



City of Mechanicville



Waterfront and Downtown Revitalization Plan

January 29, 2009

PREPARED BY:



in conjunction with



*This document was prepared for the
City of Mechanicville with funds
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CITY OF MECHANICVILLE
WATERFRONT AND DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION PLAN

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I. Introduction

The City of Mechanicville has a rich and varied history, spanning from its start as a small mill community, through the heyday as an industrial rail hub, to its current role as a residential center in southern Saratoga County. Throughout it all, the common thread of the City was a strong core of community character. Today, Mechanicville enjoys numerous advantages over other nearby communities, not the least of which is its setting on the Hudson River. The downtown, with an attractive Main Street setting, historic buildings, and adjacent neighborhoods, contribute to this character. In addition, the scale of City is completely walkable and there are several existing and potential connections to the River. When these features are taken as a whole, Mechanicville's downtown and adjacent neighborhoods evoke a very comfortable atmosphere.

This strategic plan is intended to capitalize on the community's many assets and opportunities. Through a community visioning process, inventory of existing conditions, and identification of physical enhancements, this plan will create realistic goals and strategies the City can implement to catalyze the redevelopment of the waterfront and downtown.

II. Inventory of Existing Conditions

Mechanicville owes much of its heritage to the waterways and to the railroads, which shaped the development of the community. The city's contemporary history began as a small community of millers and craftsmen along the Tenendaho Creek in the mid-1700's. The community grew steadily throughout the 1800's, as the introduction of the railway and Champlain Canal increased the importance of Mechanicville as a center for papermaking and other industries. The early 1900's saw the community become a major rail transfer yard and repair center. Mechanicville became a city in 1915, and by the 1920's had a population of nearly 10,000 people.



However, with the decline of the railroads, the City shifted its focus away from industry. Today, the City acts as a bedroom community, with residents working in Albany, Schenectady, and other nearby municipalities. As development in the Capital Region continues, Mechanicville is seeking ways to capitalize on its many assets: easy access to Route 87, historic and affordable housing stock, intact downtown, rail infrastructure, and waterfront location. This is evident in the newly proposed project to redevelop the former Mechanicville railroad yard as a new rail hub. The new facility will serve as an unloading point for intermodal containers that are brought in by rail, and also as a regional destination for delivery of new motor vehicles. The City is seeking ways to use these assets to position Mechanicville as a desirable residential center in southern Saratoga County.

To provide a basis for understanding how the City's downtown and waterfront can play a role in the future of the community and the region, an inventory and analysis of existing conditions in and around the study area was conducted. This examines the following topics:

- Existing land uses
- Land ownership patterns
- Public access and recreational resources
- Water-dependent and water-related uses
- Existing zoning and other relevant local development controls
- Historic and scenic resources
- Water quality and natural resources

The results of this inventory provide context for the formation of the Waterfront Revitalization Plan. It is not intended to be all-inclusive, but to instead provide context for the existing conditions and regional trends which are present in and around the City of Mechanicville.

A. Study Area Boundary

This plan is focused on waterfront and downtown revitalization. Accordingly, the study area boundary takes in the length of Main Street throughout the city, as well as the length of Hudson shoreline which parallels the roadway. In addition, the study area includes the Tenendaho Creek, also known as the Anthony Kill, as it winds through the community. This creek is a locally important waterway, both in terms of its historic role for the mills, and also as a unique feature to the downtown and neighborhoods through which it passes. Since this plan is also focused on the downtown area, adjacent large-scale commercial areas, such as Central Avenue commercial plaza or the Price Chopper, were not considered in this plan, except to include the portion near the Tenendaho Creek. This study area boundary was chosen to provide as much focus on waterfront and downtown issues as possible. The Central Avenue Corridor, as well as the brownfields within the City, will be studied under separate planning efforts. See Map 1 for an overview of the boundaries of the Study Area.

B. Existing Land Use and Development Patterns

The patterns of land use in the waterfront area illustrate how the waterfront is being used currently, and may influence the potential for waterfront use in the future. As such, the existing land uses have been included in the inventory of conditions in the City. Map 2 shows the location of the land uses in context with the waterfront study area and the city as a whole. These land uses are based on the property class codes assigned to each parcel by the Assessor, which is provided through the Saratoga County Real Property Tax Service. In certain cases, where the information available was missing or outdated, the land use class was determined by the committee.

In general, the waterfront study area is made up largely of residential and commercial land uses. There are also a number of community service land uses, which designate governmental or educational uses, such as City Hall, the Department of Public Works, the Post Office, the Library, schools, Community Center, and churches. There are also a few recreation and vacant parcels within the study area, which are discussed in greater detail in a separate section of this profile.

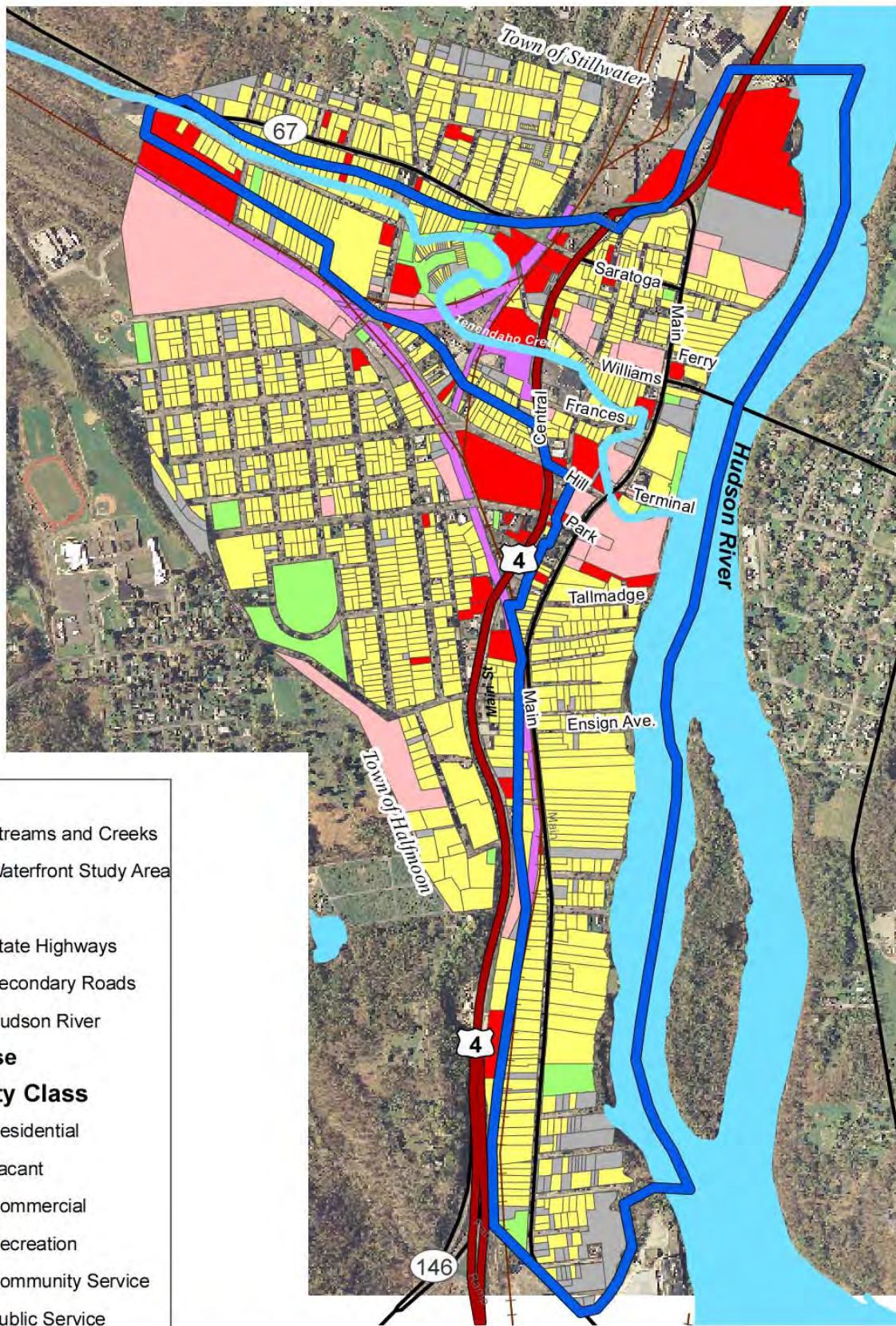
Most of the commercial and community service uses are located along the northern and central portions of the study area. The southern and western portions of the study area contain mostly residential land uses. In the northern and western portions of the study area, the arrangement of the parcels is not particularly conducive to providing waterfront access, as the shoreline is located along the rear yard of many of the lots. In the southern portion of the study area, which is mainly residential, several streets dead-end on the Hudson River. This arrangement allows for greater access to the waterfront than if the shoreline were entirely dedicated to residential yards.

The land use patterns also reveal insight into the functioning of the downtown. As is apparent in Map 2, the downtown area is not uniformly made up of commercial uses. There are a number of multi-family, civic/community, and vacant parcels within the downtown area. This poses a good opportunity for the City to promote a variety of commercial businesses downtown, which will enliven the area and support economic development. In particular, the presence of three multi-family housing developments within the study area (the Senior Center, and the apartment



**City of Mechanicville
Downtown and Waterfront Revitalization Plan
Study Area Boundaries
MAP 1**

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**City of Mechanicville
Downtown and Waterfront Revitalization Plan
Land Uses
MAP 2**

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potentially support local downtown businesses.

C. Public Access and Recreational Resources

The waterfront study area contains several recreation areas and related uses, although not all provide waterfront access. These are illustrated on Map 2. These areas include:

- The City Dock, located on Terminal Street behind City Hall. This area contains a boat dock, walkway, interpretive signage, benches, and a pump-out point for boaters. Plans are in place to install a kayak/canoe put-in as well as lockers for boaters. This is the main stopping point for all boaters coming into the City. Although not large, this facility offers direct access to both the waterfront and the downtown commercial core.



In addition, this feature retains a high level of landscape integrity, in terms of connoting the historic working waterfront of the City. As such, the City Dock is the most important waterfront feature in Mechanicville.

- Decrescente Park, located between Route 4 and the Hudson River. This area contains playing fields and is used by local youth sports groups. Currently, access to the riverfront is limited, with vegetation and topography posing both a physical and visual barrier to the river. This park is located adjacent to the library and the Mechanicville Senior Citizen Center. However, pedestrian access between the Senior Center and the playing fields is restricted, due to fencing and steep topography. This area is privately owned and the fields are provided as a temporary service to the community by the owner, until such time as the site is redeveloped.



- Paul Luther Park and playground, located on South Main Street, is operated by the City. This active recreation facility features play equipment, picnic areas, and tennis courts. There is no formal visual or physical access to the river, due to heavy vegetation along the shoreline. In addition, the shoreline in this area is subject to flooding and seasonal wetness, which limits the type of activities



which can take place on the water.

- Tenendaho playground, located along Tenendaho Creek, features tennis courts and play equipment. This facility is mainly used by residents of the housing development. There is no direct physical access to the creek, and views of the water are somewhat screened by mature vegetation.

