

# **Brownfield Opportunity Area**

## **FINAL Nomination Study**

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# 1 Project Description & Boundary

## 1.1 Lead Project Sponsors

The City of Cohoes is the municipality sponsoring the Cohoes Boulevard Brownfield Opportunity Area (BOA) Nomination Study, a program funded, administered, and overseen by the New York State Department of State (DOS), with technical support provided by the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). In conjunction with this BOA Nomination Study, the City of Cohoes also undertook the Delaware Avenue BOA Pre-Nomination Study located on the neighboring Van Schaick and Simmons Islands. As these two BOA programs share a boundary along the Mohawk River, there is considerable overlap that exists in terms of the overall vision of these areas. Together, these two initiatives will build on the City's framework for revitalization within the waterfront and downtown business district.

## 1.2 Introduction to the BOA Program

The Brownfield Opportunity Area (BOA) Program was developed in 2003 as the planning component of the NYS Superfund/Brownfield Law (GML Article 18-C, Section 970-r), providing municipalities and community-based organizations with financial and technical assistance to complete area-wide revitalization strategies for neighborhoods impacted by the presence of brownfields and environmental hazards. At the completion of the program, communities will be designated a BOA, increasing their competitive position for access to funding and incentives under the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) Brownfield Cleanup Program, the Empire State Development Corporation's economic development programs, and many other State and Federal assistance opportunities.

Brownfield sites are typically former industrial or commercial properties where operations may have resulted in environmental impairment. The NYS Department of State (NYSDOS) and NYSDEC recognize the expansive detrimental impacts these sites have on their surrounding neighborhoods, and that brownfield impacts are not limited to individual sites or adjoining property. The marketability and viability of entire neighborhoods are impacted by the presence, or potential presence, of contaminated sites by negatively affecting the psychology of residents and potential investors. The negative psychological effects of brownfields can lead to disinvestment and blight radiating outward far beyond the impacted sites or immediate area. The BOA Program assists communities in identifying and analyzing sources of neighborhood distress and provides the resources and capacity to develop and implement revitalization strategies. State and federal programs also exist, such as the DEC Environmental Restoration Program, the DEC Brownfield Cleanup Program, and the US Environmental Protection Agency's Brownfield Program. These programs focus on physical investigations and activities, further assisting local municipalities in dealing with brownfield properties and their impacts on communities.

## 1.3 Project Description

### 1.3.1 General Overview

The proposed Cohoes Boulevard BOA Study Area is located in the City of Cohoes in Albany County, New York (see Figures 1 and 2). Covering 460 acres, the proposed BOA is situated between the Mohawk River to the north and east, an abandoned railroad corridor to the west, and the City's southern boundary to the south (*refer to Map 1 – Cohoes Boulevard BOA Boundary*). The Study Area is home to the City's central business district, as well areas of higher density residential and mixed-use neighborhoods.

Traversing the Study Area are two of the City's primary transportation thoroughfares – State Route (SR) 787 (i.e., Cohoes Boulevard) and SR 470. Cohoes Boulevard provides the primary transportation access to the City's downtown business district and waterfront areas and is considered the main gateway into the City. Constructed in the 1970s, Cohoes Boulevard serves as both the main connection between the City and the majority of the Capital District to the south, and as a pass-through for commuters living in southern Saratoga County, particularly the Towns of Waterford and Clifton Park. The Study Area also serves as the main connection between the City's residential districts and large portions of the City's waterfront.

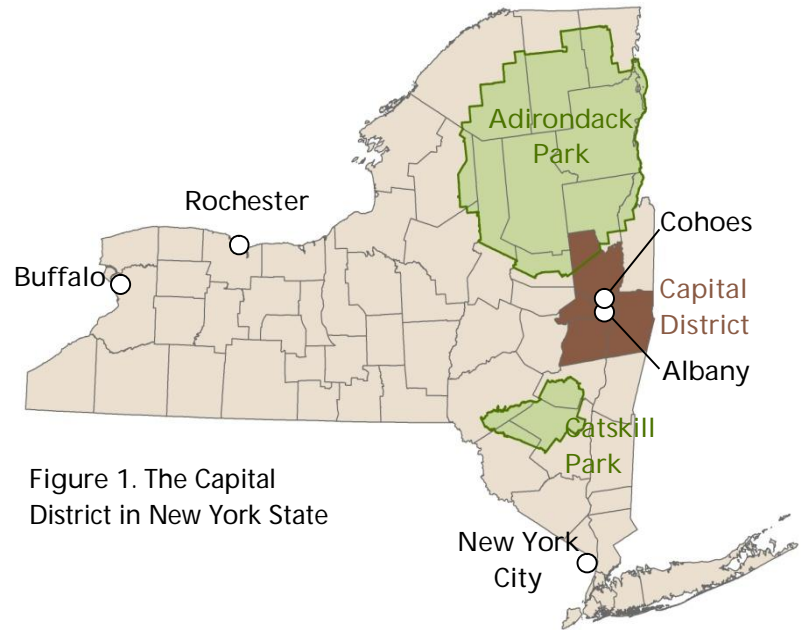


Figure 1. The Capital District in New York State



Figure 2. City of Cohoes in the Capital District region

Based on information provided in the Pre-Nomination Study, the primary community revitalization objectives to be achieved by this project include:

- Utilizing the City's wealth of natural, cultural and transportation resources to improve the City's urban character;
- Identifying and attracting economic development opportunities and promote a positive image to make the City a unique place to live, work and play;
- Improving public access to, and recreational use of, the City's Mohawk and Hudson River waterfront properties; and
- Promoting commercial development in easily accessible areas adjacent to the City's historic downtown business district and major transportation corridors, specifically the Cohoes Boulevard and SR 470 corridors.

