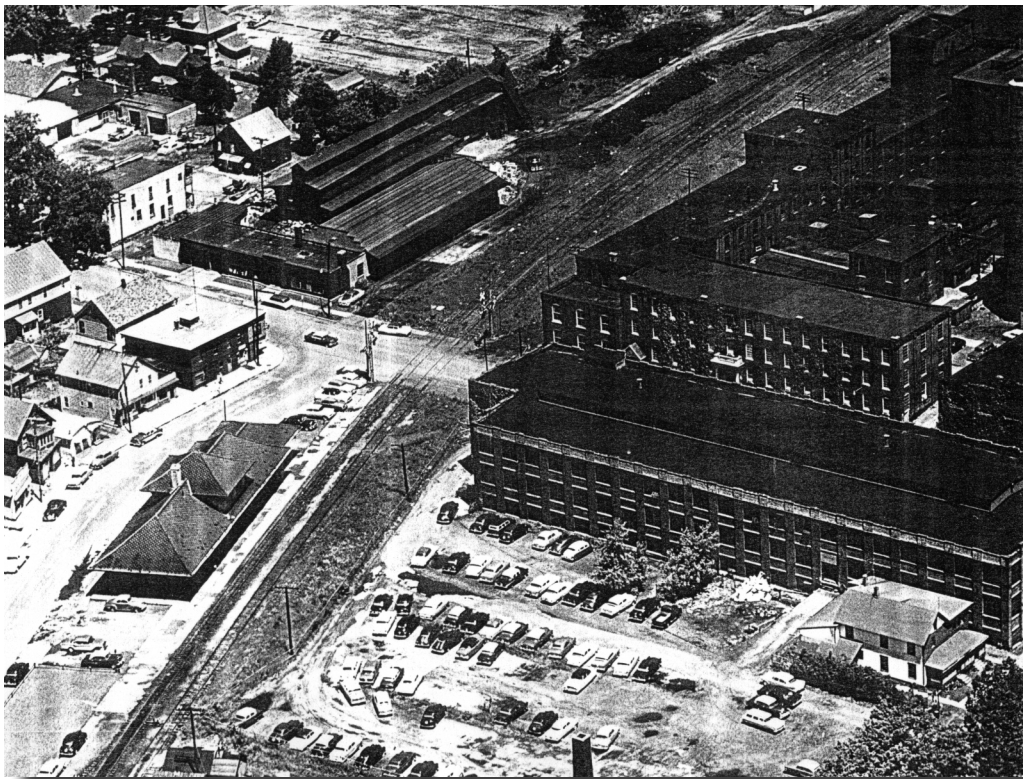

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE



III. HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

THE SOUTH END NEIGHBORHOOD OF YESTERYEAR

The City of Cortland is the sole City in Cortland County. The County was founded in the late 1700s as a military tract, a reward for service made to enlistees of the Revolutionary War. The City was strategically located on the County's main waterway, the Tioughnioga River, where early settlement mills, foundries, and stores eventually sprang up in support of an agriculture-based economy. This was similar to other County settlements. Eventually the City was chosen as the County seat. Cortland was incorporated as an official village in 1853 and remained as such until it was chartered as a City in 1900. Today the City is home to a population of 18,740 persons, or almost 39% of the Cortland County population.

During the 1800's, Cortland's agriculture-based economy quickly transformed into a strong industrial market, with ample work for many, including a strong influx of immigrants. In the mid-1800's, Cortland was one of the earliest communities to support the construction of the railroad. The City of Cortland's largest manufacturers, including the Cortland Wagon Company, Wickwire Brothers Wire Mill, the Gillette Skirt Factory, and others, benefited immensely from the presence of the railroad and its connections to regional, State, and national markets. Other major industries sprang up in the City including Smith Corona Marchant (SCM), once the world's largest portable typewriter manufacturer; the aforementioned Wickwire Brothers, a foundry where wire screen was invented and mass produced; Brockway Motors, manufacturer of the Husky truck; Cortland Line Company, a premier fishing and tennis line manufacturer; and many other industries too numerous to mention. With this newfound wealth came more elaborate structures, with tall brick and stone commercial buildings and residences replacing early settlement wooden structures.

The commercial hub of the City originated around the present Main Street area and catered to the needs of local residents and businesses. Mid-1800 to early 1900 vintage structures, many with architectural significance, were built in the Italianate, federal, Queen Anne, Greek Revival, Romanesque, and Gothic styles, to name just a few. Fortunately, many of these beautiful buildings have withstood the test of time and are included in a federal, State, and locally designated historic district.

The City's South Main Street area developed quite differently from its Main Street counterpart. While Main Street became a hub of culture and commerce, in the mid 1800's, much of the area that would evolve into South Main Street was owned by one property owner, a Mr. Roswell Randall. The South End Neighborhood had more of an agricultural sense of place as hops and corn were grown to support Randall's distilleries and other cottage industries. In the 1870's a railroad spur, depot, and many warehouse buildings were developed in the core of South Main Street, many on South Avenue including the depot. This quickly changed the landscape of the neighborhood. Wickwire Brothers erected some 40 buildings on 40 acres in the South End and took advantage of the railroad to ship its products. Wickwire's employed some 1,500 persons at its peak and attracted many Italian and Polish immigrants to its work place. Another major industrial anchor in the South End was the Cresnet Corset Company, which began in

1923 in four buildings, where women's undergarments were produced mainly by a female workforce of skilled seamstresses. At its peak in 1929, the company employed 700 workers and eventually occupied a single 93,000 square foot building on South Main Street.

Many homes sprang up in the South End, mostly tenanted by factory employees and railroad workers. The housing stock consisted mostly of owner occupied homes, rental properties, and rooming houses. Near the railroad it was not unusual for two housing structures to be built on one tax parcel, particularly on South Avenue which directly parallels the rail line. Presumably the main house was tenanted by the owner, with a rooming house located to the rear. Thus, while the core of the downtown, Main Street, was reflective of the newfound wealth of Cortland, South Main Street and its surroundings, was always a workingman's neighborhood.

The industrial economy of Cortland thrived well into the first half of the 20th century. Following a national trend, the City and County's manufacturing base started to unravel in the early 1970's. As a result, the City suffered greatly as local companies closed, relocated, or consolidated out of the area. Early industries that succumbed included Wickwire's, Brockway Trucks, Wilson Sporting Goods, Durkee Bakery, and Champion Sheet Metal, to name a few. Crescent Corset was re-sold a number of times, each time resulting in a reduction of the workforce. It closed permanently in the mid-1990's. The more recent loss of companies such as Rubbermaid, SCM, Buckbee Mears, E-One, and countless others has resulted in Cortland, in recent times, experiencing the highest unemployment rate in the State. These industrial job losses have been offset with lower paying service sector jobs with few fringe benefits. Cortland's manufacturing employment rate has been cut in half: from 32.8% in 1970, to 27.1% in 1980, to 21% in 1990, to only 14.8% in 2000. The New York Department of Labor indicates that Cortland County had 6,000 manufacturing jobs in 1990. By 2000, the number of manufacturing jobs was only 3,400, a 43% drop in ten years.

Per the 2000 Census, the City of Cortland's poverty rate has risen to a staggering one in four persons (24.7%). The City's low to moderate income population (those living at or below 80% of median income for Cortland County) is 51.8%. This economic demise has challenged the social service network and transferred more and more of the tax burden to residential property owners, hampering the City's ability to raise the taxes needed for adequate services, equipment, and programs.

THE SOUTH END NEIGHBORHOOD TODAY

It is not surprising that a working class neighborhood such as the one found in the South End would suffer significantly from the economic losses described previously. In fact, over the last 20 to 30 years, this neighborhood has deteriorated into the most distressed neighborhood in the City, with the most deteriorated housing, highest crime rate, environmental issues, and two significant fires that devastated the neighborhood. The Census Block Groups that encompass much of the South End have a combined low-to-moderate income rate of 64.1%, far in excess of the City's 51.8%. The neighborhood also has a high concentration of rental housing, with owner occupied units accounting for only 26% of the housing units in the neighborhood. According to 2000 Census data, 52% of renters are paying more than 30% of their incomes for rent. 30%

are paying over 50% of their incomes. Over 28% of households are female-headed. The low incomes of neighborhood residents are reflected in the poor condition of the housing stock. The vast majority of homes are over 50 years old, with many dating from the 1800's. A large percentage has been divided into multi-unit apartment houses. Based on an exterior housing conditions survey conducted in concert with this Plan, 80% of the residential structures were determined to be moderately to severely substandard.



Most commercial activity in the South End Neighborhood is located along the South Main Street corridor and includes the southern portion of the City's Central Business District. Thirty to forty years ago, the South End consisted of local mom and pop stores where residents could walk to get needed goods and services and work at the local factories located in the same neighborhood. With the advent of shopping malls and supermarket chains, the competition proved too great for the South End store owners, causing many locally-originated small businesses to close. This served to compound the negative impact of the closing of Wickwire's, the downsizing of Crescent Corset in the South End, and the abandonment of the railroad as the chief source of moving manufactured goods.

Today many of the commercial buildings in the South End are in disrepair, and a number are vacant. The City-owned Noss Technology Park is located on the eastern side of the neighborhood. The Park, located on a portion of the former Wickwire factory complex, includes an identified brownfield and a City-owned remediated Superfund site. The last vestige of the Wickwire era was an approximately 150,000 square foot, three story brick factory building. The building had been vacant for years and in a serious state of decay until an arson-related fire destroyed the building in December of 2004.



The site and the house next to it were subsequently leveled. Similarly, the stately and historic Squires Building also referred to locally as the Clocktower site, an 18,000 square foot commercial and residential structure located at the gateway to the South End, succumbed to fire in April of 2006. Tragically the building could not be salvaged and was torn down, leaving another significant vacant lot in the neighborhood. In addition to the commercial structures, the original railroad spur (still active) bisects the

South End. Its historic train station is privately owned and for many years had been used as a bar, although it is now closed (the former Third Rail). The present owner has owned the property for over 20 years and lives in a small apartment on the second floor. The first floor of the building is vacant and the entire site is deteriorating. There are at least six other bars operating on a small stretch of South Main Street, a real concern for area residents.

As the South End has continued to spiral downward, many residents have been vocal in trying to “take back their neighborhood”. Many homeowners have lived in the South End Neighborhood for 20 to 30 years and dream of restoring it to the attractive and welcoming neighborhood of the past. In a positive step, a recent joint project between the County and the City resulted in a \$4.5M reconstruction of South Main Street. This project has met with great local support and the neighborhood hopes to see the positive momentum continue. This fact, and the City’s own knowledge of the conditions in the South End, convinced the City that a unified effort to stem the tide of further decay was needed. This was the impetus for developing a Strategic Plan to identify the area’s problems, prioritize them, and then develop an action plan to address the neighborhood issues.

RECENT DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

During the time period that this Strategic Plan process was being undertaken, the South End of the City was the site, or proposed site, of a number of activities that have the potential to impact the neighborhood. They are listed following:

- Coffee Mania, a drive through coffee retailer, with one site located in the City of Cortland and one site located at the City’s border in the Town of Cortlandville, began roasting its own coffee in one of the former railroad warehouse buildings on South Avenue. The owners purchased this building which includes a 1.5 acre vacant lot. At the time of this Strategic Plan, the owners were moving forth with plans to make building improvements to be able to sell coffee and high-end coffee machines out of the space. The owners were very interested in utilizing the vacant lot for the good of the community; perhaps enticing the Farmers Market to move there or to create a community garden.
- On behalf of the owner of the burned out Clocktower property, the City of Cortland captured \$2M in the first round of the Restore NY Program to assist the owner in building a new commercial/residential building. The estimated cost of a four story building is over \$5M. City government and the community at-large are very supportive of the re-development of the Clocktower building due to its prominent location on Main Street, its tax base, its former location as the local City clock landmark, and the loss of important downtown retail and residential rental space. Since the site is located in the Main Street/Tompkins Street Historic District, which is locally controlled, site redevelopment must be consistent with the historic character of the surrounding area.
- Since early 2005, a number of Housing Confabs have been held in the City. The Housing Confabs represent a local grassroots effort to bring attention to the plight of the area’s housing and the impact on the Cortland quality of life. At one of the Confab meetings, Housing Visions, a Syracuse-based affordable housing developer, was invited to speak. This not-for-profit group spoke about the work they had done in other communities in buying or demolishing old buildings in struggling neighborhoods, and rebuilding or rehabilitating new housing units. This touched off a partnership among the Cortland County Business Development Corporation, the City of Cortland, and Housing Visions to rehabilitate and build new housing in the South End.