In addition, there are several pedestrian and bicycle trails which terminate in or around Mechanicville. These trail termini represent opportunities to connect the regional trail network to Mechanicville's downtown and waterfront. These include:

The Zim Smith Trail, which travels through Saratoga County. This trail connects the Towns of Ballston, Malta, and Clifton Park and Round Lake Village, and is the backbone of the Saratoga County trail system. Saratoga Preserving Land and Nature is leading the effort to secure access for the trail system throughout the county.

The Champlain Canal Trail is slated to span from the confluence of the Mohawk and Hudson rivers at Waterford to Lake Champlain at Whitehall. This trail, part of the larger Canalway Trail system, is still being developed. Short trail segments currently follow the old Champlain Canal towpath in Waterford and in Schuylerville. Parks & Trails New York, in partnership with the NYS Canal Corporation and Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, is working to complete what will ultimately be a 524-mile continuous trail along New York's historic Erie, Oswego, Cayuga-Seneca, and Champlain canals.

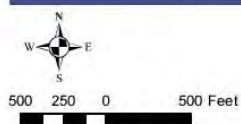
D. Water-dependent and Water-enhanced Uses

New York State Department of Coastal Resources defines water-dependent uses as “an activity which can only be conducted on, in, over or adjacent to a water body because such activity requires direct access to that water body, and which involves, as an integral part of such activity, the use of the water”. Similarly, water-enhanced uses are defined as “an activity which does not require a location adjacent to coastal waters, but whose location on the waterfront adds to the public use and enjoyment of the water's edge”. Currently, Mechanicville contains only one water-dependent use: the City Dock on Terminal Street. However, the City does contain several important water-enhanced uses, including several recreational facilities (discussed previously), community-service organizations, and a lodging facility on Ferry Street. These facilities could benefit in some way from the proximity to the waterfront, although not every feature currently takes full advantage of this benefit. Both the water-dependent and water-enhanced uses are noted on Map 3.

In general, the waterfront in Mechanicville has a significant untapped potential for water-dependent or water-enhanced uses, especially along the Hudson River. The proximity of the commercial uses on Main Street to both waterfronts could prove to be a potential advantage for certain commercial uses. Examples include restaurants with outdoor patios facing the water, or water-side services, such as canoe and boat rental, which can be located behind the businesses along Main Street.



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**City of Mechanicville
Downtown and Waterfront Revitalization Plan
Water-Dependent and Water-Enhanced Uses
MAP 4**

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E. Existing Zoning

A community's zoning ordinance is often the most important tool available to regulate land use. As such, an understanding of where the zoning districts are located, as well as the uses allowed in each zone, is important to understand how the land uses in the study area are regulated. Additionally, to promote water-enhanced and water-dependent uses, it is critical to ensure they are allowed by zoning.

There are four zoning districts located within the study area: Heavy Industrial (HI), Light Industrial (LI), General Commercial (GC), and Residential (R). These zones are shown on Map 4. As seen on the map, the majority of land in the study area is zoned residentially. The breakdown of areas devoted to each zone in the study area, as well as the allowable uses, is shown in Table 1.

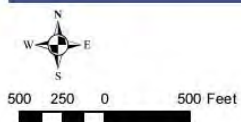
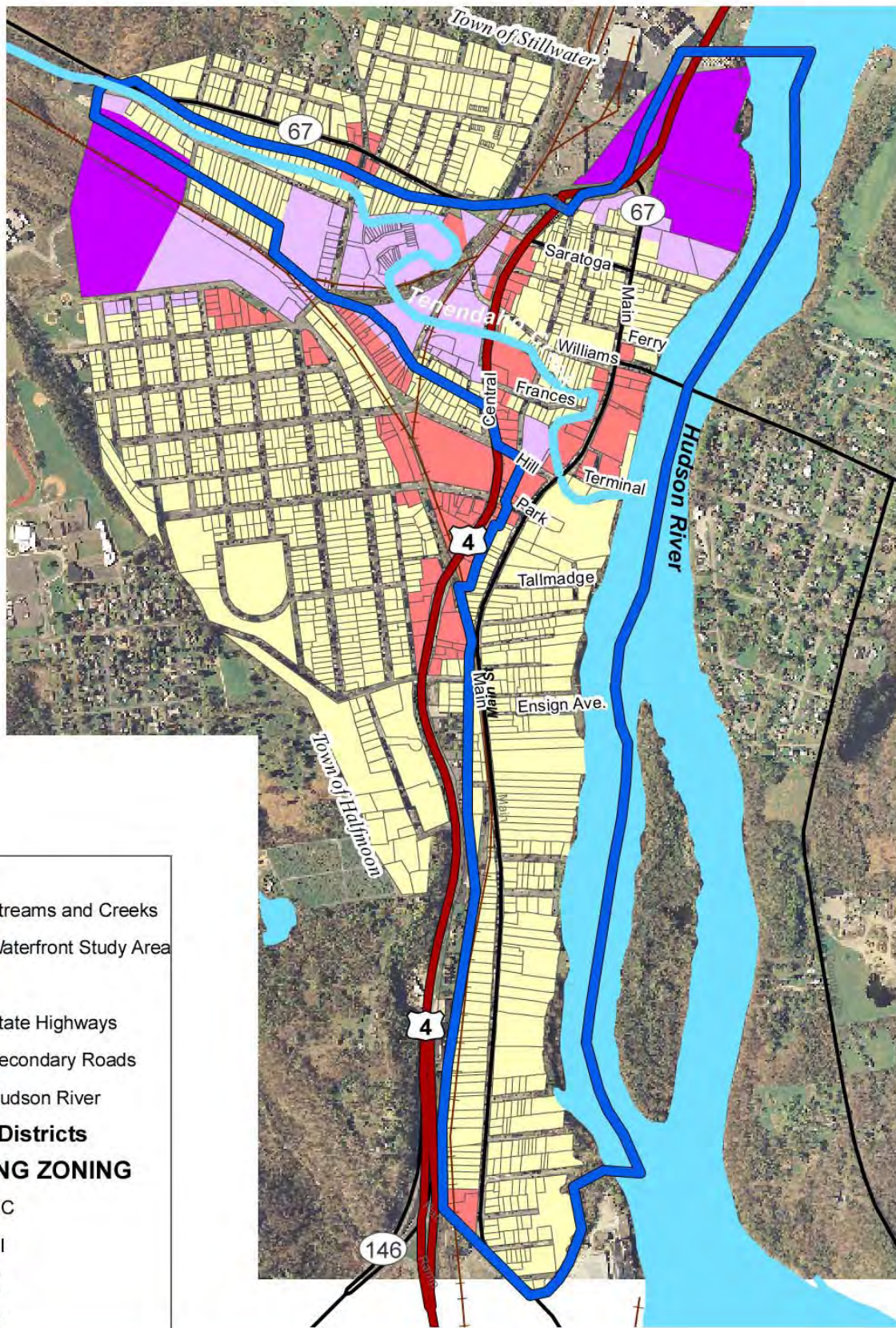
In general, the uses allowed under zoning are neutral regarding water-dependent and water-enhanced uses; the ordinance neither encourages nor prohibits these uses. The location of zones in the study area limits the amount of commercial uses which can take advantage of a waterside location. For example, the General Commercial zone along the Hudson is constrained to the area between Ferry and Terminal Streets. However, the GC zone along the west side of Main Street extends further south, to Post Office Alley. In addition, the Land Use Map indicates that there are some commercial uses located along the river which are not contained in the GC zone. Extending the a commercial zone along the river, either north and south of the current zone (or both) may provide more opportunity for water-dependent and –enhanced uses, without impacting existing residential neighborhoods.

In addition, the zoning ordinance is generally outdated; the ordinance was adopted in 1968 and has been updated only in piecemeal fashion since that time. Many revisions to the zoning are reflected only in the minutes from the City Council and were never recorded on the official zoning map or codebook. New York State Law has also changed significantly in the decades since the zoning was adopted, leaving many provisions in Mechanicville's code out of compliance with State Law. Most importantly, a disorganized and confusing ordinance can pose a hindrance to development. Although the City has always taken a flexible, common-sense approach to development approvals, there are ways that Mechanicville can both strengthen and streamline its zoning processes which will make it easier for developers to know exactly what is expected before proposing a project.

Table 1: Zoning Districts			
Zone	Acres	Allowed Uses	Special Use Permit Uses
R	106.6	One- and two-family dwellings Public school and Private school Park and recreation facility Municipal operated facility Church; Rectory, convent, and similar religious building Private non-profit facility Agriculture and gardening (excluding sale of products on-site)	Farmstand Utility substation Membership club Nursery school Hospital Real estate office Cemetery Multi-family dwellings Nursing home Museum

			Art gallery Public library Funeral home Mobile home
GC	12.8	One- and two-family dwellings Public school and Private school Park and recreation facility Municipal operated facility Church; Rectory, convent, and similar religious building Private non-profit facility Agriculture and gardening (excluding sale of products on-site) Retail Store Professional, banking, or business office Eating and drinking establishments Personal service establishments Utility substation Veterinary hospital Parking lot Gas station Automotive sales and service Business school Funeral home Commercial recreation facility Membership club Motel/Hotel	Two-family dwelling Multi-family dwellings Dry cleaning and Laundromat Hospital Nursing home Nursery school Cemetery Open storage area Fuel storage area
LI	22.9	Industrial and manufacturing uses including construction, assembly, packaging, and warehousing operations Uses permitted in commercial zones, excluding residential uses Railroad uses Truck terminals Warehousing	Junkyard

HI	18.9	<p>All uses not otherwise prohibited, excluding residential uses</p> <p>Junkyards</p> <p>Auto wrecking yards</p> <p>Scrap iron, paper, or rag storage, sorting, or baling</p>	<p>Manufacture of: Acid; Alcohol; Ammonia bleaching powder, or chlorine; Animal black, lampblack, or bone black; Carbon; Celluloid; Fertilizer; Glucose; Glue, size, or gelatin; Insecticide</p> <p>Abattoir</p> <p>Acetylene gas manufacture or storage</p> <p>Ammunition, explosives, fireworks, or gunpowder manufacture or storage</p> <p>Bone distillation</p> <p>Coal distillation</p> <p>Coke ovens</p> <p>Dead animal or offal reduction</p> <p>Fat rendering</p> <p>Hog farm</p> <p>Pickles, sauerkraut or vinegar processing</p> <p>Reduction, canning, processing or treatment of fish products</p> <p>Smelting of tin, copper, zinc, or iron ores</p> <p>Stockyards</p> <p>Stone quarry, mill, or crusher</p> <p>Tar distillation or manufacture</p> <p>Yeast plant</p>
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**City of Mechanicville
Downtown and Waterfront Revitalization Plan
Existing Zoning
MAP 4**

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F. Land Ownership Patterns

To gain a more thorough understanding of the potential opportunities available for the waterfront study area, publicly-owned lands and vacant parcels were mapped. As can be seen in Map 5, there are several publicly owned lands within and adjacent to the study area. In addition, vacant parcels are located throughout the study area, especially along Main Street in the northern and southern ends of the study area.

