North Swan Street
Multimodal Accessibility Study
Between Clinton & Livingston Ave

Prepared for
The City of Albany,
The Albany Housing Authority &
The Capital District Transportation Committee

Prepared by
Behan Planning Associates, LLC
Planning Community Futures

March 2008
Capital District Transportation Committee
North Swan Street Multimodal Accessibility Study

Advisory Committee

AHIT Business Committee, including:
Barbara Smith, Common Council Member (Co-Chair)
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Harris Oberlander, Trinity Institution
Kate Willyard, Clinton Ave Apartments
Marcie Bergen, Downtown Albany Business Improvement District

Technical Support:
Monique Wahba, City of Albany Department of Development and Planning
Douglas R. Melnick, City of Albany Department of Development and Planning
Darren Scott, Albany Housing Authority
Sandy Misiewicz, Capital District Transportation Committee
Michael Allen, Behan Planning
Mark Sargent, Creighton Manning
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**Capital District Transportation Committee**  
*North Swan Street Multimodal Accessibility Study*

**Table of Contents**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 1 - Introduction &amp; Background</th>
<th>Page 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2 - Existing Conditions</td>
<td>Page 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3 - Preliminary Designs</td>
<td>Page 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4 - Public Presentation</td>
<td>Page 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 5 - Cost Estimates</td>
<td>Page 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 6 - Recommendations</td>
<td>Page 33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix</td>
<td>Page 39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter One

Introduction and Background

North Swan Street consists of a four block area in one of the older and historic neighborhoods in downtown Albany, New York. Once a thriving and busy street, the neighborhood has experienced difficult times and many changes over the past decades. During this period, much of the existing housing stock and historic buildings were lost to neglect, and the larger neighborhood and infrastructure deteriorated over time. Today, many of the building lots along North Swan Street are empty and many of the buildings which still remain have been vacant for some time now.

Recent years have shown an increasing interest in the revitalization of the larger neighborhood and in North Swan Street in particular. The Arbor Hill Neighborhood Revitalization Plan, which included North Swan Street, began to identify priority projects and improvements to help make the area more active and vibrant again. More recently, the City of Albany and the Albany Housing Authority have invested a considerable amount of both money and time to infrastructure and housing improvements in the immediate area. This has resulted in a marked improvement including an increase in affordable housing with an effort to blend new homes in with the historic context of the neighborhood.

The local neighborhood character in many ways is made up of two parts - the private domain of the buildings and the public domain of the street. The Albany Housing Authority (AHA) has constructed new housing units and worked with the neighborhood to promote commercial development along North Swan and the immediate side streets over the past several years. Their work alone could be the single biggest catalyst for local neighborhood revitalization.
at the present time. While the work of the AHA has helped to rebuild and improve the private environment of housing, what remains is the very visible public realm of the street and sidewalks. In order for continued investment in the North Swan Street area to succeed, it is imperative that this public street-space be improved, and in fact should lead the way. Only then will the two halves of the neighborhood character come together once again. This planning study - the North Swan Street Multimodal Accessibility Study - was born as a result of the city’s efforts in this community and the need to address this second half of the community character.

This particular project is one of many studies that the Capital District Transportation Committee (CDTC) is sponsoring throughout the Capital Region. The stated purpose of these studies is to develop strategic plans that link transportation and land use throughout the Capital Region. While these initiatives are used to inform future land use and transportation decisions in these locations, they can also have more profound effects on the quality of life and beautification of a neighborhood. It is believed and hoped that streetscape renovations here will help instill more confidence and pride in the Arbor Hill neighborhood, leading the way for further investment and a renaissance of the larger community. The Capital District Transportation Committee, in collaboration with the City of Albany and the Albany Housing Authority, hired Behan Planning Associates and Creighton Manning Engineering to help envision this transformation.
Study Area

The extent of the project area consisted of a four block stretch of North Swan Street from Clinton Avenue to the southwest and Livingston Avenue to the northeast. North Swan Street acts as a common pedestrian and vehicular link between Clinton and Livingston Avenues, connecting the neighborhoods.
throughout Arbor Hill. It is also commonly used as a shortcut across town for commuters leaving the City at the end of the day. North Swan Street is currently one-way traffic from southwest to northeast, although this was a change made several years ago at the request of the Albany Police Department to help them control the flow of traffic in an effort to curb local crime activity. Intersecting North Swan are three cross-streets which are also currently one-way configurations; 1st and 2nd Streets and 3rd Street/Ten Broeck Place.

Arbor Hill is significant in the Capital Region and the City of Albany for several reasons. First, it is a historic neighborhood and is part of one of the City’s historic districts. It was once one of Albany’s most prosperous communities and as recently as the 1960’s North Swan Street was a bustling retail center. It is home to the Underground Railroad Museum, the Ten Broeck Museum, the historic St. Joseph’s Academy building and the historic King Building along with many other historic residential properties. Second, demographic data indicates that the neighborhood around North Swan Street contains low-income and minority populations which led to the area being designated as a critical environmental justice area for CDTC. The environmental justice designation is important so that the needs of these populations can be identified and addressed through

North Swan Street Concept Plan - Albany Housing Authority. Illustration which shows redevelopment projects proposed for the North Swan Street area.
the planning process, ensuring that the benefits as well as the burdens of transportation investments can be fairly distributed throughout the area. Finally, this is a gateway community for the City of Albany and its renaissance is critical not only for the residents and business leaders of the neighborhood but for the overall health of the City as well.

**Project Scope & Goals**

Although funded primarily as a road improvement and accessibility initiative, there is a common understanding that this work has additional implications in what it can achieve with regards to the revitalization of the neighborhood itself. Considering the investment which the AHA has put into new housing structures on the adjoining side streets, and its current plans for over two-dozen more units on North Swan Street alone, this project comes at a very important time. Ideally, any street improvements here would be timed to coincide with the arrival of several new families and business owners. While the immediate project goals may be to replace the deteriorated sidewalks and roadway, and to clean up the street, the long-term intent is that this will help to spur further growth and development on a wider scale.

*North Swan Street, ca. 1925 - View looking northeast with The King Building on right. Courtesy of Morris Gerber Photography Collection Albany Institute of History & Art Library. 1993.010.2313P.*
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Chapter Two

Existing Conditions

Many of the building parcels along North Swan Street are currently vacant lots, and those buildings which remain are often unoccupied. The condition of the street itself shows much room for improvement; A Pavement Conditions Inventory conducted in 2007 by the CDTC indicated that the roadway asphalt scored 5 out of 10 and can be observed to be very uneven and undulating at times. The sidewalks vary in condition from fair to poor, and in some areas are very difficult to traverse.

A detailed existing conditions report of the North Swan Street project area entitled “North Swan Street Multimodal Accessibility Study - Existing Conditions Assessment” was conducted by the CDTC and is included in the Appendix at the end of this document. According to the study, the water lines servicing North Swan Street date from between 1894 up to the most recent date of 1914, making them approximately 100 years old. The age of the sewer lines was not determined but they are believed to be very old as well. Detailed maps of the sewer and water lines are provided in the report at the end of this document. Since the City of Albany tries to plan utility replacements to coincide with street reconstructions, it would seem that if the roadway pavement is considered for reconstruction that these utilities should also be considered for replacement as well.

A summary recap of some of the more important opportunities and challenges of the North Swan Street area as described in the Existing Conditions Assessment are;

Existing Opportunities:

- St. Joseph’s Academy is a large urban building with redevelopment potential and could likely be an anchor of neighborhood activity.
- The commercially zoned area of North Swan Street already has some existing businesses and could likely provide additional neighborhood shopping for the North Swan Street neighborhood.
- The historic Ten Broeck Mansion and gardens continue to be a community focal point and resource.
Potential or Expected Opportunities:

- There are currently plans underway to redevelop many of the existing vacant lots with up to 23 new residential buildings and several commercial or mixed use buildings along the North Swan Street corridor in the near future.
- There are other redevelopment opportunities for basketball courts, an urban park or playground, garden-like connections to Ten Broeck Mansion and off-street parking.
- The existing underground utilities present under the street are quite old, and their replacement could coincide with - or act as a catalyst for - the roadway improvements.

Existing Challenges:

- Relatively narrow street and sidewalks.
- Steep grade at the western end of the street.
- Under utilized and vacant atmosphere of the street attracts criminal activity.