As a result of this relationship, Low Income Housing Tax Credits and HOME Program funds were captured and a payment in lieu of taxes was negotiated with the City. Housing Visions has purchased six properties containing 35 units. They will either renovate or demolish the properties and, as a result, 30 new units will be available. Existing tenants have been, or will be, relocated while the work is being undertaken. Upon completion of the work, tenants will be screened before they are allowed to reoccupy an apartment unit. Listed following are the properties that are included in this program:

HOUSING VISIONS PROJECT

ADDRESS	STATUS
148 S. Main Street (Former Shamrock Bar)	Demolish; Build new house with nine (9) three bedroom apartments
152-156 S. Main Street	Demolish laundry facility and renovate three other buildings on the property that will contain 10 apartments
162 S. Main Street	Demolish current building and replace with landscaping that will serve as yards for neighboring properties
164 S. Main Street	Renovate two buildings, one that fronts on Frederick Street and one that fronts on S. Main to create six apartments
2 Argyle Place	Renovate existing structure that will contain three apartments
5 Union Street	Demolish building and build new house containing two apartments.

- Cortland County made purchase offers on nine properties on the east side of South Main Street, and on William and Randall Streets. The intent of this action was to combine the County Mental Health services and those of the Health Department. This met with a backlash of controversy, as the original plans were to construct a 200 car parking lot to the rear of the South Main Street properties. Owners of the primarily single family homes which would be adjacent to the parking lot appealed to County legislators. This generated a significant amount of negative press. County legislators voted not to go forward with the acquisition of these properties. It appeared at the time of this Strategic Plan that a lawsuit would be pending since purchase offers had been tendered. This called into question whether or not the County could financially afford or legally abandon the project.
- Cayuga Press relocated from the Town of Dryden in Tompkins County to the former Impact Sports building located on South Main Street in Noss Technology Park. The building encompasses some 70,000 square feet. The company is retaining approximately 60 jobs and hopes the new location will enable it to undertake its expansion plans. Additionally, 20,000 square feet of the building was divided to enable the startup of Cortland Plastics Incorporated, a firm which will be involved primarily with blow molding plastic bottles and other containers. The company is projecting 45 employees.

EXISTING CONDITIONS AND ANALYSIS



Existing Conditions
& Analysis

IV. Existing Conditions

FIRST IMPRESSION OF THE SOUTH END NEIGHBORHOOD

Cortland's South End Neighborhood contains a number of different characteristics that make it a unique place within the City. There are open space areas and residential neighborhoods, as well as commercial and industrial areas. Physical conditions within the neighborhood vary, depending on the age and maintenance condition of infrastructure, condition of the both residential and commercial structures, and building occupancy. The social fabric in the South End also varies, from traditional City streets of single family housing, to streets that have a preponderance of rental properties. Additional rental units in the area have almost exclusively been developed from the conversion of former owner occupied structures, as opposed to new construction. Additional housing units have also been created in former garages or carriage houses, located to the rear of the main house. Some properties, particularly those nearer to the railroad on South Avenue, as noted below, were developed with two structures on site. Presumably, this was to accommodate the housing needs of the railroad employees.



South Main Street is now in excellent condition after street reconstruction and utility infrastructure replacements were completed in late 2006. This was a joint County/City endeavor that cost approximately \$4.5M and included a total street reconstruction, new infrastructure, utilities, decorative stampedcrete, new sidewalks, curbs, and street trees. This project has generated much neighborhood enthusiasm as demonstrated in written responses to the mail survey and by comments made at public meetings related to this Plan. South Main Street now provides a safe, walkable street that has adequate lighting, and new sidewalks which provide safe pedestrian passage, particularly at night (lighting exists from the intersection of Tompkins/Port Watson Street to the railroad tracks). New street trees have been planted to soften the impact of the built environment, and to provide shade for pedestrians, buildings, and streets. Building conditions along South Main Street aren't completely consistent with the quality of the street infrastructure. However, the City has provided a solid foundation so that future investments are certainly more likely. Aside from the new sidewalks on Main Street, many connecting streets' sidewalks are in poor condition or non-existent. Pedestrian lighting is also poor along the side streets.



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The residential areas north of the railroad tracks have a much higher percentage of substandard housing than do the housing structures located on streets such as Pine, Scammell, and Denti Way. As noted in the *Building Conditions* section of this Plan, income properties are in a greater state of disrepair than owner occupied structures. South Avenue, in particular, contains clusters of residential buildings with high densities because there are a number of single tax parcels with two structures. This is particularly evident on the north side of South Avenue. The number of residential units in such a small geographic area has created a problem whereby there aren't enough on site and off-street parking spaces for tenants. The high density and condition of housing on South Avenue has contributed significantly to the degradation of the South End Neighborhood. Other streets with higher concentrations of substandard housing include Argyle, Union, Reynolds, Winter, and Pierce Streets.



The poor appearance of housing and surrounding infrastructure indicates that the neighborhood has been suffering from disinvestment and subsequent decay. There are a few other negative visual influences in the neighborhood that contribute to a negative first impression and they are the overgrown bushes and garbage near the railroad tracks, a large and unsightly billboard located in the railroad right-of-way, and the deteriorating condition of the former Third Rail building, the former rail passenger station.

The businesses in the area are a mix of service related and retail stores. What is lacking is the type of services and stores that provide convenience type of services to the neighborhood such as groceries, prescription drugs, a coffee shop, etc.

The northernmost area of the South End is included in the City's Central Business District. The buildings in the district and those immediately adjacent to it are generally in good condition. The Noss Technology Park is the site where two new businesses, Cayuga Press and Cortland Plastics, Inc., which were just beginning to operate at the time of this Strategic Plan. There are 23 acres available for development in the Park and the availability of rail service is viewed as a plus. It is one of the very last places in the City where there is significant acreage for economic development.

The fires that have occurred at the Clocktower site and the former Wickwire site have left gaping holes in the neighborhood landscape. As detailed in this section under *Development Opportunities*, the owner of the Clocktower site is moving forward with plans to reconstruct a building of similar size and the owner of the Wickwire site, a well-known local developer, would like to eventually re-build. At the time of this Plan, he was weighing his options regarding the construction of a commercial or mixed use commercial/residential building.

Three additional positive influences in the area include Beaudry Park, which is within the study area and detailed in this section under *Parks, Recreation, and Open Space*, and the Cortland City Schools (Randall School and the high school), which are located just outside the South End Neighborhood but within walking distance.

HOUSING

At its core, the South End Neighborhood is a residential neighborhood. The area designated as the South End Neighborhood for the Strategic Plan includes parts of two Block Groups within the 9909 Census Tract: Block Group 2 and 3, and 12 Census Blocks. According to the 2000 Census, the study area contains 610 total housing units: 542 of the units are occupied, with 68 units vacant. Over 70% of the occupied units are rental units as compared to 56% of the City's entire housing stock. The vacancy rate of the South End is over 11% as compared to 8.3% on a City-wide basis. Per the 2000 Census, The neighborhood includes 6.8% of the City's population (1,290 persons) and over 8% of the City's housing units.

Building Conditions - Residential

An exterior building conditions survey was conducted by two experienced building inspectors on every residential property in the South End Neighborhood. Buildings that were a mixed use of residential and commercial were not included in the residential building conditions survey (they are included in the commercial survey detailed in the *South End Business Community* section discussed later in this section of the Plan). The survey was conducted using the definition of substandard provided by the NYS Governor's Office for Small Cities. (The definition is included in *Section VIII, Appendices*). The inspected buildings were categorized as either standard, moderately substandard, severely substandard, or dilapidated. The results are as follows:

Building Conditions	Structures	Percentage
Severely Substandard	97	38
Moderately Substandard	109	42
Dilapidated	2	1
Standard	49	19
Total	257	100

The results of the building conditions survey parallels the perception of the respondents to the residents' survey. For example, 43% of the respondents listed the poor condition of housing as the most important problem facing the area, and 78% listed poor housing as a problem. 81% of the respondents indicated that better housing/building conditions as an improvement needed that would make the area better.

As previously mentioned, during the summer of 2006, Housing Visions Unlimited, a not for profit developer of affordable housing, was awarded funds for its "Cortland Crown Homes" project. The Cortland Crown Homes project will result in 30 new or renovated affordable housing units along/near South Main Street in the South End. As noted in *Section III, Historical Perspective*, the Housing Visions project will include the rehabilitation of two of the severely substandard buildings. Housing Visions will also demolish one of the dilapidated properties. The owner of the other dilapidated property (adjacent to the burned out Wickwire site and severely affected by the fire) has already demolished the residential structure. As can be seen in the map on the following page, the largest concentration of substandard housing is north of the railroad tracks along South Avenue. It should be noted that the Housing Conditions Map does not

differentiate parcels containing one structure from parcels with more than one structure. A breakdown of housing as to tenure reveals the following:

Building Conditions	Rental	%	Owner	%
Severely Substandard	73	60	24	19
Moderately Substandard	39	31	70	52
Standard	10	9	39	29
Total	122	100	135	100

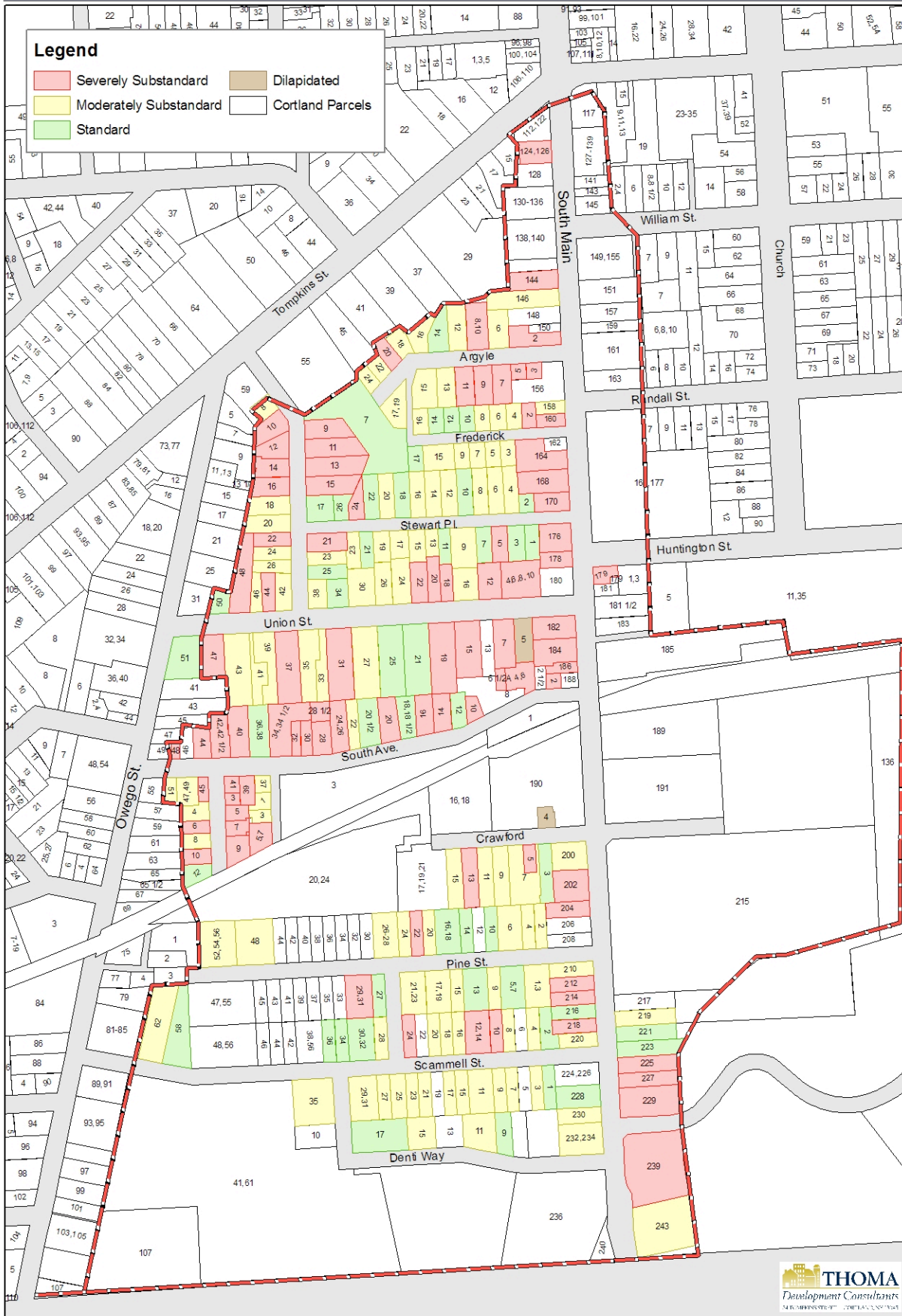
This confirms the perception of the residents and the City that the severe housing conditions in the area are generally the result of poorly maintained income properties.