A few of the primary opportunities to be addressed by this project include the beautification of the Cohoes Boulevard gateway into the City, development opportunities associated with the amount of traffic using the Cohoes Boulevard/SR 787 corridor, increased connectivity between the Study Area, City residential neighborhoods and the waterfront, including improved wayfinding to Remsen Street and the City's downtown business district. Through this effort, the City hopes to see the Study Area become an integrated, safe and desirable place to start a business, raise a family or visit.

As noted in the Pre-Nomination Study, due to its relatively large size, the Study Area has been separated into four sub-areas, designated Character Area I through IV, based on the community characteristics in each area (*refer to Map 2 – Character Areas*). A more detailed discussion of the Cohoes Boulevard BOA Study Area and Character Areas can be found in Section 3.2.

### 1.3.2 Redevelopment Potential

Redevelopment within the Cohoes Boulevard BOA is driven by numerous factors, including the availability of vacant parcels, the influx of residential units over the past decade and the City's position along the Mohawk River waterfront. Vacant and underutilized parcels account for approximately 10 percent of total land area within the Study Area. Conglomerations of vacant and underutilized properties, particularly within the Central Business District (CBD) and Columbia South (SoCo) neighborhoods and along the Mohawk River waterfront present an opportunity for larger revitalization opportunities. Redevelopment of waterfront properties including the former Municipal Landfill, the St. Michael's property and the property at 32 New Cortland Street could have a strong catalytic effect on the redevelopment of downtown Cohoes and the surrounding residential neighborhoods. Redevelopment opportunities within Cohoes will need to take advantage of the waterfront location of the City, substituting non water-dependent uses along the Mohawk River for water-dependent uses that can breathe new life into the BOA.

The Nomination Study for the Cohoes Boulevard BOA includes a conceptual master plan and build out analysis for a preferred development alternative selected through deliberation by the project steering committee with significant public input throughout the course of the project. The constraints imposed by existing conditions within the BOA described in this Nomination Study have also played a crucial role in shaping redevelopment potential in the City.

### 1.3.3 Related Planning Studies and Efforts

In a continuing effort toward revitalization, the City has conducted several planning efforts over the last 13 years that directly relate to the Study Area. These planning efforts include the Reconfiguration of Cohoes Boulevard Expanded Project Proposal, the Route 470 Corridor Study, the Cohoes Downtown Redevelopment Plan and the Urban Waterfront Rediscovery Plan. In particular, the Downtown Redevelopment Plan involved the formation of a 14-person Advisory Committee, consisting of City business owners and residents, to identify redevelopment options and strategies for the City's downtown business district. This advisory committee also guided the development of the City's Waterfront Rediscovery Plan. The plans incorporated and/or referred to several portions of the proposed BOA. The area of the proposed BOA east of SR 787 was included in the Urban Waterfront Rediscovery planning efforts and the northern portion of the proposed BOA was included in the Route 470 Corridor Study. The Cohoes Downtown Redevelopment Plan includes areas in the northwestern portion of the proposed BOA. A brief description of each of these planning efforts can be found below.

#### *State Route 787 Corridor Pre-Nomination Study (2009)*

The State Route 787 Corridor Pre-Nomination Study focused on providing a preliminary description and analysis of the Study Area to evaluate the impacts of potential brownfields. The original Study Area of 413 acres identified three target areas with potential brownfields and/or vacant and underutilized sites: the North Target Area, Scrap Yard Target Area, and South Target Area. Brownfields identified as part of this effort included properties located within the SR 787 corridor that did not conform to existing zoning or development goals, or were vacant and had potential to contribute to the City's redevelopment goals. The plan additionally identified potential redevelopment opportunities as well as further studies recommended for subsequent phases of the BOA project. These included assessment of current transportation circulation systems, incorporation of Green Building and LEED construction standards into the zoning code, a market analysis for strategic sites, a build out and bulk study of the corridor to project future traffic demands and a relocation feasibility analysis for active businesses on underutilized strategic sites.

#### *Urban Waterfront Rediscovery Plan (2005)*

The Waterfront Rediscovery Plan examined development possibilities at four underutilized waterfront sites that border the Hudson and Mohawk Rivers, including two sites within the Cohoes Boulevard BOA Study Area – the Northern Gateway site and the Southern gateway site. Redevelopment scenarios for each of the sites were created based on the data and the feedback



provided via the Steering Committee, City leaders, and the public, as well as the findings from site and market assessments. The redevelopment scenarios, along with site specific Implementation Approaches, assisted the City in its efforts to attract interest and investment in its waterfront from public and private partnerships. The most recent results from this Plan include newly constructed townhouse units along the Hudson River waterfront and along Dyke Avenue.

