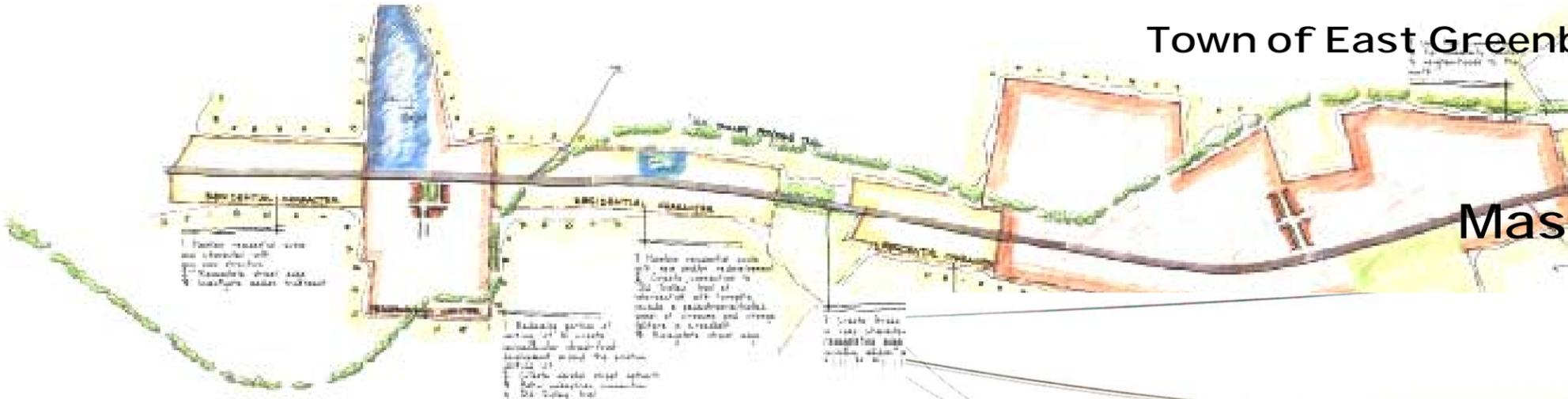


Town of East Greenbush Route 9 and 20 Corridor

Date: April 9, 2003

Master Plan Final Report



prepared by:



Route 9 and 20 Corridor Master Plan

Town of East Greenbush, Rensselaer County, New York

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Draft Master Plan April 9, 2003

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Executive Summary

The Route 9 and 20 Corridor Master Plan was funded by the Capital District Transportation Committee as part of its Community and Transportation Linkage Planning Program. Fraser and Associates and sub-consultant Glattig Jackson of Orlando, Florida facilitated the development of the Master Plan. The goals of the planning effort were not only to develop a plan for the 9 and 20 Corridor that identifies a desired street system, access plan and land use structure for the corridor, but also identifies mechanisms to help achieve the desired vision. Prior to the start of the study, NYSDOT Region 1 indicated that it would consider incorporating into the current highway project those design features made practical by the corridor plan. This planning effort acknowledges that the current project is not the end of the story for the corridor and that other opportunities will emerge to accomplish aspects of the corridor master plan.

The study area encompassed the entire Route 9 and 20 corridor in East Greenbush from the Rensselaer city line to Schodack. The current New York State Department of Transportation construction contract begins near Bruen Court and extends just beyond the Route 4 intersection.

The planning process began with a visual documentation of the existing conditions of the Columbia Turnpike including creation of a composite map utilizing the latest high resolution aerial photography, DOT contract mapping and the Rensselaer County geographic information system mapping. In addition, digital video was taken of the entire corridor, capturing over 2000 still images generated from the digital video.

An Opportunities and Constraints map was prepared to communicate the consultant team's impressions of existing character, features, constraints, and distinct areas. That map formed the basis for early workshop discussions, held in mid-December, which were intended to familiarize the consultant team and public with the physical corridor and with the issues that affect community efforts to make improvements. The discussions during the December sessions became the basis for the development of a strategy for the public design session held in February.

The public impression of the existing corridor is that it is a sterile, non-descript automobile oriented environment. Local residents voiced concerns that Route 9 and 20 was in danger of becoming another 'Wolf Road' as a result of development pressures. The current construction project added a left turn lane, widened the road, and resulted in the removal of some valuable street trees. Those improvements, while intended to make the highway safer, by their nature are oriented towards motorists and not community planning or place-making. An understanding developed that Route 9 and 20 did not need a 'complete make-over', but rather as Police Chief Lavin described, "...dabs of polish applied..." to specific locations to accomplish the project goals and make an impact that would be a catalyst for the future. This "dabs of polish" idea became the basis of focused discussions about geographic areas along the corridor that appeared to provide opportunities to make minor changes that would have a major positive impact. The areas chosen were already unique and most likely to experience change over the next few years. The areas of focus were the overall corridor, the historical village center near Hayes Road, the major commercial center at the Route 4 intersection and the commercial center at the Hampton and

Sherwood Avenue intersections. The consultant team also provided visual examples of successful local and national projects and developed design character sketches to be used in the public design workshop. Those sketches included street tree plantings, medians, crosswalks, street lighting, setbacks, sidewalks, trail networks, transit stops, bollards, signage and other street furnishings and were synthesized into the "Conceptual Planning and Design Guide" (Appendix A).

The final workshop was held at the East Greenbush Town Hall on February 11, 2003 beginning at 1:00 PM and ending at around 11:30PM. Over 130 participated in the charette including 20 students from the State University at Albany's Planning Department, students from local schools, local government officials and representatives from NYSDOT, NYSDOS, and CDTC.

The charette was organized into three working sessions, each beginning with a presentation by Walter Kulash. Groups then began a discussion of issues, did hands-on design and made presentations to the whole workshop for reactions and comments. The four distinct discussion groups dealt with the overall corridor, the historical village center near Hayes Road, the major commercial center at the Route 4 intersection and the commercial center at the Hampton and Sherwood Avenue intersections.

Following the charette, the consultant team made refinements to the concept plans that were created at the charette and organized the ideas generated into goals and implementation measures. In compiling the recommended implementation measures, the goal was to proposed short-term measures that could easily be incorporated into the current construction project, be very beneficial to the community, make an immediate and positive impact, and become a catalyst for more livable community design elsewhere on the 9 and 20 corridor. Recognizing that the NYSDOT construction project is at a very advanced stage, the recommended changes to the current construction project would not result in major modifications of completed work nor result in additional takings. Long term measures concentrated on larger scale issues that would require more planning work or a greater commitment of resources.

The Master Plan document that follows describes in detail the assessment and documentation of the problems on the corridor, the public responses to them and the facilitation of the public's ideas as illustrated by the consultant team.



An article in the Rensselaer TU edition of the Albany Times Union of February 12, 2003 highlighted the previous day's workshop.

Existing Conditions

Introduction

The corridor is currently a mix of transitioning residential to commercial, small commercial and large commercial strip development. Much of the infrastructure that historically defined unique districts and created community icons is significantly weakened or lost. The corridor is unfriendly to pedestrians and has numerous areas of dangerous, unlimited or undefined left turn access along commercial areas. Many of the curb cuts that resulted in this situation have been eliminated under the NYSDOT project currently underway. Much of the historical tree canopy has been lost to utility work and the recent highway improvements. The DOT reconstruction work has changed vertical and horizontal alignments, widened the road and created a left turn lane, all of which are likely to increase the perception of motorist comfort and thus increase the speed at which motorists navigate the road.

Visual Appearance

Currently, many of the residential parts of the turnpike are in transition to home businesses, commercial properties or multi-family dwellings. This is reflected in a recent zoning change made in the southern section of the corridor where a previous residential zoned area was rezoned for general business. While the residential architecture has thus far been maintained, it may only be a matter of time before economic forces will result in the replacement of previously residential structures with more modern commercial ones. Elsewhere on the turnpike there exists a typical and undistinguished mix of strip plazas and medium to large commercial and retail establishments.



A photograph looking northwest from near Route 4.