Some of the major challenges along North Swan Street are also considered to be the strengths of this project. For example, the width of North Swan Street is typically less than the city standard width of 28 feet. This smaller width offers a sense of neighborhood character and local intimacy to the street, making it more like a neighborhood and less like a vehicular thoroughfare. Returning North Swan Street to a two-way street from a one-way street would increase traffic visibility and accessibility for businesses, but would also make travel and parking in the area tighter and more difficult for residents and non-local patrons coming to the area. This would potentially act as a traffic calming device. Due to the impacts to North Swan Street infrastructure and its adjacent buildings, widening the roadway may be undesirable. The sidewalks on this historic street are considered narrow by modern standards, and further reductions in sidewalk widths would take away from the pedestrian accessibility, especially in tighter areas. In order to promote North Swan Street as a desirable residential or mixed-use neighborhood with vibrant community activity, it is crucial to enhance the pedestrian experience, especially in an area which would likely have children. In this regard the relatively narrow street width is advantageous to the neighborhood.
Issues & Questions

One Way vs. Two Way

At the heart of the discussion on the future of the North Swan Street corridor was whether or not to return it to the two-way traffic flow that it was a few years ago, or to keep it as a one-way street. This was an important decision for many reasons, including the fact that it would have an impact on many of the other aspects of the design. It was therefore beneficial that this be decided at an early stage. However, in order to measure the advantages and disadvantages of this decision, two independent viewpoints had to be considered:

1. The feasibility, from an engineering standpoint, of how the traffic flow would work
2. The desire of the neighborhood residents and officials

Of these two viewpoints, the second proved to be slightly more difficult to reach consensus on. From the engineering standpoint, this question was also reliant on the related issues of the traffic flows on the adjacent streets as well as the width of North Swan Street itself.

From an engineering perspective, a return to two-way traffic flow was considered feasible while perhaps not entirely ideal by modern standards. Although the average width of the street was less than current design protocols for two-way traffic flow with on-street parking, it was largely understood that this stretch of road functioned well for many years in that capacity before it was changed to one way. It was understood that in a historic urban environment people were more accustomed to maneuvering within tighter thoroughfares and parking spaces, and did not always expect the ample widths of more modern roadways found outside the cities. Also, the one-way traffic flow of the adjacent streets were not determined to have any conflict with a return to two-way travel on North Swan Street, and were considered for change only with respect to local convenience. In this regard the two-way flow with on-street parking was acceptable.

An alternative scenario considered widening the roadway a few feet to bring it
closer to modern standards, however this had many drawbacks. As previously mentioned, the existing sidewalks are relatively narrow, and any further reduction would further impair their ability to provide a safe residential habitat for adults and children. Furthermore, a widening of one or both curbs would entail the removal and or relocation of utility poles, storm drains, fire hydrants and similar utilities at a much higher cost. This effectively became an issue of paying additional money to have reduced sidewalk space, and seemed to run counter to many of the goals of the project.

Another alternative of returning to two-way travel while removing the on-street parking to make the lanes wider was discussed, but not well received. The on-street parking was considered important - especially to local business - and the additional lane widths gained without it would only serve to encourage higher travel speeds. Likewise, the presence of a parking lane provided an additional buffer between the traveled thoroughfare and the pedestrian sidewalk, and was considered a safety amenity. One complaint with the current system was that commuters use North Swan Street as a cross-town shortcut to the Interstate 90 entry ramp at the end of the workday, often speeding along the road. It was argued that any removal of the on-street parking or widening of the travel lanes here would only further encourage this.

One of the most important local considerations on this argument was the potential impact to existing and future businesses on North Swan Street. The two-way traffic was considered essential to the visibility - and feasibility - of new commercial stores attempting to carry on viable business in the community. On-street parking was considered necessary to enhance parking convenience for shopping in small stores, especially in an area where nearby off-street parking solutions would not come easily.

With respect to the advantages of maintaining the current one-way configuration, the most compelling argument was that there would
be far more room for on-street parking if both sides of the road could be used. This was largely offset by the desire to give local businesses more exposure, and the understanding that there could be off-street parking opportunities in the coming years to accommodate the same needs as the neighborhood grows.

It is important to note that the Albany Police Department, which had originally requested the change to a one-way traffic flow, has indicated it is not against a return to the original two-way format. It is generally understood that much of what this project is attempting to do could help to improve the neighborhood conditions which prompted the change in the first place.

Partial Two Way Traffic
A third alternative scenario was discussed which would effectively be a hybrid design of the one-way and two-way configurations. This was suggested as a compromise solution to allowing two-way traffic flow in commercial areas while still providing more on-street parking in others. The difficulty with this arrangement was that it would be more confusing and frustrating to motorists, and that the benefit of two-way traffic exposure to the local businesses would not be realized if the traffic could not pass all the way to the other end of the study area.

Traffic Flow of Adjacent Streets
The direction of travel on several of the adjacent streets was discussed with respect to community convenience and coordination with North Swan Street. Three areas in particular were suggested for evaluation of their direction of traffic flow: Colonie Street, Ten Broeck Place and Hall Place. Currently, both Colonie Street and Ten Broeck Place create ‘head-on’ conditions at their intersection with North Swan Street, forcing a turn and preventing the driver from continuing in their direction of travel. Ten Broeck Place also suffers from a steep incline which is not easily climbable in the winter, preventing people from getting to the Ten Broeck Mansion, some homes and local roads. This also makes it difficult for snow emergency parking at the rear parking lot of the Ten Broeck Mansion. It was suggested that the direction of travel on these streets could be reversed or opened up to two-way flow to resolve these issues.

On Street Parking
On street parking was generally considered to be an important asset, especially in close proximity to the commercial blocks on the eastern end of the street. The additional benefits of on-street parking were that it would act as a pedestrian buffer and help to set the character of the neighborhood as a local community and not just a thoroughfare. While there isn’t much demand for on street parking on North Swan Street presently, it was concluded that this demand would increase over time as the
population of the neighborhood grew and as small businesses return. The demand for parking on the adjacent intersecting streets is relatively high, and there was some concern that any spillover from North Swan Street in the future would be taking away from the adjacent areas. Some of this potential pressure is expected to come from the future housing units, some of which are expected to be supplying their own off street parking areas to offset the demand.

Off Street Parking

In conjunction with the need for on-street parking spaces, the likelihood of off-street parking was also discussed as a way to accommodate future needs. Four properties in particular were identified as potential areas, with three of those “likely potential” candidates. The likely potential candidates were City owned properties which could be used for public parking, or land across the street from St. Joseph’s Academy, which would likely be used for future uses within that building. This amounted to a total of about 48 spaces which could be created in the short-term with relatively little trouble. An additional 10 (from 14 to 24) spaces could be added if one of the City lots was expanded. St. Joseph’s also has the possibility to have shared parking arrangements with the adjacent church during select times of the day.
Transit Service

Because of the steep grade near the intersection with Clinton Ave., fixed route transit service was not considered practical on North Swan Street itself. However, Clinton Avenue has fixed route transit service with stops adjacent to North Swan Street. It is possible during CDTA’s transit development plan work in Albany that transit service could be provided on Livingston Avenue with stops at the end of North Swan Street.

Business Visibility

One of the core elements of the future North Swan Street as a local neighborhood destination is the survivability of the commercial businesses there. While it is one thing to create and fill successful housing in a neighborhood, it is more difficult to create and maintain successful businesses. While we have little control over the businesses that might be located in the commercial area, we do have some control over other aspects such as the condition of the neighborhood and how often it might be traveled. It was agreed that, in addition to creating a welcoming streetscape for potential customers, care should be taken to increase the visibility of the businesses through way-finding signage, facade treatments or other mechanisms consistent with the historic nature of the neighborhood.

Gateway Treatments

One important note was the concept of promoting travel on North Swan Street as a means of helping the local businesses get started - but also as a way of celebrating the street, encouraging more activity and discouraging crime. While North Swan Street acts as a connector road between two more heavily traveled thoroughfares, it can easily be missed by vehicular traffic. The suggestion of special gateway design treatments at either end of the street to attract attention and coax people in was seen as a possible way to achieve more attention as a neighborhood commercial area.
With these design issues in mind, Behan Planning Associates and Creighton Manning developed renderings to illustrate a range of urban design scenarios for North Swan Street. While many of the design concepts could be used interchangeably, the primary focus and difference was the decision between one-way and two-way traffic flow. Concept One looked at how the street might work and appear if it was kept as a one-way road with eastbound traffic. Concept Two looked at changing the road to become two-way traffic flow. Nevertheless, wanting to provide options to and gain feedback from residents and project committee members, the variations were intended to work together while yielding a range of design features for discussion purposes.