These parcels represent potential opportunities for projects to be located, or for connections between water-dependent uses. This potential exists for both public and private redevelopment. For example, there is concentration of vacant parcels in the southern end of the study area, adjacent to the City-maintained South Main Street Playground. This proximity to a public use could be an opportunity for this public facility to be expanded to include greater interaction with the River. This opportunity also exists in the Tenendaho estates along the creek.

There are also opportunities for private redevelopment, especially in the commercial area on the east side of Main Street, and at the northern tip of the study area. These areas have direct waterfront access, which is a valuable commodity for many types of commercial and mixed-use development.

These patterns of land ownership represent a variety of opportunities for waterfront and downtown development, either in the public or private sector. In particular, the vacant parcels should be considered for private redevelopment, if possible, as a way to keep the land in the tax rolls. Lands already owned by public agencies are prime for consideration for public recreation or other amenities and improvements.

G. Historic and Scenic Resources

The local historic resources in the City represent the community's rich and varied past. In addition, Mechanicville contains one listing on the state or national Register of Historic Places, the Col. Elmer E. Ellsworth Monument and Grave, in the Hudson View Cemetery. This historic resource is not located in the study area. Another nearby designated historic resource is the Champlain Canal, which extends both north and south of the City, although no officially designated portions of the canal are located within Mechanicville. Locally important historic resources not directly related to the waterfront include the XO Tower along the CSX rail line. Within or adjacent to the study area, locally important cultural and historic resources include:

- Scenic Route 4. Central Avenue in the City of Mechanicville is also designated as a National Scenic Byway (known locally as Scenic Route 4). There is currently an effort underway to shift the scenic designation of this portion of the Lakes-to-



of the scenic route through downtown. The City has passed a resolution to this effect, and the re-designation has been noted in the most recent corridor management plan prepared by Lakes to Locks.

- **First Methodist Church.** This church, built in 1884, is located on Main Street. The distinctive yellow brick edifice is an integral part of the streetscape and an important community amenity. The church is located across Main Street from the vacant school building and is diagonally across from Terminal Street and City Hall.
- **St. Luke's/Arts Center on the Hudson.** This church building is located adjacent to the vacant elementary school, at the foot of Park St. The church, which has been vacant since 2002, recently became the home to the Arts Center on the Hudson. The church, which was extensively remodeled, now has seating for about 340 people and will offer a variety of arts functions in conjunction with the neighboring Spatial Dynamics center.
- **The Dutch Gap.** This unusual railway underpass, located next to South Main Street, opened in 1871. At the time the tracks were laid in the 1850's, the road crossing was at grade and many accidents occurred, making it a dangerous crossing. Interestingly, the underpass was named after a Civil War strategy used by the Union army in Richmond, Virginia. The forces avoided a dangerous Oxbow in the James River by digging a channel across the narrow neck of land, making the journey twelve miles shorter and much safer. The underpass was named after this feat, given that the danger posed by the railroad was avoided by tunneling the road out from underneath the tracks.
- **Assumption/St. Paul's Church.** This church was built in the 1850's and expanded in 1919. Located opposite Ferry Street, the front steps of the old church afford a great view of the river. The façade of the original structure is another important feature along the streetscape.
- **City Hall.** This structure was built in 1914, and originally housed the Fire Department on the first floor. Located at the intersection of Terminal and Main Streets, the façade adds an attractive civic element to the streetscape, highlighted by the landscape plantings and benches located in the front.
- **Italian Fraternal Hall.** This building, located near the Tenendaho Creek on Viall Avenue, was established in 1899 as a mutual aid society for the many Italian immigrants living in the City at the time. This Italian heritage became an important part of Mechanicville and the Fraternal Hall stands as a testament of that history.
- **Welcome Clock.** This clock and welcome area was designed by Sam Carabis and built in 2001. This feature is an important gateway to Main Street and the downtown/waterfront area.

There are also several existing and potential scenic views in the Study Area. These include views of the River from Decrescente Park, the Senior Center, across the Howland Avenue bridge, from the City Dock, and from Paul Luther Park. In addition, there are potential views at the termini of several streets which are perpendicular to the River. Although most of these streets are largely residential, the potential for views of the water could be seen as an added benefit to these homes.



View from behind Senior Center

These historic and visual resources make up a large part of the charm and character of Mechanicville. As such, efforts should be made to highlight and promote these features in the development of a physical enhancement plan. In addition, the design of other improvements should build on the strong cultural fabric of the City, whether or not the proposed projects are located near or on these historic features. This will create a framework of contemporary and historic elements which work together to celebrate the culture and character of Mechanicville.

H. Natural Resources, Water Quality, and Environmental Constraints

As an urban community, the natural resources in Mechanicville's waterfront study area are limited. There are no significant land or water habitats or endangered species in the study area. The waterfront does contain some areas of floodplain, as shown on Map 6. Since the City participates in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP), development within floodplains must be built consistent with the NFIP and NYSDEC guidelines. The floodplain areas in the south of the study area also contain hydric soils, and could be considered wetlands, although no specific wetland designation has yet been mapped by the NYSDEC. This area floods frequently; any construction in this area must take into account the likelihood of inundation.

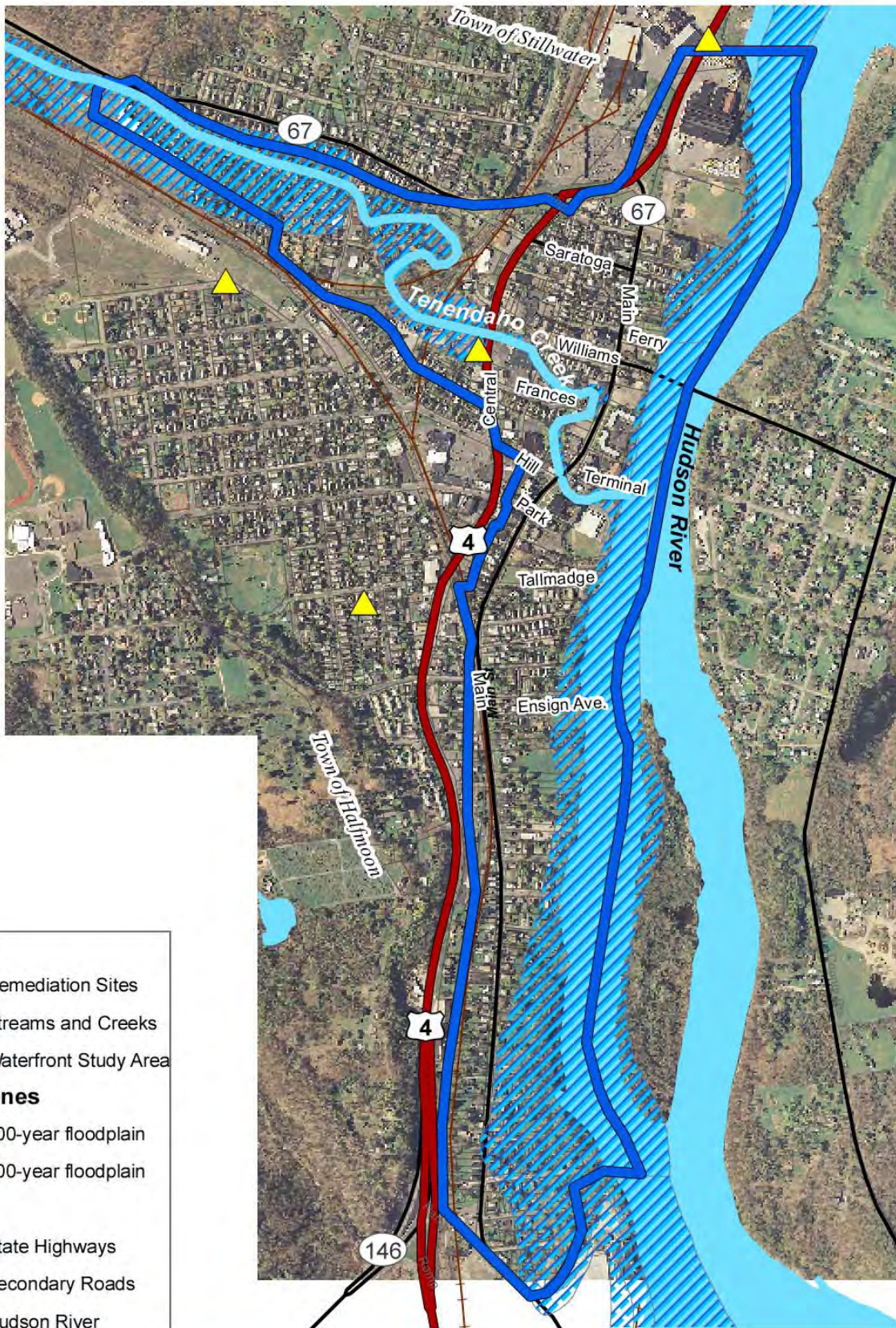
Wetlands behind Paul Luther Park.



Mechanicville's waterfront is largely developed, and was historically important to several mills and industries. As in many former industrial areas along the upper Hudson River, both land and water resources became polluted. In Mechanicville, the Hudson River is listed as an impaired waterbody, due to PCB contamination. This contamination has resulted in restrictions on fish consumption, as well as threats to local water supply, especially as dredging begins in northern portions of the river. In particular, there is a "hotspot" near the southern end of the study area, where polluted siltation has collected near the shore. The Tenendaho Creek, which is listed as the Anthony Kill, also has minor impacts. These impacts, caused by pathogens from a combined sewer overflow and urban runoff, can sometimes discourage recreational use of the creek. These impairments and impacts could pose limits to the ranges of uses of the waterfront in the City.

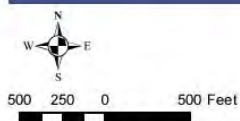
In addition to water quality, some land resources have constraints due to contamination. The Waterfront Study Area contains a Class 2 Superfund Site, located on Central Avenue adjacent to the creek. The designation Class 2 indicates that the disposal of hazardous waste has been confirmed and the presence of such hazardous waste represent a significant threat to the environment or to health.

This site, a former New York State Electric and Gas facility, is undergoing current monitoring and remediation. The site was partially remediated in 1999, with the removal of a relief gas holder, which leached pollutants into the soil, groundwater, and creek. However, contaminated soil remains on the site, which poses a direct health hazard, and the contaminants continue to impair groundwater quality. Impacts to the creek are mainly visual and do not pose significant health hazards. The remediation effort is slated for completion within the next year or two.



**City of Mechanicville
Downtown and Waterfront Revitalization Plan
Natural Resources and Constraints
MAP 6**

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Another remediation site is the former Boilerhouse Property, located just north of the study area in the Town of Stillwater. This property, which was remediated under the Environmental Restoration Program, had contaminated soils from petroleum and chemical storage on site. This site has largely been remediated and contaminated soil has been removed, so it should not pose any constraints on uses in the study area.

The natural resources and environmental constraints in the study area may influence and limit the kinds of projects which can be proposed in certain areas. In particular, the flooding and wetlands in the southern portion of the study area poses difficulties for construction. In addition, the hotspot in this area may restrict direct access to the waterfront.