#### *Reconfiguration of Cohoes Boulevard Expanded Project Proposal (2004)*

In an effort to improve the safety, function and attractiveness of the Cohoes Boulevard Corridor, the City of Cohoes commissioned a reconfiguration study with the assistance of the NYSDOT. The overall goal of the Reconfiguration of Cohoes Boulevard Expanded Project Proposal (EPP) is to make it an attractive and identifiable feature of the City's urban fabric, enhance the success of recent revitalization efforts and improve the attractiveness of Cohoes as a place to live, work and visit. As a result of the EPP, six feasible alternatives are currently under consideration:

- Alternative No. 2, Raised Center Median with Landscaped Edge
- Alternative No. 2b, Raised Center Median with Landscaped Edge and Roundabouts
- Alternative No. 3, Raised Center Median with Bicycle/Pedestrian Features
- Alternative No. 3b, Raised Center Median with Bicycle/Pedestrian Features and Roundabouts
- Alternative No. 3c, Raised Center Median with Multi-use Path
- Alternative No. 3d, Raised Center Median with Multi-use Path and Roundabouts

Any roadway improvements would be constructed in harmony with the needs of the community by employing cost-effective methods, while retaining the overall capacity and efficiency of this important commuter roadway.

#### *Cohoes Downtown Redevelopment Plan (2002)*

The City of Cohoes Downtown Redevelopment Plan was completed in 2002, utilizing Governor's Office for Small Cities Technical Assistance Grant Program funds. The Downtown Redevelopment Plan is action oriented, providing clear and achievable redevelopment and image building strategies for the City, merchants, potential investors and residents. A 14-person Advisory Committee was formed to identify redevelopment options and strategies. In a continuing effort towards revitalization, Cohoes took a proactive look at the appearance, functionality and economic mix of its central business district.

#### *Route 470 Corridor Study (2000)*

In 2000, the City of Cohoes undertook the development of the Route 470 Study, which was the first step in a multi-phased process that identified strategies for redevelopment in the City of Cohoes. The purpose of the document was to provide a coherent framework for corridor

improvements, economic development opportunities, and resource preservation to guide future public and private capital investments.

As part of the Route 470 Study, a list of corridor development implementation items was created, which included:

- The development of a strategic plan for the revitalization of Remsen Street (completed in 2002);
- The revision of the City's Zoning Code (completed in 2006); and
- The creation of a Main Street program for Remsen Street to organize residents and business owners, provide merchant support and restructuring assistance, promote available sites to potential businesses, and ensure consistent, attractive and historically relevant design guidance (completed in 2007).

## 1.4 Community Vision, Goals & Objectives

### 1.4.1 Supporting the City's Vision

Over the past several years, the City of Cohoes has worked towards the revitalization of its downtown business district, which includes portions of the Cohoes Boulevard BOA Study Area (see Section 1.3.3). As part of these planning efforts, the City has put forth a collective vision that is based on significant public input. To ensure the vision and goals established as part of the City's recent planning efforts is continued, members of the Advisory Committees from previous planning efforts are also serving on the BOA Steering Committee.

### 1.4.2 A Vision for the BOA in 2020 and Beyond

During the Pre-Nomination phase of the BOA program, the community identified a vision specific to the Cohoes Boulevard BOA that identifies how they would like to see the Study Area enhanced and improved in the future. The vision statement captures and embraces the elements of the BOA that the City desires to preserve, while recognizing that changes are necessary to realize the future potential of this area.

## ISION FOR THE COHOES BOULEVARD BOA STUDY AREA

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The Cohoes Boulevard BOA Study Area is an integrated, safe and desirable place to start a business, raise a family, access world class recreational resources and learn more about our country's industrial heritage. As the Capital District's premiere transit-oriented community, Cohoes provides an integrated multi-modal network allowing residents and visitors to navigate the community in a safe and efficient manner. Our waterfront provides a vibrant mix of residential and commercial uses and is now a destination for water based recreation. The Central Business District is the core of the Cohoes Boulevard Study Area and our community, providing access to a mix of uses, cultural resources, services, retail shopping and employment opportunities. Cohoes Boulevard, once a barrier in our community, is now the gateway to the City and an integral part of our identity.

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### 1.4.3 BOA Goals and Strategic Objectives

In support of the Vision Statement, the City has identified a series of goals to help guide decisions and future investments. Each of the goals is supported by strategic objectives drawn from input generated by the public, steering committee, project stakeholders, and City staff.

Each objective has been addressed through the BOA planning and design process and is included within the Master Plan in Section 5 as a series of recommendations for capital projects, administrative activities, and changes to the Study Area land use pattern. Tables 31, 32, and 33 summarize how each of the goals and objectives are addressed through project recommendations.

### *Goal 1 – Make the Waterfront a Destination*

Waterfronts are natural destinations, offering picturesque views and recreation opportunities. They also serve as a centerpiece and attraction for many types of development and activities. Regardless of the season, people enjoy being near the water. Tapping into this potential involves managing waterfront land uses, ensuring that the highest and best use of the land is in place wherever feasible. The Cohoes Boulevard BOA has 2.2 miles of waterfront land along the Mohawk River. However, not all lands are developed to their full potential. The City must continue to move forward with efforts to promote economic development along the Mohawk River.

#### *Objectives:*

- 1.1 Attract mixed-use development with high quality public access opportunities.
- 1.2 Capitalize on and market the Study Area's developable waterfront properties.
- 1.3 Improve connections between the Mohawk River waterfront and downtown.
- 1.4 Provide attractive housing alternatives for businesses seeking a high quality of life for their employees.
- 1.5 Enhance waterfront recreation opportunities to encourage active, healthy lifestyle choices.