### Design Variables

**Across the street from St. Joseph’s Academy**

Across the street from St. Joseph’s there is a vacant lot and an existing basketball court. This public space is not in very good condition although it is used by residents on occasion to walk dogs and for other activities. Reorganizing and improving the entire site would make the area more attractive and usable for a wider variety of neighborhood residents. Depending on the re-use options for St. Joseph’s Academy, a certain amount of off-street parking would be needed. Therefore, one design concept looked at altering the site to include a parking lot and an improved public park or other greenspace.

This site was attractive for parking because it has the potential for exit access out through Second Street. A two-row parking lot design would allow for more spaces, while
a one row design would allow for more space in the park.

**Widening Sidewalks**

Other variables included the widening of the sidewalk in front of St. Joseph’s or other select places to make more room for pedestrians. The already narrow sidewalk width in many areas did not seem sufficient when in front of a large building such as the old schoolhouse which could potentially see a lot of pedestrian activity.

It was suggested that, instead of on-street parking at this location, the street itself could be narrowed to make a wider sidewalk area and more room for plantings and benches instead. Conversely, the on-street parking spaces at the same location would be very valuable.

**Curb Bulb-Outs**

One suggestion which works best with the one-way traffic concept, but can work anywhere there is on-street parking, is curb bulb outs. The purpose of the bulb-outs is to shorten the distance between one side of the street and the other, making it safer and easier to cross the street. This feature has to be weighed against the fact that bulb-outs are typically a snow plowing and maintenance nuisance for the City crew, which may not find them to be cost-effective.

**Stepped Planters**

As part of a “Gateway Concept” at the intersection of North Swan and Clinton, some stepped landscaping planters were suggested on either sidewalk going up the steep incline. The space for such planters would be possible here because the sidewalks on this block of North Swan are much wider.
Decorative Planting Beds and Paving Patterns

An additional design concept could be the introduction of landscaped planting areas or decorative paving patterns built into the street or sidewalk. While an additional cost, it would help to enliven the street and could be an excellent opportunity to make a gateway “statement” or to pay homage to a historical figure in North Swan Street history.

New Crosswalks

While new crosswalks would be recommended in all design solutions, different variations of them could be chosen. Traditional painted “ladder” style crosswalks could be replaced with a more modern stamped concrete, possibly with colors. The cost/benefit of such designs would have to be weighed against the expected durability and maintenance costs of the more elaborate designs. Cobblestone, which is believed to be under many parts of the existing road, was also discussed as a possible border to the crosswalks which could act as a “rumble-strip”. A drawback with cobblestone is increased maintenance and reduced vehicle traction. Additionally, in lieu of crosswalks at only the corners, mid-block crossings could also be added.
ADA Compliant Curb Ramps

At each corner, new curb ramps should be provided to allow easier access to and from the sidewalk and the crosswalks. These can be textured to provide additional traction in slippery weather and a tactile warning system for the visually impaired.

Replace Existing Pole-Mounted Streetlights

Although North Swan Street is currently lit to adequate levels with the existing pole-mounted street lamps, these fixtures are primarily designed to illuminate larger roadways. Their tall mounting height and long spacing also tend to encourage faster driving speeds. These “cobra” style lamps should instead be replaced by shorter, more pedestrian scaled lighting fixtures which are primarily designed to illuminate the sidewalks. The use of such smaller lighting fixtures will help to transform the character of North Swan Street from a vehicular thoroughfare to a more pedestrian scale neighborhood.

Also shown in these images is the use of special concrete pavers to help accentuate the edge of a sidewalk and to add a decorative design element. A similar design motif to this is suggested in the design drawings for Concept #2.

Street Trees

Street trees spaced in regular intervals are recommended in both design scenarios because they help to soften the landscape and add color, shade and depth to an otherwise hard urban environment. Like the traditional street lamps discussed above, they can also act as a traffic calming device, slowing vehicles down.
Preliminary Design Concepts

Concept #1 One-way Traffic Design

Roadway configuration stays essentially the same.
One (1) 11’ travel lane
Two (2) 8’ rows of on-street parking

Advantages:

• Functionally efficient from the engineers’ perspective
• More on-street parking (both sides)
• Relative status quo
• Low cost - relocation of curbs/utilities minimal

Disadvantages:

• Not efficient from the drivers’ perspective
• Increases traffic for specific streets
• Disorienting to non-local drivers

Concept #2 Two-way Traffic Design

Roadway configuration could return to two-way traffic, with some on street parking.
Two (2) 11’ travel lanes
One (1) 8’ row of on-street parking

Advantages:

• Raises drivers’ awareness
• Better for short local trips
• Offers retail exposure and accessibility
• Better traffic circulation

Disadvantages:

• Could limit truck turning and loading efficiency
• The two-way alternative would have about half as many on-street parking spaces.
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General Concepts:
- Bump-outs to slow traffic
- Street trees on both sides of the street

**Street Tree (Typical)**

**Light Pole (Typical)**

8 On-street Parking Spaces

One-way Traffic Flow
General Concepts:
Bump-outs to slow traffic
Street trees on both sides of the street

12 On-street Parking Spaces

One-way Traffic Flow

Proposed 26-space Parking Lot

Potential Park

Future plantings and benches along facade wall to accentuate building/entrances

Street Tree (Typical)
Light Pole (Typical)

Saint Joseph’s School Building

North Swan Street
Streetscape Improvement Concept #1
First Street to Second Street

Map Prepared by:
Behan Planning Associates, LLC
Planning Community Futures

DRAFT - For Conceptual Planning Purposes Only
Approximate Scale when printed at 11”x17” is 1” = 20’
General Concepts:
- Bump-outs to slow traffic
- Street trees on both sides of the street
General Concepts:
Bump-outs to slow traffic
Street trees on both sides of the street

22 On-street Parking Spaces

One-way Traffic Flow
General Concepts:
- Bump-outs to slow traffic
- Street trees on both sides of the street
- Evergreen trees at the end of the blocks to soften hard building edges (as needed)
- Future plantings along facade wall as appropriate to accentuate buildings/entrances with possible low fence to protect plants (long-term goal)

Traffic Light Concept:
Place new traffic signal at intersection of North Swan and Clinton, and coordinate the signalization between North and South Swan Street intersections.

Two-way Traffic Flow

Pavement treatment to signify Swan Street gateway

Light Pole (Typical)

Street Tree (Typical)
General Concepts:
Bump-outs to slow traffic
Street trees on both sides of the street
Evergreen trees at the end of the blocks to soften hard building edges (as needed)

Potential Park

Future plantings and benches along facade wall to accentuate building/entrances

Street Tree (Typical)

Light Pole (Typical)

Proposed 11-space Parking Lot

Mid-block crossing with pavers/cobble rumble strip

Two-way Traffic Flow

4 On-street Parking Spaces

Saint Joseph’s School Building

North Swan Street
Streetscape Improvement Concept #2
First Street to Second Street

Map Prepared by:
Behan Planning Associates, LLC
Planning Community Futures

DRAFT - For Conceptual Planning Purposes Only
Approximate Scale when printed at 11" x 17" is 1" = 20'
General Concepts:
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- Street trees on both sides of the street
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**Chapter Four**

**Public Presentation**

On October 11th, 2007, a public presentation and meeting was held at the Ten Broeck Mansion. Local residents and officials were invited to review some of the design ideas and take part in a discussion of alternatives for the future of North Swan Street.

**North Swan Street Community Meeting**  
**Ten Broeck Mansion, Albany, NY**  
**October 11, 2007**

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<td>Jenn Novak</td>
<td>Ten Broeck Preservation League</td>
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<td>Doug Melnick</td>
<td>City of Albany Planning Department</td>
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<td>Underground Railroad History Project</td>
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<td>Biagio Cjoejsgno</td>
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<td>Jeff Mirel</td>
<td>Albany Barn, Inc</td>
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<td>Beverly Padgett</td>
<td>Resident &amp; President of Arbor Hill Neighborhood Association</td>
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</table>
Public Responses

During the public meeting, the design concepts were presented along with a review of the variables that were independent of the one-way versus two-way issue. Parking was a topic of discussion, especially as it related to the future uses of St. Joseph’s Academy and how that may impact the adjacent side streets. Crime was also discussed and how it relates to the current direction of traffic flow. Many agreed that the important issues were not which way the traffic flows, but how much revitalization will actually take place in the neighborhood. The consensus was that a successful revitalization effort will bring more people to the area which in turn would bring more “eyes on the street” which would discourage crime. Members of the Albany Police Department who were present for the meeting agreed that this concept could help reduce crime and wanted to express their support for the goals of the project.