City of Cortland South End Neighborhood, Substandard Housing

Legend

- Severely Substandard
- Moderately Substandard
- Standard
- Dilapidated
- Cortland Parcels



BUILDING CODE ENFORCEMENT

In the early 1990's, the City began to transform its Code Enforcement Office. It was included under the purview of the City's Fire Department and the City began an effort to train its paid fire fighters as code enforcers. The goal was to expand the department's ability to complete required fire safety inspections and to provide round-the-clock code enforcement services for the public.



Today the Code Enforcement Office consists of three full time code enforcers who deal primarily with site plan enforcement and building construction. Additionally, two persons are trained to answer zoning and code questions. Twenty-seven (27) fire fighters are certified fire safety inspectors. The NYS Uniform

Fire Prevention and Building Code recently enacted stricter guidelines for more frequent inspections which means the City has to increase the man hours devoted to this effort.

With an aged and deteriorating building stock, a large off-campus housing population, and the day-to-day issues facing the Code Enforcement Office, the office is understaffed. As previously mentioned in this Plan, the City is inhabited by a significant lower income population, and challenged by a stagnant economy, which limits the City's ability to raise the taxes needed to hire additional staff, purchase needed equipment, and expand its programs and services.

The South End housing segment of the City produces the second most amount of work for the Code Enforcement Office; second only to student housing. This includes the second most reports of non-compliance housing violations and the most complaints. Because staffing is limited, the office has had to resort to being reactive instead of proactive in its code enforcement efforts. While the property maintenance codes do allow the Code Enforcement Office to place the responsibility of the condition of individual units on the tenant for some issues, the Code Enforcement Office has not been able to utilize this option and therefore it must go after the owner of non-compliant properties. If the Code Enforcement Office had the financial wherewithal, it would be able to address code concerns in a proactive manner on a day-to-day basis.



One of the other primary issues facing the City's Code Enforcement Office is the lack of judicial support. While many of the code violations are addressed by the owner after a cooperative negotiation with the City, when an owner is not cooperative, and all the proper steps have taken place, the matter winds up in City Court. Unfortunately, the sitting judge has not convicted or

penalized the property owner as prescribed in City Code or has adjourned the case in contemplation of dismissal. This usually results in a non-cooperative owner feeling confident that he or she can continue to disregard code violations.

The City is looking into establishing a City Housing Court. The Court would focus solely on building code violations and the decision of the Court would be binding. The Code Enforcement Office is also looking at ways to increase the manpower in their office with a specific goal of assigning someone to the South End on a consistent basis for a defined time period. It is believed that this action would allow the City to be proactive with its code enforcement in the South End Neighborhood by addressing the major issues on a daily basis.

SOUTH END BUSINESS COMMUNITY

The South End Neighborhood does not have a large number of businesses. As evidenced in the Building Conditions Survey detailed in the following section, only 11% of the buildings were constructed solely for business uses. The most prominent type of business is restaurants and bars, of which there are ten. Additionally, there are two small convenience stores, a laundry, an auto parts store, and several other retail and service businesses. The South End Neighborhood is also home to several larger commercial businesses such as Northern Concrete Block, Web Clothes, and JTS Lumber. At the time of this Strategic Plan, three new businesses were established in the area: the roasting operations for Coffee Mania on South Avenue and Cayuga Press and Cortland Plastics International in Noss Technology Park. The northernmost portion of the neighborhood has the most concentration of businesses and commercial locations. This portion of the study area is also closest to the businesses of Downtown Cortland.



61% of the respondents to the Residents' Survey stated that the area did not have enough stores and services and 59% stated that they could not walk to the stores they needed to get to. With limited commercial locations near the bulk of the residents, it is important that commercial properties remain available for those entrepreneurs desiring to start South End retail and service businesses. The Cortland Crown Homes Project is removing two commercial properties. The owners of vacant land along South Main Street outside of Noss Technology Park should be encouraged to use their property for commercial developments that meet the needs of the residents.

Building Conditions - Commercial

There were 34 solely commercial or mixed use residential/commercial buildings identified in the South End Neighborhood. An exterior inspection was conducted using a

conditions rating of excellent, good, fair, and poor (the definition of each is include in the *Appendices of Section VIII*). The results are as follows:

Building Conditions	Structures	Percentage
Excellent	1	1
Good	11	33
Fair	14	42
Poor	8	24
Total	34	100

Vacant Properties

In the South End Neighborhood the survey team identified ten (10) vacant properties. These properties include both vacant buildings and vacant land. As part of the Cortland Crown Homes project, Housing Visions will purchase two of the properties that are vacant buildings. Housing Visions will be demolishing each and constructing new housing on the site.

There were three other properties that had buildings that were identified as vacant or partially vacant; two are on South Avenue and include the partially vacant Third Rail and Coffee Mania building (Coffee Mania now has two additional tenants in her building including a massage therapist and a dog groomer).

Vacant land within the neighborhood includes the Clocktower site, the Wickwire site, and the Potter Paint site. Also there is vacant industrial land in the Noss Technology Park, which has been designated as a Build Now NY site by New York State. The Build Now NY designation hopefully results in the creation of “shovel ready” sites for future industrial and commercial users.



Vacant commercial space is available in the former Crescent Corset building on Main Street (also known as the former site of ASSA International). The building is now a multi-tenant business center with Web Clothes as a major anchor. The former Moose Lodge is presently vacant, however, as noted in *Section III, Historical Perspective*, this is one of the properties that Cortland County slated for a new mental health/environmental facility. There is presently much controversy surrounding this site.

DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Five properties in the South End Neighborhood have been identified for future development opportunities at this time:

Development Site	Condition	Size	Potential Use
Noss Technology Park	Vacant Land	23 acres	Industrial/Technology Businesses
Potter Paint	Vacant Buildings	4.3 acres	Residential/Commercial Development
Wickwire Site	Vacant Land	2.1 acres	Commercial/Residential Development
Third Rail	Partially Vacant Building (1 st Floor Vacant)	6,000 SF	Commercial/Public Development
Clocktower Site	Vacant Land	8,000 SF	Commercial/Residential Development

Of the above five development opportunities, the future development of one is well underway. The owner of the Clocktower site is proposing a four story mixed use residential and commercial development. Significant public financial assistance has been committed and construction should begin in 2007. Another development site, Noss Technology Park, is in the planning stages. The bulk of the property is owned by the City of Cortland. With assistance from two New York State programs, environmental and planning work will be undertaken in an effort to make the park “shovel ready” within three years. Upon completion of the environmental and planning work, the Park will be very attractive to future technology businesses based upon its location and the City’s designation as a NYS Empire Zone. NYS Empire Zone designation was given to the City in 2001. The program provides tax and other financial incentives with a goal of boosting local economies.

The other three development opportunities, the Wickwire site, the Third Rail, and the Potter Paint site, are privately owned with no firm development plans. The City of Cortland must partner with the owners to assure future developments are compatible with neighborhood desires.

CONNECTION WITH DOWNTOWN

South Main Street, from the intersection of Tompkins/Port Watson Streets southward to Randall and Frederick Streets, is included in the City’s zoned Central Business District. The majority of the Central Business District (CBD) resembles a typical 19th Century downtown with attached multi-story masonry buildings set at the streetline. The northernmost block of South Main Street, between Port Watson Street and William Street, is most similar to the rest of the Central Business District with a traditional “downtown” sense of place. This includes older two and three story attached commercial structures with no setback from the street right-of-way. Main Street, south of William Street, has a much different character, with one and two story commercial structures intermixed with residential structures. Many of the commercial structures on

this southern end have parking to the front or sides of the structure. Instead of a clear, distinct edge to the Downtown, the commercial center gradually blends into the industrial and residential areas to the south.

The section of the CBD south of the Tompkins/Port Watson intersection has historically not been well integrated with the Downtown. This is due to a number of reasons. Main Street is a one-way street north of this intersection and a two-way street south of it. A streetscape enhancement project completed in the 1990's, including street trees, decorative streetlights, and brick pavings, did not extend south of the intersection. Furthermore, the commercial buildings on South Main tend to be of a simpler design than those a block north. These attributes combine to create a distinct edge to the Downtown that is not consistent with the established zoning. This division is so strongly ingrained in the community's consciousness that this section of Main Street is routinely call "South" Main Street, despite the fact that there is no official designation for this.



The recent reconstruction of South Main Street included streetscape improvements similar to the balance of Main Street, creating a uniform design concept in the CBD and strengthening the physical connections between South Main Street and the balance of the Downtown. Recent and planned façade renovations for several buildings in this area will further enhance the character of this section of Downtown. Continued private investment seems likely. A proposed county governmental structure will also impact the character of the CBD in the South End.

Although other businesses located along South Main Street are not within the zoned Central Business District, they are nevertheless part of the larger, less formally designated commercial center of the City of Cortland. Efforts should continue to better integrate businesses in this area with the rest of the Downtown while recognizing that the mixed-use character of this area differs from much of the balance of the Downtown. The Cortland Downtown Partnership, a new non-profit organization modeled after the National Trust for Historic Preservation's successful "Main Street" Approach to commercial district revitalization, considers the southern portion of "South" Main Street to be within its program area. Given appropriate support by the City and business community, the Partnership can significantly enhance the economic vitality of businesses on South Main Street and in the South End Neighborhood. Downtown improvement efforts should ensure that the southern end of the downtown is included, and fully participates in, revitalization and improvement efforts.

MULTIMODAL TRANSPORTATION NETWORK

The transportation infrastructure network in the South End Neighborhood is made up of local roadways, railroad tracks that bisect the neighborhood, and sidewalks along most streets. All of the roads are owned and maintained by the City of Cortland, while the Cortland County Industrial Development Agency owns the railroad right-of-way.

Individual property owners own the sidewalks, and are responsible for maintenance and replacement.

There are approximately three miles of roadway within the South End Neighborhood. South Main Street is the principal artery in the area, providing access to numerous businesses, residential areas, and the Cortland Middle/Senior High School. The majority of streets in the South End are much narrower than South Main Street and serve as residential streets where hundreds of residences are located. South Main Street delivers traffic to busier State and US routes, namely, nearby New York State Route 13, which immediately intersects with New York State Route 41 and US Route 11. Most of residential side streets also intersect with Owego Street, also known as State Route 215, which is just outside of the study area.