I. Public Input Summary

The following issues and opportunities were identified during the Public Workshop session for the Waterfront Revitalization Plan, held on June 25th, 2008. This workshop was attended by about two dozen residents, and was hosted to collect input on issues specific to the waterfront and downtown. This input was used to create the Vision Statement, and also influenced the selection and identification of projects for the Physical Enhancement Plan. In general, participants focused on the role of the waterfront and downtown in the community as a whole, as well as the importance of the heritage of Mechanicville in the image of the City.

The issues discussed are paraphrased below, and have been grouped together according to general themes which were repeated by the participants over the course of the evening. The ideas have also been consolidated to minimize repetition.

History/Heritage

- Reflect history and where we came from
- Lineage of community should be evident in the built environment
- Maintain and old atmosphere, but updated
- Reuse old facades
- Avoid tearing down valuable buildings
- Need an iconic image of the heritage

Center for residential community

- Need an identity or slogan
- Surrounding communities (Halfmoon, Stillwater) have no sense of community or downtown and could look to Mechanicville to fill this role
- Position City as a place to buy and rehab older homes
- Make sure infrastructure is good in neighborhoods
- City is not viable as an employment center - more of a bedroom community where businesses survive from strength of neighborhoods.
- Community is such that you can “get your arms around it”. People may want to move here for the small town atmosphere.
- Children are leaving – would like them to stay, even without employment. No perceived reason to stay, need to market to this demographic.

- Large population of seniors – build on this asset

Downtown amenities

- Downtown features smaller stores and services - doctors/dentists, medical stores, beauty parlors, restaurants.
- Park Street could be closed to vehicular traffic.
- Update and enhance the downtown – build on existing strengths
- Large majority of senior citizens. Accessibility is important.
- With the energy crisis, more bikes and pedestrians will need accommodation
- Some people want bigger stores so they don't have to leave the City to shop.
- Need a large feature, not necessarily a big box store, but some draw that's not the same as every other town – a Hotel/Conference Center, for instance.
- We want a parking problem downtown - it's good to have people to fight over this place.
- Also need a gathering point for people to visit downtown, like a Museum.

Waterfront amenities

- Dock can be expanded, and the link to Main Street could be strengthened as well.
- We could expand the services for boaters – ice cream or concessions, transportation to downtown services.
- A Beach or city pool would be a good water activity.
- A Marina would allow bigger ships to come – if possible given depth of River.
- Active places are good, but also want a pleasant area on waterfront, shady and comfortable, peaceful, to be able to relax and listen to water.
- Parks and public places should accommodate children. Not just young kids, also teens – they need something constructive to do, a place to gather.
- Water in creek doesn't seem clean. Perhaps City could set an example - the “clean water city”.
- Provide a bridge from City Dock across Anthony Kill would open up area behind school for everyone to enjoy. May need some restrictions on hours of operation since it is private property.
- A barge restaurant is a good draw for the waterfront too.

III. Vision Statement

Mechanicville's vision for the waterfront and downtown starts with an active community. Residents and visitors walk easily between shops, services, the waterfront, and the neighborhoods. The shop fronts downtown are occupied by a mix of local craftspeople, restaurants, and service-oriented businesses. There is something for everyone – families, seniors, teens, and young children have an array of activities at their disposal. People from surrounding communities like Halfmoon and Stillwater come downtown to patronize businesses, enjoy the nightlife, or take part in community events. The waterfront provides opportunities for local businesses to take advantage of the proximity to the River and creek. These downtown businesses are complemented and supported by other commercial types nearby, especially along Central Avenue.

The built environment of the waterfront and downtown reflect Mechanicville's strong historic heritage. This includes local history and events, as well as the community's role in the regional heritage of the Hudson River and Champlain Canal. Opportunities to interpret this heritage are readily available and add to the enjoyment of the waterfront and downtown. The streetscape, building design, and public amenities all work together visually to strengthen the identity of the community, with the City Dock as the centerpiece. The downtown is equally accessible by walking, cycling, or driving. The core downtown environment is attractive and welcoming, highlighted by public art. Physical links to the waterfront are located throughout the downtown and community.

Moving outward from the downtown, the waterfront offers varied forms of recreation and enjoyment. Residents and visitors alike can enjoy many activities which depend on the water, or are enhanced by views of the River and creek. Playgrounds, sports equipment, boat launches, and other amenities are plentiful and well-maintained. There are also areas for relaxation, quiet places to sit and enjoy the river. These add to the value of the neighborhoods and the community as a whole, making Mechanicville an even more desirable place to live.

The creek and river shore are able to support a healthy ecology and are an asset to the community. Civic groups, business owners, neighborhoods, and public agencies work together to maintain and improve the quality of the water. The quality of the water is unaffected by commercial or industrial activity in the City. Public amenities along the shoreline work with, not against, the natural processes of the river.

IV. Goals and Recommendations

A. Guiding Principles and Goals:

The vision statement, while focused on the waterfront, actually addresses many community-wide issues and opportunities. In response, the goals of this plan are broad as well. The strategies and recommendations that follow can address how the waterfront specifically plays a role in attaining these goals. It should be noted that, although these goals are listed separately, each is interdependent with the other; all working towards the goal of revitalizing the waterfront.

Goal 1: Waterfront and Downtown.

Use the many assets provided by the River and Tenendaho Creek to create a vibrant and healthy downtown.

Goal 2: Heritage.

Maintain, enhance, and celebrate the built and cultural heritage of the City.

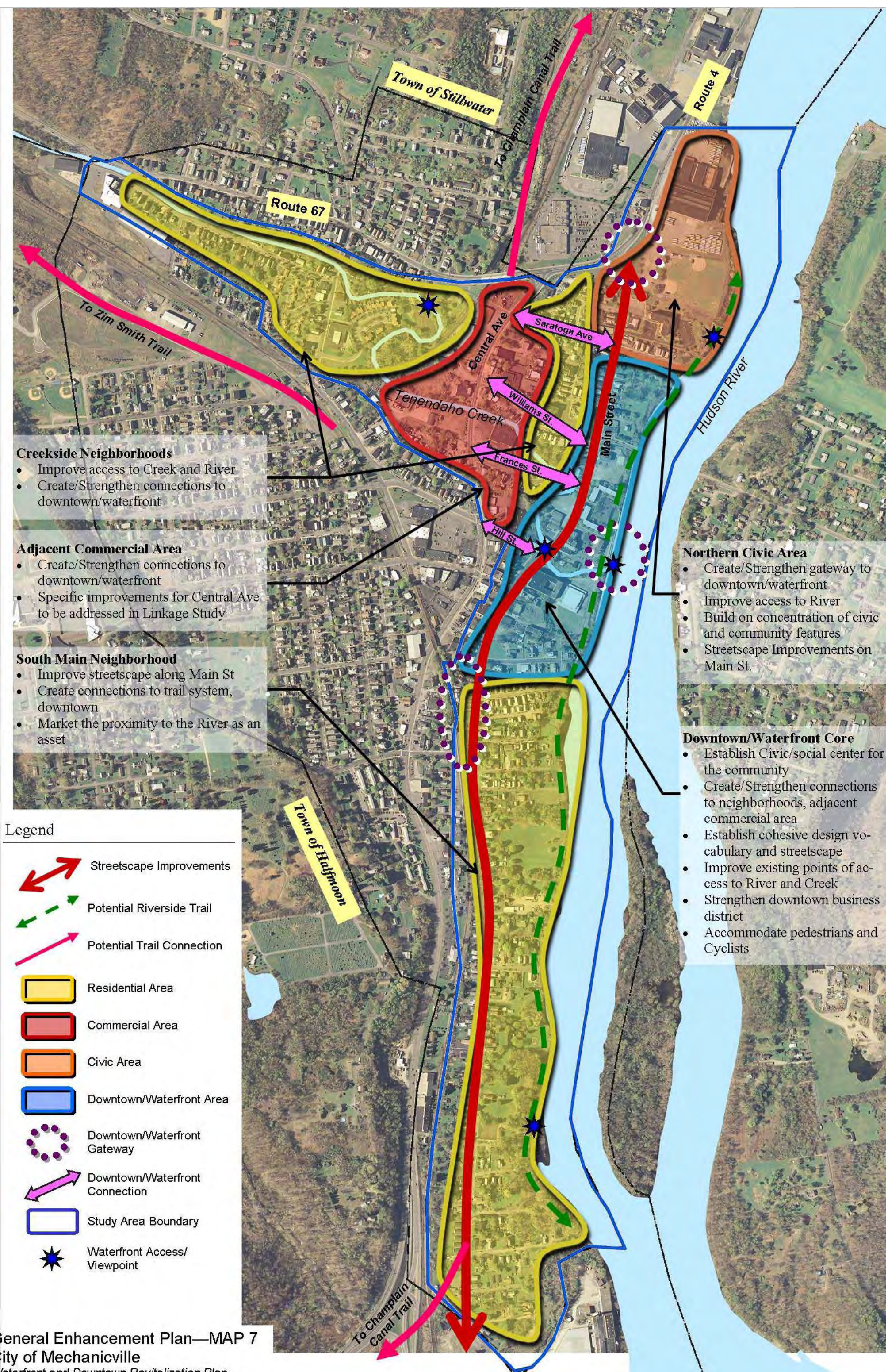
Goal 3: Neighborhoods.

Make Mechanicville a desirable place to live, for people of all ages and ensure all neighborhoods are both interconnected and connected to the waterfront.

Goal 4: Recreation and Environment.

Work to make Mechanicville a clean, green City, with ample opportunities to actively and passively enjoy the waterfront.

To achieve these goals, this plan outlines physical enhancements, zoning and land use recommendations, and strategic partnerships and collaborations the City can pursue. Addressing these categories of improvements will be the most effective means by which the City can improve its waterfront and downtown. These improvements are shown graphically on Map 7, General Enhancement Plan. This map shows the interrelationship between the ideas proposed in the plan, that, when taken as a whole, work together to revitalize the waterfront and the downtown.



Creekside Neighborhoods

- Improve access to Creek and River
- Create/Strengthen connections to downtown/waterfront

Adjacent Commercial Area

- Create/Strengthen connections to downtown/waterfront
- Specific improvements for Central Ave to be addressed in Linkage Study

South Main Neighborhood

- Improve streetscape along Main St
- Create connections to trail system, downtown
- Market the proximity to the River as an asset

Northern Civic Area

- Create/Strengthen gateway to downtown/waterfront
- Improve access to River
- Build on concentration of civic and community features
- Streetscape Improvements on Main St.

Downtown/Waterfront Core

- Establish Civic/social center for the community
- Create/Strengthen connections to neighborhoods, adjacent commercial area
- Establish cohesive design vocabulary and streetscape
- Improve existing points of access to River and Creek
- Strengthen downtown business district
- Accommodate pedestrians and Cyclists

Legend

- Streetscape Improvements
- Potential Riverside Trail
- Potential Trail Connection
- Residential Area
- Commercial Area
- Civic Area
- Downtown/Waterfront Area
- Downtown/Waterfront Gateway
- Downtown/Waterfront Connection
- Study Area Boundary
- Waterfront Access/Viewpoint

General Enhancement Plan—MAP 7
City of Mechanicville
Waterfront and Downtown Revitalization Plan

B. Physical Enhancement Plan

One of the most direct methods the City can employ to effect change in the waterfront and downtown is to improve the public spaces within the study area. Physical improvements can make an immediate and significant change in the image of a community, and can catalyze further public and private revitalization. Since these recommendations involve physical improvements, design, and construction, they also represent the most extensive and involved changes the City can make. As such, these recommendations have been crafted to target those areas which will provide the most positive benefit. This will allow the City to allocate its resources in the most efficient way possible. The plan elements address trails, gateways, streetscapes, and waterfront improvements. These elements are shown in Figure 1, Physical Enhancement Plan and explained in further detail in the following pages.