While some of those present expressed a desire to have the street widened, many preferred to have it remain the same width to protect the size of the sidewalks, and liked the idea of a narrow street to slow traffic. There seemed to be consensus that the parking issue would not be a problem for some time until the neighborhood grew and populated more, and that over time adequate parking could be accommodated with a mix of on and off-street spaces. Overall, the most interest was in the advantages of the two-way design of Concept #2. There was consensus that the existing sidewalks are narrow enough, and that reducing them any further to make the road wider was not considered advantageous. Making the sidewalks wider in select places, on the other hand, was found to be unacceptable. There remained some concern that local truck traffic, which would ideally only be on North Swan Street to serve local businesses, have difficulty on the narrow street. One alternative would be to provide a dedicated loading zone which could be limited to certain hours of the day along with limiting truck traffic to non-peak times of day.

Specific comments about the design came about in regards to the suggested reconfiguration of the basketball court/vacant lot area. Some indicted that the basketball court was actively used more often than might be realized, and that removing it would be a mistake as it supplies a recreational activity for local youths. As an alternative, it was suggested that the existing court not be removed until a new one can be built to replace it somewhere else, particularly if this site is to be partially used for off-street parking.
Chapter Five
Cost Estimates

In order to get a better idea of the magnitude of the project and begin to prioritize individual design elements, it became apparent that some preliminary cost estimates would be helpful. Looking at the project in comparison to other recent road reconstruction projects in the area, it is possible to assume a certain order of magnitude based on the size of the project.

For example, similar configurations of two-lane urban street reconstruction projects in the cities of Glens Falls and Kingston ranged from approximately $600 to $2000 per linear foot of roadway. With approximately 1260 linear foot of road for the North Swan Street project, this would equate to a ballpark project cost range of between $750,000 - $2.5 million.

A more accurate example, which was similar in size and scope to what is being considered for North Swan Street, would be the 2004 reconstruction of Henry Johnson Boulevard. That project was completed for roughly $1,050,000 which equates to around $590 per linear foot. This would seem to indicate that a likely assumption for the North Swan Street Project would be closer to the lower-end of the assumed $600 to $2000 range.

While these ballpark estimates are useful, a slightly more detailed breakdown of the individual costs of various design elements would allow the committee to weigh the advantages of certain design elements against one another (i.e. the cost of the street repaving versus the cost of the sidewalks and curbs). The estimate would also, more importantly, help to set the framework for the committee to seek the necessary funding for this neighborhood improvement.
### Capital District Transportation Committee

#### Chapter Five

**Swan Street - Schematic Cost Estimate**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construction Element</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Material &amp; Labor Cost</th>
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Cost per linear foot of road construction: 1262 ft $1,040.19

For initial schematic budgeting purposes only - not for construction.
Assumptions

The project area under consideration consists of approximately 1260 linear feet of roadway from Clinton Avenue to Livingston Avenue.

Not included in estimate: The following items were considered to be outside of the direct scope of the street improvements, and were therefore not included in the cost estimate:

- New center median on Clinton Avenue;
- Creating additional off-street parking spaces or land acquisition;
- The creation of a public park / open space on the corner across the street from St. Joseph’s Academy;
- Potential removal of existing basketball court and fence across the street from St. Joseph’s Academy;
- Special paving patterns/stamped concrete pattern in the roadways

Included in estimate: The following items were derived from the concept design drawings and included in the cost estimate:

- Two way traffic flow design similar to Concept #2, with on-street parking.
- Reversal of traffic flow on Ten Broeck Place to south/east bound.
- Remove and replace all sidewalks and curbs on both sides of street with new concrete sidewalks and new granite curbs.
- ADA Compliant textured wheelchair ramps would be provided at approximately 16 locations.
- 34 new street trees with tree grates approximately every 40 feet on center would be provided
- 13 new benches would be provided
- Existing signage which would remain would have to be temporarily removed and replaced during the construction phase.
- A decorative inlay band of concrete pavers would be set into the sidewalk ~ 16” wide for most of the length of the sidewalks
- Landscape planting beds would be provided at the end of each block and at intermediate areas.
- Approximately 12 existing “Cobra” style street lights would be removed from the utility poles on the north side of the road.
- 40 new pedestrian scale lamp posts, no more than 12 feet in height, would be installed at regular intervals along the road.
- New curb bulb-outs would be added at the end of each block
on whichever side of the street had on-street parking.

• The entire 1260 foot length of the existing asphalt roadway would be removed down to dirt, and would require a new sub-base, grading, stone, compacting and two new layers of asphalt each three inches deep. Additional asphalt areas at the intersections with the cross-streets would also have to be replaced.

• The existing catch basins, storm drains, manholes and similar in-ground infrastructure would be kept in place to whatever extent possible, but that some would likely require adjustments, fixes or replacements.

• New line paint and parking striping would be provided.

• Four new painted crosswalks would be provided at each of the three intersection locations.

• The existing one-way and do not enter signs which would no longer be needed would be removed or relocated.

• Four new stop signs would be provided.

• The traffic lights currently found at the intersections with Clinton, First and Livingston would need to be modified to accommodate the new traffic flow patterns.

**Known price adjustments / design alternates:**

A large assumption made to the scope of the street renovations is that the roadway reconstruction would require a new sub-base. If it was determined that instead the existing asphalt surface could be stripped and resurfaced, this could present a large cost savings.

We estimate that concrete curbing, if substituted for the granite curbing, would represent roughly up to a 50% cost reduction for that item, which would provide curbing for around $27,000 less.

If additional or new traffic lights are provided, each would cost approximately $100,000 installed.

The decorative inlay of special concrete pavers could be removed from the design for a cost reduction of approximately $23,000.
Potential Funding Sources:

The availability of funding to turn conceptual designs into a reality can be a challenge. In addition to city appropriated funds, additional funding sources could be sought from the following resources: SAFETEA-LU (Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users) was signed into law in 2005. This legislation created federal funding for highway, transit and infrastructure improvements. Pedestrian safety and safe routes for children walking to school also fall under the SAFETEA-LU Act. The CMAQ Program (Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement) is another federally funded source for implementing the North Swan Street improvements. CMAQ supports pedestrian and bike improvements, as well as traffic flow upgrades.

Safe Routes to School

The Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Program is being administered in New York State by the Department of Transportation. It is a SAFETEA-LU program that provides funding for projects or education programs which enable and/or encourage children to walk or bicycle to school. To be eligible for funds under the Safe Routes to School Program, the proposed project must:

A. Qualify for one or more of the five eligible SRTS categories;
B. Be located within two miles of a primary or middle school;
C. Be located on a municipal (State, County, Town, City or Village) right-of-way;
D. Not be used for Ineligible uses; and
E. Benefit the public interest through the provision of public access and use.

As part of the project application, the sponsor must demonstrate how the proposed project satisfies each of these five eligibility requirements. The project then will be evaluated based on the information in the application, and a final eligibility determination will be made.

The five eligible SRTS categories are:

1. Engineering Efforts (infrastructure): Creating operational and physical improvements to the infrastructure surrounding schools that reduce speeds and potential conflicts with motor vehicle traffic;
2. Education Efforts (non-infrastructure): Teaching children about the broad range of transportation choices, instructing them in important lifelong
bicycling and walking safety skills;
3. Enforcement Efforts (non-infrastructure): Partnering with local law enforcement to ensure traffic laws are obeyed in the vicinity of schools and initiating community enforcement such as crossing guard programs;
4. Encouragement Efforts (non-infrastructure): Using events and activities to promote bicycling and walking;
5. Evaluation (non-infrastructure): Monitoring and documenting outcomes and trends through the collection of data, including the collection of data before and after the interventions.

Sponsors for the SRTS Program may be municipalities or a public school or public school district. The Program is a reimbursement program and infrastructure projects (sidewalks, traffic calming, crosswalks, etc.) may have a maximum cost of $400,000 and unlike many federal aid programs, no local match is required although it is strongly encouraged to demonstrate the sponsors level of commitment to the project.