Historic Structures

The Town Historian has identified 25 historic buildings on Columbia Turnpike, many of which exist near the area of Hayes Road, identified as the Historic Village Center. At present there are no buildings, landscapes or districts registered with the State or National Registers of Historic Places on the Columbia Turnpike. Much of the existing architecture along the Turnpike is older than 50 years and thus eligible for nomination to the state or national registers. The commercial centers at Hampton Avenue/Sherwood and at Hayes Road are potentially historic commercial centers with older commercial and institutional structures the dominant architecture elements. One area of a

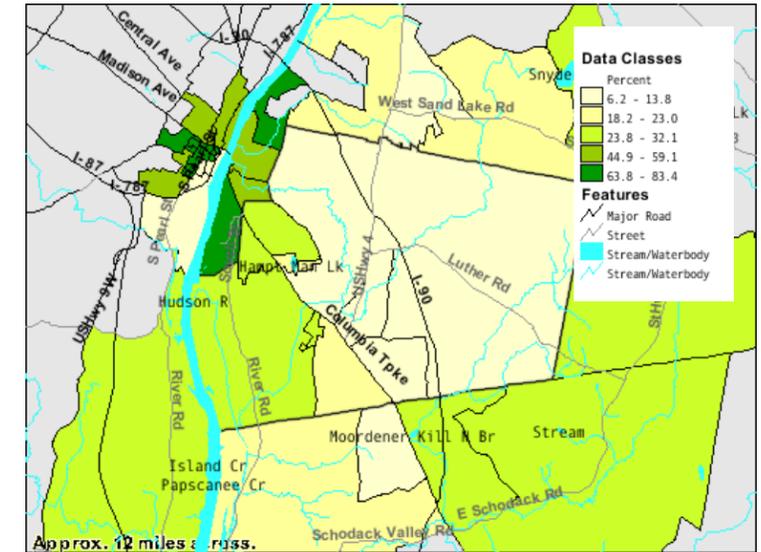
relatively intact and homogeneous grouping of homes exists between ONderdonk Avenue and Maple Avenue where many craftsman bungalows exist. This housing style was prevalent in the early twentieth century and represents a valuable window to the history of the town. Forming a historic district to protect these bungalows should be given serious consideration as a means of preserving this residential area.

According to 2000 Census Data, a significant percentage of the buildings in the areas adjacent the Route 9 and 20 Corridor were built before 1940 as illustrated in the map to the right. The darker shaded areas represent higher percentages of structures built before 1940.

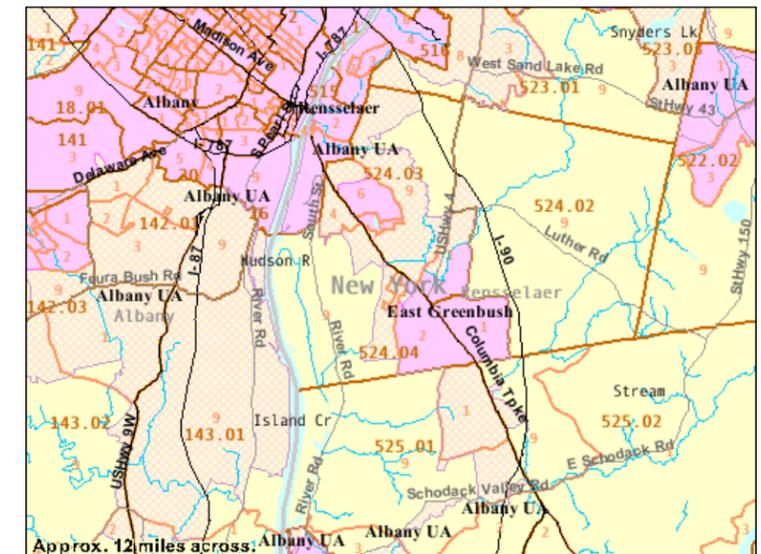
As a result of aging architecture, many of the older residential and commercial buildings have been replaced, demolished or converted from residential to commercial uses. Fortunately, many of the formerly residential structures have been retained and minimally changed in appearance and bulk. As development pressures along the Turnpike increase this trend may not continue.

Transportation-Related Demographic Factors

The 2000 Census data provides a great deal of valuable information related to the 9 and 20 Corridor. An analysis of the Block Groups (Census Tract 524.03, Block Groups 5,6 and 9; and Census Tract 524.04 Block Groups 1, 2, 3, 4, and 9) adjacent to the Route 9 and 20 Corridor provides insight into commuting habits and a basis for what commuters on the Turnpike are all too familiar with, heavy traffic volumes.

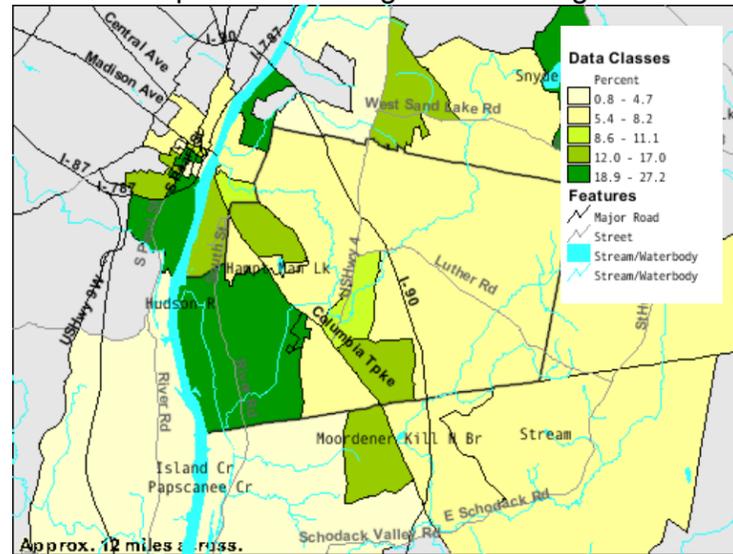


Percentage of Homes Built Before 1940 by Block Group. Source 2000 Census Data, Census Datafinder.



Map of East Greenbush Census Tracts and Block Groups. Source 2000 Census Data, Census Datafinder.

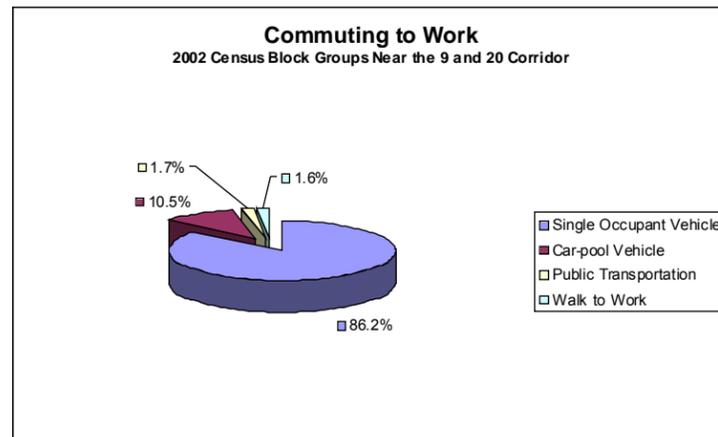
Of the 6,750 employed adjacent the corridor a majority (4,394 or 65%) work outside of Rensselaer County. Based on commuting data available from the Capital District Regional Planning Commission, most of those commuters are employed in Albany County. While many of these commuters will utilize Route 9J or I-90, a significant number of these commuters use Route 9 and 20 and cross at the Dunn Memorial Bridge into Albany. Given the relocation of several state offices into downtown Albany, the number of commuters crossing the Dunn Memorial Bridge has probably increased significantly since the 1999 collection of Census Data.



Map Showing the Percentages of Commuters Using Public Transportation in the 9 and 20 Corridor Block Groups. Source 2000 Census, Census Datafinder.

Census Data includes statistics about the type of transportation used by commuters including whether they carpooled, bicycled, used public transportation or walked to get to their jobs. Based on the 2000 Census Data for the same Block Groups listed above the majority of trips to and from work in the corridor are made in single occupant vehicles. Of the 6,750 commuters only 934 or 14% used those alternative transportation methods compared to 20.6% overall in the six metropolitan Capital District counties. The map above illustrates that commuters living near the Route 9 and 20 Corridor are more likely to use alternative transportation than elsewhere in the Town.

Another commuter characteristic that is notable is the very low percentage, 1.7% of commuters who utilize public transportation (116). Of that number, 8 reported using the train to commute to work, the remaining 108 public transportation commuters use bus transportation. This is a relatively low number compared to the entire Capital District percentage of 3.2% and is in spite of the fact that Route 9 and 20 is well served by CDTA bus lines.