Concerning the roads within the study area, their overall condition is fair to good, with the recently reconstructed South Main Street being excellent. As would be expected, when a particular

road begins to deteriorate, the City Department of Public Works plans for an upgrade (milling and resurfacing, new shoulders, and curbing). Every attempt is made to also include other infrastructure improvements in conjunction with such work, including water or sewer main replacement and other utilities.

Concerning public transportation, the City is served by the Cortland Transit Company bus service, which operates a variety of routes in and around the Cortland area. The Cortland Transit Company operates Monday through Friday from 6:00 AM to 6:00 PM, with all routes originating at the County Office Building on Central Avenue. There are two routes which either pass through the South End or immediately adjacent to it. Route 1 has designated stops at the intersection of South Main Street/South Avenue and at the Cortland High School. Route 4 has stops at the intersection of Owego Street/Union Street and Church Street/Huntington Street. In addition, the company operates a Dial-A-Ride system where the public can arrange for transportation to any location.

The New York, Susquehanna, and Western Railroad provides a means of transportation for industrial and business uses in the South End. This infrastructure provides the ability to transport materials, which may help attract future development that has a need for such rail service. Former railroad buildings are located on South Avenue, but are no longer used for railroad purposes. Regarding the condition of the railroad during this planning process, numerous complaints were received regarding overgrown brush and garbage around the tracks.

The other transportation elements include those for pedestrians and bicyclists. Pedestrians are encouraged to use the sidewalks provided along the streets in this neighborhood while bicyclists must share the roadway. Concerning the sidewalks,

nearly all of the streets have sidewalks on each side with no walks along selected streets, or portions of streets, as noted below:

- Hollenbeck Street (both sides between Argyle and Frederick)
- South Avenue (south side from the former railroad depot to Pierce)
- Crawford Street (north side, two gaps west of the Wickwire site)
- Noss Drive (both sides)
- Cannone Street (east side, short gap just north of Scammel)
- Scammel Street (north side, west of Denti Way intersection)
- Denti Way (both sides entirely except small stretch on west just south of Scammel)

Overall, the condition of sidewalks in the South End is satisfactory to poor. Every street, with the exception of South Main Street, has large portions of sidewalk that are in need of replacement. Evidence of the poor sidewalk conditions include cracks, heaves, buckled blocks, and spalled walking surfaces. Sidewalks also lack adequate width in various places within the neighborhood. Some sidewalks only measure three feet in width, which does not accommodate two pedestrians passing, nor provide sufficient space to accommodate handicapped or mobility impaired people (the average City sidewalk block measures 5' x 5'). Some sidewalks do not provide curb cuts (handicap access) to street level, which also limits accessibility. In some cases, there is a full curb still in place, while in other places the edge between the pavement and walk is too severe. The noted locations where these accessibility issues are located are as follows:

- Argyle Place (southwest corner with Hollenbeck)
- Union Street (northwest corner with Reynolds)
- South Avenue (southwest and southeast corners with Winter)
- Scammel Street (northeast corner with Cannone)

The public participation process allowed neighborhood attitudes to be expressed regarding various transportation elements. From the survey responses, the capacity of the roadways seems to be sufficient, as only 7% of resident survey respondents felt traffic congestion was the most important problem facing the neighborhood. Only 39% of respondents agreed that sidewalks and roads were in good condition, but only 38% disagreed, while the others were neutral. A total of 79% of survey respondents said that pedestrians were not safe at night, while only 6% said they were safe. 15% were neutral. As would be expected, respondents also feel that pedestrians are much safer during the day. 35% felt that pedestrians are unsafe during the day.



The City streets serving the South End Neighborhood range from fair to excellent condition and have no significant deficiencies other than the usual routine maintenance that must be attended to. As future projects are considered within the study area, it is strongly recommended that all of the impacted streets should be evaluated as to their adequacy. Consideration should be given to any needed improvements regarding drainage, sidewalks, accessibility,

pedestrian friendliness, bicycles, public amenities, infrastructure, etc., along those same streets.

MUNICIPAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND UTILITIES

In any municipality there are a wide variety of infrastructure elements that play a significant role in both establishing the conditions within that community, as well as providing support for future development opportunities and change. The five primary infrastructure elements of water supply, wastewater disposal, fuel sources, storm water management, and electricity/telephone/TV are all assets that a city the size of Cortland has available, and to a large degree, do not represent constraints or concerns. Due to their critical importance to any planning effort, a brief discussion of each follows.

Water Supply

The City of Cortland public water supply serves the residents and businesses within its municipal boundaries but also has emergency connections to several other communities. The source of the water is a group of wells located on the Waterworks property adjacent to Broadway. The capacity of these wells is very significant (several 1000's of gallons per minute (GPM)) due to the fact that they draw from an aquifer of enormous capacity.

The average daily water usage for the City is typically 2.1 million gallons per day (GPD) with a typical static pressure of 70 psi in the South End study area. There are three storage tanks on the system. One is the 3 million gallon concrete tank located on Starr Road (City-owned and located in the Town of Cortlandville) and the others are two 1.2 million gallon (each) steel bolted tanks located on the SUNY Cortland campus. The pipe sizes for the network of water mains located in the South End Neighborhood range from 6" to 12" and, in general, fire flows are adequate. There are some dead-end mains on a limited number of the streets but overall the system is looped. In the area of Noss Technology Park, the main along Noss Drive is 8" and does not presently connect to the main along Pendleton Street. It should be noted that the 12" main along South Main Street has a 12" main connected to it that runs easterly along the southern railroad right-of-way and connects to the 24" main on Pendleton Street which is a direct feed from the tank on Starr Road. Significant volumes of water, therefore, are readily available to the study area.

Concerning the overall condition of the water system in the City's South End, there are no urgent issues but there are several items that should be addressed in the future. Some of the more important concerns are: (1) replacement of the undersized mains (6") on selected streets to insure adequate fire flows and (2) modifying the system so as to eliminate dead-end mains wherever possible. Both of these issues must be reviewed in conjunction with any anticipated growth and development in the study area so that adequate plans can be prepared to meet those potential future demands.

Wastewater Disposal

The City of Cortland is presently served by a central wastewater treatment plant and a comprehensive network of collection mains throughout the City. The present plant utilizes both activated sludge and nitrification treatment methods, and at some point in the future, will face a mandated upgrade to include biological nutrient removal as well. Presently the plant treats an average daily flow of 7 MGD (million gallons per day) which is well above the output of public water (2.1 MGD). This concern for excessive Inflow and Infiltration (I&I) is fully recognized. A strategic plan for addressing the issue is underway and improvements are slated for the near future.

All of the streets within the South End Neighborhood are served by sewer mains, with the range of pipe sizes from 8" to 12". The recently replaced collection main along South Main Street is in excellent condition, while others are likely in need of replacement or rehabilitation based on the magnitude of the I&I volumes noted above. A detailed review of the specific mains in question is beyond the scope of this Plan but any consideration of new development in the study area should include a comprehensive review of this information.

Fuel Sources

The City of Cortland is fully served by a network of natural gas piping provided by New York State Electric and Gas (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.

With natural gas already available, there is no immediate concern. However, it is strongly recommended that NYSEG be included in any discussions concerning the need for increased services.

Storm Water Management

The storm water issue in the South End is rather unique in that there are two distinct elements. On one hand, there is the traditional network of storm sewers and catch basins located along most of the streets which collect the runoff into a closed system which eventually discharges to the Tioughnioga River. In addition, passing through the area are two branches of Perplexity Creek, both of which enter the area from the southwest. The westernmost branch passes through Beaudry Park heading north and then follows the railroad right-of-way as it continues easterly towards the Tioughnioga. Nearly all of this branch of the creek is within a closed/piped system. The eastern branch enters the City adjacent to South Main Street, follows the bottom of the steep slope below the Cortland High School, and then also heads easterly once reaching the intersection of the railroad and Pendleton Street. This part of the creek travels through the area in a combination of both a closed/piped system with some locations being open ditches.

In general, the system works satisfactorily but there is one area of concern where the flow being carried in the closed system reaches the intersection of Williams Street

and South Main Streets. Under heavy runoff conditions, the flow in this area can be excessive. Particular attention should be given to any project which may increase the flows entering the Williams Street collection main.

Electricity, Telephone, and Cable TV

The entire City of Cortland is served by electricity from National Grid, telephone service from Verizon, natural gas from NYSEG, and television by Time Warner. There does not appear to be any unique problems or particular issues with any of them. The only consideration for these elements is to be sure to include the appropriate agencies/utilities whenever a discussion of new development is being initiated.

HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

The South End Neighborhood has a varied collection of buildings and structures that documents its history and establishes its character. A large percentage of structures in the South End are historically and/or architecturally significant, either due to their architectural styles or relationship to the development of the neighborhood and City. Unfortunately, many of these buildings are in poor condition or have received inappropriate alterations, masking their historic importance.



The architecture of the neighborhood is largely undocumented. While the City does have a federal, State, and locally designated historic district that encompasses much of Main Street, the only part of the South End Neighborhood included in the Main Street/Tompkins Street Historic District is site of the former Squires building (Clocktower) on the corner of Main and Tompkins Street. There are no other local, State or federally designated buildings or districts in the neighborhood. The fact that the area has no *designated* historic structures does not, however, mean that there are no structures of historic importance. The neighborhood's historic structures, although undocumented, include many buildings that are worthy of note, despite the fact that many are in a state of disrepair and neglect.

Buildings in the South End represent many different eras, but the majority of residential structures date from the late 19th to the early 20th century. There is also a significant number of modest mid-20th century homes. Most commercial structures appear to be early to mid 20th century with unremarkable characteristics. The building styles mostly represent modest worker housing related to the nearby railroad and the Wickwire factory. There are also a number of higher style buildings. Represented building styles include, but are not necessarily limited to, Federal, Italianate, Queen Anne, and Second Empire structures, with later structures including ranches and Cape Cods. Highlighting specific higher style buildings would minimize, however, the importance of the many simpler structures that give the neighborhood its unique character. Several significant structures in the neighborhood, however, include:

124 Main Street, Elmer Sperry House – This is the boyhood home of Mr. Sperry, inventor of the gyroscope compass and 400 other patented inventions. The building apparently dates from the early 19th century although many inappropriate changes have obliterated any trace of its architectural roots. At the time this Strategic Plan was being drafted, the owner had intentions of demolishing the site to accommodate the need for parking for the Clocktower site redevelopment.

Crescent Corset Company – This former home of the Crescent Corset Company is the only remnant of the many large industrial buildings that once dominated much of the neighborhood. The building now houses a number of smaller commercial businesses.

South Avenue Railroad Depot – This railroad station, presumably built in the early 20th Century, is remarkably intact despite years of deferred maintenance. A touchstone to the importance of the railroad to this neighborhood, the building has most recently been used as a bar. It still retains its hipped, red tile roof with projecting dormer, large brackets, windows, and other architectural details.

The preservation of historic assets should be a major consideration as this neighborhood is revitalized. A thorough Cultural Resource Survey would be an important first step in documenting the neighborhood's buildings and structures.

PARKS, RECREATION, AND OPEN SPACE

One of the true assets in the South End portion of the City of Cortland is the availability of Beaudry Park, located just off of Scammell Street. In one of the public sessions related to this Strategic Plan, the park was rated as the number one neighborhood asset. The park consists of more than ten acres, is located in the southwestern portion of the study area, and borders the Town of Cortlandville. The park is located adjacent to what is primarily a residential area with some commercial properties nearby as well. Beaudry Park is open all year and is operated and maintained by the Cortland City Youth Bureau. There are a variety of activities and facilities available. The use of this park is quite extensive and serves this community very well. With such extensive open space and facilities, both free play/unorganized opportunities exist as well as the varied programming which is offered by the Youth Bureau.