The solicitation for projects under the SRTS Program has begun and applications are due April 1, 2008. For more information visit: https://www.nysdot.gov/portal/page/portal/divisions/operating/opdm/local-programs-bureau/srts.

The Capital District Transportation Committee (CDTC) as the designated Metropolitan Planning Organization for the Capital Region is responsible for programming federal transportation dollars made available to the region through many of SAFETEA-LU’s programs. The following lists some of the programs that are currently or will soon be out for solicitation:

**Bicycle & Pedestrian SPOT Improvement Program**

The Bicycle and Pedestrian Spot Improvement Program is a CMAQ funded program designed to fund small-scale bicycle and pedestrian projects through smaller “spot improvements” to the overall transportation system. Spot Improvements are smaller scale projects that address problems at specific locations such as intersections or short lengths of roadway such as a block or two of North Swan Street. They are intended to address gaps or obstacles in the non-motorized transportation system which helps to link much larger systems together.

Eligible projects include the construction of short lengths of sidewalks, pavement repairs, sidewalk reconstruction, crosswalk markings or similar safety
improvements. There are no set minimum or maximum project costs, although the typical project budget is modest and may be well suited to addressing a few key elements of the desired improvements along North Swan. By identifying small, independent actions which could be done with this program, the needs of the larger project could be offset or found more easily. In determining priorities for funding, the CDTC looks favorably on recommendations which were made as part of a previous Linkage Project or similar study, which should give any North Swan Street work an advantage.

Potential project components which could be independent of other funding sources:

- New crosswalks
- New ADA compliant wheelchair ramps at corners

The reconstruction of selected sidewalk areas may be sought as a SPOT Improvement, although there may be some complexity in coordinating such work with related needs for street lamps and underground electrical, which would likely require different funding sources. In such cases there would need to be a higher degree of coordination and timing between two or more funding sources which may not be as realistic.

The next solicitation for projects under this program is expected to occur in mid-2008.

**Bicycle and Pedestrian Network Set-aside**

The Bicycle and Pedestrian Network Set-aside is a funding program through CDTC’s 2007-2012 Transportation Improvement Program which is designed to support bicycle and pedestrian projects that have been recommended through CDTC’s Linkage Program planning studies. The set-aside is supported by CMAQ federal funds and only $1 million will be available on a competitive basis. Because the North Swan Street Multi-modal Accessibility Study is a Linkage Program study, many of the bicycle and pedestrian recommendations in this report are likely to be eligible for funding. Program guidelines are being developed by CDTC for a solicitation that is expected to occur in March 2008. The solicitation may be undertaken concurrently with other CDTC set-aside programs.
The Transportation Enhancement Program

The Transportation Enhancement Program (TEP) is a federal reimbursement program under the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), administered by the New York Department of Transportation (NYSDOT).

In recognition that transportation systems are influenced and impacted by more than the condition of the traditional highway and bridge infrastructure, this program enables funding for transportation projects of cultural, aesthetic, historic and environmental significance.

Elements of the North Swan Street project are eligible for funding in two TEP project categories: Provision of Facilities for Pedestrians and Bicycles and Landscaping and other Beautification. The TEP requires the project sponsor or applicant to front the cost of the project and request reimbursement. Each project requires a minimum matching share of 20% of the total project cost. Innovative finance features are available to minimize the cash outlay for applicants and sponsors. Applications are due by June 27, 2008 and additional details regarding the program can be found on the NYSDOT website at https://www.nysdot.gov/portal/page/portal/programs/tep.

The New York Main Street Program

The New York State Main Street Program funds streetscape improvement projects as well as the revitalization of “downtown anchors,” or a building that has been identified as a key element of the revitalization effort, St. Joseph’s Academy, for example.

The NYS Council on the Arts offers funding through their Architecture, Planning, and Design program that includes emphasis on projects that address planning and community design, open space planning, streetscapes, transportation linkages, design of public spaces and more.

In addition, The Preserve New York Grant Program, administered by the NYS Council on the Arts and the Preservation League of NYS, provides support for three types of projects: cultural resource surveys, historic structure reports, and historic landscape reports. The program generally provides only partial support on a competitive basis.
A Main Street grant was awarded in 2007 and will be used in conjunction with the Albany Housing Authority’s mixed-use project, which includes the rehabilitation of the King’s Way Building at 27-29 North Swan Street. This work is expected to include improvements to the streetscape in front of that property.

Additional funding might also be obtained through the Governor’s Office of Small Cities Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Small Cities Program. The Small Cities Program Annual Competitive Round provides grants to eligible municipalities for projects principally benefiting low and moderate income persons through revitalizing neighborhoods, expanding affordable housing and economic opportunities, and improving community facilities.
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Chapter Six
Recommendations

Roadways themselves do not make neighborhoods - people do. Because these recommended roadway improvements are not a means to an end, but rather a necessary step in the larger picture of bringing people back to the neighborhood, it is important that this work leads the way. The new housing and commercial opportunities which are slated to begin soon will have a much greater chance for success if the street itself is brought up to a standard of living first. Conversely, roadway reconstruction which takes place afterwards will only disrupt a delicate regrowing process. Perhaps more to the point, if these improvements are not made, then the investments which are to follow will have a more difficult chance of success. Therefore this project should be approached from the standpoint of maximizing feasibility.

A full reconstruction of the North Swan Street corridor will entail a large amount of work and coordination. If it should become apparent that the project in its entirety cannot be funded completely, it should not be shelved or postponed. Some of the complexity and feasibility may be improved by breaking the project up into smaller, more manageable, parts or phases. This may help to ensure that the primary goals remain feasible and achievable. Priority importance should go to those aspects which will make the largest visual and functional difference in the community.

In order to maximize the feasibility of the work in a phased approach, the following recommendations are suggested within the framework of Short, Medium and Long time frames for completion.

Overall

Based on the work and feedback over the course of this project, North Swan Street should be renovated to accommodate two-way traffic flow with on-street parking, street trees and pedestrian amenities similar to the designs shown in the Concept #2 drawings.

Short Term

Survey road and utilities condition - Have engineers more thoroughly investigate the condition of the North Swan Street asphalt roadway and
underlying utilities to determine the necessary level of work required to rehabilitate them. If a complete reconstruction is recommended, investigate when and if this can be scheduled with underground utility upgrades with the City. This can be done during the Survey / Early Design stages. If a minor repaving project will be sufficient, coordinate that with medium term work. Update the schematic cost estimates as necessary.

**Identify sidewalks to be replaced with new construction** - Several new construction and renovation projects along North Swan Street in the near future - particularly by the Albany Housing Authority - will include new sidewalks in front of buildings in selected areas. This would help to offset overall sidewalk construction costs, create “gaps” in between for areas that would be eligible for SPOT funding, and provide a clear passage in and out of those buildings during the period when the rest of the sidewalks are being replaced.

**Apply for SPOT, TEP, and/or Safe Routes to School funding** - Identify specific aspects or priorities of the corridor improvement which can be financed and done independently of the others. Apply for funding at earliest date possible to begin with work.

**Reverse direction of Ten Broeck Place traffic** - So that it acts as a continuance of the direction of the Third Street traffic flow. Adjust signs and other traffic controls as needed.

**Medium Term**

**Construct new sidewalks, plant street trees, construct crosswalks and curbing** - This element should be the first construction priority of the corridor in preparation for some of the new buildings and renovations expected within the neighborhood. It will have the largest visual and psychological effect on the mood and character of the street. This work could be funded in part by the work of the SPOT and/or TEP program mentioned earlier, which would help to offset the overall costs. Priority should be given to the northeastern-most two blocks of North Swan which contain the commercial businesses, working southwest toward a connection with Clinton Avenue. If the resources for new streetlights and electrical cannot be included with this work, then the underground conduit should at least be set in place with capped areas to accommodate the lamps at a future date.

**Resurface existing street asphalt** - [Optional] - If it is determined that a road
resurfacing of North Swan Street will suffice and can be funded within the medium time frame, it could be scheduled shortly after the reconstruction of the sidewalk and curbing work.

**Return to two-way traffic flow** - Stripe (or re-stripe) asphalt for two lanes of traffic with on street parking along North Swan Street. Adjust signs and other traffic controls as needed. Returning the street to two-way flow prior to road reconstruction will allow locals to get adjusted to the change earlier and allow greater exposure to local business, but will reduce flexibility for redirecting traffic flow during construction periods later on.

