the scale of the street, sidewalks, and buildings. However, some of the allowable uses, and uses allowable with special use permits for the High Intensity district could jeopardize the intimacy of the pedestrian oriented segment of downtown. The portion of the corridor south of Spring Street changes character, as more modern day development and infrastructure were built to accommodate more vehicular traffic.

As Route 38 turns into Peru Road, the character of the atmosphere changes even more. Aged strip development has deteriorated and vacant structures have become eyesores for the corridor. From the intersection of West South Street and Peru Road to the high school, there is less comfort for pedestrian traffic. The zoning district remains as the High Intensity classification until one reaches the grounds of the high school. The district classification then changes on both sides of the road into a Medium Intensity zone.

The Village recently underwent a zoning revision process in 2006 to draft amendments to the zoning local law. No changes were made to the zoning district boundaries or zoning map, but several areas of the zoning text were amended to clarify particular issues, keep policy consistent with State statutes, and fine tune the Village's site plan review process. Revisions have yet to be adopted, but the new language will better prepare the Village to handle future development scenarios within both the corridor and Village-wide. The proposed amendments will improve the quality of life for residents and businesses while considering the health, safety, and general welfare of the community.

DESIGN / STREETScape

Within a downtown, the most important part of a building for pedestrians is the first fifteen to twenty feet in height. This is where most people interact with buildings. Details and building components such as stoops, overhead canopies, pedestrian scaled signs and windows, lighting, displays, and plantings are all important features that contribute to the sense of place in small village main streets. Other considerations regarding appearance include well-detailed window trim, masonry, kickplates, and doors.

It is important for safety, as well as functional reasons, that storefronts have transparent facades at or near eye level. Incorporating glass windows allows a business or restaurant to display products or provide seating that overlooks the street. The transparency also provides a level of comfort and safety, as people inside the building can see what is happening outside, and the people outside the building can see and have faith that someone can see them on the sidewalk.

Groton's Main Street Corridor contains an inconsistent streetscape appearance, which has both advantages and disadvantages. Supportive features to a streetscape include items such as benches, awnings, flower plantings, street trees, appropriately selected and placed waste receptacles, and sidewalks that are both clean and in good condition. Individual site designs and layouts also contribute to the overall streetscape picture within the Main Street corridor. The older part



of the village center has buildings that abut the sidewalk and have little or no on-site parking. If parking is available, it is located at the back of the building or in a lot adjacent or near the building. Newer development has allowed buildings to be set back a great distance from Main Street, which allows vehicular parking to be located in front of the building, sometimes detracting from the visual quality of Main Street.

The advantages of pedestrian-oriented streets are that they promote safe walking in a community while accommodating vehicular traffic. Three common elements found in pedestrian-friendly streets include street trees, on-street parking, and generous sidewalks. Pedestrian-friendly streets have a calming effect on vehicular traffic, thereby reducing traffic speeds, reducing accident frequency and severity, and reducing environmental impacts. Main Street areas that are accommodating to pedestrians enhance the overall street liveliness. Shoppers are attracted to stores where public activity is happening, and where vehicular traffic isn't intimidating. Slower vehicular traffic also allows occupants the ability to see what is in the windows of the storefronts. Therefore, a pedestrian-friendly Main Street enhances economic vitality.

Newer private development along Main Street has been designed to be more accommodating to vehicular traffic. For example, the Wilson Farms and Mobil Express Mart areas have been designed so that buildings are located toward the rear of the lot while parking is situated between Main Street and the building. This new development is not consistent with the traditional village center "feel" of Main Street. Parking arrangements on new development should be located either on the side or rear of the buildings, or provide minimal parking in front of the building. This policy will help to locate buildings closer to Main Street, in keeping with the traditional village center sense of place.

In addition to the parking issue, large expanses of asphalt pavement detract from community character and contribute to stormwater runoff concerns. Large expanses of asphalt contribute to stormwater picking up sediments and pollutants that runoff quickly

and contribute to localized site flooding. Stormwater can run onto adjacent properties causing hardships. Although flooding hasn't been identified by the community as a significant issue, the volume and speed of runoff contributes to contamination of the Owasco Lake Inlet. Future site plans reviewed by the Planning Board should consider breaking up large expanses of asphalt with plantings, trees and grass, to allow absorption of rain and stormwater, so the soils can filter out sediment and contaminants that would negatively affect the Owasco Lake Inlet. Planting trees in and around paved parking areas also helps provide shade for parking vehicles, and reduces the ambient temperature around the parking lot. There are also aesthetic benefits to planting trees, shrubs, and grass around development. Landscaping makes the built environment, storefronts, and parking areas more attractive and inviting.