### *Goal 2 – Ensure the Central Business District Supports City and Regional Residents*

Historic cities and villages located within a metropolitan area face a significant challenge in finding a focused identity. They recognize the importance of preserving their historic fabric while trying to meet the demands of a more modern and automobile-oriented society. Cohoes in some respects functions as a bedroom community to the Capital District. Yet, the community's vision is to increase the mixed-use vitality of its historic downtown, serving locals, regional residents, and tourists. Additionally, the City is located on a major commuter corridor in the region. This confluence of challenges and opportunities are at the center of the City's revitalization efforts. The adjacent neighborhoods, which have higher concentrations of poverty compared to the rest of the City, should be the focus of housing rehabilitation and greater provision of daily goods and services. At the same time, the City should identify opportunities for higher end housing that supports the businesses typically associated with successful downtown revitalization. As that momentum begins to build, Cohoes can emerge as a regional focal point for reinvestment and activity.



*Objectives:*

- 2.1 Increase the visibility and accessibility of the Central Business District from outside.
- 2.2 Locate modern amenities and services downtown while preserving historic character.
- 2.3 Support the viability of businesses along Remsen Street.
- 2.4 Improve conditions in the neighborhoods within and adjacent to the Central Business District.

*Goal 3 – Offer a Diverse Urban Experience*

After many decades of development trends pulling families and businesses into suburban locations, the desire to be “downtown” is re-emerging. More and more people are seeking a walkable urban environment that is rich in history, has a dynamic mix of activities, is focused on locally-owned and niche businesses, and fosters a greater sense of community and civic pride. This trend has yet to yield the critical mass to be purely market-driven, but communities like Cohoes have been actively stimulating investment consistent with this trend. The City’s historic building stock, walkable network of streets connecting to neighborhoods and the waterfront, and central location within the Capital District make it a well-positioned to further invest in downtown revitalization. The presence of the high-volume Cohoes Boulevard through the City creates a unique opportunity to capture a higher percentage of through traffic to boost revitalization efforts. The waterfront in particular presents an opportunity to truly differentiate this urban experience from the surrounding suburbs. The City must set forth a design philosophy that instills a sense of pride in the community and translates to high quality streetscapes, public spaces, and new development projects.

*Objectives:*

- 3.1 Create an atmosphere that attracts new residents, visitors, and businesses to downtown.
- 3.2 Promote the small-scale, walkable urban form with access to transit.
- 3.3 Embrace “Complete Streets” design concepts.
- 3.4 Improve awareness of the remaining Erie Canal assets and their role in providing cultural and recreational resources to the community.
- 3.5 Promote and expand the area’s healthy living characteristics.
- 3.6 Encourage sustainable infill development within the Central Business District.
- 3.7 Continue to provide programming on Remsen Street that attracts visitors all year.

#### *Goal 4 – Promote Land Use Diversity*

The success of the BOA Study Area is directly tied to the diversity of its land uses. Downtown Cohoes, the adjacent neighborhoods, and the Cohoes Boulevard corridor have historically been home to a varied range of land uses, including commercial, industrial, residential and mixed-use buildings. This diversity is desirable in that it provides opportunities for housing, employment, daily commerce and tourism all in close proximity to one another. Design strategies and guidelines can be employed to help overcome potential land use conflicts. The ultimate benefit of having a variety of land uses is a vibrant city core that supports the local tax base, provides jobs to residents, welcomes and responds to visitors needs, fosters small business development, promotes protection of historic resources, and provides options for residential living.

##### *Objectives:*

- 4.1 Encourage the horizontal and vertical mixing of compatible uses.
- 4.2 Identify and remove regulatory barriers to mixed-use development downtown and along the waterfront.
- 4.3 Make the City an appealing place to live for a range of income levels.
- 4.4 Encourage a vibrant sense of place in the Central Business District.
- 4.5 Focus City resources on capital investments that will most likely incentivize private investment.

#### *Goal 5 – Celebrate our History, Culture and Recreational Resources*

The City's land use and development patterns are closely tied to its industrial, manufacturing and goods-transportation history. Heritage-tourism and recreational opportunities have leveraged these historic resources as an integral component of the community's identity. These opportunities include the adaptive reuse of historically significant buildings, connections to the trails, rivers and canals, or the rich architecture of the City's neighborhoods. However, acknowledging these ties is not enough if the City wants to stand out from other communities. Cohoes needs to celebrate its history and the cultural resources it offers to ensure that those assets that are "uniquely" ours are shared with others.

##### *Objectives:*

- 5.1 Preserve, reuse and celebrate historic and cultural assets, keeping them safe, attractive and informative places to visit.
- 5.2 Promote historic and cultural assets to attract tourism locally and regionally.
- 5.3 Utilize technology to expand seasonal and relevant programming in the downtown and waterfront areas.
- 5.4 Enhance community pride through effective education and marketing of our industrial and canal heritage.

- 5.5 Evaluate opportunities for permanent and rotating public art in the downtown area.

### *Goal 6 – Ensure Public Investments Benefit all Modes of Travel*

Today, many of the land uses in the Cohoes Boulevard BOA are designed primarily for automobile use. While sidewalks are prevalent, the design and placement of buildings and other site elements should reinforce a more balanced approach to access and mobility. This is a difficult balance to achieve given the high volumes of commuter traffic passing through the City. However, creating a place where foot traffic is clearly a priority will contribute to the success of local businesses, creating a positive feedback loop. Successful urban and waterfront environments are built upon high quality access and experiences within the public realm. Additionally, Cohoes is uniquely positioned to become a center of multi-use trail activity. The numerous former canal and rail corridors, some of which have already been converted to trails, represent an opportunity to create an extensive network of greenways that serve the local population as well as the entire Capital District region.