Currently Beaudry Park contains the following amenities, equipment, and recreational opportunities:

- One baseball and two softball fields with backstops
- One asphalt surfaced area with two basketball courts
- One playground area
- One picnic pavilion
- One structure providing a recreation center, office, and bathrooms
- A hillside serving as a sledding and tubing area

The overall condition of the park is good and the facility is well maintained. This is very important, and it is equally essential that the fields, courts, and structures be in good condition, attractive, and well kept in the future. As with any playground, the age and safety of the playground equipment is always a concern. With strict standards now

in place, all of the existing equipment should be routinely evaluated to insure its safe usage.

One item of note is the existing structure in the park that serves as the recreation center. This building is clearly inadequate and undersized and should be replaced. The City Youth Bureau has received an anonymous donation towards upgrading the center, or replacing it. The City is presently attempting to use this donation to leverage grant funds to complete the project.

In addition to Beaudry Park, there are several other open spaces within or adjacent to the neighborhood but they are associated with either the Cortland High School property, the vacant portions of the Noss Industrial Park, or vacant portions of commercial properties. There are also eight vacant lots on the north side of Pine Street that border the former Potter Paint site. It should also be noted that not far from the study area (just northeast) is another City of Cortland park, Meldrim Field, and the Randall School playground. Just south of the City is the newly developed Starr Road Park located in the Town of Cortlandville.



While there are many leisure activity opportunities that can be found throughout the Cortland area, it remains critical to the quality of life for any neighborhood to provide high quality facilities and opportunities for recreational purposes with relatively

easy access. It is apparent that Beaudry Park maintains a strong identity within the South End Neighborhood and there are three key factors that must be considered during any planning effort so as to insure that this identity remains strong. They are: (1) maintenance and preservation, (2) present and future use and (3) relationship/connectivity with other community and regional assets and activities. A brief discussion concerning each follows.

Maintenance and Preservation

As mentioned earlier, the continued utilization of existing parks and open spaces will only be insured if they are well maintained. By maintaining and improving these facilities and their amenities, their true potential can be realized. It is fully recognized that all of these efforts require funding and a variety of possibilities should be pursued to that end including, but not limited to, private and public agency funding programs, foundation grants, private donations, local fundraisers, community volunteerism, etc.

Present and Future Use

While the existing park and open spaces presently experience a fair amount of use, it is important to plan ahead and then seek out all opportunities that will maximize

the park's potential. Inherent limitations of these parks and spaces are due to either the limited available space and/or the limited facilities. It is strongly recommended to continue to pursue the acquisition of additional land, if and when available. With an expanded facility, the City can broaden the scope of programs, events, and activities that it offers to the community at large. Good planning is essential.

Connectivity to Other Assets and Activities

This aspect of open space and parkland focuses on the broader view of the interrelationship between the various spaces and activities that take place in the area. Pedestrian links to the downtown, and other recreational opportunities that may develop, are essential.

In summary, the recreational opportunities within this part of the City of Cortland are quite good and the facility management is well done by the Youth Bureau. Keeping these facilities vital and energized will insure their long-term value to the South End community.

NEIGHBORHOOD POLICING

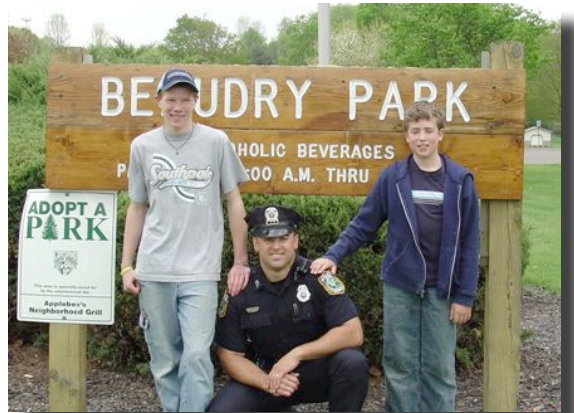
Responses to the mail survey conducted in concert with this Strategic Plan indicate a high percentage of residents in the South End Neighborhood have concerns about neighborhood crime. When asked to note if any of the following conditions existed in the South End, 59% responded there was drug dealing; 57% said there was excessive noise; 43% said there was loitering; 39% believed there was vandalism; 36% noted violence and assault; and 22% believed there are robberies and burglaries. When asked to rate certain statements made about the South End on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 indicating that a respondent "strongly agrees" with the statement and 5 indicating they "strongly disagree", 79% of respondents rated a 4 or 5 (they strongly disagree) that pedestrians feel safe at night. 46% strongly disagree (with an indicator of 4 or 5) that there is enough police protection in the South End.

On August 15, 2005, the City Police Department undertook a pilot community policing program for the South End Neighborhood. The initiative was funded by the New York State Community Outreach Fund and it proved to be very successful. Residents were ecstatic to receive additional police attention, and almost immediately the initiative reaped dividends. Residents began giving officers drug information, and officers were able to garner license plate numbers of suspected drug dealers and drug customers. By the end of 2005, the Cortland Police Department's drug sergeant, with the assistance of the New York State Police C-NET unit, had arrested twelve drug dealers who were either living on the South End or heavily dealing drugs in the area. Seven of these arrestees were charged with Class B felony drug sales.

The South End community officer also strictly enforced "quality of life" statutes and several arrests were made during the tenure of the initiative. Quality of life statutes deal with such issues as loud noise or loud music; littering; drinking, fighting, and swearing in public; nuisance animals; and other issues that affect the everyday repose of citizens. Officers working the detail were able to make 25 arrests in regard to these

issues. Officers were also called upon to make criminal arrests, such as criminal mischief and arrests stemming from domestic issues, endangering the welfare of children, and violations of orders of protection. Weapon possession arrests were made as well. Officers responded to a myriad of calls for service and were able to quell many potentially violent incidents.

The results of the South End Neighborhood community policing program can be quantified by looking at the statistics. From August 1st, 2004 until December 31, 2004, the Cortland Police Department answered 552 calls for service in the South End of the City. During the same time period in 2005, during which the South End community policing initiative took place, the Cortland Police Department answered 405 calls for service, a drop of 147 calls (26%). If one looks deeper into the statistics, the drop in calls for service occurred mostly at addresses that were notoriously “focal points of interest” for the police. This drop in numbers can at least be partially attributed to the community policing initiative.



Other results of the South End community policing detail cannot be measured in numbers, but are in no way less important. The feedback that the Police Department received from the residents of the South End was always positive in nature. Officers reported being thanked by the residents for their presence in the neighborhood and the officers had many opportunities to interact with children living there. Officers report that they also enjoyed the interaction they had with the residents of the South End.

Unfortunately the funding for this program eventually disappeared and the police department could not longer afford to assign an officer solely to a South End detail. The police department continues to aggressively seek funds to address specific programs. These include successes such as the COPS in Schools Program at the Cortland Middle/Senior High School; the Police on Patrol (Pops Program) which provided a police presence in Beaudry Park; and the NYS Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) which establishes a police presence in the East End Community Center (in 2007, funding from the JAG will provide additional policing once again to the South End for a period of approximately five months). These grant programs tend to come and go, however, and often the Police Department does not always have the funding to institutionalize the programs (it does continue a rotating police presence in each of the City parks during the summer months). Much of the more recent federal or State funding streams have been diverted towards Homeland Security efforts which makes the reality of establishing long term police programs even more remote.

While the City's Police Department will continue to serve and respond to the South End Neighborhood, when funds are available (such as the State's Community Outreach Fund as noted above), much of the crime can be thwarted before it ever starts. The Police Department's goal for the South End is to continue a relationship and

presence in the neighborhood because statistics show that proactive policing stops crime and provides for a better quality of life.

LAND USE AND ZONING

Land use within the study area is diverse in that residential uses are situated in close proximity to the City's Central Business, General Business, and General Industrial zoning districts. These districts allow for a wide array of uses that can accommodate retail, manufacturing, and service businesses. There are two residential zoning districts within the South End Neighborhood, including the R-1 and R-2 districts.

The district that encompasses the largest geographic area within the South End is the General Industry zoning district. Large portions of this district are unoccupied, as they encompass the former Rosen Superfund site which is now included as a part of the Noss Technology Park. As mentioned, at one time the Rosen Site had environmental



contamination concerns that stood in the way of future development. Fortunately, the Rosen site environmental concerns have been remediated by the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the site is available for use in the future, albeit with some restrictions (there is a five acre site which is capped and not available for development). Regarding the remainder of Noss Park, the City has received brownfields funding from the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation to conduct a site investigation to determine the type and quantity of the contamination located

on another portion of Noss Park. An investigative report will be generated describing the details of environmental contamination. After the investigation is complete, the City intends to apply for additional money from New York State to clean up Noss Park. It is essential the City complete this project so the property will be marketable for future development.

Brownfield redevelopment has the potential to significantly impact not only the South End Neighborhood, but the entire City as well. The Noss Technology Park site is a prime redevelopment area that could build momentum for positive community-wide change. Community benefits of redevelopment include an increase in the local tax base, job growth within the South End, the creation of community amenities and services, increasing surrounding property values, and an improved environment. New development here can utilize existing infrastructure, which reduces the need for new development to sprawl out into the green areas of the nearby Town of Cortlandville.

Another vacant site that lends itself to future development is the former Wickwire building site on South Main Street. This site abuts the railroad and is zoned General Business. This zoning district allows a significant number of commercial activities to take place.

The second largest zoning classification in the South End Neighborhood is the R-2 zoning district. This district allows for single- and two-family dwellings by right, while ancillary parking areas, bed-and-breakfasts, churches, places of worship, fraternity and sorority houses, home occupations, and public service utilities are all uses allowed with a special use permit.

There is a public perception that a number of residential structures in the South End have changed from stable, permanent households to housing accommodations for more transient people such as college students. The Residents' Survey revealed that most renters in the South End have lived in the neighborhood for less than five years. The neighborhood lends itself to student housing development due to its proximity to SUNY Cortland and the services located Downtown. Developers can command much higher rents from the college population compared to the rest of the City's rental market. The abundance of properties zoned as R-2 also facilitates the trend to convert single family dwellings into multi-unit residential structures. The City should consider rezoning some existing R-2 areas into an R-1 zoning classification. This would prohibit existing single family structures to be converted into multi-unit residential properties. A prime location for carrying out this policy would be in the vicinity of Crawford, Pine, Cannone, and Scammel Streets. The existing R-1 area around Scammell Street and Denti Way could simply be extended into where the existing R-2 district boundary is located.

The R-1 zoning district is the only other residential zoning district in the South End. This district is at the southernmost end of the study area and includes only a fraction of the South End's housing units compared to the rest of the neighborhood.

The General Business and Central Business zoning districts are located along South Main Street which is appropriate for the character of the street. It keeps business and services out of the residential neighborhoods, but allows for easy access by area residents.

The map following on page 37-A depicts a future land use scenario.

NEIGHBORHOOD DESIGN



V. NEIGHBORHOOD DESIGN

Visual Resources Analysis

As noted in section *II. Process*, of this Plan Cindy Teter, RLA, was hired to a complete conceptual drawing of selected areas of the South End. As noted elsewhere in this plan there are a number of developable vacant properties in the neighborhood. Therefore, the central focus of the drawing was developable parcels in the neighborhood including: (1) the Third Rail, Coffee Mania, and Coffee Mania vacant lot which are all contiguous; (2) the vacant Wickwire site, (3) the Potter Paint site, and (4) the vacant land which is streetside on South Main Street and is included in Noss Technology Park. She also noted the condition of other prominent areas which are already developed but need improving, such as the perimeter of Northern Concrete Block and the general area of South Avenue. There is a unique neighborhood opportunity in that the four developable parcels are all available at the same time, and are owned by persons who share a vision for a better South End Neighborhood. Ms. Teter used her observations of the South End built environment and comments made by the public during the visioning sessions as a basis for her design recommendations. The positive attributes/observations of the neighborhood follow:

Positive and unique visual and social elements of the South End Neighborhood:

- Historic architecture
- Strong visual and physical connection to Downtown Cortland
- Rich industrial history
- Family oriented residential streets and neighborhoods
- Close proximity to elementary, junior high and high school
- Transitional zone between industrial, commercial, and residential areas

Ms. Teter then used these observations and her expertise to make suggestions to the neighborhood on how the South End's built environment, aesthetics, its natural attributes, general design, and the relationship individuals have with the neighborhood could be improved. These recommendations follow:

Establish Neighborhood Sense of Place:

- Expand upon positive elements to form a cohesive character; or
- Create a new image or character for the neighborhood and community.