The Village of Groton needs to consider a pedestrian-friendly Main Street in context with local conditions, considering its on-street parking configuration, building usage, degree and type of non-motorist activity, and percentage of truck traffic. A Main Street should not be solely designed for ease of use by tractor-trailers and vehicular traffic at the expense of the local community, aesthetics, and pedestrian safety. Balancing the needs of multi-modal transportation users will ultimately provide a decent Main Street environment.

HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL RESOURCE PROTECTION

No known cultural resource surveys of historic places have been undertaken in the Village of Groton. The northern part of the Village Main Street Corridor (north of Spring Street) consists of a number of late 19th and early 20th century commercial and residential buildings. As mentioned, some of the buildings have had historically inappropriate additions or alterations, however, some appear to be intact. This same part of the Main Street Corridor Study area is often viewed as the heart of the downtown. Other than the old Groton School building (now Schoolhouse Gardens) being individually listed on the State and National Register of Historic Places, there are no known records of other property listings in the Corridor. Changes to the facades of these potentially historic buildings are not protected by any local historic preservation law or other zoning ordinance. If there is a change in land use, this may trigger site plan review at which time exterior changes may be reviewed by the Village Planning Board. This would be the only time a Village entity would have a say in a change to the exterior of a privately owned building.

PARKS, RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE

The National Park and Recreation Association recommends a standard of five acres per 1,000 people for a community park. Considering the Village of Groton's 2000 Census population was 2,470, the community needs 12.35 acres of parkland. Groton Memorial Park is 17.74 acres when you consider the entire parcel, but half of that is not accessible for recreation. Within the corridor, the creek-side park on Conger Boulevard, next to the Owasco Lake Inlet, is 10.72 acres in size. Considering those two parks alone, there is more than enough parkland in the community. Even though the quantity of Groton's parkland is sufficient, the creek-side park within the study area needs to function better. The existing gazebo is a nice feature, but it is situated and positioned in an awkward location. One benefit to its location is that it provides the elderly or mobility-impaired people to hear and see a community performance from their own vehicles without having to get out.

One of the most important assets the corridor possesses is the presence of the Owasco Lake Inlet. The water body provides a unique feature to both the built and natural landscape. The stream is not a navigable waterway, but it is an important feature that should be enhanced and capitalized on within the Main Street corridor. Potential exists to accentuate the stream's presence at the park located on Conger Boulevard and behind the municipal parking lot located on



Main Street. Private development should also take advantage of the aesthetic potential of the stream by designing and orienting future land use changes and site plans to enhance the stream's presence. Public spaces could be provided or enhanced as part of private development, but spaces owned and managed by the community are perceived as more accessible and civic in nature.

As with any recreation facility, the routine maintenance and continued upkeep of the Conger Boulevard park is essential. If a spiral of deterioration and degradation begins, it becomes increasingly difficult to stop the momentum and reverse the trend. In conjunction with this is the concern for vandalism, which can sometimes lead to other illegal activities and petty crime. For the continued success and enjoyment of the park, it is critical that the Village, its citizens, and the local law enforcement community make a concerted effort to minimize vandalism and keep the park safe. Vandalized property must immediately be repaired to set the tone that this park is very important to the Village.

Both the Village of Groton and private property owners can benefit from preserving and creating open space. While the cost of obtaining and preserving open space may be great, it has been proven that the return in taxes from the enhanced value

of real estate in the vicinity of new and existing parks and open spaces, as well as income from betterments, ensures strong financial benefits for the community. Past analysis of economic benefits provide a compelling reason for the Village of Groton to preserve open space within the corridor.