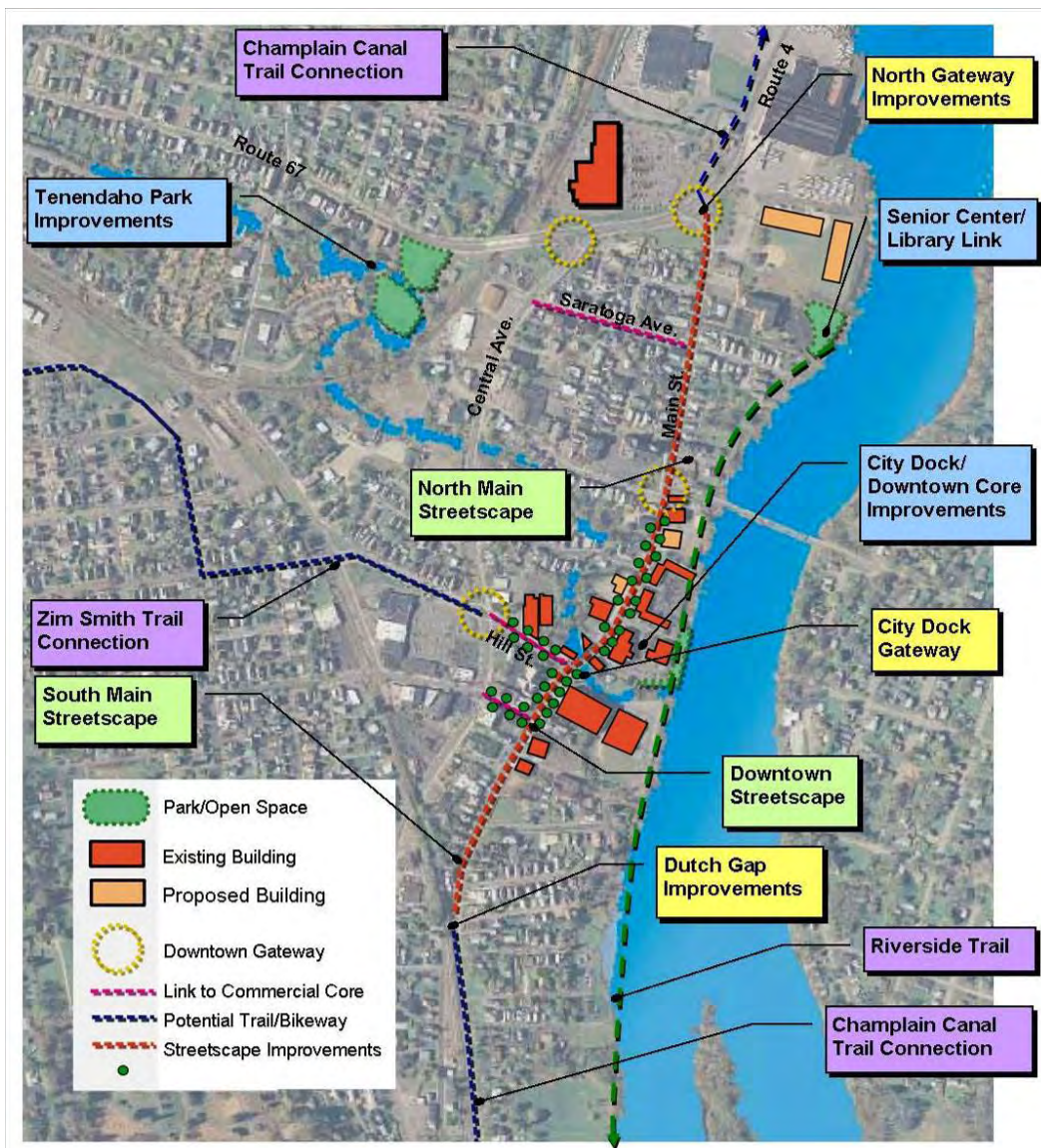


Figure 1 - Physical Enhancement Plan

City of Mechanicville
Downtown and Waterfront Revitalization Plan

1. Waterfront Improvements

As stated in the vision, the waterfront and downtown are inextricably linked in the City of Mechanicville. Due to the location at the confluence of the Hudson River and Tenendaho Creek, the downtown and surrounding areas could derive many benefits from the waterfront areas. The City can build on this location by pursuing targeted improvements to public spaces along the water. Specific projects identified for this plan include the City Dock, Senior Center Overlook, Tenendaho Park, and Downtown Creek Overlook, as located on Figure 1. As with all physical improvements proposed in this plan, these projects were selected to provide the most potential benefit while efficiently allocating City and community resources.

City Dock

The centerpiece of the City's waterfront is the City Dock. Located behind City Hall, the dock is the main waterfront access point for the community. Since the dock is susceptible to seasonal flooding, any proposed improvements on the dock itself must be able to withstand periodic inundation. Public design workshops have revealed a desire for a comfort station, improved pedestrian access, and a greater flexibility for uses in the space.



Figure 2 – City Dock concept plan

The most significant improvement recommended is to construct a visitor center/comfort station at the northern end of the dock. This allows the majority of the dock parking and loading areas to remain unobstructed, and also gives pedestrians a reason to walk to the northern end of the site. As the structure has the potential to become the icon for the City's waterfront, the architecture should be high-quality and distinctive. A widow's walk on the roof could provide visitors and residents with a better view of the river, and provide another interesting feature for the structure. Since the entire dock area is subject to flooding, the building will need to be

elevated at least a few feet above the current level of the dock. To accommodate handicapped access, a system of ramps will also need to be constructed. It is recommended that the ramp system be designed

as an integral part of the proposed structure, and also to take advantage of the linear site configuration. In addition to the comfort station, the proposed plan calls for tree and landscape plantings along the Dock. Flood-resistant shade trees could provide some measure of relief from the sun for people sitting along the Dock and create a more attractive and inviting setting.

To further improve connections between the Dock and downtown, pedestrian improvements are proposed between Terminal Street and River Street. This area currently features wide expanses of asphalt pavement in varying conditions. The lack of pedestrian amenities makes this an uncomfortable place to walk. However, this area could serve as a vital link between the proposed comfort station and Terminal Street. To address the needs of pedestrians, a variety of elements are proposed. A dedicated walkway could be constructed flush with the existing grade. This walkway, which could be constructed of concrete, concrete pavers, or stamped asphalt, would provide visual separation between pedestrian and vehicular areas without compromising the width of the right of way or changing the existing drainage patterns. In addition, pedestrian-scaled lighting and landscape plantings could enliven the area for both dock users and nearby residents.

In addition to these physical improvements, the City can pursue other ways add amenities to the Dock, both for residents and visitors. For instance, the City should investigate whether it is feasible for the City's bus system to add a loop which includes the Dock, or the parking area behind City Hall. This may be a function of whether the turning radii of the busses can maneuver to the Dock itself. The City can also pursue offering Wi-fi service at the dock, so that boaters and residents can access the internet from the dock. By providing a wider range of amenities, the City can encourage more people to enjoy the Dock and waterfront.

Tenendaho Park



Figure 3 – Tenendaho Park concept plan

This park is attractively located at a bend in the Tenendaho creek, and offers tranquil views of a highly naturalized riparian area within an urban core. The park was originally constructed as an amenity for the adjacent multi-family housing development but is open to all residents of the City. It features two tennis courts, a play structure, a picnic table, and is linked to Williams Street via a pedestrian bridge over the creek. This park, though well-maintained by the City, is no longer heavily used by

the residents. The park is not very accessible for use by

other residents of the City either, mainly due to lack of nearby parking and signage.

To address these concerns, the proposed design includes provision for off-street parking on Williams Street, within the public right-of-way. This will afford a wider range of access for residents, both driving along Route 67 and walking from the neighborhoods to the north. Signage for the parking lot and park should also be located at the intersection of Williams Street and Route 67. In the park itself, the focus of the plan is to improve and enhance the existing features, to make them more useable for contemporary needs. One or both of the tennis courts could be converted to basketball courts, as a way to draw more users into the park. In addition, the picnic area should be expanded to include more tables. The existing wearing patterns in the grass indicate that the picnic table does receive a fair amount of use, which suggests that additional tables and benches would benefit the park. Additional benches and picnic tables should be sited to take advantage of views of the creek. If selective vegetation clearing is necessary, it should be done in consultation with the local Soil and Water Conservation Service, to ensure no detrimental impacts to the streambanks. Sections of split-rail or other decorative fencing may be required to discourage direct access to the water, which could pose a liability for the City. Pedestrian-scaled lighting should also be included, to increase the safety and attractiveness of the park.

Senior Center Riverside Park

The City maintains a small gazebo and picnic area behind the senior center. Despite its riverside location, this area receives very little use. As part of this plan, interviews were conducted with some residents who were sitting outside the senior center, to determine their needs for this area. These residents indicated that the provision of a pleasant sitting area close to the senior center itself and the lack of a direct pedestrian connection to the gazebo served as impediments to use of the park area. In addition, interviews with Library staff



Figure 4 – Senior Center improvements

indicated that, with a proper pedestrian connection, the green space and gazebo could be integrated into children's programs sponsored by the library.

As such, the proposed plan intends to address the lack of pedestrian connection by creating a dedicated walkway to the park area. In addition, this walkway connects to the existing pedestrian network for the Library. Interviews with staff indicate that, with a safe way to walk to the park area, this riverside gazebo could be used in children's programs sponsored by the Library. As with the Tenendaho Park, selective clearing and limbing up individual trees could open up views of the water, making the area even more attractive, and more likely to be used.

2. Gateways

For the purposes of this plan, gateways into the waterfront and downtown were identified. These serve as the first and last impression of the study area, as well as signifying a sense of arrival into the community as a whole. The location of these gateways is dictated by a sense of arrival, which may be influenced by physical landmarks such as intersections, views, or buildings.

Three gateways were identified in this study: the intersection of Main Street and Route 4, the City Dock, and the Dutch Gap. Each was examined to determine what measures could be taken to enhance the sense of arrival and create the most positive impression possible. The proposed site designs which follow were intended to achieve these objectives with small-scale projects which would be feasible for the City to undertake.

City Dock Gateway

Figure 5 – Existing (top) and proposed (Bottom) City Dock Gateway



The entrance to the City Dock has been much-discussed throughout the downtown revitalization process, starting with the public charettes held for the Downtown Grants Program. This gateway works in both directions: to the dock from Main Street, and from the water to Main Street for boaters using the dock. The entrance to the dock from Main Street is very narrow and has inadequate signage to alert motorists and pedestrians to the location of the Dock. The Dock is perhaps the most important feature of Mechanicville's waterfront. It is vital that visitors and residents have adequate way-finding to and from the Dock, so that it becomes the centerpiece of the downtown waterfront.