Pie Chart Illustrating the Distribution of Commuting Methods in the 9 and 20 Corridor Block Groups. Source 2000 Census Data, Census Datafinder.

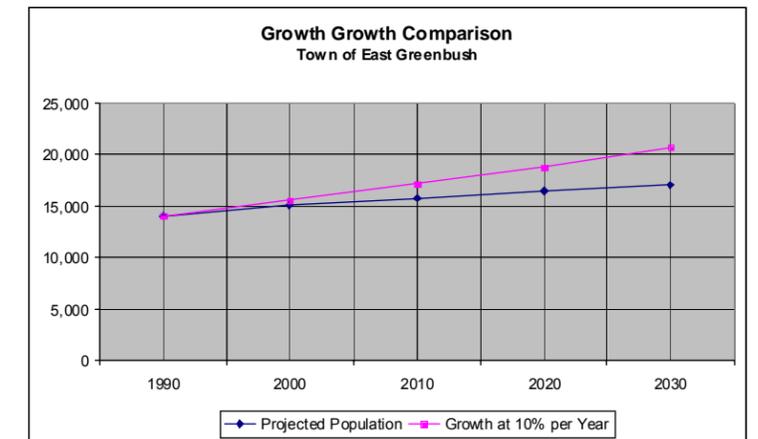
Interestingly, almost as many commuters walked to their jobs as used public transportation. About 1.6% or 107 commuters reported they were able to walk to their jobs in the 9 and 20 Corridor Block

Groups. According to statistics from CDRPC, 3.8% of Capital District commuters walk to work, one of the highest percentages found in the country.

2000 Income and Population Census Data

The Town of East Greenbush population grew according to the 2000 Census to 15,560, an increase of 1,484 or about 10% from the 1990 Census. To put this fact into perspective, the Capital District Regional Planning Commission (CDRPC) in a projection revised in May 2000 estimated a population of 15,045, and a growth rate of about 7% from 1990. The actual growth rate is close to CDRPC's projections for 2010 of 15,733. Should the Town continue to grow at 10% over the next 10 years, the population could be near CDRPC's projected population for the year 2030, twenty years ahead of growth projections.

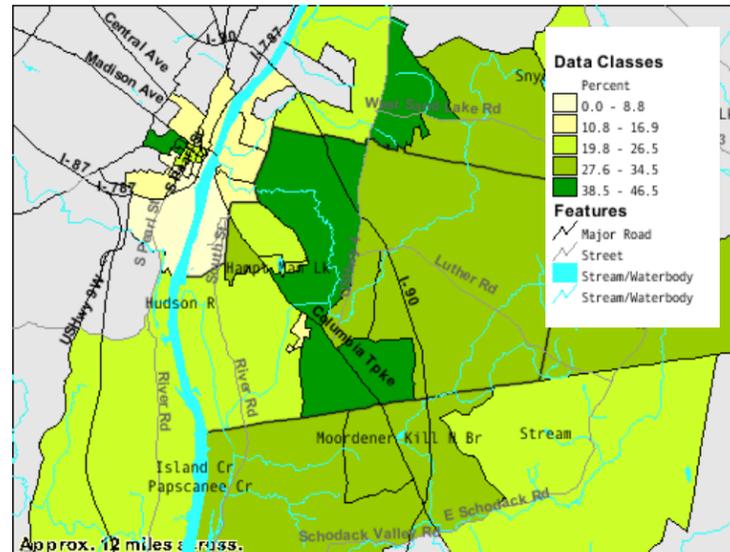
Out of the 2000 Census population of 15,560, those living in the Block Groups near the Columbia Turnpike Corridor numbered 11,382 or 73% of the Town's population. Given the growth projections above and the convenience and available developable land near the Route 9 and 20 Corridor, is it likely that there will be a significant influx of population, consumers, and commuters living adjacent the Route 9 and 20 Corridor.



Other Important Demographic Factors

The loss of major employers such as Sterling Organics and Gardenway in the past few years has contributed significantly to increased commuting on Route 9 and 20. Recent events will hopefully begin a reversal of that trend. The University at Albany East Campus development at the former Sterling site will provide a reported 2,500 new jobs in the short-term and several times that number over the long term. With this development, the Town of East Greenbush has an opportunity to attract new residents and commerce related to the East Campus development. A significant percentage of the new jobs could be staffed by local 9 and 20 Corridor residents. In addition, an influx of new residents hoping to live near the East Campus could potentially purchase and rehabilitate some of the aging residences nearby along the 9 and 20 Corridor. Brand new single and multi-family development might also be triggered, increasing the diversity of the local housing stock. In addition, there is likely to be an increased demand for goods and services. This great opportunity for the Town would be greatly enhanced by creating an attractive and very livable place along the Route 9 and 20 Corridor.

Among the built-in assets East Greenbush has to offer is a high percentage of well educated residents in the 9 and 20 Corridor Block Groups. This is indicative of a ready-made work force for the kind of development that will be occupying the University at Albany East Campus. The map at the right shows the percentage of residents in the Route 9 and 20 Corridor Block Groups with at least a four year college degree according to the 2000 Census.



Percentage of residents with 4 or more year college education. 2000 Census Data, Census Datafinder.

Summary of Traffic Studies

The New York State Department of Transportation studied turning movements on Route 9 and 20 in 1994-5 and in 1999. Those movements were then projected for 2009 and 2019. Based on the data generated in those studies, the DOT came to some conclusions about changes needed in signalization and incorporated those conclusions into the reconstruction project.

The “Arterial Access Management Report” prepared by Clough Harbour and Associates for Region 1 NYSDOT in January 2000 formed the basis for the work being completed under the current construction contracts. The report contained the major recommendation that a “center median be constructed to remove left turning traffic from through travel lanes.” The report also presented several short-term objectives which are being implemented with the 9 and 20 reconstruction including consolidating curb cuts, changes to traffic signals, pedestrian improvements and parking improvements.

The report also contained specific longer term recommendations designed to further reduce curb cuts on the tumpike, mitigate projected increases in traffic volume, and improve pedestrian facilities. The report called for the elimination of driveways or reduced driveway widths in several locations. Service road



connections offering alternative connections to the Kmart and Hannaford Plazas were suggested. Shared parking and access were recommended in the same locations to create more uninterrupted local circulation patterns adjacent Route 9 and 20. On a larger scale the report recommended that interconnections in local road networks paralleling the Tumpike be accomplished through zoning changes that would encourage cross-connections. Other recommendations were made for collector roads that would parallel the 9 and 20 corridor and a new arterial connections that would reduce the reliance on the 9 and 20 corridor for local trips.

Physical Description of the Corridor

Presently Route 9 and 20 is a corridor in transition from a mix of residential and commercial strip malls to an essentially all-commercial strip. There is a lack of definable separation that would help identify where you are on the Tumpike. The ongoing NYSDOT construction project has in many ways contributed to this lack of a sense of place by changing the road alignment, removing vegetation and removing some residential structures in order to provide a wider travel-way and a dedicated left hand turning lane. The DOT project proceeds south from the Rensselaer line to the Route 4 intersection. From Route 4 south to the Schodack Line, a similar transition of residential to commercial land uses is also underway, however, some of the original character is maintained because many of the historical structures have been retained. During the visual analysis of the corridor the consultant team identified several ‘unique’ areas which could potentially form distinct districts or neighborhoods. These areas are:

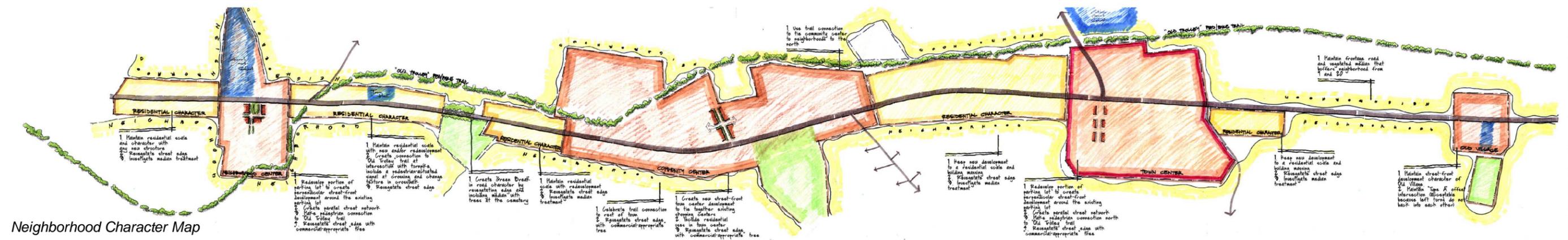
- a wide open and green entrance to the town from Rensselaer and Albany,
- a transitioning residential to commercial neighborhood,
- an older commercial center and town operations center,
- a narrow green area, a highway commercial strip with some vacant lands,
- a major strip mall (Columbia Plaza) and intersection (Phillips Road),
- a large scale highway commercial strip,
- a major intersection and commercial center (Route 4/Hannaford Plaza),
- a residential to commercial transitional zone with institutional uses,
- a historic village crossroads setting (Hayes Road),
- a residential to commercial transitional zone,
- and last the rural commercial southern gateway.