ACTION AGENDA

V. ACTION AGENDA

Via the process detailed above, the Advisory Committee, in tandem with Thoma Development Consultants, developed specific actions that, if undertaken, should bring positive change for Main Street, Groton. These actions are benchmarked below. Each benchmarked project describes the issue to be addressed, the basic tasks needed to implement the project, the indicator to measure success, the project leader, project partners, and potential resources. An identified resource may be a potential funding source for the project, or may be an entity that can provide technical assistance in project development. While this Action Agenda and the projects benchmarked herein provide a blueprint for revitalizing Groton's Main Street area, this Action Agenda should be considered a living document that should be reevaluated and updated as projects are completed and priorities change.

BENCHMARK # 1

PROBLEM/OPPORTUNITY 1 – Riverwalk Trail / Park

The Village of Groton's Main Street corridor is blessed with a natural water feature that can serve as a focal point for community revitalization efforts. Fortunately, a number of Main Street buildings are located in viewing proximity of the Owasco Lake Inlet. The municipal park on Conger Boulevard should also take advantage of being adjacent to such a natural feature. Many communities work with an existing water feature in the physical environment to enhance their sense of place. A well-managed water resource will provide improved community aesthetics, community identity, an inviting environment for pedestrians, and a catalyst for revitalization. Blending the natural environment with built environment of the Main Street corridor will build civic pride and provide a foundation for promoting the community.

PROJECT 1.1

Create a parks master plan – A parks master plan will set forth an approach to providing parks and recreation services to the Village of Groton. A few recreational, scenic, cultural, historic, and open space resources exist within the Main Street corridor, but should be included as a component of a Village-wide effort to coordinate open space and recreational amenities. The parks master plan should focus on an interconnected system, linked by a greenway trail. Development of parks and trails, as well as management policies for the system should help shape the parks master plan.

INDICATOR – Municipally adopted parks master plan

TASKS

- Appoint a committee of primarily local representatives, and include county government officials, property owners, and other representatives to inventory and guide development of recreational lands in the Village.
- Involve the public in shaping the parks master plan to solicit opinions and feedback.
- Assess issues of proximity, accessibility, park connectivity and equity among village residents and park users.
- Identify park sites, their size, facilities and equipment at each site, function that each site serves, and conditions of the site, equipment and facilities.

- Stress how park areas in the Main Street Corridor should impact and shape new development and built environment.
- Stress how new development should accentuate park and open space resources, to make the area inviting and welcoming with a distinct sense of place.

PROJECT LEADER

Village of Groton

POTENTIAL PARTNERS

Town of Groton
 Village of Freeville
 Tompkins County Planning Department
 Property Owners

RESOURCES

Village of Groton
 NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation
 NYS Department of State Quality Communities Program
 Tompkins County

PROJECT 1.2

Relocate the creek-side park from Conger Boulevard to Main Street – Relocating and redesigning this park is essential to achieve maximum enjoyment, use, function, and interconnectivity with other areas on Main Street. The focus of the park should be on informal recreation, serving recreational and social purposes. Addressing landscaping issues, orientation of the gazebo, placement of picnic tables, historic bridge utilization, and shoreline enhancements will make the area more inviting and usable for various community or private functions. Relocating the park amenities will provide a “village green” right in the heart of the village center. Main Street will benefit from having an attractive, user-friendly, and functional park space right within the central business district. The village must strive to balance the parking needs of merchants and building tenants with the importance of having a highly visible greenspace. The majority of parking should be located on Conger Boulevard, but minimal parking could also be considered on the East side of the Owasco Lake Outlet.

INDICATOR – Park relocation, and increased usage

TASKS

- Modify the current Conger Boulevard park into a parking area. The parking lot needs sufficient lighting and visibility for safety purposes. Moreover, a green buffer strip should be provided to help filter and slow stormwater runoff from the parking lot to Owasco Lake Inlet. A more convenient and functional handicapped accessible bridge needs to be installed to accommodate increased pedestrian traffic.
- Coordinate with adjacent property owners on the east side of the Inlet about parking options for Main Street, and accessibility for park users.
- Remove parking surface from the existing municipal parking lot, and install landscaping, trees, grass, picnic facilities, lighting, trash receptacles, and a path network. Relocate the existing gazebo to the new recreational park area and orient to accommodate gatherings and small performances.
- Through the parks master plan, and in consultation with appropriate entities, clean, enhance, and stabilize the shoreline of the Owasco Lake Inlet, so that it is a more attractive and inviting natural feature within the Main Street corridor.
- Reuse the historic bridge by making it a part of the riverwalk trail or relocate within the park for use as a stage.