#### *Objectives*

- 6.1 Enhance pedestrian and bicycle safety throughout the Cohoes Boulevard corridor.
- 6.2 Improve awareness of and wayfinding to Remsen Street from Cohoes Boulevard.
- 6.3 Promote sustainable transportation options including bus transit.
- 6.4 Ensure land use decisions support multiple modes of transportation.
- 6.5 Improve connectivity of on- and off-road trail systems throughout the Study Area.

### *Goal 7 – Advance Environmental Stewardship*

The negative perceptions often associated with the Study Area are directly tied to the notion that many of the sites are contaminated, blighted and/or underutilized. This study will further the understanding of environmental conditions on identified sites to better position them for future redevelopment and enhancement. Remediation and enhancement of key sites will improve overall community health, increase property values, foster economic development opportunities and instill a sense of pride and positive change.

#### *Objectives:*

- 7.1 Actively work to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and encourage sustainable development practices.
- 7.2 Remediate existing brownfields to facilitate future development opportunities.
- 7.3 Return vacant, underutilized or blighted properties to productive uses, focusing on strategic sites identified as part of this plan.

- 7.4 Identify opportunities to leverage the funding and technical assistance provided by the NYS BOA program to encourage private and federal redevelopment.



## 1.5 BOA Boundary Description & Justification

### 1.5.1 Summary Description

The Cohoes Boulevard BOA Study Area comprises 460 acres and 1,320 parcels extending from the City's southern boundary north along the western shoreline of the Mohawk River to its confluence with the Hudson River. The BOA is situated between the Mohawk River to the north and east, an abandoned railroad corridor to the west, and the City's southern boundary to the south and serves as the main connection between the City's residential districts and large portions of the City's waterfront.



Figure 3. Cohoes Boulevard BOA Study Area Context Map

### 1.5.2 Boundary Justification

#### *Northern Boundary*

The northern boundary of the Study Area follows the Mohawk River, Saratoga Street, and a portion of the Mohawk River waterfront. This is slightly expanded from the boundary provided in the Pre-Nomination report (see Figure 4) to incorporate the adjacent commercial portions of the downtown business district. Route 470 and Saratoga Street are major thoroughfares and generally separate the City's mixed use downtown business district from a primarily commercial area just to the north. The northern portion of the BOA contains numerous brownfield, vacant and publicly-owned properties with the potential to serve as catalysts for revitalization and expand economic redevelopment activities within downtown Cohoes.



**Figure 4.** The Study Area boundary has been expanded to the north from the original boundary to include 110 new parcels and an additional 56 acres (shown in orange).

### *Southern Boundary*

The Study Area's southern boundary is also the City's southern boundary, which is shared with the Town of Colonie. This boundary marks the southern limit of the Saratoga Sites public housing complex to the west of Cohoes Boulevard and the approximate end of Mohawk River waterfront to the east of Cohoes Boulevard. The southern boundary marks a distinct separation between the dense residential and heavy industrial uses within the Study Area and the lower density strip residential and vacant wetland areas found immediately south of the existing boundary. A number of properties within the southern portion of the BOA, including the Norlite Plant, are identified brownfields. Additionally, residential and commercial properties within the southern portion of the BOA, including the Saratoga Sites public housing property, were included within the southern boundary, as the potential exists for these properties to be effected by emissions from the Norlite Plant, with the residential and commercial properties located on the windward side of the plant.

### *Western Boundary*

The western boundary follows the City boundary for a small portion and the Mohawk Hudson Bike-Hike Trail (along the abandoned railroad corridor) located just west of Central Avenue and Bedford Street. The bike path is a natural separator between the City's mixed use downtown neighborhoods and business district and the primarily residential areas to the west. The Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail is a key open space resource that connects regional assets in Albany, Saratoga and Schenectady Counties to the City of Cohoes, drawing tourists into the City. Upon completion of the Cohoes Heritage Trail, the Mohawk Hudson Bike-Hike Trail will be connected to other important regional open space assets, including the Delaware Avenue Trail and the Lakes to Locks Passage trails system. The fact that Cohoes will serve as the significant nexus of each of these trail features will hopefully result in a significant increase in economic activity within the BOA thanks in part to trail users visiting the City.

### *Eastern Boundary*

The eastern boundary is formed by the City's Mohawk River waterfront. This boundary was selected since redevelopment of and accessibility to the waterfront are both vital components of the City's vision for revitalization. Several large parcels along the BOA's eastern boundary between the Mohawk River and State Route 787, including the St. Michael's property, the former municipal landfill, the Cohoes Business Park, and the NHKelman property have been identified as brownfield properties. Due to their brownfield status and their strategic location along the State Route 787/Cohoes Boulevard corridor and the Mohawk River waterfront, these properties have been identified as potential redevelopment catalyst sites that can help transform the City of Cohoes and its relationship to the waterfront.

## 2 Community Involvement

### 2.1 Community Participation Plan

Community engagement and buy-in is imperative to the long-term successful implementation of the goals identified in the Cohoes Boulevard BOA program. Community members, landowners, stakeholders, elected officials, and regional organizations must have a vested interest in the success of the plan and, most importantly, must become partners in its implementation.