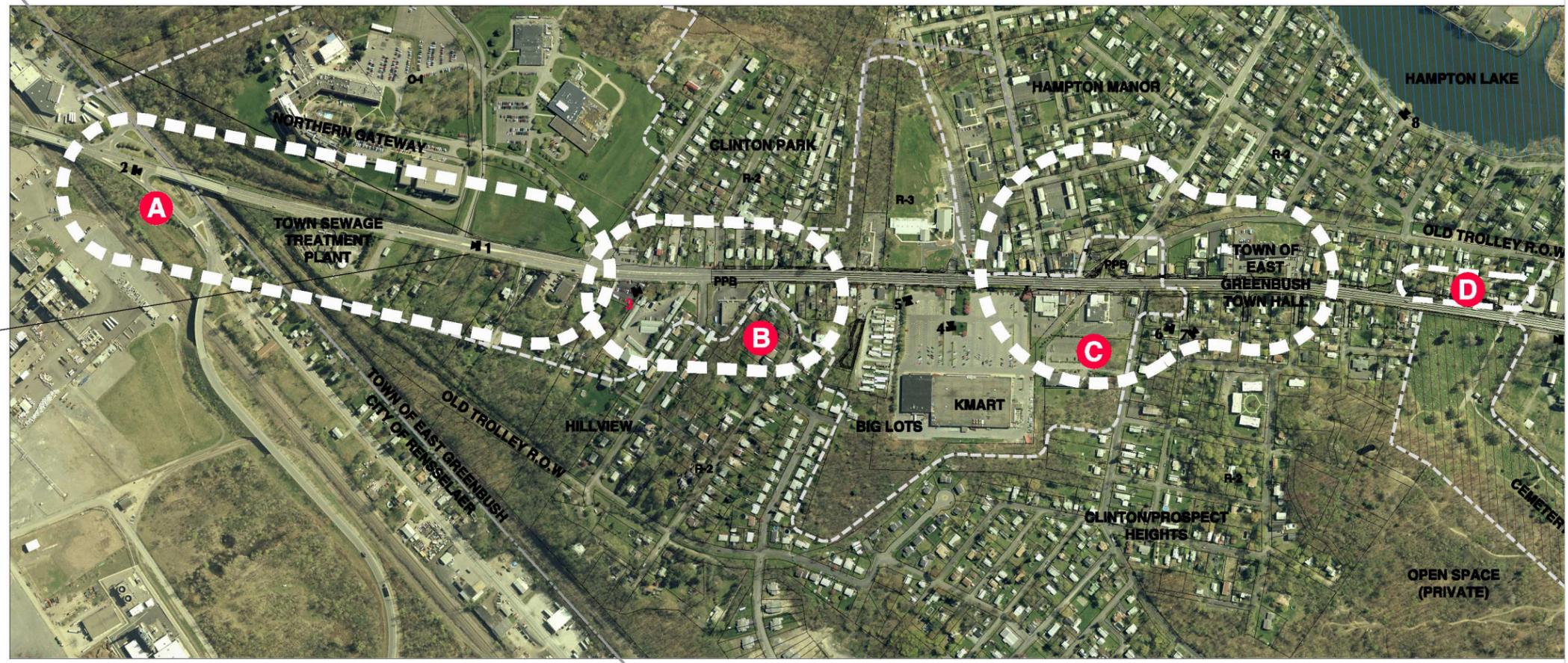
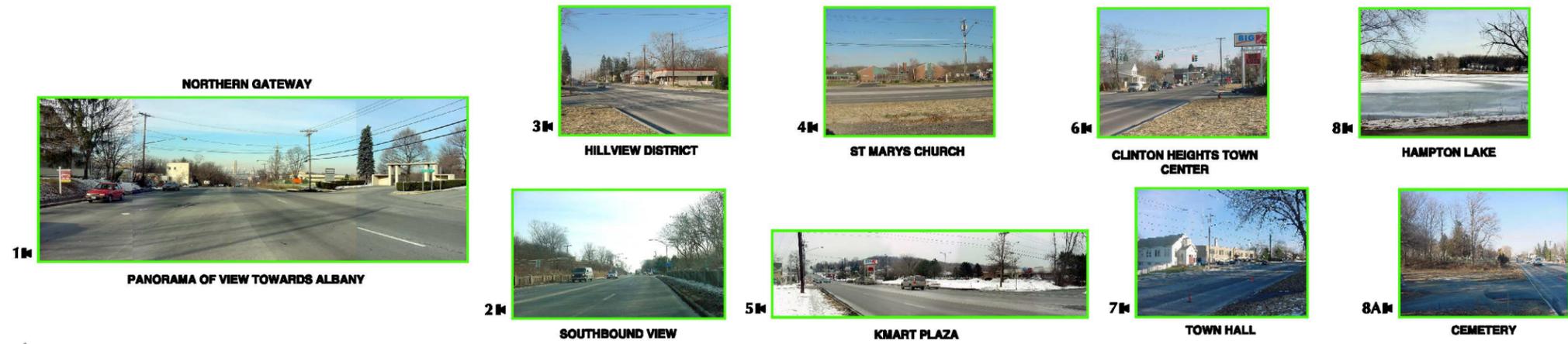


Some distinct features exist on the Route 9 and 20 Corridor including some small pedestrian-scale commercial crossroads, unique topography, significant views, and large undeveloped areas. Other distinctive features include a frontage road that forms a buffer between a desirable residential neighborhood and the Columbia Turnpike and a northern gateway to the Town that provides excellent views of downtown Albany. The maps that follow on illustrate the current conditions of the Route 9 and 20 Corridor and outline the perception of potential definable districts or unique features.



The Route 9 and 20 Corridor looking north between Schodack and Route 4.





A NORTHERN

- ▶ IMPORTANT VIEWS NORTHBOUND
- ▶ FEW CURB CUTS HIGHWAY FEEL
- ▶ TOWN STP LACKS SCREENING

B HILLVIEW

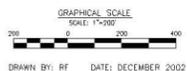
- ▶ RESIDENTIAL SCALE COMMERCIAL FRONTING TURNPIKE
- ▶ MODERN COMMERCIAL "SMALL-BOX" AND SMALL OFFICE