**Longer Term**

**Streetscape amenities** - The introduction of streetscape amenities such as benches, new street signs, street lights and landscaping can be added at a later date as new funding sources become available and the pedestrian activity increases. As the pedestrian population of the street increases, over time there will be more pedestrian activity to appreciate and monitor these amenities and there will be a reduced likelihood that they will fall prey to theft or vandalism.

**New street paving or resurfacing of North Swan Street** - Although this is an important element in the total streetscape, it is not considered mandatory and can be left for later phases if funding and resources are not available at earlier times. Any road reconstruction will likely have the greatest negative effect on the North Swan Street livelihood due to its impact on local businesses and residents, but with only secondary aesthetic improvements. For this reason it is recommended that these improvements take place either very early in the redevelopment stages, or much later after people are more established and settled. This could coincide with some of the later arrivals of new housing and commercial redevelopment.
## Capital District Transportation Committee

### Chapter Six

#### Approximate Cost Breakdown By Phase

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<tr>
<th>Construction Element</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
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<th>Material &amp; Labor Cost</th>
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<td>$6,600.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Add new granite curbing</td>
<td>2230</td>
<td>lf</td>
<td>$22.00</td>
<td>$49,060.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Add new granite radius curbing at corners</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>lf</td>
<td>$32.00</td>
<td>$6,400.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textured wheelchair ramps at corners</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>ea</td>
<td>$1,000.00</td>
<td>$16,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debris removal</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>cy</td>
<td>$50.00</td>
<td>$25,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New underground electrical service for lamps</td>
<td>2400</td>
<td>lf</td>
<td>$30.00</td>
<td>$72,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electrical transformers</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>ea</td>
<td>$2,000.00</td>
<td>$8,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Install new 2&quot; caliper street trees</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>ea</td>
<td>$500.00</td>
<td>$17,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tree grates and guards</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>ea</td>
<td>$750.00</td>
<td>$25,500.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remove and replace existing signage to remain</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>lump</td>
<td>$4,000.00</td>
<td>$4,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remove existing one way and do not enter signs</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>lump</td>
<td>$500.00</td>
<td>$500.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Add new street signage</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>ea</td>
<td>$700.00</td>
<td>$2,800.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modifications to existing traffic lights</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>ea</td>
<td>$750.00</td>
<td>$2,250.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area containment and detours</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>lump</td>
<td>$10,000.00</td>
<td>$10,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>subtotal</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$454,510.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Prevailing wage adjustment</strong></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>$45,451.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Project management &amp; overhead</strong></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>$45,451.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Contingency</strong></td>
<td>20</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>$90,902.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Longer Term - Roadway

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construction Element</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Material &amp; Labor Cost</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Design &amp; Engineering</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>ea</td>
<td>$35,000.00</td>
<td>$35,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Install new lamp posts</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>ea</td>
<td>$3,000.00</td>
<td>$120,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Install new benches</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>ea</td>
<td>$1,000.00</td>
<td>$8,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New stepped planters</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>lump</td>
<td>$6,000.00</td>
<td>$6,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decorative planting beds</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>sy</td>
<td>$30.00</td>
<td>$6,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remove existing cobra head lights</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>ea</td>
<td>$1,000.00</td>
<td>$12,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remove existing asphalt road paving</td>
<td>4000</td>
<td>sy</td>
<td>$10.00</td>
<td>$40,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debris removal</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>cy</td>
<td>$50.00</td>
<td>$25,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Set new base course, grade and compact</td>
<td>4000</td>
<td>sy</td>
<td>$16.00</td>
<td>$64,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New asphalt paving</td>
<td>4000</td>
<td>sy</td>
<td>$33.00</td>
<td>$132,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjust/replace existing manholes and catchbasins as needed</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>ea</td>
<td>$800.00</td>
<td>$8,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New line paint, striping and crosswalks</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>lump</td>
<td>$10,000.00</td>
<td>$10,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area containment and detours</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>lump</td>
<td>$10,000.00</td>
<td>$10,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patch/repair curbing and ramps</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>lump</td>
<td>$5,000.00</td>
<td>$5,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>subtotal</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$431,000.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Prevailing wage adjustment</strong></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>$43,100.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Project management &amp; overhead</strong></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>$43,100.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Contingency</strong></td>
<td>20</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>$86,200.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Additional Neighborhood Improvements

St. Joseph’s Academy

- The rehabilitation of the St. Joseph’s Academy building has great potential to act as a social activity anchor for the neighborhood. Situated at the middle of the span of North Swan Street, the uses and activities here could have a ripple effect on the surrounding area, and should be considered a neighborhood priority. It is additionally important that a new use be found for the original building architecture.

Off street parking

- Continue to develop and expand the existing City-owned lots in and around the immediate North Swan Street area to develop a strong base of public parking opportunities. This would benefit both the residential and commercial investment in the area.
- Consider coordinating new AHA building projects on adjacent parcels to split the needed parking spaces into one common/shared lot and curb cut. This will help to maximize off-street parking efficiency in a neighborhood which has limited space.

New Corner Park / Playground

- Creation of a new public space at the corner of North Swan Street and Second Street. This would ideally include provisions for new outdoor recreational amenities such as basketball, a new playground, outdoor seating and possible off-street parking.

Facade & Building Improvements

- Local business owners should be made aware and kept up to date on grant opportunities for facade or building renovation to improve the look of their building.
- The commercial design standards already in place for the C-1 Neighborhood Commercial Zoning District (from 2nd Street to Livingston Ave.) will help to go a long way to provide more attractive building facades and businesses. The allowable size of signs and the permitted use of projecting signs seems to coincide well with the desire to give businesses here increased visibility.
Appendix

Traffic Circulation Memo

Existing Conditions Assessment
Memo

To:    Mr. Michael Allen
From:  Michelle Dennis and Mark Sargent
Date:  August 1, 2007
Re:    Traffic Circulation Memo
Project:  North Swan Street, Albany County CME Project No. 07-037d

This memo summarizes the traffic circulation issues on and surrounding North Swan Street in the City of Albany, from Clinton Avenue to Livingston Avenue. This traffic circulation evaluation is part of the North Swan Street Multimodal Accessibility Study funded jointly by the Capital District Transportation Committee (CDTC) and the Albany Housing Authority (AHA). The purpose of the study is to revitalize the North Swan Street area, both economically and physically - To encourage new business and provide improved accessibility and streetscape features and amenities, and to improve the attractiveness of the area. Items such as landscaping, street trees, lighting, signing, pedestrian improvements, parking and circulation improvements are being explored. The purpose of this memo is to document the traffic circulation issues and feasibility for improvements.

Currently, the four block section of North Swan Street is one-way northbound between Clinton Street and Livingston Avenue. First Street is one-way eastbound. Second Street is one-way westbound. Third Street and Ten Broeck Place are one-way toward North Swan Street. Hall Place is one-way southbound. The existing flow pattern is inconvenient to local residents and businesses, particularly on the north end of North Swan Street where the one-way streets converge, which requires all motorists to exit the study area by traveling north to Livingston Avenue.

Working with the Advisory Committee for the project, a number of potential traffic circulation changes were identified. The alternative with the most support includes:

- Converting North Swan Street to two-way traffic between Clinton Street and Livingston Avenue; converting Ten Broeck Place to one-way eastbound from North Swan Street to Ten Broeck Street, and changing the direction of Hall Place from southbound to northbound between First Street and Ten Broeck Place.

It should be noted that this traffic circulation was in place prior to October of 2000, when the City’s Police Department implemented the current pattern. Recent discussions with the Police Department indicate that they are not opposed the current plan.

Proposed Changes in Traffic Flow
Traffic volumes are low to moderate in the area, so vehicular capacity is not a driving force behind the traffic circulation pattern. Discussions with the Advisory Committee and members of the community indicated that the primary concern is the potential impact to on-street parking. For example, the segment of North Swan Street from Clinton Street to First Street is too narrow (22') to provide two-way traffic while maintaining on-street parking.