As part of its overall revitalization strategy, the City of Cohoes has reached out to the community during preparation of the Route 470 Corridor Study, the Cohoes Downtown Redevelopment Plan, and the Urban Waterfront Rediscovery Plan. Community input from these efforts focused on the following concepts:

- The SR 787 Corridor is vastly underutilized and redevelopment of this area would have a positive impact on the surrounding community.
- Increased traffic associated with any such redevelopment will have to be carefully evaluated and planned to decrease any negative impacts on the community.
- The City has an abundance of waterfront that is currently underutilized and that should be redeveloped to incorporate open space and recreational opportunities (i.e., parks or marinas) in addition to any commercial or residential development.

At the onset of this BOA planning process, a Community Participation Plan (CPP) was created that outlined the methods and techniques used to engage the community throughout the course of the project. Similar to previous planning and design efforts undertaken by the City, a variety of in-person opportunities for public involvement were identified, ranging from general informational public meetings to small group working sessions. In addition, regular electronic and internet communications afforded all interested persons the opportunity to offer their perspectives.

The CPP includes the following methods for engaging the public, and is located in Appendix A:

- Steering committee meetings (11)
- Public meetings (4)
- Stakeholder meetings (2)

### 2.2 Enlisting Partners

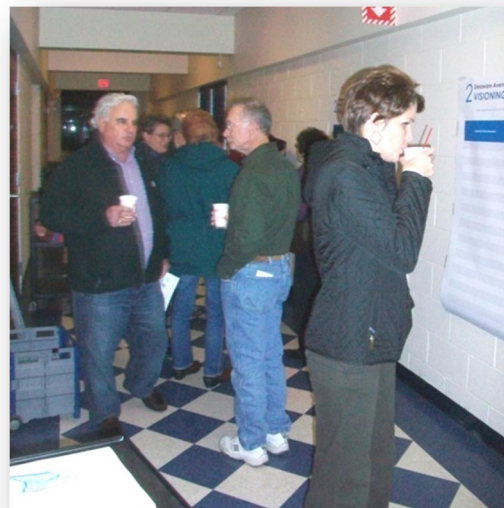
The local commitment for the proposed brownfield program is strong and the City is currently building upon a successful track record of brownfield remediation and redevelopment. This is evidenced by \$400,000 in brownfield assessment grants from the United States Environmental

Protection Agency (USEPA) over the past decade. USEPA funding will augment BOA program activities to conduct inventories and investigations of brownfield properties, as well as remedial and end-use planning for properties where investigations are performed based on the results of the Cohoes Boulevard BOA planning effort.

Cohoes success to date is due in large part to the City's extensive efforts to partner with local stakeholders. In particular, Cohoes has been a long time supporter of the Heritage Area (formerly the Urban Cultural Park), the Hudson River Valley Greenway, the Albany County Intermunicipal Waterfront Committee, and the Capital District Transportation Committee. The City is also periodically holding meetings with officials from surrounding communities including Green Island, Waterford, Albany County, and Troy. In addition, the City is actively meeting with the Daughters of the American Revolution, Open Space Institute, Peebles Island State Park, Chamber of Commerce, and Cohoes neighborhood watch groups to present plans and seek input from the community. These avenues for public participation will be carried forward by the City as part of future brownfield redevelopment planning.

### 2.2.1 Consultation Methods and Techniques

Community participation throughout the project was solicited through multiple meetings both open to the public and by invitation. Funding for this project lead to the formation of a Steering Committee, which is responsible for the joint administration of both the Cohoes Boulevard and Delaware Avenue BOA projects in the City of Cohoes. These two projects share a Steering Committee to take advantage of savings in time and resources, while leveraging the knowledge and applicability of public input to both plans. In addition to regularly scheduled Steering Committee meetings, a series of Public Meetings provided opportunities for broad community input, while Stakeholder Meetings have allowed for focused discussion on important issues facing the community.



*Community members consider the opportunities and constraints associated with redevelopment within the study area.*

### 2.2.2 Steering Committee

The 17-member Steering Committee is comprised of a number of public officials, government representatives, not-for-profit members, and private citizens from the general public with a common goal of improving economic and environmental conditions and overall quality of life within the City of Cohoes. The Steering Committee for the Cohoes Boulevard BOA included: City staff, at large members from each of the three City Wards in the Study Area, and representatives from NYS Parks and the National Park Service. In addition, the NYS Department of State provided advisory and material support for plan development and implementation. A complete



listing of Steering Committee membership can be found in Appendix A. The committee was responsible for guiding the consultant team in developing the plan and acted as a sounding board for ideas related to revitalization of the Study Area.

During this process, the City also engaged in a Step I Pre-Nomination Study for a BOA immediately to the east. To maximize the use of consultant and volunteer time, the committee met bi-monthly to engage in the discussion of both projects simultaneously while the Delaware Avenue BOA Pre-Nomination Study project was active. Steering Committee meeting summaries for the Cohoes Boulevard Nomination Study are included in Appendix B. Copies of presentations to the Steering Committee are located in Appendix L.

### 2.2.3 Public Meetings & Workshops

The Cohoes Boulevard BOA project recognizes public input as an integral part of the planning process. As a result, members of the public were asked to participate in a series of meetings and workshops to provide community insights and brainstorm innovative solutions to the challenges faced by the Study Area. These public meetings were held in order to develop a vision for the Study Area and to identify community priorities. An overview of each meeting is provided below, with meeting summaries included in Appendix C. Copies of presentations from Public Meetings are located in Appendix L.