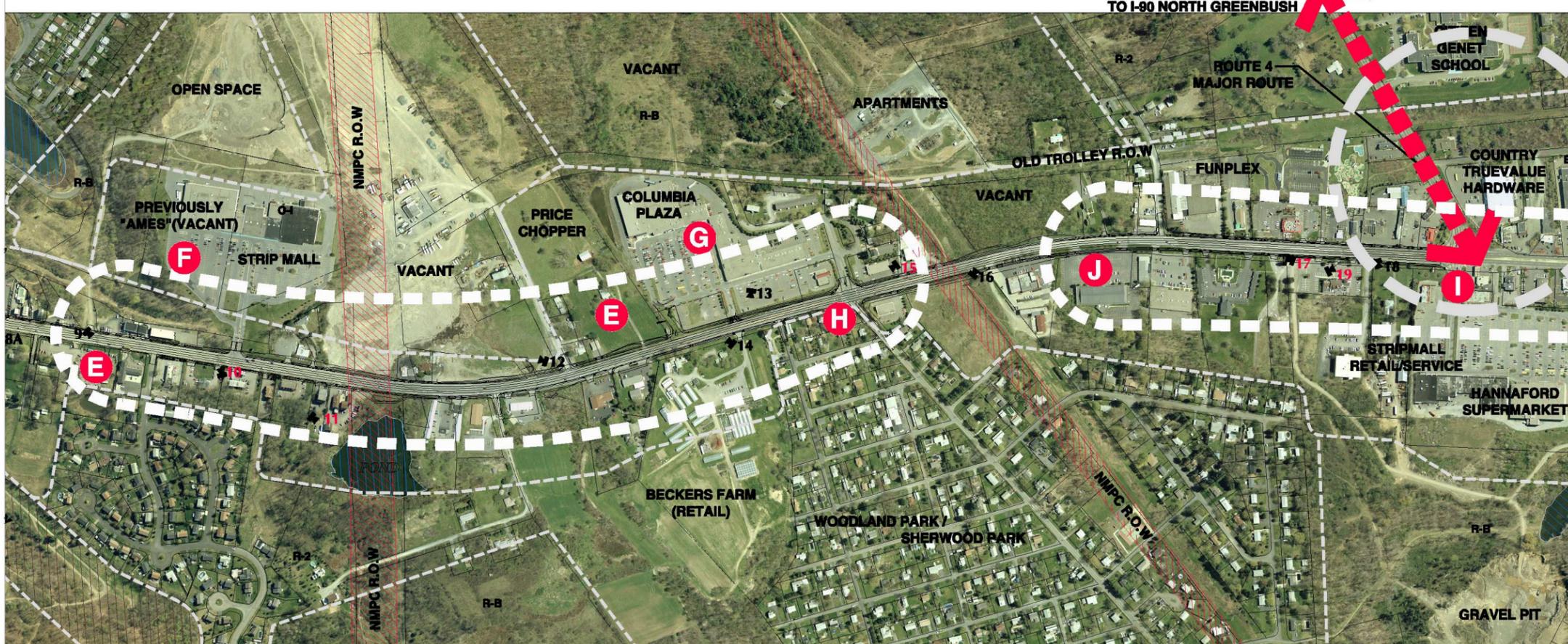
C CLINTON HEIGHTS TOWN CENTER

- ▶ SMALL COMMERCIAL RETAIL
- ▶ IMPORTANT INTERSECTION
 - SHERWOOD AVE - HEAVILY USED
 - VEHICULAR LINK TO ROUTE 4
 - COMMERCIAL DISTRICT
- ▶ TOWN OF EAST GREENBUSH TOWN HALL
- ▶ HISTORIC CHURCH
- ▶ ADJACENT TO LARGE SINGLE FAMILY
- ▶ NEIGHBORHOODS (HAMPTON MANOR, CLINTON/PROSPECT HEIGHTS)

D FORMERLY RESIDENTIAL ALONG TURNPIKE

- ▶ AREA OF D.O.T. TAKINGS
- ▶ VACANT LANDS





E NORTHERN TURNPIKE COMMERCIAL DISTRICT

- ▶ MIXED BIG-BOX PLAZAS WITH SCATTERING OF SMALL CONVERTED RESIDENCES
- ▶ OPENSOURCE OFFERING COMMERCIAL INFILL/RECREATIONAL USES
- ▶ BECKERS FARM RETAIL

F AMES PLAZA

- ▶ AMES STORE VACANT
- ▶ REMAINING (STRIP-MALL) LOW VOLUME USE
- ▶ (FORMER BINGO PARLOR LOCATION)

G COLUMBIA PLAZA

- ▶ PRICE CHOPPER SUPERMARKET
- ▶ SMALLER RETAIL/SERVICE (STRIP-MALL)
- ▶ HIGH VOLUME USE

H PHILLIPS ROAD INTERSECTION TO ROUTE 9J

- ▶ POSSIBLE FUTURE WOODLAND PARK AND TOWN CENTER
- ▶ HIGH TRAFFIC VOLUME
- ▶ PEDESTRIAN UNFRIENDLY
- ▶ LARGE ADJACENT RESIDENTIAL AREA – APARTMENTS, WOODLAND PARK/SHERWOOD PARK
- ▶ AREA OF POTENTIAL RESIDENTIAL GROWTH

I ROUTE 4 INTERSECTION

- ▶ PRICE CHOPPER SUPERMARKET
- ▶ SMALLER RETAIL/SERVICE (STRIP-MALL)
- ▶ HIGH VOLUME USE

J CENTRAL TURNPIKE COMMERCIAL DISTRICT

- ▶ MAJOR TOWN COMMERCIAL CENTER – HIGH TRAFFIC VOLUME
- ▶ RESTAURANTS – McDONALDS, WEATHERVANE SEAFOOD AND CHINESE BUFFET
- ▶ LARGER SCALE RETAIL DEVELOPMENT AND PROFESSIONAL OFFICES INCLUDING CEDAR PARK AND VANDEN HOUTER SQUARE
- ▶ AUTOMOBILE CARE
- ▶ "FUNPLEX"

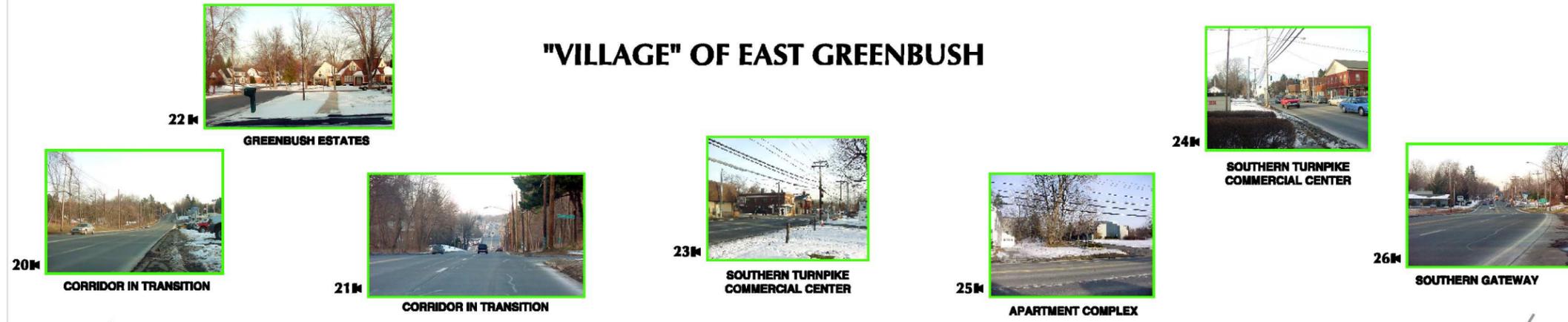


GRAPHICAL SCALE
SCALE: 1"=200'
DRAWN BY: RF DATE: DECEMBER 2002



TOWN OF EAST GREENBUSH ROUTE 9 AND 20 CORRIDOR MASTER PLAN

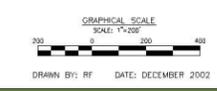
"VILLAGE" OF EAST GREENBUSH



- K CORRIDOR IN TRANSITION**
- ▶ PREVIOUSLY ZONED R1-A, NOW ZONED B-Z
 - ▶ FLANKED BY LARGE SINGLE-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL
 - ▶ NEIGHBORHOODS OF OLD "VILLAGE" OF EAST GREENBUSH

- L SOUTHERN TURNPIKE COMMERCIAL CENTER**
- ▶ EXISTING SMALL SCALE TOWN CENTER CENTRAL TO DESIRABLE RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOODS
 - ▶ MIXED USE
 - ▶ PEDESTRIAN FRIENDLY
 - ▶ HISTORIC CHURCH

- M SOUTHERN GATEWAY**
- ▶ RESIDENCES CONVERTED TO BUSINESS USES - MAINTAINING RESIDENTIAL CHARACTER
 - ▶ ECLECTIC MIXED USE
 - COMMERCIAL, RETAIL, PROFESSIONAL BUSINESS
 - MULTIFAMILY RESIDENTIAL AND INSTITUTIONS
 - ▶ NO SENSE OF ENTRY TO TOWN



Summary of Opportunities

The focus of planning efforts was to develop a conceptual plan for the corridor. This included identifying short and long-term land use and transportation actions with a particular attention to actions that could be implemented under the current construction contract by DOT. Opportunities include enhancing the perception of unique districts along the Route 9 and 20 Corridor; functionally connecting to and attracting workers from the University at Albany East Campus to the Sherwood Avenue/Hampton Avenue commercial district; enhancing the commercial/public transit centers at the Sherwood/Hampton Avenue; enhancing the major commercial Town Center at the Route 4 intersection; enhancing the historic 'village' center at Hayes Road; developing a trail on the existing trolley corridor; and improving the overall appearance of the corridor with street tree plantings, architectural lighting and by burying overhead power lines.