The following table summarizes the amount of parking for the one-way and two-way alternatives based on the preliminary streetscape concepts developed by Behan Planning Associates.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number of on-street parking spaces</th>
<th>Number of off-street parking spaces</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One-way Alternative</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>0 to 26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two-way Alternative</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>0 to 26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although on-street parking spaces are not currently delineated, on-street parking is allowed and the one-way alternative represents the approximate capacity of existing on-street parking. The Table shows that there are approximately 59 on-street parking spaces today. There are zero off-street parking spaces, but up to 26 off-street spaces could be provided under either alternative at the existing basketball court location depending on the final design. For example, the advisory committee is evaluating an alternative that integrates a community park into the basketball court property and provides 11 off-street parking spaces. Although not currently quantified, the redevelopment plan will also include additional shared off-street parking associated with specific uses, such as St. Joseph’s and the Baptist church. The end result is that the two-way alternative can accommodate 24 on-street parking spaces. When combined with the maximum 26 off-street spaces, this alternative approaches the existing parking supply, but falls short by nine (9) total parking spaces. Additional, undetermined parking associated with specific uses will make the total available parking approximately equal to the existing on-street parking.

The City’s minimum standard for two-way traffic with parking is 28 feet (two ten foot wide travel lanes, plus an eight foot wide parking lane). The segment of North Swan Street from First Street to Livingston Avenue measures 26 to 27 feet in width which is slightly less than the City’s 28 foot wide standard. Nevertheless, this section previously accommodated two-way traffic with on-street parking and the City has acknowledged that the 26 foot width could be acceptable. This would be a low cost approach to accomplishing the two-way alternative, by utilizing the existing street cross-section. If widening is included in the two-way alternative, then a 30 foot cross-section is recommended (two 11 foot wide travel lanes, plus an eight foot wide parking lane). This would still allow up to 9 feet of width on both sides of the road outside the traveled way for a maintenance strip (four feet) and sidewalk (five feet).

In addition to the primary concerns related to parking and street widths, other factors were considered in terms of advantages and disadvantages of the two alternatives. These include pedestrian access, bike safety, parking, vehicular access, truck loading/unloading accessibility, cost, historical quality and the ability to support upcoming commercial development. Table 2 notes the advantages and disadvantages of both patterns.
Table 2 – North Swan Street Circulation Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advantage</th>
<th>Disadvantage</th>
<th>Advantage</th>
<th>Disadvantage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Functionally efficient (Engineers’ perspective)</td>
<td>Not efficient (Drivers’ perspective)</td>
<td>Raises drivers awareness</td>
<td>Limits on street parking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allows space for art, landscaping and bikes</td>
<td>Increases traffic for specific streets</td>
<td>Better for short local trips</td>
<td>Limits truck turning and loading efficiency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Status Quo</td>
<td>Disorienting to non-local visitors</td>
<td>Offers retail exposure and accessibility</td>
<td>Does not support bike activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potentially Lower cost</td>
<td>Does not support historical quality of the area</td>
<td>Supports vehicular access</td>
<td>Potentially Higher Cost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supports pedestrian activity</td>
<td>Does not support future commercial development</td>
<td>Support historical quality of the area</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supports bike activity</td>
<td></td>
<td>Supports future commercial development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allows parking on both sides of the street</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allows adequate space for truck turning and loading efficiency</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to the primary circulation change proposed on North Swan Street, the plan proposes to reverse the direction of traffic flow on two nearby streets - including Ten Broeck Place, and Hall Place. These are low volume streets and there is no apparent constraint associated with the change. In fact, the change will complement the existing eastbound flow on Third Street.

Lastly, although not part of the original proposal, some committee members expressed an interest in reversing the flow of traffic on Colonie Street, near the north end of the study area. Colonie Street is currently one-way eastbound between Lark Street and Livingston Avenue. The proposed change would improve system continuity, by providing alternating one-way streets on First Street (eastbound), Second Street (westbound), Third Street (eastbound) and Colonie Street (westbound). A field inspection confirmed that although this one-way alternative is feasible, converting Colonie Street to two-way traffic is also feasible and would be preferred if combined with the two-way North Swan Street alternative.

This traffic circulation assessment included several field visits. All of the proposed traffic circulation changes are considered feasible and desirable, with the trade-offs noted herein. Under the two-way alternative, the total number of parking spaces will be comparable to existing. Improved neighborhood accessibility will be realized, which will in turn support future commercial development within the area.

Specific traffic control at intersections such as stop signs and traffic signal modifications will need to be verified and changed as necessary. Traffic signal warrants analysis should be conducted at the existing traffic signals on North Swan Street at First Street and Second Street. The signals at these two low volume locations could potentially be removed regardless of whether the one-way or two-way traffic circulation plan is progressed.
North Swan Street
Multimodal Accessibility Study

Existing Conditions Assessment

Prepared by:
Capital District Transportation Committee
City of Albany
Albany Housing Authority

February 2007
Introduction

The Capital District Transportation Committee (CDTC) with support from the City of Albany and the Albany Housing Authority has prepared the following existing conditions summary for the North Swan Street Multimodal Accessibility Study. The summary focuses primarily on the North Swan Street corridor in the City of Albany and includes descriptions of the roadway characteristics, transit routes, signage, bicycle and pedestrian environment, parking opportunities and the existing traffic circulation pattern. Additional details on the neighborhood can be found in the Arbor Hill Neighborhood Plan.

North Swan Street Characteristics

Pavement and Motor Vehicles

North Swan Street is a one-way, 0.2 mile long road between Clinton and Livingston Avenues. Street widths vary in the corridor from curb to curb as follows: from Clinton Ave. to First St. North Swan is roughly 22 feet wide (14 foot travel lane and eight foot parking lane [See Image 1]), from First St. to Second St. North Swan is roughly 26 feet wide (18 foot travel lane and eight foot parking lane) and from Second St. to Livingston Ave. (See Image 2) North Swan is roughly 27 feet wide (19 foot travel lane and eight foot parking lane). There is no bicycle lane or formal shoulder.

The street surface is an asphalt-overlay and in 2006 it had a pavement condition rating of 5 out of 10 (according to the CDTC Pavement Conditions Inventory). This means that the street should be evaluated by an engineering professional to determine the amount of needed reconstruction or rehabilitation. It should also be noted that there is a steep grade for the first block of North Swan from Clinton Ave. to First St. (See Image 1).

Although CDTC and the City do not have traffic counts for North Swan, the traffic volumes are assumed to be very low due to its one-way configuration and its function as a local city street. Heavy vehicles are not present with the exception of deliveries made in the northern commercial section (between Second St. and Livingston Ave.). It should also be noted that vehicles were observed disregarding red lights and the one-way restriction during CDTC’s two week period of data gathering in the corridor.
Parking

Parking is permitted at all times of day on the east side of the entire street (or the side closest to downtown Albany). Parking is prohibited at all times on the west side of the street. Private off-street parking is available at a few locations along the street. There is a small private lot at the southern end, between Clinton Avenue and First Street, on the east side serving two newly constructed homes. Between Second Street and Third Street/Ten Broeck Place there is a small private lot/driveway on the east side of the street serving as access to an old garage.

As mentioned earlier, trucks make deliveries in the corridor, particularly the section from Second to Third Street (see Image 3) but there is no truck delivery zone designated for their use. Bicycle parking is non-existent.

Sidewalks

The sidewalks in the corridor are continuous, primarily concrete and range from roughly 10 feet to 13.5 feet in width as measured from building edge to curb at select locations in the corridor. The sidewalks are generally deteriorated and in some sections very difficult to traverse. However, new sidewalk was recently constructed in the section near Clinton Avenue on the east side of the street. Table 1 provides specific information on the condition of the sidewalks by street segment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Start</th>
<th>End</th>
<th>East Sidewalk Width (ft) and Condition</th>
<th>West Sidewalk Width (ft) and Condition</th>
<th>Surface</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clinton Ave</td>
<td>First St</td>
<td>13 – Very Good</td>
<td>13 – Good</td>
<td>Concrete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7 – Very Good</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First St</td>
<td>Second St</td>
<td>12 – Good</td>
<td>11 – Very Good</td>
<td>Concrete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second St</td>
<td>Third St</td>
<td>11 – Fair</td>
<td>11 – Fair</td>
<td>Concrete/Brick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third St</td>
<td>Livingston Ave</td>
<td>11 – Fair</td>
<td>12 – Poor</td>
<td>Concrete/Asphalt</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Very Good = recent work and ideal walking conditions
Good = walkable condition with no signs of recent work
Fair = cracks and uneven surface
Poor = cracks, very uneven surface and major heaving
**Pedestrian Intersection Infrastructure**

Along with generally poor sidewalk conditions, none of the intersections in this corridor are in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). In order to comply with the ADA, curb cut ramps for wheelchair users and truncated domes for blind individuals must be provided at all four corners of each intersection. These features are not present here. In addition, there are no crosswalks at the intersections (both signalized and unsignalized) in the corridor, with the exception of Livingston Avenue. At Livingston, the crosswalk is a high visibility ladder style crosswalk but has largely faded away (see Image 5).