Define Target Areas for Neighborhood Improvement:

- South Avenue
- Wickwire Site
- Potter Paint Site

- Northern Concrete Block
- Noss Technology/Industrial Park

Define Social Problem of Overall Target Area:

Loss of industry and jobs:

- Eliminates social opportunities among residents
- Creates open, ugly, vacant lots and buildings
- Creates downward spiral in neighborhood cohesiveness, pride, property values, and business opportunities
- Causes residents and business owners to suffer low self-esteem and feel powerless
- Lowers opportunities for economic and political support from policymakers and developers
- Creates situation where people look outside the neighborhood for opportunities instead of creating them within and drawing businesses and residents into the area

Define Specific Issues for Specific Developable/Problem Areas:

South Avenue:

- Harsh entrance to street from Main Street with ugly billboard
- Overcrowded residential lots due to multiple residences per single frontage
- Lack of off-street parking on individual properties
- Located in transitional zone between commercial, industrial, and residential areas
- Rail Station has important historic architecture and character
- Numerous open parking areas exist along street with no green buffer
- Poorly maintained, unsightly, and unfriendly buildings and properties
- Lack of pride in properties and neighborhood
- Lack of hope for improvement of properties and neighborhood
- Lack of street trees and presence of open, vacant lots offer no softening of buildings, utility lines, and pavement. Atmosphere is harsh, cold, unfriendly, uninviting, and unsightly
- Large vacant lot offers opportunities for development

Wickwire Site:

- Large, vacant site along South Main Street offers opportunities for development
- Located in transitional zone between residential, commercial, and industrial areas

Potter Paint Site:

- Large, vacant, industrial property located adjacent to the residential areas
- Vacant property offers opportunities for development

Noss Technology Park:

- Neat and clean, but stark and lacking in architectural character and plantings
- Large, undeveloped area provides opportunities for industrial development, which allows former industrial areas on the other side of South Main Street to be redeveloped for lighter commercial and residential uses.
- Lack of plantings and attractive signage along frontage and entrance road do not give a strong, positive visual image to attract potential industrial users and do nothing to enhance the streetscape or neighborhood.

Northern Concrete Block:

- Rural, industrial character with historic characteristics
- Thriving business
- Location across from Beaudry Park and adjacent to residential zone not particularly compatible
- Well kept buildings, but unattractive frontage and perimeter of property

Recommendations

Use Site Plan Review, new Design Standards/Guidelines, and Zoning Regulations to promote the following site improvements (See conceptual drawing following on page 42-A). Improvements include:

- Creating/retaining green space on developable properties
- Planting more street trees to provide not only shade, but community character
- Developing properties whose design, scale, and character are in keeping with the desired vision for the neighborhood
- Landscaping plans for private property
- Better signage
- Developing commercial properties that provide the South End Neighborhood with neighborhood services/meet local consumer needs
- Encourage the development of community gathering places (e.g., Coffee Mania lot utilized as community garden or farmers market)
- Improvement of pedestrian pathways/amenities
- Clean up unsightly areas
- Industrial development advocated for east side of South Main Street, while small scale, low density housing/commercial development promoted for west side of South Main Street, particularly the Potter Paint site

ACTION AGENDA



VI. ACTION AGENDA

Via the process detailed previously, the Steering Committee, in tandem with Thoma Development Consultants, developed specific actions that, if undertaken, should bring positive change for the South End Neighborhood in the City of Cortland. The projects with the highest priority 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. Also included is an Action Agenda that lists all projects recommended to spur revitalization of the South End Neighborhood. While this Action Agenda and the projects benchmarked herein provide a blueprint for revitalizing the City's South End Neighborhood, this Action Agenda should be considered a living document that should be reevaluated and updated as projects are completed and priorities change.

IMPLEMENTATION

In order for the goals of this Plan to be fully realized and for the Benchmarked projects to be implemented, the City will need to continue its commitment to the South End. There is currently no clear non-governmental organization or entity to spearhead implementation. Although a Neighborhood Association is proposed to be developed, it will take a number of years before such a group will have the capacity to effect real change. Even then, the long term involvement and commitment of the City will be vital to future success and ensuring long-term revitalization. The City may want to consider appointing a task force of City staff, officials, and stakeholders to ensure a continued, consistent, and organized focus to ongoing revitalization efforts and to track progress.

The chart included in the Action Plan Matrix at the end of this section shows a recommended timeframe for implementing benchmarks. These are guidelines, and may be (and should be) adjusted based on real or perceived needs and in response to new opportunities. New opportunities, however, must be weighed against the overall goals of this plan.

At the outset, it is important to concentrate on activities that will: (1) increase capacity to implement and coordinate projects, and (2) be relatively easy to accomplish and have high visibility. Early successes are important in creating excitement for revitalization activities, maintaining momentum, and for combating apathy among businesses, property owners, and residents. The "clustering" of various individual projects can exponentially increase their impact. For example, combining the planting of street trees with the repaving of streets, and perhaps rehabilitation of residences, will multiply the impact of each individual project. As progress is made, every success, no matter how small, should be celebrated publicly. Attempts should be made to highlight a success or a milestone on a regular basis.

In the early stages of the revitalization effort, it is important that efforts do not get bogged down with difficult to implement projects. If progress is not being made on a particular issue, it may need to be set aside for the time being in order to accomplish other tasks. Failures should be assessed to identify what did not work, and to identify

what can be done to better address the issue in the future. As needs change, and new opportunities arise, the City and neighborhood should be flexible and open to new projects, concepts, and ideas that are consistent with the vision of the South End Neighborhood. Lastly, it should be understood that revitalization efforts are an ongoing and incremental, and are not completed in a few years. Despite past problems, the desire for the revitalization of this neighborhood seems to be experiencing a groundswell of support and enthusiasm and this bodes well for future revitalization efforts. It is important that this momentum not be lost.

Specific benchmarked priority projects are detailed following:

BENCHMARK #1

PROBLEM/OPPORTUNITY 1 – Housing

The majority of structures in the South End Neighborhood are predominantly residential. Over the years, single family structures have been steadily converted to multi-family rental properties. The cause of this conversion is the economic demise of the industrial economic segment of the South End which resulted in a number of abandoned buildings and an industrial waste site. This precipitated a decline in the value of the surrounding housing market. As single family homes lost their value, they were purchased and converted to rental properties, many with lower income tenants and many not well-maintained. This has created a vicious cycle of more and more properties losing value and more and more conversions. As rental units escalate in number, the neighborhood becomes less desirable for single family homeowners. Today there are an estimated 876 housing units in the South End and 584 are rental units (67%). 91% of the rental housing market is in considered to be in moderately to severely substandard condition.

To reverse this trend, the City should embark on a course of rehabilitating the existing owner-occupied housing market segment and encouraging homeownership programs to increase the level of owner-occupied housing. Tenants also deserve to live in standard, affordable housing units, and the City should promote the rehabilitation of the rental market, particularly those units occupied by lower income households. Rehabilitation efforts should preserve and enhance the rich architectural detailing that gives the neighborhood its character. Financial incentives should be developed to assist tenants in the South End to become homeowners. This action would make the dream of homeownership a reality and help to reverse the lack of pride which is evident on some of the neighborhood's streets. New housing programs should recognize that energy efficient housing features, and other housing quality and safety features, not only protect the environment, they increase housing affordability and safety on the individual household level. As the population ages, and special needs persons are identified, housing units should be developed or modified so they can be enjoyed by all.

The City should also be exploring ways to infuse more market rate housing in the South End so that there is more economic diversity.

The density of housing on some streets, e.g., South Avenue, causes overcrowded housing conditions and lack of on site parking. City planners should be looking seriously at reducing the number of tax parcels that contain two housing structures. This can be accomplished through providing incentives for property owners to demolish one of the structures, especially in cases where parking will be created. The City can also use the power of site plan review to limit the development of second structures, including the conversion of former garages and carriage houses to living units.

While the City can be the catalyst for procuring funding for housing efforts, this must truly be a community effort. In addition to the existing local housing provider network and local developers, the community must look at creative ways to engage volunteer, educational, and not-for-profit organizations to assist with these projects, both

from a planning perspective and from the perspective of providing some of the labor needed to undertake needed housing programs. It is highly advisable for the South End Neighborhood to advocate for itself either through the establishment of a Neighborhood Association or by forming a 5th Ward Task Force.

PROJECT 1.1

Create a housing rehabilitation program for owner occupied and income property units in the South End Neighborhood – 80% of the housing structures in the South End Neighborhood is moderately to severely substandard. This results in a poor first impression of the neighborhood, a decrease in property values, a lack of further positive investment, unsafe housing conditions, and a lack of neighborhood pride and enjoyment.

There are a number of absentee income property owners in the South End Neighborhood that do not maintain their properties. Often if a property owner is not cooperative, a change in ownership through acquisition by a qualified developer can serve to improve the subject property(ies). The Housing Visions Crown Homes Project slated to take place in the spring of 2007 can serve as a model for other efforts.

INDICATOR – Reduction in substandard housing

TASKS

- Seek funding from various State and federal programs for the rehabilitation of the existing housing stock and for homeownership programs. Hire a consultant to administer the program(s).
- Develop guidelines for the creation of a housing rehabilitation program in the South End Neighborhood for owner occupied housing, particularly for lower income homeowners. Financial incentives must be contingent upon homeowners living in the South End for a specified time period after the rehabilitation work is completed.
- Develop guidelines for the development of an income property rehabilitation program, particularly for properties where the majority of units are tenanted by households which are lower income. Financial incentives must include provisions for rents to remain affordable to lower income tenants and for the properties to be maintained, meet code, and provide a safe living environment subsequent to rehabilitation.
- Work with both private and not-for-profit developers such as Housing Visions on the acquisition of properties which present a slumming and blighting influence on the South End. Financial incentives in the form of leveraged community development dollars, grant funds, Low Income Housing Tax Credits, and/or Payment in Lieu of Taxes should be negotiated in order to entice investment in this area of the City.
- Not-for-profit housing agencies such as the Cortland Housing Assistance Council, the Cortland Housing Authority, the ARC of Cortland and Madison Counties, etc. have proven to be quality developers who rent to lower income households and/or to those with special needs. The City will continue to work with these and other

reputable developers on the acquisition and subsequent upgrade of the rental market housing in the target area.

- Beginning in 2011, the City will have the power to seize properties which have unpaid back taxes. When the opportunity arises, the City should require that development proposals be submitted for residential properties offered up for bid. Priority should be given to those bidders that can show upgrades to the subject property that will result in a significant improvement to the community's housing stock, and to properties that will be acquired by owner occupants.
- Form a Neighborhood Association or a Task Force of the 5th Ward. One of its roles will be to serve as a conduit for spreading the news regarding neighborhood housing opportunities. It will also work to ensure that press coverage in all media outlets is undertaken.
- Work with other housing providers such as CAPCO, Access to Independence, and Area Office on Aging, for example, to maximize the impact of funding spent in the South End.