Potential Impacts of the University at Albany East Campus

Commuters living locally would be able to choose to walk to work or take a short ride on public transportation to get to their jobs. Traffic could be more dispersed if a number of those currently not employed in Rensselaer County were to switch to employment in the county at the East Campus as trips would no longer be primarily dependent on crossing the Dunn Memorial Bridge via the Route 9 and 20 Corridor. Retail development near the East Campus should respond to the potential demands of consumers who work at the East Campus as well as the demands of those newly employed at the East Campus choosing to relocate into the Town of East Greenbush. In the near-term, construction will be underway shortly for a major cancer research center to be located at the East Campus.

With the East Campus employing nearly 2,500, it will be critical to establish a strong link between the East Campus and the commercial corridor at Sherwood Avenue/Hampton Avenue. There are at present no formal pedestrian connections between the East Campus and that commercial district. An extension of the walks on Columbia Turnpike should be considered as well as alternative connections utilizing Sherwood Avenue. The Town will be installing new sidewalks along Sherwood Avenue during the 2003 construction season, significantly enhancing the potential for pedestrian visits from the East Campus.



The entrance to the University at Albany East Campus soon to be home of Regeneron Pharmaceuticals.

Sherwood Avenue/Hampton Avenue Commercial District

Besides the existing commercial architecture that gives an impression of a commercial center, this area has three other significant opportunities. First the realignment of Hampton Avenue, takings of real estate and closing of a portion of Clinton Avenue provide a large area of public open space which could be developed as parking, a transit stop and public open space. Another opportunity may exist to enhance the road frontage in front of the K-mart plaza by encouraging the landowner at the plaza to develop commercial infill fronting on Route 9 and 20 with parking behind. Should K-mart abandon this store in the near future, the Town could have mechanisms in place to encourage a street fronting commercial redevelopment. A third significant opportunity relates to the potential conversion of the former trolley line right-of-way to a trail. The trail will cross Route 9 and 20 in this location, creating a multi-modal pedestrian center while linking the entire Town by trail to the commercial developments here, setting the stage for a very interesting and active commercial center.



The Sherwood Avenue (at the traffic signal)/Hampton Avenue (mid-right) Commercial District facing Northwest.

Route 4 Town Center

The intersection at Route 4 is undeniably the commercial center of the Town with several major shopping destinations, major restaurant chains, schools and banking institutions in close proximity. The development in this area is typical of highway strip development, and lacking in pedestrian amenities or a sense of safety for pedestrians. Significantly, the trolley line right of way passes very close to the highway along this area, again offering a potential interesting mix of inter-modal access to commercial development. As is the case with most of the corridor, few if any street trees exist, however, many of



The intersection of Route 4 is the commercial center of town.

the commercial developments have maintained some trees and landscaping. Most significant here is that the Hannaford Plaza developer has indicated a willingness to adopt many 'Livable Streets' principles in the renovation of the plaza.

Historic Village Center at Hayes Road

The Hayes Road/Greenbrier Intersection already has a character unique to the 9 and 20 Corridor. A concentration of 'historic' residential, commercial and institutional buildings exists here with a unique minimal setback to the highway curb for a group of commercial storefronts reminiscent of the classic 'Mayberry' downtown. Of critical concern is the desire of highway engineers to realign the Hayes Road intersection so that it is no longer has an offset crossing the Turnpike. This section of Route 9 and 20, south of the Route 4 intersection, is slated for a redesign in the near future. This redesign, should it include widening the road through this area, would produce a significantly negative effect on the area's character.



The Historic Village Center near Hayes Road offers an opportunity to strengthen an already unique setting.

Old Trolley Line/Power Line Right of Way

An old electric trolley that reportedly connected Kinderhook and Valatie to the City of Rensselaer parallels the Route 9 and 20 Corridor through the entire Town of East Greenbush. The potential to convert this right of way to a trail would provide an exciting opportunity to establish a rare brand new trail corridor through a densely populated and commercial area. An amenity of this kind in the Town would bring immeasurable benefits to the community and region.

Overall Route 9 and 20 Corridor

The perception of the corridor as one long strip mall is probably strengthened by projects that improve driver comfort, driver vision and driver safety. This effect can be changed by paying more attention to a "community" perception, vision, and safety of the other features of a street including pedestrians, bicyclists, business owners, residents, and the natural environment. Fortunately, the local DOT has a history of developing context sensitive solutions where they are justified or demanded by the public. Another benefit of the current project has been the focusing of attention on developing a stronger communication avenue between those that live on the 9 and 20 Corridor and those that make decisions. DOT has indicated a willingness to incorporate changes into the

current project, slated for completion in the summer of 2003 so long as they do not 'undo' completed construction work, or require additional takings of land by DOT. This offers the Town opportunities to request changes to landscaping, pavement striping and walks.

The addition of street trees and burial of overhead electric lines would make the profound visual impact on the corridor. Few areas of consistent street tree canopy exist on the 9 and 20 Corridor at present. Overhead lines are a consistent eyesore, not including the unavoidable high-tension crossings of major transmission lines.

Fortunately, there is still a great deal of undeveloped open space along the corridor providing an opportunity for the Town to advance a new vision in those areas. Among the corridor's most unique features is a 'frontage road' called Park Drive. Park Drive parallels Route 9 and 20 and separates a desirable residential neighborhood from the road with a wide landscape buffer space. A similar treatment elsewhere in the Town would accomplish the same buffering effect for both residential and commercial land uses by utilizing a familiar character treatment.



The Park Drive buffer space (right) forms a visual and perception barrier between a residential area and the highway corridor.

Other Opportunities

Vast areas of undeveloped open space exist along and near the Route 9 and 20 Corridor in the Town. Adjacent to the highway, this open space is zoned for business, further off the highway it is zoned mainly for single family residences. Some of the available open space is probably not suitable for development because it is wetlands, it occupies utility rights-of-way or it has other environmental constraints that could make the land too expensive to develop. Acquisition by the Town and conversion of this undevelopable open space into formal parklands would add significantly to the



Example of undevelopable open space which could be formalized as a public park.

appearance of the Route 9 and 20 Corridor. Acquisition of additional land could be accomplished with little or no cost to the Town through transfer of development rights, conservation easements or other planning strategies.

A significant reduction in the use of Route 9 and 20 for local traffic could be accomplished by making cross connections between neighborhoods and commercial properties along the Turnpike. Most of the local neighborhoods exist as isolated pockets of residential streets connected only to Route 9 and 20. The same is true of many of the major commercial developments on 9 and 20. In addition, the Town should explore the feasibility of making additional connections to Route 9J to provide an additional thoroughfare for isolated residential areas. These connections could be accomplished through changes in planning and zoning ordinances and by providing incentives to commercial developers for making cross connections. Other road extensions could be made over time by the Town or NYSDOT utilizing federal highway funding.

Beside the major districts identified above, several other “nodes” exist where development could be shaped to form more pedestrian and attractive local centers. Those areas include the entrance to the Ames Plaza, Phillips Road/Columbia Plaza, Old Troy Road, and Horizon Drive. Each area could be planned to retrofit the existing facilities and organize new development in accordance with the Liveable Community principles based on the local context in terms of development type, local scale and community desires.



The existing entrance to the former Ames Plaza could be retrofit to create a more pedestrian Village Center along the existing 'Main Street' entrance to the plaza.

Public Visioning

A major component of the effort to develop a corridor plan for Route 9 and 20 was the hands-on involvement of Town officials, property owners, other Town residents and other stakeholders in a series of three visioning workshops. These workshops provided an intense opportunity for participants to address issues and opportunities in the corridor through facilitated interaction. The first two sessions were held in successive days in December, and the final workshop in February. The Opportunities and Constraints maps prepared for the corridor graphically communicated the consultant impressions of existing character, features, constraints, and distinct areas. Those maps were used to form the basis of discussions that highlighted the first two days of public visioning.