The CDTC has compiled an inventory of pedestrian facilities at signalized intersections throughout the Capital Region called the Pedestrian Infrastructure Index. The Pedestrian Infrastructure Index assigns a grade of A through F to the intersection’s pedestrian facilities according to the available infrastructure and other intersection characteristics. This corridor has received an overall grade of C. A summary of the pedestrian infrastructure index of North Swan Street is provided in the appendix. A grade of C implies that the corridor has walkable characteristics (narrow cross section, small turn radii, sidewalks, etc.) but may be lacking some of the additional infrastructure necessary to make the corridor truly pedestrian oriented (such as crosswalks, curb ramps, etc).

**Streetscape Features**

The existing streetscape on North Swan Street does not currently add to the appearance of the neighborhood. The only significant landscaping is five trees on the west side of the road between First Street and Second Street. The corridor is filled with weeds, particularly in the sidewalks, along the buildings and even around the street trees. The only visible street furniture (trash cans, benches, mail boxes, etc.) is a City of Albany trash can located on the west side of the street on the block between Third Street/Ten Broeck Place and Lexington Avenue. Planters, street benches and mailboxes are not present with the exception of one planter at the far corner of Livingston Avenue at North Swan Street (see Image 1 on Page 1).
**Lighting/Utility Poles**

Lighting throughout the North Swan Street study area caters to the automobile with many dark spots and no pedestrian scale lighting. A site visit found that there are 15 cobra style lights in the corridor, all of which light the roadway from above. Six of these lights are located at the intersections and the remaining nine are at mid-block locations. The utility lines as well as the street lights are primarily found on the western side of the street and the utility lines and cobra lights generally share the same pole in the corridor. A few of the poles are leaning (see Image 3 on page 2) and may require replacement. Nearly all the poles are placed no more than one foot from the curb line and are in the sidewalk.

**Street Signage**

Street name signs are present at each intersection, are in very good condition, easily read, and appear to be new. The parking signs are generally in good condition and inform drivers that parking is prohibited at all times on the west side of the street. The only exception to the condition of the parking signs is the block between Second and Third Street/Ten Broeck Place on the west side of the street which are hard to read.

**Water and Sewer**

The Albany Water Board plans their rehabilitation projects to coincide with major street rehabilitation projects. According to the map provided by the City, the water lines running along North Swan Street date from as long ago as 1894 up to the most recent of 1914. The age of the sewer lines is unclear but it can be assumed that their age is similar to the water lines and thus close to 100 years old. Detailed maps of the sewer and water lines are provided in the appendix. It would seem that if the roadway pavement is considered for reconstruction that the water/sewer lines should also be considered for replacement at the same time.

**Parks and Public Space**

North Swan Street is one of the few places in the Arbor Hill area that has a neighborhood oriented public recreational area (a basketball court located across the street from St. Joseph’s Academy at 56 Second Street). On the days of CDTC’s site visits, this court was not used.

*Image 7 Abandoned or unused neighborhood basketball court across the street from the abandoned St. Joseph’s Academy*
**Circulation Pattern**

One-way streets dominate the circulation pattern in the North Swan Street study area. North Swan is a one-way route heading north from Clinton Avenue to Livingston Avenue. Clinton Avenue, Livingston Avenue and Ten Broeck Place are all two-way streets where they intersect with North Swan. First Street and Third Street are both one-way streets heading east where they intersect with North Swan and Second Street is a one-way route heading west where it intersects with North Swan.

**Transit Routes**

No public transit routes traverse this corridor. However, the following Capital District Transportation Authority transit routes are adjacent to the corridor at a comfortable walkable distance:

- **Route 3, Quail Street Belt**, runs a loop between Quail Street along Central Avenue, through Clinton Avenue to the Ten Eyck Plaza continuing to the Empire State Plaza and finally connecting back to Quail Street.

- **Route 6, Second Avenue**, starts at the River Center in the Village of Menands, heads along Livingston Avenue passing the North Swan Street intersection, and ends in the South End neighborhood of the City of Albany via Pearl Street.

- **Route 8, Arbor Hill**, starts in the South End neighborhood, runs along South Pearl Street into the Arbor Hill Neighborhood, passes the corridor at the intersection of Livingston Avenue and North Swan Street, and ends near Manning Boulevard and Central Avenue.

**Potential Future Development and Redevelopment Plans**

The purpose of the North Swan Street Multimodal Accessibility study is to develop a conceptual streetscape plan for North Swan Street which balances the needs of all transportation modes while enhancing the appearance of the street to help attract people to the redeveloped commercial/cultural corridor. It is essential that the investment being made by the Albany Housing Authority and others in the neighborhood be supported by investments in the streetscape and transportation system. The Albany Housing Authority is currently constructing four residential rental units on North Swan between Clinton and First Street. Other sites in the vicinity of First Street are also being considered for rehab or for future residential development.
In Spring 2007, the Albany Housing Authority will begin construction on 23 residential rental units over seven storefronts on North Swan Street. The concentration will be between Second and Third Streets. There is some parking associated with these units/storefronts.

The Albany Housing Authority is also studying reuse options for the former Saint Joseph's Academy building on North Swan Street. The three scenarios currently being evaluated include:

1. Senior housing and a café/health/community center,

2. Artist live-work space and arts oriented community center,

3. Market rate loft space with a corresponding commercial use on the first floor.

Finally, the Albany Housing Authority is partnering with the Albany County Historic Association, operator of the Ten Broeck Mansion, in rehabilitating the King Building at 27-29 North Swan Street. The building would be resued for office space, a gallery and a gift store and possibly one residential unit. The grounds between 27-29 and 41 North Swan Street would be made into a park and connected to the Ten Broeck Mansion via an easement.

**Environmental Justice**

As the primary forum for the cooperative development of regional transportation plans, CDTC must incorporate environmental justice concerns in its planning process. This applies to the North Swan corridor because CDTC’s environmental justice identification criteria indicate that the neighborhood around North Swan Street contains low-income and minority populations. The environmental justice designation is important so that the needs of these populations can be identified and addressed ensuring that the benefits, as well as the burdens of transportation investments can be fairly distributed throughout the planning area.
Conclusion

The summary of existing conditions on North Swan Street indicates that there is a need to improve the streetscape in light of new investment in the study area. Several opportunities and constraints were observed and noted for use in the development of the streetscape plan.

Opportunities

The greatest opportunity presents itself through the investment being made in the corridor by the Albany Housing Authority and others. Rehabilitating existing structures, constructing new housing and the additional plans being developed for the reuse of more structures support the implementation of the Arbor Hill Neighborhood Plan. These investments must be supported by an attractive streetscape that presents an inviting, attractive and safe image to residents and visitors alike. In addition, if it should be determined by the city that the street needs a complete reconstruction, the opportunity to replace aged water and sewer lines presents itself. The corridor is also built to a pedestrian scale and simply needs some fine tuning to enhance the pedestrian environment. Finally, there appears to be many low cost actions that can be taken to greatly improve the streetscape (i.e., weeding the corridor, etc.) in lieu of a complete reconstruction of the street.

Constraints

The cross section of North Swan Street is narrow and careful consideration must be given to how the street right-of-way is allocated for transportation and other uses. Public safety must also be considered. Lack of parking is potentially a problem, particularly if the street is converted to a two-way road and in light of the proposed reuse of the Saint Joseph’s Academy, a property that lacks on-site parking.
Appendix
## Pedestrian Infrastructure Index

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intersection</th>
<th>Total # of Intersection Lanes</th>
<th>Greatest # of Road Lanes</th>
<th>Left Lanes</th>
<th>Right Channel</th>
<th>Right Red Prohibited</th>
<th>Signal Phasing</th>
<th>Crosswalk</th>
<th>Pedestrian</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td># Type</td>
<td>Condition</td>
<td>Buttons</td>
<td>ADA Buttons</td>
<td>Signals</td>
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<th>Approach Grade</th>
<th>Blocked Views</th>
<th>ADA Compliant</th>
<th>Turn Radius</th>
<th>Skewed/Offset</th>
<th>Lighting</th>
<th>Special Features</th>
<th>Raw Score</th>
<th>Grade</th>
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