One idea, previously identified in the Downtown Grants Program, would be to build an arch over Terminal Street. This would enhance the gateway, and the City should continue to consider this a viable option as a gateway improvement. However, this treatment may be costly to implement, and may not increase the overall visibility of the gateway to motorists, due to the geometry of Main Street. An alternate gateway treatment would be to hang large banners at the entrance to Terminal Street. This is a low-cost solution, which could be implemented by itself or in conjunction with the archway treatment. The banners would add color and vibrancy to the intersection of Terminal and Main Streets, and could be coordinated with the

existing municipal heritage flags. In addition, the retaining wall in front of City Hall provides an opportunity to add a gateway element which would be visible to motorist driving north on Main Street. These banners could also build on the City's efforts to secure a Greenway grant for historic directional

signage at this intersection. If the sign project is funded, the banners could be used as temporary signs as well, for specific events.

Just south of the entrance to the City Dock, there is an attractive bridge over the Tenendaho Creek. The bridge is topped by a chain link fence which detracts from views of the Tenendaho and does not encourage pedestrians to enjoy the creek. To capture this area and integrate it into the downtown setting, the City should replace the chain link fencing on the bridge over the creek with a more decorative fence.

A decorative fence, tall enough to ensure safety, would enhance this gateway to the waterfront. This area also provides an opportunity for a mosaic celebrating the waterfront, either on the blank wall on City Hall, or along the creek itself, as in Figure 5.



Figure 6 – Existing (left) and proposed (right) creek treatments

Route 4 & 67/Main Street

Currently, this area contains a well-designed gateway treatment, with two “Welcome to Mechanicville” signs and a verdigris clock. The signs and clock are high quality, and located on a small strip of land at the confluence of Main Street and Route 4 and 67, across from the Price Chopper. Unfortunately, given the topography of the area, it is difficult to see the low signs from the vantage point of a car. The color scheme and materials used on the signs also contributes to the low visibility of the gateway. Although the gold and maroon of the signs complements the brick pillars, this scheme lacks contrast. This is further exacerbated by the dark vegetation behind the signs and clock.

The proposed gateway treatment involves adding more seasonal color and visual contrast for the signs. Light-colored flowers and grasses would draw the eye to the signs. In addition, the lettering of the signs could be changed to white. This simple change would drastically improve the level of contrast on the signs and would make them much more visible to passing motorists. A vertical element, such as ornamental trees, should be planted



Figure 7 – Existing (top) and proposed (bottom) gateway treatments

behind the signs. The colorful blooms or foliage would create an attractive backdrop to the signs and clock.

In the long term, a master plan for this area should be conducted, similar to that which was developed three years ago. This master plan should be coordinated with any development projects which may be proposed on the DeCrescente Fields site adjacent to the gateway.

Dutch Gap

The southern gateway to the downtown/waterfront area lies along the railroad abutment near the Dutch Gap. This area serves as a linear gateway for those traveling north along Main Street, as well as a more traditional gateway for those going under the gap from Ellsworth Ave. The City has already begun a series of low-cost improvements to this area, by cleaning out overgrown vegetation and litter from beneath the gap. Continuing in that vein, the City should pursue improvements to the face of the concrete abutment, to repair the spalling on the face of the wall. In addition, spreading wildflower seeds along the vegetated strip along the railroad would provide color and interest to the top of the wall, and would require no additional maintenance above that which is already provided by the railroad. This gateway treatment would provide a visually interesting transition between the proposed streetscape along South Main Street and the downtown area. For more information on proposed streetscape improvements, see Section 4, Streetscape Improvements.



Figure 8 – Existing gateway (top) and proposed treatment (bottom)

3. Trails

As shown in Figure 1, there are several regional trail connections proposed. This will allow the City to be a part of the regional network of bikeways and pedestrian trails currently being expanded by other agencies. The goal in fostering these connections should be to strengthen links to and from the downtown and waterfront and to connect Mechanicville to this regional network of trails. Due to its position at the confluence of several trail systems, the City can serve as a hub for trail users, by providing services such as lodging, restaurants, and ATMs. These trails can also be an amenity to local residents. The proposed connections are outlined below.



Figure 9 - Portion of the Zim Smith trail in Round Lake

The Zim Smith trail currently terminates just to the west of Mechanicville, at Coons Crossing in the Town of Halfmoon. It is proposed to bring the trail into Mechanicville via Elizabeth Street, then connect to Main Street downtown and the waterfront via Mabbett/Hill Streets. This would be an on-road trail connection, in the form of a bike lane or other urban trail system.

The Champlain Canal Trail currently terminates in the Village of Waterford to the south. The proposed connection to the City of Mechanicville would be to bring the trail past the sewer treatment plant, crossing Route 4 at the intersection of Route 4 and South Main Street. The trail would then continue north as an on-road bike lane along South Main Street through the City,

converging with the Zim Smith Trail near City Hall. At the terminus of Main Street, the Trail could continue north out of the City along Route 4, re-joining the Canal bed about $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile north, at the end of Mitchell Road in the Town of Stillwater. This alignment would eliminate the need for an additional at-grade crossing of the railroad.

In addition to these trail connections, the City should pursue a Riverside Trail along the Hudson. This would be a long-term goal, as this project would require the acquisition of easements from private property owners. If a phased approach is taken, the first priority should be to create a trail between the City Dock and the Senior Center. This short stretch would greatly increase the access to the waterfront and would be an amenity for both residents and business owners. This trail could then be gradually expanded to the south, terminating at Paul Luther Park, again contingent on the willingness of property owners to grant easements. This southern section of the trail would be more of a local amenity for nearby residents. However, as projects such as AMD are pursued regionally, young workers will be seeking places like Mechanicville, which have an authentic downtown, neighborhood feel, and a wide array of recreational amenities. Providing trails of this sort will advertise the high quality of life currently enjoyed by residents.

4. Streetscape Improvements

In addition to physical improvements at the gateways and waterfront, this plan proposes a range of improvements for the streetscape along Main Street. A streetscape is comprised of the elements within and along a street that define its character and functionality, including, street furniture, landscaping, trees, sidewalks, and pavement treatments. Main Street is the primary transportation and commercial spine for the study area. For the purposes of this plan, the street was divided into three sections; a different streetscape treatment was proposed for each. The elements proposed in each section were selected based both on the existing look and feel of Main Street, as well as the role the street should play in each area. These are described in greater detail below.

North Main Street

This area, between the intersection of Route 4/67 and Main Street and the Route 67 bridge over the Hudson, is characterized by a mix of residential homes and civic uses. Many of the structures are set 10-15' or more back from the street. There are sidewalks and curbs on both sides. However, the curbs in many places are sunken into the street pavement. Since the curbs are so low, and there is no striping to indicate on-street parking, motorists have taken to pulling up on to the sidewalk to park their cars. This significantly detracts from the pedestrian usability of the sidewalks, as well as the general appearance of the street. In addition, the sidewalks are cluttered with utility poles and overhanging vegetation, reducing the useable pavement width for pedestrians even further.

To address these issues, and to create a lively and safe streetscape, replacing the sidewalk and curb to prevent cars pulling up on to the sidewalk. This phenomenon appears to be due to a perception that the road is not wide enough to accommodate on-street parking. The roadway pavement width may be sufficient to allow on-street parking without widening the road. Striping can be added to assure motorists that on-street parking is possible and allowed without pulling on to the sidewalk. A decorative paving treatment along the sidewalk will give a visual buffer between the pedestrian area and the street. This paving treatment can also be coordinated with decorative tree grates. The combination of functional and decorative elements will greatly improve the look and feel of the roadway in this section.

In addition, the City should work to bury the overhead wires. This will accomplish several goals. First, the utility poles which obstruct the sidewalks will be eliminated. In addition, the lack of overhead wires will add to a neater, cleaner appearance for Main



Figure 10 – Existing streetscape (top) and proposed improvements (bottom)



Street, and will allow for unrestricted tree plantings, which may have otherwise interfered with the wires.

Downtown Core

The downtown core streetscape encompasses Main Street between Williams Street and Tallmadge Place. This section is characterized by a traditional commercial development pattern, with 2-3 story buildings located at or near the back edge of the sidewalk. Over the years, however, buildings have been removed, and/or reconstructed with parking in front of the building. This has created gaps in the streetscape. If this pattern continues, it could have a detrimental impact on the form and function of this section of Main Street. For a more detailed discussion of how the City can work to maintain appropriate development patterns, see section B of this report, Zoning and Land Use.

In terms of the downtown streetscape, the proposed recommendations are intended to foster an attractive environment that encourages people to spend time downtown. To achieve this, a decorative paving treatment is proposed, similar to North Main Street. As the street trees fail and are replaced, it is recommended that a tree with a more columnar canopy is selected, such as the Littleleaf Lindens shown in Figure 11. This will prevent foliage from spreading into the building facades, and will promote a neater appearance and easier maintenance. Pedestrian light fixtures should also be installed to coordinate with those existing along Park Street. Using the same light fixture will promote a unified design vocabulary throughout the City's commercial areas and downtown, creating a unified sense of place. The City should also introduce seasonal color into the streetscape with the use of hanging baskets or planters. Although these planters require regular maintenance, it may be possible to pursue a partnership with a local agency, such as the Chamber of Commerce, to engage in the upkeep of these annual flower displays. As with all seasonal plantings, the displays must be of sufficient size, and must receive adequate maintenance, to achieve the intended visual impact.

In addition, the City has expressed interest in researching the feasibility of angled on-street parking, especially in front of City Hall. This would alleviate parking demand in an area with potentially sufficient roadway width to accommodate such a design. This issue would need to be studied further to determine if angled parking is safe in this area; the City should pursue discussions with the Department of Transportation and/or traffic engineers to determine what issues need to be addressed, such as roadway geometry, sight distance, and vehicle speed.



Figure 11 – Existing and proposed downtown core streetscape treatments

South Main Street

The streetscape in this area, between Tallmadge Place and the southern city boundary, is largely residential in character. The east side of the roadway is dominated by residential homes. The railroad runs alongside the western side of the street for a significant portion of this section. There are sidewalks along both sides of the road in the residential portions of the streetscape which should continue to be maintained as an amenity for residents. The recommendations involving the railroad and Dutch Gap were discussed previously in this report. In addition to the improvements proposed along the railway, the City should also pursue tree plantings within the road right-of-way, on both sides of the street. The trees should be planted near the back edge of the sidewalk, where sufficient room exists. This will add a vertical element to the streetscape, which will help visually define the roadway and give the streetscape additional character. In addition, it will create a more comfortable environment for pedestrians, and will screen traffic from the residential homes as well. This streetscape design should integrate the need for a bike lane, as discussed previously in the trail section of this report.

C. Zoning and Land Use

The City's zoning ordinance has been in place since 1968 without a comprehensive update. As such, there may be regulations in place which no longer reflect the needs of the community, and which may unintentionally create impediments to development. The City takes a flexible approach to approving development projects, which is to be commended. However, by actively updating the zoning ordinance in a comprehensive way, Mechanicville can take a more proactive role in where development occurs. The outdated zoning is an issue for most of the City, as developers must often get a zoning change prior to obtaining site plan review or a special use permit. This lengthens the approvals process and is a burden even with the flexibility offered by the City. As such, the land use provisions should be updated comprehensively, so that the ordinance works cohesively.