PROJECT LEADER

Village of Groton

POTENTIAL PARTNERS

Town of Groton
New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
US Army Corps of Engineers
Tompkins County Planning Department
New York State Office of Parks Recreation and Historic Preservation

RESOURCES

Village funds
NYS Department of State
New York State Environmental Protection Fund

PROJECT 1.3

Install greenspace in new Conger Boulevard municipal parking lot around pedestrian bridge and shoreline – Current conditions of the shoreline on the east and west side of the inlet and immediate surroundings are unattractive. The new Main Street park features should extend across the inlet to enhance the visual presence of the stream near the parking lot on Conger Boulevard. New greenspace at the back edge of the parking lot will not only enhance the beauty of the parking lot and stream, but will also help with reducing the negative impacts of stormwater runoff into the Owasco Lake Inlet. Improvements should be designed to make the Inlet’s presence more inviting for those on Main Street, and enhance the connection between Main Street and the inlet.

INDICATOR – New appearance of Owasco Lake Inlet from the Conger Boulevard vantage Point

TASKS

- Establish parking spaces against Main Street buildings where available, to reduce the amount of parking along the edge of the Inlet.
- In accordance with the potential recommended parks master plan, install greenspace and landscaping on the backside of the municipal parking lot near the Inlet. Greenspace should include lighting for safety at night. Install defined entrance to pedestrian bridge by using stamped asphalt or concrete as a path to the parking lot.
- Install a sign on Mian St. to identify where the Conger Boulevard parking lot and pedestrian bridge are located. Utilize existing sign infrastructure to install new sign (use the “P” parking sign infrastructure).
- Through the parks master plan, and in consultation with appropriate entities, clean, enhance, and stabilize the shoreline of the Owasco Lake Inlet, so that it is a more attractive and inviting natural feature within the Main Street corridor.

PROJECT LEADER

Village of Groton

POTENTIAL PARTNERS

Local business owners
Local property owners
New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
US Army Corps of Engineers

RESOURCES

Village funds
NYS Department of State
New York State Environmental Protection Fund

PROJECT 1.4

Develop a riverwalk trail – A riverwalk trail or greenway trail will help to develop an interconnected park system. Trails and walking paths provide people the opportunity to walk throughout communities. Generally, people that have access to walkways that connect to multiple destinations walk more often than those who don't have access to an interconnected trail or sidewalk. Providing inviting pedestrian infrastructure in Groton's Main Street corridor reduces the need for people to drive in their cars to cross town or run a quick errand. People need to feel comfortable and safe while walking, so the greenway or riverwalk trail needs to provide adequate lighting, visibility, and handicapped accessible surface for disadvantaged and elderly populations. The trail needs to be a minimum of five feet in width to accommodate a clear, unobstructed space for two individuals to walk side by side. However if the trail was to be a multi-user trail that allowed bikes and other forms of transportation, the trail would need to be wider. If the trail is ever adjacent to a building or fence, an additional one-to-two feet of "shy space" should be provided. A greenway and trail along the inlet will not only be a useful feature for local residents, but will differentiate Groton from other downtowns in the area and will be a springboard for economic revitalization. The trail will also have the ability to connect to a larger trail network outside of the Village.

INDICATOR – Interconnected park system linked by trail network

TASKS

- Develop and adopt a parks master plan as detailed in Project 1.1.
- Identify and solicit cooperation from private property owners where necessary.
- Seek funding partners to help finance the development of new interconnected riverwalk trail.