During the first two days of workshops held at the East Greenbush Town Hall on Columbia Turnpike in the Town, were the consultant team became familiar with the physical corridor and with the issues important to the public. The color rendered Neighborhood Character Map was produced as well as a phased massing study for a Commercial Town Center at the intersection of Route 4. The team further conceptualized design character options to be used in the later public design workshop including appropriate plantings, medians, crosswalks, street lighting, setbacks, sidewalks, trail networks, transit stops, bollards, signage and other street furnishings. Those elements were later developed into the Conceptual Design Manual which was used to provide graphic standards for improvements to the corridor.

As a result of the December workshops and public feedback that followed, approach statements were developed to guide the visioning workshop activities. The following approach statements were used at the design workshop that was held at the East Greenbush Town Hall on the evening of February 11, 2003:

- **Overall Corridor Master Plan**

1. Reduce existing curb cuts on Route 9 and 20 and anticipate areas of growth where future curb cuts can be reduced.
2. Develop traffic calming at entrances, residential and pedestrian areas.
3. Confirm the identified 'Town Centers' and identify other important 'centers'
4. Increase the aesthetic appeal of the corridor by applying the appropriate character settings to existing areas and anticipated areas of growth.
5. Suggest a palette of street and site furnishings to be used to define districts and neighborhoods in the corridor.
6. Anticipate potential growth areas and identify a land use that is compatible. Suggest a pattern of development, roads, access and parking to form a unique appearance and complement or improve the appearance of the Turnpike.
7. Develop a template for new building construction in anticipated growth areas and potential infill developments.
8. Identify areas for recreation and open space and apply character settings to preserve and enhance.

9. Identify existing and anticipated pedestrian crossings and apply the appropriate calming and safety devices.
10. Identify existing and anticipated transit centers.
11. Establish public spaces on vacant public lands and suggest landscaping and a function for those spaces.
12. Identify existing and anticipate future pedestrian paths and trail systems along the corridor.
13. Identify existing and anticipate future needs for planted and structural buffers along the corridor.

The work of the 'Overall Corridor Master Plan' group overlapped slightly with the work of the other groups. This group considered the problem statements for the other groups and then considered general recommendations for those areas that fit into work on the 'Overall Corridor Master Plan'.

- **Route 4 Intersection Commercial Town Center**

1. Develop a safe and attractive pedestrian system through out the Route 4 Commercial town center.
2. Develop an attractive Town Center road, access and parking template including and not limited to the realignment of highways to form a unique appearance and improve the function of vehicular access.
3. Develop a template for new building construction in the Commercial town center.
4. Locate a transit center in the commercial town center.
5. Establish public spaces on vacant public lands. Suggest landscaping and suggest a function for those spaces.
6. Suggest a palette of street and site furnishings to be used consistently throughout the Commercial Town Center.
7. Suggest a name/identity for the Town Center.

- **Hampton Manor/Sherwood Retail Town Center**

1. Develop a safe and attractive pedestrian system through out the town center.
2. Resolve the street closure of a portion of Clinton Ave. and the resulting landlocked parcels.
3. Find a suitable and attractive place for the Hampton Manor Pillars.
4. Establish an interrelated system of public spaces utilizing available public owned lands and suggest a function for those spaces.
5. Develop an attractive and functional parking scheme for retail in the area.
6. Locate a transit center in the commercial town center.
7. Develop strong pedestrian linkages from the U @ Albany East Campus and Town Hall to the Retail Town Center.
8. Suggest a palette of street and site furnishings to be used consistently throughout the Retail Town Center.
9. Suggest a name/identity for the Sherwood Ave. Town Center.

- **Hayes Road Historic Town Center**

1. Anticipate the need to address the offset intersection utilizing realignment, roundabout, and no-change alternatives.
2. Create a public space or commons and suggest a function for that space utilizing available public lands or anticipated takings.
3. Create a wider pedestrian space at the building fronts.
4. Develop a safe and attractive pedestrian system throughout the Hayes Road town center.
5. Develop a road, access and parking template including the realignment of highways to form a unique appearance and improve the function for vehicular circulation.
6. Develop a template for new building construction in the Hayes Road town center.
7. Suggest a palette of street and site furnishings to be used consistently throughout the Town Center.
8. Suggest a name/identity for the Hayes Road Town Center.

The Design Charette

Over 130 participated in the public workshop held three consecutive sessions in an afternoon and evening format at Town Hall in East Greenbush on February 11, 2003 beginning at 1:00 PM. Amongst those attending were municipal officials of the Town of East Greenbush including Supervisor Bob Angelini, Joe Cherubino, and Peter Partak. Representatives from the City of Rensselaer, and Town of Schodack also attended as did Richard Carlson and Michael Wyatt from the NYS Department of Transportation, John Poorman from the Capital District Transportation Committee, Linda Von de Heide from the Rensselaer County Industrial Development Agency and representatives from the NYS Department of State. A significant representation of local citizens and businesspersons residing on or near the Turnpike to participated in one or all of the three workshop sessions. Fraser and Associates and Glatting Jackson facilitated the event with the assistance of Michael Allen, AIA, a local architect who voluntarily participated and several



A conceptual design prepared during the charette illustrates the potential for the creation of a pedestrian friendly 'Town Center' at the Route 4 Intersection. The major landowners participated in the development of this conceptual design.

Geography and Transportation Engineering students from the University at Albany.

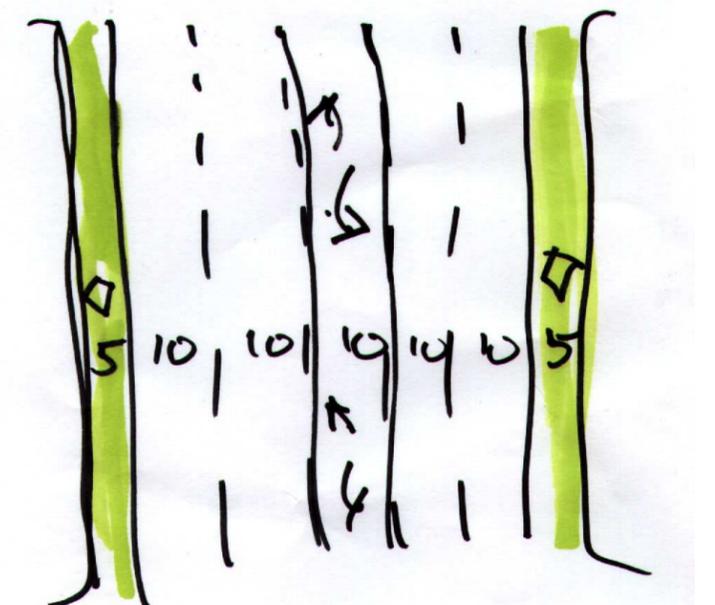
Each of the three sessions began with a brief orientation for those participating, then the participants were invited to join discussions in one of the four groups outlined above. Groups were asked to discuss the approach statements and add new items or delete items that were determined to be unimportant. Each group was instructed to elect a presenter to review the discussions and conceptual design developed with the entire workshop participants. A Conceptual Design Manual was provided to each group for their use in visualizing design changes and developing conceptual plans. The first two sessions were conducted as planned, while the final session was conducted as an inspirational slide show presentation by Walter Kulash illustrating the 'Livable Streets' principles that could be applied to the Route 9 and 20 corridor followed by discussions. The marathon session ended at about midnight.

Design Workshop Products

In general, there was a consensus opinion that many of the Livable Streets principle could be accomplished easily along the 9 and 20 Corridor and that they would be very beneficial to the community. There was a great deal of interest in the development of identifiable 'Commercial Centers' in the Town, especially at the Route 4 Intersection which is currently the commercial center of the Town. Also important were the aesthetic, traffic control and pedestrian safety improvements that could be made overall.

Among the new ideas that developed at the charette were the use of the former Albany Railroad Trolley right-of-way as a Town wide trail. Another visionary idea that developed was the potential to build a new arterial highway through the Town that would provide a direct connection between Route 4 or Route 151 to a new bridge crossing over the Hudson River and a direct link to Thruway Exit 23. A previously unthinkable reduction in the number of lanes of traffic was discussed and a critical element in the design concepts developed for the overall corridor south of Route 4 as well as the Hayes Road Historic Town Center.

Refined conceptual plans for each of the four areas of discussion based on the public participation at the charette are shown on the pages that follow.



This sketch was created during the charette illustrating an a pedestrian and bicycle friendly re-striping of the existing highway.



Existing Hanaford Plaza.