As part of this report, the following sub-goals were created to guide future updates to the zoning ordinance. Although these sub-goals and recommendations are designed to be able to be implemented as a stand-alone amendment, it is recommended that the changes to the zoning take place as part of an overall rewrite of the ordinance.

Zoning Goals for the Study Area:

- Encourage water-dependent and water-enhanced uses along the waterfront
- Create a mix of uses which furthers the vision for a vibrant downtown along Main Street
- Eliminate as many conflicts with existing land uses as possible (commercial uses in residential zones, etc.)
- Encourage physical development which is visually pleasing and contributes to the function of the downtown and waterfront
- Reduce unnecessary administrative burdens in the zoning and land use regulations

Zoning Recommendations:

1. Re-zone portions of the study area to include Waterfront Mixed Use (WMU) and Waterfront Commercial (WC) zones.

As stated in the inventory, there are currently areas within the study area where the current land use conflicts with the zoning designation. In addition, there may be uses and regulations which could encourage waterfront development which were not included in the current ordinance.

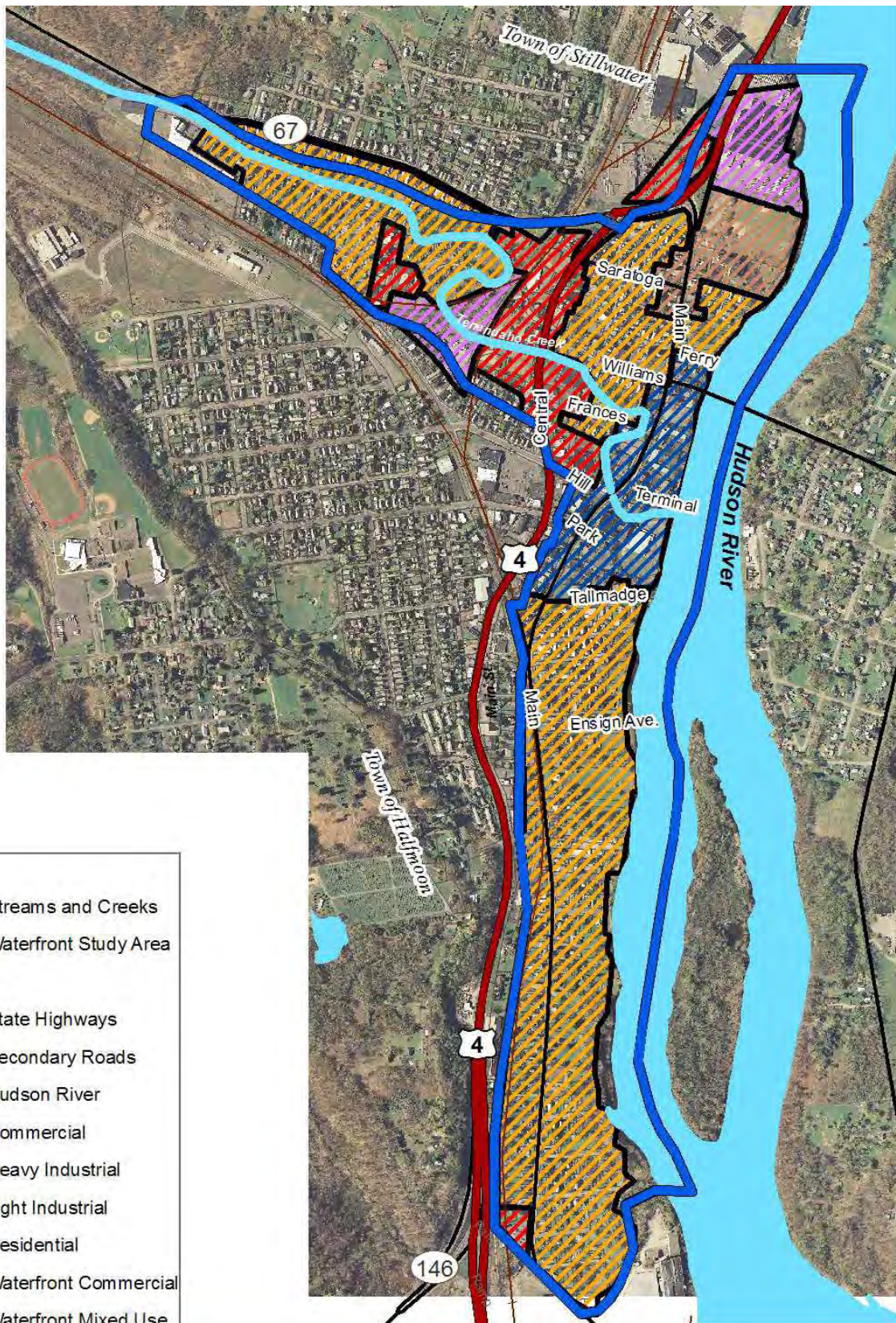
To address these issues, the Waterfront Mixed Use and Waterfront Commercial zones are recommended in the areas shown in Map 8. These areas were identified to rectify existing conflicts between commercial and residential land uses and zoning.

The Waterfront Mixed Use zone is intended to provide a traditional mix of urban uses, combined with water-dependent and water-enhanced uses which would benefit from the proximity to the Hudson. Conversely, the Waterfront Commercial zone is intended to allow a combination of intensive commercial uses as well as water-dependent and water-enhanced uses. This zone has less focus on mixing single-family residential uses, in favor of creating a vibrant, dense downtown.

To differentiate between the two areas, the following list of uses is recommended.

Proposed Commercial Zoning District Uses	
Waterfront Commercial	Waterfront Mixed-Use
Public & Private school Park and recreation facility Municipal operated facility Church, Rectory, convent, Private non-profit facility Professional, banking, or business office Personal service establishments Veterinary hospital Business school Funeral home Commercial recreation facility Membership club Motel/Hotel Retail Store Multi-family dwellings* Dry cleaning and Laundromat* Hospital* Nursing home* Nursery school* Cemetery* Residential Uses not located on ground floor Art Gallery Sit – down Restaurants Lodging: B&B/Inn Boat Storage Boat Rental Boat Fueling facility* Marina*	Public & Private school Park and recreation facility Municipal operated facility Church, Rectory, convent, Private non-profit facility Professional, banking, or business office Personal service establishments Veterinary hospital* Business school Funeral home Commercial recreation facility Membership club Multi-family dwellings* Dry cleaning and Laundromat* Hospital* Nursing home* Nursery school* Cemetery* Art Gallery Neighborhood Retail (small) Sit – down Restaurants Lodging: B&B/Inn Boat Storage Boat Rental Marina*

* indicates use allowed by Special Permit



Legend

Streams and Creeks

Waterfront Study Area

Roads

State Highways

Secondary Roads

Hudson River

Commercial

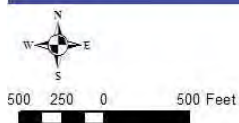
Heavy Industrial

Light Industrial

Residential

Waterfront Commercial

Waterfront Mixed Use



**City of Mechanicville
Downtown and Waterfront Revitalization Plan
Proposed Zoning
MAP 8**

This map is computer generated using data acquired by Elan Planning and Design, Inc. from various sources and is intended only for reference, conceptual planning and presentation purposes. This map is not intended for and should not be used to establish boundaries, property lines, location of objects or to provide any other information typically needed for construction or any other purpose when engineered plans or land surveys are needed.

2. Institute Design Guidelines for commercial development.

Design Guidelines or Standards are an effective way for communities to have a say in the look and feel of commercial development. These typically address issues not covered under traditional zoning: building facades, site features, landscaping, and so forth. The City of Mechanicville has already taken the first step towards improving the appearance of its downtown through the implementation of a Main Street Façade program.

In this program, building owners may receive a matching grant for improvements to the façade of the structure. To qualify, the design of the improvements is regulated by guidelines intended to achieve a cohesive, authentic appearance for the downtown.

The City can build on this progress by instituting guidelines for the features on a site, such as parking, landscaping, lighting, and pedestrian improvements. The intent is to create these guidelines for the Waterfront Mixed Use and Waterfront Commercial zones; however, this idea can be tweaked to apply to any commercial or industrial zone in the City. Within each zone, the guidelines can be mandatory, suggested, or a combination of both. Many communities find that a flexible approach works well. Using suggested guidelines allows the ideas to be applied to sites through a collaborative process between the Planning Board and the applicant.

The following table is intended as a starting point for the City to create Design Guidelines. The finished document will elaborate on each issue, specific to the conditions in the City and the goals for the zone. In addition, graphics can be added to further explain the intent of the guidelines, which is often helpful for applicants and reviewing boards alike.

Issues to be addressed	Goal by zone	
	WMU	WC
Building Placement	Buildings located with 10-15' front yard setback	Buildings located at back of sidewalk
	No parking in front of building	
Vehicle Areas	Connect between parking areas when possible	
	Limit number of entrance/exit drives	
	Entrance drives should meet NYSDOT requirements for geometry (width, turning radius, etc.)	
	Include buffers between parking areas and sidewalks	
Pedestrian areas	Include provisions for accessible pedestrian access – asphalt and concrete walkways	Connections to public sidewalks should be designed to be accessible
	Use pedestrian areas for outdoor cafes, retail displays	
	Include safe, attractive connections between parking areas and building entrances	
Lighting	Use attractive, pedestrian-scale light fixtures between 12-20' tall, depending on use	
	Use minimum light levels necessary to maintain safety	
Landscaping	Include landscape plantings in and around parking areas	
	Design planting beds with enough soil volume to maintain plant health	
	Choose appropriate plant materials: climate, location, function	
Loading & Utilities	Screen all loading and utility areas	

The goals for the zones may differ, depending on the kind of development pattern which is most suited to that zone. For instance, in a downtown, front yards are usually discouraged in favor of a traditional Main Street setting with the buildings located up to the sidewalk. However, in a more mixed-use area, it may be desirable to encourage shallow front yards, to integrate professional and light commercial uses into a more residential fabric. The issues which should be addressed in each zone are outlined below.

3. Revise zoning ordinance to allow projecting signs in WC zone.

The City currently has regulations in effect which control the size, placement, and number of signs. These requirements appear to be well suited to the needs of the community. However, a review of the language revealed that new projecting signs are not allowed, although existing signs are permitted to remain. These type of signs are usually located along storefronts, and hang perpendicular to the face of the building. This allows drivers to locate downtown businesses before they drive past the storefronts; these signs also contribute to an attractive and pedestrian-scaled experience from the sidewalk. As such, it is recommended that the sign regulations be revised to allow perpendicular signs, at least within the Waterfront Commercial zone. These regulations should stipulate a minimum height clearance from the bottom of the sign to the sidewalk, to minimize safety concerns.

4. Consider revising off-street parking regulations to allow more flexibility downtown

The zoning ordinance currently requires a certain number of off-street parking spaces, depending on the proposed use of the building. The way the regulations are currently written, a building with one floor of retail and two floors of apartments may need to provide parking for all uses. However, in reality, the parking used by the tenants is likely to be vacant during the day, and therefore available for the retail use. In a downtown setting where lots are small, this may prove burdensome for developers looking to maximize the use of a site. In addition, having many small parking areas does not add to a vibrant, walkable downtown. It is recommended that the number of parking spaces be decided through the site plan review process, which will allow the Planning Board and applicant to collaborate on the most efficient number of spaces. In addition, the regulations should allow applicants to count on-street, public, or shared parking towards the total number of spaces required.