PROJECT LEADER

Village of Groton

POTENTIAL PARTNERS

Town of Groton
Village of Freeville
Tompkins County Planning Department
Groton Business Association

RESOURCES

Village Funds
SAFETEA-LU (Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient, Transportation Equity Act)
New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation

BENCHMARK #2

PROBLEM/OPPORTUNITY 2 – Downtown Coordination

The Groton Business Association serves the Village of Groton and greater Groton community. In order for positive and proactive change to occur, and for the strategies and recommendations of this and other plans to be implemented, a framework for implementation must be established. Currently, no organization has, as its sole mission, a focus on the Groton Main Street area. There are a number of organizational models that could be utilized, ranging from a loose affiliation or network of existing groups or organizations similar to what exists today, to a highly structured, incorporated, non-profit organization. Due to the small nature of the downtown, it is unlikely that a highly structured Main Street program can be developed. Some type of organization, however, is vital to the success of the downtown, and downtown businesses.

At some point, a more formal “Main Street” program would greatly benefit the downtown. The National Trust for Historic Preservation created the Main Street™ model and it has been successfully used to revitalize downtowns throughout the nation. The program outlines four broad areas important to downtown revitalization including Organization, Design, Promotion, and Economic Restructuring. It also stresses that revitalization efforts undertaken in partnership with the various downtown stakeholders, and that efforts must be incremental in nature. A formal Main Street Program usually has a paid staff person, a Main Street Manager, who runs the program. Groton is likely not large enough to sustain a Main Street program of its own, but could partner with other nearby communities to share a Main Street Manager.

PROJECT 2.1

Establish a subcommittee within the Groton Business Association to focus on Main Street and the village center – The Groton Business Association should organize a branch of GBA individuals to head up efforts toward a the downtown Groton community and the Main Street area. The primary focus of a subcommittee should remain on the village center. At the least, this organization of members, residents and property owners should meet bi-monthly to discuss mutual issues of concern. This group within the GBA should work to organize one or two small events per year, and should tackle other downtown projects, such a joint hours, business mentoring, Main Street promotion, and similar initiatives. This committee should focus on the four points of the Main Street™ approach (Organization, Design, Promotion, and Economic Restructuring).

INDICATOR – Subcommittee members pursuing Main Street efforts

TASKS

- Identify a core group of individuals to act as a base for the subcommittee.
- Core members, or representative thereof, should attend available Main Street/downtown revitalization training workshops, such as the New York Conference of Mayor’s Main Street Conference.
- Core members should develop a plan of action for initial activities.
- Bring together all business and property owners, as well as government and interested individuals at re-focusing meetings.
- Implement revitalization activities, focusing on small, easily accomplished, highly visible projects first.

PROJECT LEADER

Groton Business Association

POTENTIAL PARTNERS

Village of Groton
Chamber of Commerce
Downtown Property Owners
Downtown Business Owners

RESOURCES

Downtown Business/Property Owners
Thoma Development Consultants

BENCHMARK #3

PROBLEM/OPPORTUNITY 3 – Design/Land Use

Community character can be built by private sector entities that redevelop properties or construct new facilities on available land. Communities have the ability to guide private development in the way it looks, the way it is situated, the way it is designed, and the way it will interact with the rest of the community. Fortunately the Village has a zoning local law to help with determining what uses are allowed where, incorporating a sound site plan review policy that should be adopted in the near future. Utilizing design guidelines and concept images as supplements to local land use laws will help new development adhere to community standards for contributing to the desired landscape, rather than detracting from it.

PROJECT 3.1

Create design guidelines for Main Street developments – Even though the Village’s new site plan review policy will go a long way with guiding new development and a limited amount of existing development that is altered, the Village should establish design guidelines for the buildings and grounds located within the traditional village center. Many projects within this area may not require site plan review under the amended zoning law, but guidelines with concept images and standards will help mold future physical changes that will adhere to valued community images depicted in this plan and community valued concepts. Design guidelines should give direction toward new and altered signage, building facades, and landscaping where appropriate. These guidelines will also compliment the site plan review process when such review is required.

INDICATORS

Adopted design guidelines for the Main Street corridor

TASKS

- Adopt site plan review amendments in the zoning law.
- List desired physical features of development that could potentially locate within the Main Street corridor.
- Develop design guidelines for physical alterations and development.

- Incorporate concept images into design guidelines.
- Establish a review commission.