PROJECT LEADER

City of Cortland

POTENTIAL PARTNERS

South End Property Owners
City Code Enforcement Office
Neighborhood Association/5thWard Task Force
Local News Media
Cortland Housing Assistance Council
CAPCO
Area Office for Aging
Housing Visions
Private Developers
Cortland Housing Authority
City of Cortland Planning Commission

RESOURCES

City of Cortland
Governor's Office for Small Cities: Community Development Block Grant Program
NYS Division of Housing and Community Renewal: HOME Program
NYS Housing Trust Fund
NYS Affordable Housing Corporation
RESTORE Program
Weatherization Program
Low Income Housing Tax Credits

PROJECT 1.2

Limit the conversion of the existing owner occupied housing market to income properties and encourage the conversion of income properties to owner occupied housing by developing homeownership programs – There has been a slow and steady conversion of the existing housing stock in the South End from owner occupied to income property. In order to both stem the tide of further conversions and to reverse the trend, financial incentives must be provided to maintain the housing units that are currently owner occupied while, at the same time, converting income property units back to owner occupied. Since the housing units will, in all likelihood, need repairs upon purchase, financial incentives must not only be given for down payment and closing cost assistance, but for housing rehabilitation subsequent to purchase.

INDICATOR – Increase in the number and percentage of owner occupied housing units

TASKS

- Establish a first time homeownership program for both single and multi-family housing structures in the South End Neighborhood. Financial incentives in the form of down payment and closing cost assistance and rehabilitation will be the cornerstones of this program. Priority will be given to lower income households to assist in achieving the dream of homeownership. In the multi-family homeownership program, priority will be given to eligible, existing tenants.
- Develop a program for first time homeowners that includes technical assistance, from how to look for a mortgage, to budgeting, etc., and how to transition from tenant to landlord in the multi-family homeownership program.
- The Neighborhood Association or 5th Ward Task Force should advocate for planning and zoning policies and laws which would limit the conversion of single family homes to multi-family.

PROJECT LEADER

City of Cortland

POTENTIAL PARTNERS

Neighborhood property owners
Neighborhood Association/5th Ward Task Force
Local lending institutions
Board of Realtors
Housing and credit counseling agencies
Not-for-profit housing providers' clients/tenants

RESOURCES

City community development funds
Governor's Office for Small Cities: Community Development Block Grant Program
NYS Division of Housing and Community Renewal: HOME Program
NYS Affordable Housing Corporation
U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

PROJECT 1.3

Demolish residential properties not fit for habitation and encourage demolition where it will serve to address undesirable housing densities – Some of the structures in the South End Neighborhood have deteriorated to a point where they are no longer fit for human habitation and are beyond rehabilitation. Housing Visions will be demolishing residential and commercial structures to enable it to build new housing units. Additionally, there are a number of streets in the neighborhood with high housing densities, particularly substandard housing units. This is a slumming and blighting influence on the neighborhood, as it limits the number of on site parking spaces causing tenants and their visitors to park on front lawns, creating ruts and standing water. Cars also straddle the sidewalks, blocking other tenants who wish to exit the property, causing tension among neighbors. It also creates an unsafe situation for emergency responders. The City should encourage the demolition of unsafe and uninhabitable structures, as their existence is a threat to health and safety and serves to diminish the impact of other neighborhood revitalization efforts.

INDICATOR – Decrease in the number of severely substandard housing structures, less density of housing on individual tax parcels, and more off street parking.

TASKS

- The City, particularly the Code Enforcement Officer, will work to identify properties that cannot be rehabilitated for a reasonable cost. The City will work with the property owner on providing incentives for the demolition of the property.
- The City will seek financing to encourage property owners to demolish second structures on properties with high densities. Property owners will be required to use the new space for off street parking.

PROJECT LEADER

City of Cortland

POTENTIAL PARTNERS

City Code Enforcement Officer
Private property owners

RESOURCES

City community development funds
Governor's Office for Small Cities: Community Development Block Grant Program
City of Cortland Fire Department training funds

PROJECT 1.4

Promote energy saving, safety, and special needs housing features so that living units remain affordable and can be enjoyed by all – In order for housing to be remain affordable for individual households, housing rehabilitation improvements must consider energy saving features such as those put forth in Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED), the Energy Star Program, etc. Rehabilitation must also

take into account the needs of individual household members such as features that allow the elderly to “age in place” and allow those with physical disabilities to fully enjoy their place of residence. Lastly, safety issues such as addressing lead based paint and asbestos, the installation of smoke and carbon monoxide detectors, etc. will serve to protect South End households.

INDICATOR – Increase in the number of homes that are rehabilitated utilizing green energy features; increase in the number of homes made accessible or adaptable for special needs populations; increase in the number of homes where lead paint and/or asbestos has been addressed and/or safety appliances such as smoke and carbon monoxide detectors have been installed.

TASKS

- Develop rehabilitation programs with a goal of reducing energy bills. This can include, but not be limited to, energy efficient windows and doors, sufficient insulation, using “green” materials, and energy efficient appliances.
- Work with local utilities on undertaking community informational meetings on ways to cut energy costs.
- Identify households with persons who have special needs and rehabilitate home to meet these needs. Encourage landlords to make units accessible or adaptable.

PROJECT LEADER

City of Cortland

POTENTIAL PARTNERS

City Code Enforcement Officer
Private property owners
City of Cortland Fire Department
NYSEG
National Grid
Access to Independence
Area Office on Aging
Cortland Housing Assistance Council
CAPCO
Cortland County Environmental Health Department

RESOURCES

City community development funds
Governor’s Office for Small Cities: Community Development Block Grant Program
NYS Division of Housing and Community Renewal: Access to Home Program
U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
NYSEG
National Grid
Cortland County Health Department
Assistance to Firefighters Grant

PROJECT 1.5

Encourage the development of more middle income housing in the South End Neighborhood – In order for the South End Neighborhood to be revitalized, there must be an effort put forth to diversify the economic strata of households in the neighborhood.

INDICATOR – Increase in the number of middle income housing units in the South End Neighborhood.

TASKS

- Work with private developers and property owners in creating owner occupied and rental housing for households with incomes in the range of 81-120% of the Cortland County median income in the South End Neighborhood.

PROJECT LEADER

City of Cortland

POTENTIAL PARTNERS

Property owners
Private developers
Board of Realtors

RESOURCES

Restore NY Program
City Miscellaneous Revenues
NYS Affordable Housing Corporation

PROBLEM/OPPORTUNITY 2 – Zoning and Land Use

Community character can be built by private sector entities that redevelop properties or construct new facilities on available land. The City has 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. The City’s zoning ordinance is the regulation that determines what uses are allowed where, and a site plan review policy within the zoning regulation gives the local planning body the leverage to shape development. It is necessary for the City to revisit its local development policies and revise the standards so that new development within the South End is consistent with the desired characteristics that were expressed through this planning process. Even design guidelines and concept images could supplement the zoning ordinance and help new development adhere to community standards for contributing to the desired landscape, rather than detracting from it.

PROJECT 2.1

Remove billboard sign at the intersection of South Main Street and the New York and Susquehanna Railroad – Signs are one aspect of the built environment that impact planning strategies and the quality of neighborhoods. Balancing the need for commercial or non-commercial billboards with the City’s long-term planning objectives, which aim to improve neighborhood quality, aesthetics, and traffic safety, means that this particular type of sign is out of character with the desired future for the South End. It is difficult to determine when this sign was initially put up, and what regulations were in effect at the time it was erected. Park Outdoor currently has a lease agreement with the Cortland County IDA until 2014. The billboard sign would not be allowed to locate in this location according to the existing zoning ordinance. It is necessary for the City to enforce its existing amortization schedule and update a reasonable amortization policy. However, other options exist to achieve in eliminating this particular sign, such as negotiation and cooperation.

INDICATOR – Removed Billboard (Off-Premises Sign)

TASKS

- Enforce existing amortization schedule in Section 300-113 to remove the existing billboard.
- Amend the City of Cortland Zoning Ordinance so that off-premises and billboard signs are not allowed within the City, except within a commercial or industrial zone that is within 660 feet of an Interstate route.
- Incorporate a new amortization schedule into the City zoning ordinance so that non-conforming signs must either be removed or must come into compliance

within a specified period of time based upon its fair market value. This time period must allow the property owner to realize a return the financial investment of the sign.

- Collaborate with the billboard owner and the Cortland County Industrial Development Agency on implementing this removal project through simple negotiation.

PROJECT LEADER

City of Cortland

POTENTIAL PARTNERS

Park Outdoor
Cortland County BDC/IDA
Cortland County Planning Department
Qualified Planning Consultant

RESOURCES

NYS Department of State, Division of Local Government Resources
New York Planning Federation

PROJECT 2.2

Supply off-street parking for new and existing development – The abundance of multi-unit residential properties within the South End Neighborhood contributes to the number of cars parked on-street or illegally. The sizes of existing lots do not accommodate the number of cars tenants may have at any given property. New development should be required to provide sufficient on-site parking for their particular use. Parking standards are provided within the City of Cortland zoning ordinance, but should be reviewed and amended with current planning standards.

INDICATOR – Less cars parked on-street, and maximum utilization of parking lots

TASKS

- Review existing parking standards and modify to incorporate design guidelines, and appropriate size and quantity standards.
- Assure new development incorporates updated parking standards into their site plans, while also carefully scrutinizing the need for any area variance related to parking.

PROJECT LEADER

City of Cortland

POTENTIAL PARTNERS

Local business owners
Local property owners
New York and Susquehanna Railroad

RESOURCES

City Budget
Development Impact Fees

PROJECT 2.3

Proceed with creating an up-to-date Comprehensive Plan – The City has already secured a \$54,000 grant from the Department of State Quality Communities Program (2007) to undertake this project. A comprehensive plan will engage the entire City in a planning process to determine how Cortland will develop and operate in the future. The plan will subsequently enable the City to amend its land use regulations by focusing on smart-growth principles and preservation of the environment, while also providing cost-effective delivery of municipal services. The City's new vision for land use will establish community priorities by considering the social, economic, physical, environmental, and political balances in the region, and create a blueprint for future action by both the public and private sector.

INDICATOR – Adopted Comprehensive Plan

TASKS

- Assemble steering committee
- Hire consultant to facilitate process
- Adopt Plan

PROJECT LEADER

City of Cortland

POTENTIAL PARTNERS

Cortland County Planning Department
City of Cortland Planning Commission
Cortland County Planning Board
Southern Tier East Regional Planning and Development Board
New York State Department of State, Division of Local Government Services
Qualified Planning Consultant
City Residents and Property Owners

RESOURCES

Cortland County Planning Department
New York State Quality Communities Program

PROJECT 2.4

Amend zoning districts in South End – The existing zoning district boundary lines should be changed to reflect the desired future land uses within the South End neighborhood. Reclassifying certain areas within the study area will help stabilize single-family residences, improve community and family neighborhoods, and may eventually increase property values once future development adheres to new zoning district standards (see also Land Use map at the end of this Benchmark).

INDICATOR – Amended zoning map

TASKS

- Proceed with the comprehensive planning process and adopt a new City Comprehensive Plan.
- Redraw district boundaries so that the R-2 zoning district in the vicinity of Crawford, Pine, Cannone, and Scammell Streets becomes R-1.
- Eliminate the General Industrial zoning district between South Main Street and Owego Street, and rezone to allow mixed uses such as residential development, neighborhood services, and small business.

PROJECT LEADER

City of Cortland Legislative Body

POTENTIAL PARTNERS

City Planning Commission
Cortland County Planning Department
Qualified Planning Consultant
Municipal Attorney

RESOURCES

Cortland County Planning Department
City Department of Public Works (for map production)

PROJECT 2.5

Increase resources for concentrating an aggressive code enforcement program in the South End – Increased resources will allow numerous code violations to be resolved in a timely fashion. Improving the conditions in the noticeably rundown areas of the South End will lessen the negative impact those areas will have on surrounding neighborhoods. It is important for the City to address health and safety concerns to assure residents a safe and healthy quality of life.

INDICATOR – Increased number of code-compliant properties and less code related complaints

TASKS

- Secure financing for more code enforcement through grant opportunities and legislative member items.
- Assign one or two code enforcement officers to the South End Neighborhood with expanded resources.