5. Consider adopting Planned Development District regulations

Although the zoning ordinance provides some flexibility, the nature of traditional zoning is to set forth regulations for the uses and dimensions of parcels in the City. As such, there may be development patterns or uses which, while they may benefit the City, were not anticipated in the zoning ordinance and are therefore not allowed.

One technique which allows for greater flexibility for developers is a Planned Development District. This sets forth a process in which an applicant essentially proposes specific zoning for a site, in conjunction with a specific site plan. The applicant works with both the City Council (to amend the zoning) and the Planning Board (to approve the site plan). When completed, the

result is a project in which the uses, dimensional requirements, and other regulations have been drafted to allow a particular development for a site; a PDD is essentially a zoning amendment and site plan review rolled into one process. These developments can be residential or commercial, although the goal is usually to promote a mix of uses unattainable through traditional zoning. There are several large parcels currently underutilized or vacant in the study area, especially in the northern and southern portions of the study area, which may be ideal for PDDs. This tool will also be useful in other parts of the City outside the study area, and should therefore be included when the City revises its zoning ordinance.

D. Strategic Partnerships

The City of Mechanicville is poised at the confluence of several regional initiatives, with focuses on trail systems, economic development, environmental issues, housing, and community planning. To accomplish the City's vision for the downtown and waterfront, the community should seek to collaborate with other agencies and groups, either as a funding source or to leverage other resources. These agencies, as well as the role each could play in terms of Mechanicville's waterfront and downtown, are listed below.

- New York State Department of State, Division of Coastal Resources. Working in partnership with community groups, non-profit organizations, state and federal agencies, and local governments, the Division of Coastal Resources makes communities better places to live, work, and visit. By combining both traditional and innovative techniques to advance communities' use and enjoyment of their waterfronts and waterways, the Division works with partners in the public, business and non-profit sectors. In addition, the Division provides technical and financial assistance to New York's communities, to help them respond to their changing waterfronts. The Division is already an active partner in the Waterfront Revitalization effort, having provided funding and technical assistance for this plan.
- Odyssey School of Fine Arts. The Odyssey School of Fine Arts facilitates the establishment of public art, by tapping into the cultural and human resources of a community. This organization, working with grant funding through a variety of sources, brings together professional artists and local students to create mosaics that describe the character and history of the community. The director of the school has indicated that there is a series of mosaics planned along the Erie Canal National Heritage Corridor, which Mechanicville could participate in.

Although the location of these mosaics is dependent on many factors, a few photo representations of how public art can enliven a space were prepared for this report. It is recommended that the City work with the Odyssey School to select a suitable site and create a mosaic or series of mosaics within the downtown and



Figure 12 – Location of potential mosaic/mural partnership project

waterfront. These could provide a unique character to the City and celebrate the strength and cohesiveness of the community.

- Lakes to Locks. The mission of Lakes to Locks Passage, Inc. is to further the appreciation, recognition, stewardship and revitalization of the communities along the upper Hudson River/Champlain Canal, Lake George, Lake Champlain, Chambly Canal and Richelieu River. This is accomplished through the implementation of a Corridor Management Plan, Visitor Information and Interpretation Plan, and Marketing Plan. The City should determine whether it may be possible to leverage the resources which have been brought together under this program.
- NYS Canal Corporation. The NYS Canal Corporation administers the Erie Canal Greenway Grant Program, which provides financial assistance to improve waterfront access to the Erie and Champlain canals. This program also supports the creation of trail networks throughout the region, including the Champlain Canal Corridor Trail, which extends both north and south of Mechanicville, but does not currently run through the City. The City should work with the Canal Corporation to link these trails through the study area, preferably along the riverfront or Main Street.
- Hudson River Valley Greenway. The Hudson River Valley Greenway is a state agency created to facilitate the development of a voluntary regional strategy for preserving scenic, natural, historic, cultural and recreational resources while encouraging compatible economic development and maintaining the tradition of home rule for land use decision-making. Through participation in the Greenway community planning program, communities in the Hudson River Valley can receive technical assistance and funding for local land use planning. In addition, this agency provides funding for trail planning, construction and amenities, historic landscape preservation, regional and local partnerships as well as many other resource enhancement and economic development projects. Mechanicville has already begun to work with the Greenway to establish a kayak/canoe launch and lockers for boaters at the City Dock. This relationship should be continued into the future as other improvements are made pursuant to this plan.
- Parks & Trails New York. Parks & Trails New York is an organization working to protect New York's parks and help communities create new parks. Founded in 1985, this agency's mission is to expand, protect, and promote a network of parks, trails, and open spaces throughout the state. This includes collaborative efforts on the Canalway Trail system, as well as Healthy Trails, Healthy People, a statewide program to encourage and assist communities in planning and developing multi-use trails, and Accessible Parks and Trails, which is a program to increase the accessibility of New York's outdoor trails for people with physical limitations. This is another resource the City can tap in to for resources to link regional trails through the community.
- Saratoga PLAN. Saratoga PLAN helps protect the exceptional quality of life in the region by working to preserve open spaces for present and future generations. This non-profit land trust has also worked to create a trail system throughout Saratoga

County, including the nearby Zim Smith trail, which is currently planned along the Anthony Kill in Halfmoon. The City has already begun to pursue alternatives for the Zim Smith trail alignment through the community; this collaboration should be continued.

- Saratoga Economic Development Corporation. This agency, known as SEDC, seeks to create jobs and diversify and increase the tax base while improving the quality of life for the residents of Saratoga County. The focus of the SEDC is retaining existing business and attracting new industry to the County. The City should continue to work with SEDC on the location of local empire zones, as well as other initiatives to bring new development and redevelopment to the waterfront and downtown.
- Capital District Transportation Committee. This agency, known as the CDTC, acts as the Metropolitan Planning Organization for the Capital District, and implements federal transportation funding in the area. In addition, the CDTC administers their Linkage Program, which provides assistance for joint regional-local planning initiatives that link transportation and land use. The City of Mechanicville received a Linkage Program Grant in 2007, the Central Corridors Linkage Study, to address the Central Avenue/Mabbett Hill/Route 67 area. This collaboration will benefit the waterfront area as well, by improving the function and identity of the Central Avenue corridor, as well as strengthening connections to the downtown.
- Historic Saratoga-Washington on the Hudson Partnership. The Partnership is a state commission established with the objective of partnering with existing public and private initiatives. This relationship will foster collaborative agriculture and open space preservation, economic revitalization, recreational and tourism development, and the protection of natural, cultural, and historical heritage. Communities bordering the Upper Hudson River from both Washington and Saratoga counties are represented in the Partnership.

V. Implementation Plan

This plan lists a series of recommendations that build upon the vision for the Waterfront and Downtown. Some of these recommended actions should be implemented immediately, while others can be accomplished over a long-term time frame. To implement the plan, however, the City must establish a framework within which these actions can be taken.

Currently, the effort to revitalize Mechanicville has fallen mostly on the shoulders of the City Supervisor and Community Development Agency (CDA), who have done an exemplary job in bringing people together to make progress. In addition, there is an established downtown revitalization committee which oversees individual grant applications and projects for the Downtown Grants Program. The Downtown Grants Program examined many different initiatives throughout the City and sought to secure grant funding for implementation. Many grants have been awarded, including one from the New York State Department of State Environmental Protection Fund, which funded the preparation of this revitalization plan.

The City Supervisor, the CDA, and the Downtown Revitalization Committee, working together as they do currently, have the ability to implement the plan. The City should consider continuing these roles to implement this plan as well. As implementation of larger projects continues, the City may want to consider part-time staff to help administer grants, coordinate between the various partners, and be a point-person for implementation of planning projects.

Toward this end, the following implementation matrix provides a framework for the completion of each recommendation. For each strategy, the implementation leader, involved groups, starting point, and action item is listed. Another issue for consideration when outlining an implementation strategy is the capability to assemble the funds required to complete certain strategies, especially given the large number of strategic partnerships available to the City. As such, potential funding sources are listed as well.

Implementation Matrix						
	Potential Partners	First Steps	Potential Funding Source(s) *	Implementation Timing		
Topic Area				Short	Med	Long
<i>Physical Plan - Gateways</i>						
Route 4/Main Street	Chamber of Commerce, Decrescente, NYSDOT	Design planting plan and reach out to stakeholders	NYSDOS, NYSDOT, U&CF	X		
City Dock Gateway	Chamber of Commerce, downtown Business Owners	Determine whether downtown businesses/chamber has interest in supporting program	NYSDOS, HRG		X	
Dutch Gap	CSX railroad	Contact railroad to determine their role	Volunteer			X
<i>Physical Plan – Waterfront Improvements</i>						
City Dock	Canal Corp.	Obtain funding sources	NYSDOS, HRG, U&CF		X	
Tenendaho Park	Parks & Trails NY	Design improvements	NYSDOS, OPRHP	X		
Senior Center Riverside Park	Senior Center, Library	Design sidewalks	NYSDOS		X	
<i>Physical Plan – Streetscapes</i>						
North Main Street	CDTC	Obtain funding sources	NYSDOS, NYSDOT, U&CF	X		
Downtown Core	CDTC, Chamber of Commerce	Obtain funding sources	NYSDOS, NYSDOT, U&CF		X	
South Main Street	CDTC	Obtain funding sources	NYSDOS, NYSDOT, U&CF			X
<i>Zoning and Land Use</i>						
Re-zone portions of the study area	Planning Board, ZBA	Obtain funding to undertake amendments	NYSDOS, Small Cities		X	
Institute Design Guidelines for commercial development	Planning Board, ZBA	Obtain funding to undertake amendments	NYSDOS, Small Cities		X	
Revise zoning ordinance to allow projecting signs in WC zone.	Planning Board, ZBA	Obtain funding to undertake amendments	NYSDOS, Small Cities		X	
Consider revising off-street parking regulations to allow more flexibility downtown	Planning Board, ZBA	Obtain funding to undertake amendments	NYSDOS, Small Cities		X	
Consider adopting Planned Development District regulations	Planning Board, ZBA	Obtain funding to undertake amendments	NYSDOS, Small Cities		X	

Implementation Matrix, cont.						
	Potential Partners	First Steps	Potential Funding Source(s) *	Implementation Timing		
<i>Strategic Partnerships</i>				Short	Med	Long
Work with Odyssey School to create system of mosaics in downtown	Odyssey School	Determine locations for mosaics	NYS Council for the Arts	X		
Link to regional trail system	Saratoga PLAN, Parks and Trails NY, Canalway, Lakes to Locks	Obtain funding to construct trails	NYSDOS, OPRHP, NYSDOT		X	

- * NYSDOS = New York State Department of State, Division of Coastal Resources
 NYSDOT = New York State Department of Transportation
 OPRHP = New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation
 HRG = Hudson River Greenway
 U&CF = New York State Department of Environmental Conservation Urban and Community Forestry Grants