PROJECT LEADER

Village of Groton

POTENTIAL PARTNERS

Village of Groton Planning Board
Tompkins County Planning Department
Qualified Consultant/Architect

RESOURCES

New York State Department of State, Division of Local Government Services
New York State Quality Communities Program
New York Planning Federation
American Planning Association
Tompkins County Planning Department

PROJECT 3.2

Develop vacant lot next to Mobil gas station – This vacant lot is located in an area that is targeting a population that relies heavily on vehicle traffic. The building setbacks and number of off-street parking spaces on this part of Main Street are congruent with newer development trends that consist of solitary buildings that provide on-site parking. Possibilities exist to market this site to attract a desired service or business such as a drug store or medicine shop. New development should be consistent with the principles suggested in this plan. Building style and setback should be appropriate with attention paid to its proximity and thoughtfulness toward the Owasco Lake Inlet. Appropriate greenspace and landscaping is desirable to soften the impact of new physical development, particularly at the street's edge.

INDICATORS

New compatible use for lot

TASKS

- Resolve obstacles with property management and ownership, and express desires to property owner for the lots future use.
- Market availability of the site to realtors, lenders, IDA, and developers

PROJECT LEADER

Property Owner

POTENTIAL PARTNERS

Village of Groton
Groton Business Association
Industrial Development Agency
Local Realtor

RESOURCES

Downtown Business Owners
County Economic Development Office
Groton Business Association
Thoma Development Consultants

PROJECT 3.3

Amend zoning map to reduce industrial uses near the village center – As industrial activity is no longer Groton’s biggest employment sector, the village center of the Main Street corridor should comprise of uses that are geared toward more professional or high tech offices that do not require the masses of land that traditional industrial activity requires. The current presence of tractor-trailers parked on the rear of lots along Main Street will likely impede development of a greenway trail or detract from the economic development opportunities in that part of the corridor. While existing uses are often allowed to continue when zoning districts and regulations change, amending the zoning map to reduce the possibility of new or expanding industrial activity will assure that new development is compatible with the Village’s vision.

INDICATORS

Revised zoning map

TASKS

- Determine if a portion of the corridor in the Village center needs to be re-zoned according to the new vision for the corridor and Main Street.
- Assure there is adequate opportunity for industry in other parts of the corridor or Village.
- Adopt zoning map changes that allow for desired development in the Main Street corridor.

PROJECT LEADER

Village of Groton

POTENTIAL PARTNERS

Village of Groton Planning Board
Village of Groton Code Enforcement Officer
Tompkins County Planning Department - GIS

RESOURCES

Village funds
New York State Department of State, Division of Local Government Resources

BENCHMARK #4

PROBLEM/OPPORTUNITY 4 – Pedestrian Safety

The greatest danger for pedestrians is usually experienced when they are exposed while crossing a street. Special consideration needs to be given to the Groton pedestrian community because of the volume of traffic on Main Street. All age groups utilize the sidewalk network, including the elderly, youth, and people who work and shop in the immediate area. Numerous traffic generators exist in the Main Street corridor, such as the Village and Town offices, post office, bank and convenience stores, which attract local people who drive into the community. Opportunities exist to improve the Main Street corridor's transportation network for all modes of transportation.

PROJECT 4.1

Install marked/textured crosswalks – The entire corridor lacks marked crosswalks, but since the beginning of this planning process, a pedestrian crossing sign has been placed in the middle of South Street as it intersects with Route 38. There are numerous locations where curb ramps exist in the sidewalk network that bring pedestrians to the street, but there are no markings on the street to visually cue motorists of the potential for pedestrian crossing. It is important for the Village to work with the New York State DOT to install crosswalks with horizontal markings at the minimum, but preferably a ladder design or diagonal markings that provide the most visibility for crosswalks. Combining a different surface with the visual cue is also recommended. Either stamped concrete or asphalt could also change the color of the crosswalk from the standard charcoal black that the roadway is paved with.



Example of textured crosswalk, which is highly visible to both pedestrians and vehicular traffic

INDICATOR – Marked crosswalks

TASKS

- Initiate contact with NYS Department of Transportation to coordinate local priorities with installing marked crosswalks in specified locations. See project 4.2 below.
- Location of crosswalks should be at most street intersections and where curb ramps are present.