#### *November 10, 2010 - Visioning*

The first public meeting was held at the Cohoes Middle School as a joint meeting for the Cohoes Boulevard BOA and a concurrent BOA Study being conducted for Delaware Avenue. Bergmann Associates presented an overview of the Brownfield Opportunity Area (BOA) program, including the project timeline, the BOA process, and benefits associated with the BOA program. Previous planning efforts related to the project area were also presented. Finally, a summary of existing conditions within the Study Area was provided. This included information related to demographic, socio-economic, and physical features of the two Study Areas. Following the presentation, participants were invited to review



*Participants engaged in an interactive exercise to help identify the future vision of the Cohoes Boulevard BOA.*

and comment on posters of the draft goals for each Study Area, developed based on prior planning efforts. Finally, participants were broken into two groups and engaged in a visioning exercise for each of the BOAs.

*August 29, 2012 - Public Design Workshop*

The second public meeting for the Cohoes Boulevard BOA was a public design workshop, which provided the members of the steering committee and the public with an additional opportunity to work interactively with the project team in refining the vision and potential build out scenarios for the Study Area. Bergmann Associates facilitated the meeting, which provided an educational primer on design best-practices, a community character survey, and a small-group design roundtable. The findings from the survey and roundtable session were incorporated into the Master Plan as presented in Sections 4 and 5.

*December 11, 2012 - City Council Meeting*

Bergmann presented the preliminary Master Plan for the Cohoes Boulevard Revitalization Strategy to City Council and the general public at an open meeting. The presentation included a brief overview of the NYS Brownfield Opportunity Area program, progress update and the draft phasing of the preferred Master Plan identified by the Steering Committee.

*December 12, 2012 - Choose Cohoes Meeting*

Similar to the public meeting the night before, Bergmann Associates presented the preliminary Master Plan to the Choose Cohoes membership at the Cohoes Senior Center. Choose Cohoes is a diverse organization of local business leaders, educators, residents and governmental representatives that seek to improve the economic and community development climate in Cohoes. The presentation included a brief overview of the NYS Brownfield Opportunity Area program, and the following discussion included opportunities for the continued involvement of the Choose Cohoes membership during project implementation.

#### 2.2.4 Stakeholder Meetings

A series of Stakeholder Meetings were held on June 9, 2010 to provide the consultant team and the steering committee with additional feedback necessary in helping to shape the analysis within this Nomination Study. Stakeholder topic areas included:

- Large businesses (Norlite Corporation, Mohawk Fine Papers)
- Developers and investors (Conley Associates)
- Strategic communications & branding (Oberlander Group)
- City officials (Community & Economic Development, Cohoes Housing Authority)
- State agencies (NYS Canal Corporation)

The stakeholder meetings were facilitated by members of the consultant team. Summaries of stakeholder meetings are located in Appendix D.

## 3 Inventory and Analysis of the BOA

### 3.1 Community Setting

#### 3.1.1 Historical Perspective: The “Spindle City”

Located at the confluence of the Mohawk and Hudson Rivers, the City of Cohoes was settled in the early 1700s as part of the Manor of Rensselaerswyck, a Dutch colonial feudal system developed around farming. Within a few decades, the city emerged as a focal point for military operations, in particular during the French and Indian Wars, the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812. During these wars, colonial and American troops used the Van Schaick Mansion as a military headquarters.

As peace once again settled over the country, Cohoes developed into a more traditional small city. Several industrial operations arrived and were complemented by the Erie and Champlain canals, which were completed in 1823. The presence of waterpower on both major rivers, coupled with the accessibility made possible by the canals fueled the strength of industry in Cohoes. In particular, textile operations such as the Harmony Mills complex thrived in the city. In the years following the Civil War, Cohoes had become established as a leading manufacturing center with foundries and machine shops as well as the various mills and textile operations. This boom led to a large increase in the population, from 150 in 1840 to 4,229 in 1850. This trend continued throughout the rest of the 19th century as immigrants from Europe and Canada arrived in Cohoes. The City's population peaked at 24,709 in 1910.

Eventually the textile industry began to decline, as cheaper electricity combined with lower-cost labor in the South contributed to operations leaving the City. Between 1910 and 2010, Cohoes lost over 8,500 residents (+/- 35 percent). While some industrial activity remains within the City of Cohoes, many of its original industrial buildings became deteriorated and outdated and were unable to compete with modern facilities. In recent years, however, the City has sought to revitalize these facilities, including the renovation of the Harmony Mills complex into residential units. The late 20th Century and early 21st Century have been characterized by the City's transition from an industrial powerhouse to a bedroom community in the Capital District.



*Artist rendition of the Erie Canal traversing through the bustling City of Cohoes during its heyday as one of the nation's leading textile production communities.*

This transition has been marked, especially in recent years, by proactive community planning which seeks to preserve the City's past and use that as a foundation for revitalization in the future.