PROJECT LEADER

City of Cortland

POTENTIAL PARTNERS

City of Cortland Fire Department and Code Enforcement Office

RESOURCES

Governor's Office for Small Cities: Community Development Block Grant Program
Municipal budget

BENCHMARK #3

PROBLEM/OPPORTUNITY 3 – Streetscapes and Infrastructure Improvements

The streetscapes and infrastructure in the South End Neighborhood are in varying states of condition. Many infrastructure and streetscape improvements need to be made on side streets, including but not limited to, sidewalks, street tree plantings, curbs, roads, water/sewer improvements, lighting, etc. For example, South Avenue is a concrete road whose surface is in very poor condition. Pierce and Winter Streets are deadend side streets which are located off South Avenue. The water and sewer lines on both Pierce and Winter Streets need to be upgraded, as they are not properly looped and/or are in deteriorated condition. Also, there are sidewalks in poor condition along all three streets or they are non-existent. The area is lacking street trees which could provide the shade and aesthetics needed to restore neighborhood character. Since South Avenue also contains some of the worst housing conditions in the neighborhood, the City should undertake both visual and operational improvements to the infrastructure in the South End so that the revitalization effort is all encompassing. It should be a goal of the City to consider the multimodal transportation network including vehicles, pedestrians, and bicyclists.

South Main Street was recently reconstructed and showed that a well designed and implemented streetscape improvement project provides an area with an historic and gracious appearance. During the public visioning sessions related to this Strategic Plan, neighborhood residents complained that the South Main Street project, while very welcomed, stopped at the railroad tracks, with respect to the brick inlays (stampedcrete) and the historic street lighting. Many felt this only served to separate a portion of the South End from the rest of the South Main Street neighborhood. The City must remain vigilant in maintaining these South Main Street improvements, expand them, and continue to institute further improvements in the remainder of the South End Neighborhood.

PROJECT 3.1

Replacement/Upgrade/Installation of the South End Neighborhood Infrastructure – The City of Cortland should undertake an inventory of the infrastructure and streetscapes network in the South End. This inventory will serve as a basis for prioritizing needed projects. One of the areas with pressing needs at this time is the South Avenue/Winter and Pierce Streets' portion of the target area. Since these streets also contain some of the most deteriorated housing, a concerted effort to totally revitalize this area will result in a significant positive impact on the entire South End.

INDICATOR – Completion of South Avenue/Winter and Pierce Streets' infrastructure project.

TASKS

- Engineer project components.
- Create cost estimates.
- Identify and secure funding.
- Construct planned improvements.

PROJECT LEADER

City of Cortland Department of Public Works

POTENTIAL PARTNERS

City of Cortland Community Development Office

RESOURCES

City of Cortland Community Development Office
Governor's Office for Small Cities: Community Development Block Grant Program
DEC Community and Urban Forestry Program for tree planting

PROJECT 3.2

Continuation of Main Street Streetscape – As noted above, in 2006 South Main Street was rebuilt from Port Watson Street on the north, southward to the City line (it extended further to the Town of Cortlandville). Streetscape work, stampedcrete and historic lighting, was only completed to the rail crossing. The streetscape should be continued south to Denti Way. This will serve to visually improve the southern portion of the neighborhood, as well as make South Main Street south of the railroad tracks more pedestrian friendly.

INDICATOR – Extension of the Main Street Streetscape

TASKS

- Engineer project components
- Create cost estimates.
- Identify and secure funding.
- Construct planned improvements.

PROJECT LEADER

City of Cortland

POTENTIAL PARTNERS

South End businesses

City of Cortland Community Development Office

RESOURCES

City of Cortland Community Development Office

Governor's Office for Small Cities: Community Development Block Grant Program

SAFTE-LU Funding

PROJECT 3.3

Continuation of Noss Park Drive – It is anticipated that the Build Now NY designation and the environmental and marketing-related projects to be undertaken in the Noss Technology Park will result in an attractive site for future business development. Two new businesses, Cayuga Press and Cortland Products International, have just started up in the Park, attesting to its desirability for business expansion. With new business expansion comes additional traffic and, most likely, additional truck traffic. A rebuilt South Main Street will degrade more slowly if truck traffic is limited. Extending Noss Park Drive to Pendleton Street will provide a shorter, more direct truck route without using Main or Huntington Streets. The extension of the road will also encourage new development on other properties and increase vehicular and pedestrian safety on South Main Street. As part of this project, water and sewer mains should be extended as well.

INDICATOR – Extension of Noss Park Drive to Pendleton Street.

TASKS

- Determine routes
- Engineer project components.
- Create cost estimates.
- Identify and secure funding.
- Construct planned improvements.

PROJECT LEADER

City of Cortland

POTENTIAL PARTNERS

Cortland County BDC/IDA
Noss Technology Park businesses
City of Cortland Department of Public Works

RESOURCES

Private engineering firms
City of Cortland Community Development Office
Governor's Office for Small Cities: Community Development Block Grant Program
NYS Department of Transportation
Empire State Development Corporation
Appalachian Regional Commission

BENCHMARK #4

PROBLEM/OPPORTUNITY 4 – Neighborhood Policing

Portions of the South End Neighborhood are the location of the greatest number of crimes in the City. This includes drug dealing and drug and substance abuse, domestic violence, robberies and burglaries, child abuse and endangerment, and lesser crimes such as excessive noise, public intoxication, animal abuse and lack of control, loitering, and other petty crimes which disrupt the peace and tranquility of the neighborhood. Additionally, while the reconstruction of South Main Street was a welcome addition to the neighborhood, it is anticipated the new condition of the road will result in increased speeding in the neighborhood.

A significant percentage of respondents to the residents' survey believe the South End has a significant crime issue. When the City has captured funds to devote a police officer to a South End detail, crime rates declined and neighborhood residents, including children, have had the opportunity to positively interact with a police officer. Unfortunately, the City of Cortland is an economically depressed community and it cannot generate the taxes needed to continue a police presence exclusive to the South End Neighborhood. Scarce grant funds are being channeled more and more to Homeland Security efforts. Until more funding is allocated, the Cortland Police Department will have to continue to aggressively seek grant dollars for patrolling the South End. This not only includes a police officer on vehicle or foot patrol but also a continuation of policing efforts such as those found in Beaudry Park during the summer months.

PROJECT 4.1

Seek funding for a larger police presence in the South End Neighborhood

– At the time of this Strategic Plan process, the Cortland Police Department had just received word that funds received by the Cortland Youth Bureau (JAG funds), which contain a policing component, would be used to continue more policing in the South End. Since a reduction in crime goes hand and hand with all the other efforts being undertaken in the area, and is essential to the success of its overall revitalization, the City of Cortland needs to take a hard look at perpetuating a police presence in the target area.

INDICATOR – Reduction in South End Neighborhood crime; additional officer hours devoted to the South End Neighborhood.

TASKS

- Continue to seek grant funds for a South End Neighborhood police presence.
- Create a satellite office in the South End, preferably in a South End Community Center.

- Install a high visibility speed monitor on South Main Street.
- Assign a school crossing guard on South Main Street.

PROJECT LEADER

City of Cortland

POTENTIAL PARTNERS

City of Cortland Police Department
Cortland City Youth Bureau
Neighborhood Association/5th Ward Task Force

RESOURCES

City of Cortland
Governor’s Office for Small Cities: Community Development Block Grant Program
U. S. Department of Criminal Justice Services
New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services

BENCHMARK #5

PROBLEM/OPPORTUNITY 5 – Vacant Land and Underutilized Buildings’ Development Opportunities

As noted in the *Existing Conditions* section of this document, the South End Neighborhood contains five properties that were identified as having development potential. These include the former Wickwire site, the Potter Paint site, the old Third Rail, the Clocktower property, and Noss Industrial Park. Two of those properties, the Clocktower site and Noss Technology Park, are well on their way to redevelopment. This Benchmark focuses on the Third Rail, the Wickwire site, and the Potter Paint property.

PROJECT 5.1

Encourage the reuse of the Third Rail Building – The Third Rail building is a historic railroad station that sits between South Avenue and the railroad tracks. It has limited land for parking. Previously used as a bar, the first floor of the building has been vacant for many years. The owner’s apartment is located on the second floor. While much of the historic character of the building remains intact, it is in need of substantial rehabilitation. Additionally, with taxes severely in arrears, the owner does not appear to have the financial ability to undertake a redevelopment project. The building is in a prime location in the neighborhood and its physical condition make it a blight on the neighborhood. During the visioning sessions, many persons commented that if this building were “fixed up” it would be a wonderful community asset. The adaptive reuse of this building is crucial for the revitalization of the South End. Once the building is developed, it could be used as a location for needed goods and services for neighborhood residents.

INDICATOR – Reuse of the historic Third Rail

TASKS

- Establish a marketing relationship with owner and a realtor.
- Investigate feasibility/desirability of reuse options.
- Determine incentives, if any, needed to entice reuse.
- Locate potential buyers/developers/users.
- Nominate building for inclusion on the State and National Registers of Historic Places.
- Seek funds for historic preservation.

PROJECT LEADER

City of Cortland

POTENTIAL PARTNERS

Building Owners
Cortland County BDC
Cortland County Chamber of Commerce
Local business developers
Cortland County Board of Realtors

RESOURCES

Third Rail Building Owner
Local businesses
City of Cortland Community Development Office
Governor's Office for Small Cities: Community Development Block Grant Program
Restore NY Program
Empire State Development Corporation
NYS Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation

PROJECT 5.2

Encourage reuse of the former Wickwire Site – The Wickwire campus of buildings dominated the South End for many years. There were some 40 buildings located on 40 acres. In the 1960's and 1970's, all the buildings were demolished with the exception of the building located on the west side of South Main Street, just south of the railroad tracks. That building stood until 2006 when a massive fire necessitated the need for it to be raised. The now vacant site is in a prime location along South Main Street. A local developer with a track record of creating successful commercial developments owns the site. The site appears to be conducive to a commercial or mixed-use development. New development on this site it could accommodate a location for needed goods and services for neighborhood residents, specifically a small food and/or drug store.

INDICATOR – Reuse of Wickwire site

TASKS

- Meet with landowner to determine his intentions.
- Investigate feasibility/desirability of development options.
- Determine incentives, if any, needed to entice development

PROJECT LEADER

Land Owner

POTENTIAL PARTNERS

City of Cortland
Cortland County BDC/IDA
Cortland Housing Assistance Council

RESOURCES

Local lenders
City of Cortland Community Development Office
Governor's Office for Small Cities: Community Development Block Grant Program
Restore NY
Empire State Development Corporation
NYS Affordable Housing Corporation
NYS Division of Housing and Community Renewal: Home Program

PROJECT 5.3

Encourage the reuse of the Potter Paint Buildings or Site – Potter Paint went out of production approximately three to four years ago. Currently there are several vacant industrial/warehousing buildings, along with office space, located on the site. These buildings are suitable for certain commercial uses. If the buildings are demolished, the site will be conducive to multi-family housing or low density commercial development. Since one of the concerns of the residents of the South End Neighborhood is the density of housing in the area, any housing development on this site needs to be somewhat small in scale. A housing development must include sufficient green space. The same developer that owns the Wickwire site owns this property.

INDICATOR – Full reuse of building and/or site

TASKS

- Meet with property owner to determine intentions.
- Investigate feasibility/desirability of development options.
- Determine incentives, if any, needed to entice development.

PROJECT LEADER

Property owner

POTENTIAL PARTNERS

City of Cortland
Cortland County BDC/IDA
Cortland Housing Assistance Council

RESOURCES

Local lenders

City of Cortland Community Development Office

Governor's Office for Small Cities: Community Development Block Grant Program

Restore NY

Empire State Development Corporation

NYS Affordable Housing Corporation

NYS Division of Housing and Community Renewal: Home Program