PROJECT LEADER

Village of Groton

POTENTIAL PARTNERS

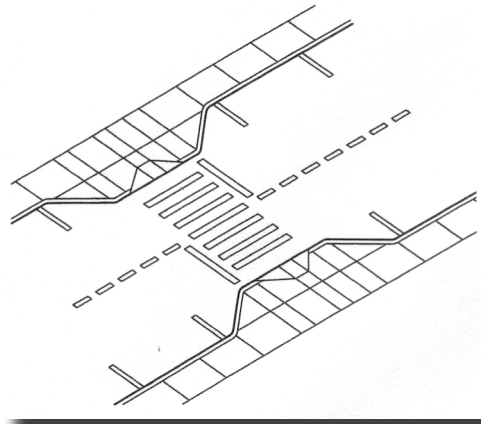
New York State Department of Transportation
Groton Business Association
Village Department of Public Works

RESOURCES

Village of Groton
New York State Department of Transportation
SAFETEA-LU

PROJECT 4.2

Install mid-block crossings and curb extensions – In combination with marked and textured crosswalks at corners, a mid-block crosswalk should be created just south of the Route 222 and 38 intersection. The road is narrower, which means it will take pedestrians less time to cross the street. It will also allow vehicular traffic that is traveling from the north more of an opportunity to see the crosswalk after they crest the hill at the intersection, thereby allowing them to stop if necessary. The mid block crosswalk here will help to calm traffic, keeping the street safe. The other location for a mid-block crosswalk is near the senior housing facility. Consideration needs to be given to the seniors in this building and their ability to cross the street to obtain the goods and services they need. Curb extensions are recommended for these potential crosswalks to calm traffic and reduce the distance between the two sides of the street for pedestrians. A curb ramp must be installed for the crosswalks to be accessible to people with mobility impairments.



Example of mid-block crossing with curb extension (Planning and Urban Design Standards, APA, 2006)

INDICATOR – Installed mid-block crosswalks

TASKS

- Initiate contact with NYS Department of Transportation to coordinate local priorities with installing marked crosswalks in specified locations.
- Coordinate with Department of Transportation for installing marked mid-block crosswalks in specified locations to meet the needs of traffic visibility, the senior populations and those that have mobility impairments.

PROJECT LEADER

Village of Groton

POTENTIAL PARTNERS

New York State Department of Transportation
Groton Business Association
Village Department of Public Works

RESOURCES

Village of Groton
New York State Department of Transportation
SAFETEA-LU

BENCHMARK #5

PROBLEM/OPPORTUNITY 5 – Businesses/Services

In order for the downtown to be successful, downtown businesses must be economically successful. Downtown Groton is fortunate in that it has a relatively low vacancy rate, and a number of established businesses that have anchored the downtown for years. The downtown has also been fortunate to retain other downtown anchors, including municipal offices, the library, and the post office. The importance of these institutional anchors to the economic strength of the downtown cannot be overstated. The downtown, however, struggles to meet the demands of the local population and loses business to nearby communities and regional shopping centers. For the most part, the downtown does not appear to fully capitalize on the volume of through traffic, forfeiting this revenue source to other communities.

PROJECT 5.1

Reoccupy vacant storefronts and buildings – The first floor spaces of buildings in a village center such as Groton are an ideal space for retail such as shops for flowers, gifts, books, clothes, art, music and goods needed by the local population. Other desirable first floor uses include professional offices such as medical and financial institutions, or restaurants. Many personal services such as a barber or salons locate in first-floor areas, as well as entertainment and culture facilities, and public facilities that attract frequent pedestrian traffic. If existing first floor uses are not contributing toward a vibrant or well-utilized first floor storefront, they should be relocated to upper floors or other areas of the Main Street corridor. The village center in Groton should include appropriate uses including upper story residential and office use.

INDICATOR – Occupied and functioning downtown buildings and storefronts

TASKS

- Rehabilitate facades and interiors of buildings where necessary to make the location an attractive place for businesses to occupy
- Promote vacant space to Tompkins County area business publications, and Chamber of Commerce.
- Occupy vacant storefronts and window displays with local displays of artwork or event promotion materials, so the windows aren't completely empty.

PROJECT LEADER

Village of Groton
Property Owners

POTENTIAL PARTNERS

Groton Business Association
Main Street corridor Property Owners

RESOURCES

Chamber of Commerce
IDA
Real Estate Company