During the December workshop a phased development plan for the Route 4 intersection focused on the Hanaford Plaza was developed in consultation with the developers of the project. From those sketches, Glatting Jackson created a series of massing studies that illustrate how New Urbanist principles can be applied to retrofit an existing development over time.



Phase1 Development, 1 year .



Phase 2 Development, 3-5 years.



Phase 3 Development, 5-10 years.



Phase 4 Development, Build out in 10-15 years.

Implementation Plan

The measures outlined below represent an attempt to respond to discussions during and after the public visioning regarding a new future for the 9 and 20 Corridor. They represent a balanced approach that is neither disruptive of the existing corridor nor too subtle to be effective. These actions will take the concerted efforts of public and private parties to be accomplished. Many of the actions can be done in the short-term, but others will require more time and more planning. These actions will be of a great benefit to the community, making noticeable functional changes that will hopefully become catalysts for more place-making changes elsewhere along the corridor. While the current NYSDOT construction project is in an advanced stage of completion, the short-term measures recommended could be pursued under the current contract without the need for major changes to completed work, and without additional takings. As a result of the implementation of the short-term measures in the current DOT contract, the community could benefit greatly from enhancements that would create public spaces, improve pedestrian safety, calm traffic, and benefit local businesses. Most importantly, the recommended short-term measures would quickly set a new precedent for the corridor, counteracting the long held perception that 9 and 20 is a sterile highway and beginning a new era of place-making.



Street trees and some medians can be a significant enhancement on the 9 and 20 corridor.

The overall goals of the Master Plan for the Route 9 and 20 Corridor are:

- Improve the aesthetics of the corridor, making it more attractive to business and new residents. Install additional street trees, medians, textured pavements, architectural lighting, pedestrian amenities and architectural signage. Bury overhead wires.
- Improve safety for pedestrians and create an environment that encourages pedestrians and bicycling throughout the corridor.
- Create clearly defined gateways, activity centers and other unique features along the corridor to develop a sense of place.
- Limit commercial uses between activity centers.

- Implement traffic calming throughout the corridor through the use of physical changes and driver perception changes that will cause vehicular traffic to slow down.
- Improve the maintenance of the corridor to reduce the impact of maintenance on landowners.
- Reduce the local traffic on the corridor by interconnecting isolated neighborhoods through a grid network of parallel streets.
- Reduce the left turn traffic movements on the tumpike.
- Encourage alternative transportation methods on the tumpike.
- Develop a bicycle trail system utilizing the utility corridor that parallels the highway corridor.
- Make changes to land use regulations that will encourage setbacks, yards, height, bulk, access and circulation that will enhance the character of the corridor and avoid the creation of another 'Wolf Road' in East Greenbush.

Short-term Actions

The following actions are recommended for the New York State Department of Transportation:

1. Add a length of sidewalk to the current contract from Bruen Court to the University at Albany East Campus (see page 18).
2. Make changes to the current planting design that include new large caliper street trees from a local source planted between the sidewalk and curb in the areas identified on concept plans. Use the species and spacing recommended in the Conceptual Design Manual for the 9 and 20 Corridor (see Appendix A, p. A16)
3. Install short runs of landscaped medians at the Northern Gateway near the East Campus, in the Hampton/Sherwood area, and near the cemetery south of Town Hall (see page 18).



Short landscaped medians and curb-side street trees can make a significant improvement in the corridor's appearance.

4. Modify the pavement striping plans by reducing lane widths to allow for bicycle lanes. Provide crosswalks in specific additional locations shown on concept plans (see pages 18-20).
5. Modify the current plans for parking, open space and circulation as shown on the concept drawings for Hampton Square (see page 21).
6. Develop snow removal plans that will reduce the impact on local residents and businesses.
7. Modify grading to improve visibility at the intersections of Homestead, Orchard and Grove Streets.
8. Modify signalization plans to add signals at Barber, Homestead, the University at Albany Entrance, and Old Troy Road (see pages 18-20, 29).
9. Modify signage plans to include better identification of significant pedestrian crossings.
10. Initiate a public dialog regarding the redesign of Route 9 and 20 south of Route 4 to discuss expanding the planning beyond the corridor right-of-way.
11. Install architectural lighting instead of 'cobra lights' along the corridor (see Appendix A, page A11).

The following short term actions are recommended for the Capital District Transportation Committee.

1. Complete segment analysis for the Route 9 and 20 Corridor south of Route 4 to evaluate the reduction of the highway to 3 lanes (2 lanes with a center turning lane).
2. Complete a linkage study of the Route 4 Corridor that responds to the goals and implementation measures of this plan.

The following short-term measures are recommended for the Town of East Greenbush.

1. Explore Historic District Status for the Bungalows between Onderdonk and Maple Avenues. Assess the potential to create a historic district at the Hayes Road Historic Village Center.
 - a. Complete an Nomination for the Bungalow District and Hayes Road Center.
 - b. Apply for Historic Preservation funding (see Appendix B.)
 - c. Complete the Certified Local Government process with the OPRHP.

2. Adopt zoning revisions to require build-to development as illustrated in the concept plans in the Historic Village Center, Route 4 Town Center, Hampton Square, and Clinton Heights Village (see pages 21, 23, 25 also see Appendix A, pages A14-A17). Consider adopting the same zoning revisions for Phillips Road, and the Ames Plaza intersection.



A typical zero or minimum front yard setback creates a very pedestrian friendly and attractive commercial corridor.

3. Evaluate and update the Town of East Greenbush Comprehensive Plan to ensure that new growth in the community will be in character with this master plan.
4. Explore the use of the trolley right-of-way by working with the utility company and the public to develop a trail corridor plan (see pages 18-20). Apply for trails funding to complete the study and develop priority segments of the trail .
5. Initiate a 'Main Street' beautification program that dedicates public funds and seeks private, state and federal grant assistance to make yearly streetscape improvements on the Route 9 and 20 Corridor.
6. Develop architectural streetscape and façade improvement guidelines to further detail the Town's desired approach to aesthetic improvements on the Route 9 and 20 Corridor.
7. Undertake a study of pedestrian linkages between the University at Albany East Campus and commercial development in the Hampton Square area.
8. Undertake a marketing study along the Route 9 and 20 Corridor to analyze potential commercial opportunities, assess the need of developers and business owners and project future trends that could benefit the Route 9 and 20 Corridor and the Town.
9. Obtain funding under the Governor's Office of Small Cities to advance the Town's goals for commercial and economic development on the Route 9 and 20 Corridor (see Funding Opportunities in Appendix B).

The following long range actions are recommended for the New York State Department of Transportation.

1. Continue implementation of streetscape improvements in the corridor including street tree planting, medians, walks, trail crossings, public transit facilities, architectural lighting and pedestrian safety improvements (see Appendix A, Conceptual Planning and Design Manual).
2. Redesign the Route 4 intersection to minimize the turning radii, enhance the intersection for pedestrian crossings and streetscape improvements utilizing signage, street trees, architectural lighting and pedestrian amenities (see pages 26-27).
3. Evaluate the creation of a new arterial that will make a connection between Route 151 and the Route 9 and 20 Corridor.

The following long range actions are recommended for the Capital District Transportation Committee.

1. Include those Department of Transportation “Short Term Actions” that cannot be included in the current construction contract in the regional Transportation Improvement Plan.

The following long range actions are recommended for the Town of East Greenbush.

1. Develop a program of street light replacement, throughout the Town, replacing cobra lights with architectural light fixtures, poles and bases.
2. Encourage new development to accomplish cross-connections.
3. Encourage and incorporate community input to the design of improvements to the Route 9 and 20 Corridor south of Route 4, utilizing the public workshop approach employed in this study.

The following long range actions are recommended for others:

1. Niagara Mohawk should begin to remove overhead wires from the corridor, incrementally burying them.
2. The University at Albany Foundation should consider assisting the Town of East Greenbush in an analysis of pedestrian connections between the East Campus and Sherwood Avenue, Hampton Manor and Clinton Heights as well as the future Trolley Trail.

3. The Rensselaer Gateway Development Corporation and the Rensselaer County Industrial Development Agency should consider assisting the Town in undertaking a Marketing Analysis of the Route 9 and 20 Corridor.
4. Concerned citizens could consider forming a “not-for-profit” organization to assist local and state government units with the implementation of this plan.