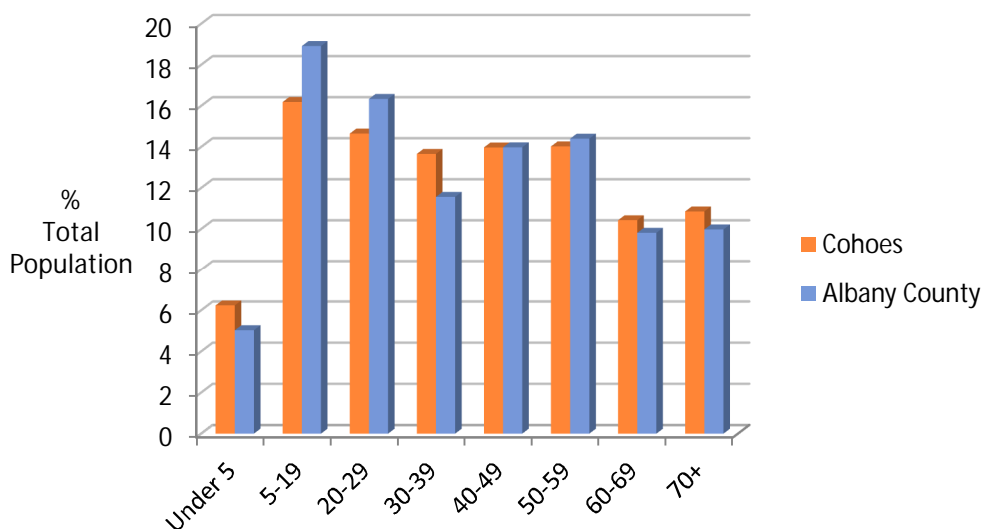
### 3.1.2 City and Regional Trends

#### *Population*

Like many industrial cities in the northeast, the City of Cohoes experienced an out-migration of industry during the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. The City's population peaked in 1910 at 24,709, yet has declined nearly 35 percent since due to the decline of manufacturing jobs, the exodus to the suburbs and the dislocation of housing due to major urban projects, including the construction of SR-787. Not unlike other cities in similar situations, the loss of population has had significant adverse impacts on the City's tax base, job and business development, and housing values.

Figure 5. Population Breakdown by Age, 2010

Source: US Census Bureau



However, recently the Cohoes has experienced a growing resurgence, with a population increase of 4.2 percent between 2000 and 2010, helping stabilize the City and provide an improved outlook for future growth. Some of this population gain can likely be attributed to the rebirth of residential development in Cohoes, including the construction of several housing developments and the renovation of the Harmony Mills complex to include a significant number of loft-style residential units.

It is also important to understand the age breakdown of an area's residents as different age groups requires a unique set of municipal services. A community with a large proportion of young families, for example, may require more youth recreational opportunities and day care



facilities; whereas communities characterized by larger numbers of senior citizens may realize increased demand for public transportation, medical services and senior-related recreational activities.

As is depicted in Figure 5, the age breakdown for the City of Cohoes and Albany County follow very similar trends, with the majority of residents being under the age of 40 (51 percent in the City and 49 percent in the County). With approximately 22 percent of the population under age 22, additional pressure will be placed on municipal services typically directed towards young families and the youth.

To determine the number of residents living in the Study Area, block group data was collected from the U.S. Census Bureau for both 2000 and 2010. As can be seen in Figure 6, five census block groups are wholly or partially located within the Study Area (note that a sixth block group traverses the very northern tip of the Study Area but only encompasses commercial properties and was thus not included). For most of the Study Area, census block group boundaries match-up with those of the Study Area. The only area where census block groups extend beyond the Study Area boundary is in the northwest corner along Ontario Street. The largest extension outside of the Study Area is by Block Group 2 (Census Tract 129); a small portion of Block Group 2 (Census Tract 129) also reaches beyond the Study Area boundary. Fortunately, there are few residential parcels in those portions of the census block groups that extend beyond the Study Area. As such, these extensions should not skew the census data analysis results provided below.

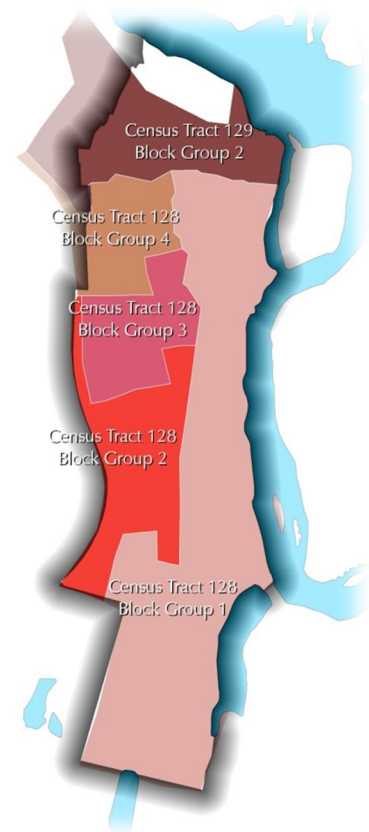


Figure 6. U.S. Census Block Groups in the Study Area

Between 2000 and 2010, the population residing in the Study Area increased by approximately 4 percent, from 4,600 people to 4,806 people. In terms of the age of Study Area residents, the age breakdown for the Study Area is very similar to that of the City as a whole. The following are a few key age-related statistics for the Study Area:

- Approximately 46 percent of the population is over the age of 40, up from 44 percent in 2000.
- School-aged children comprise 18 percent of the Study Area's residents, down from 25 percent in 2000.

- Block Group 2 (Census Tract 129), located in the northeastern portion of the Study Area, has a larger proportion of residents over the age of 40 (61 percent) than does the City (49 percent) or Study Area (45.9 percent) as a whole, up from 58 percent in 2000.

### *Housing Characteristics*

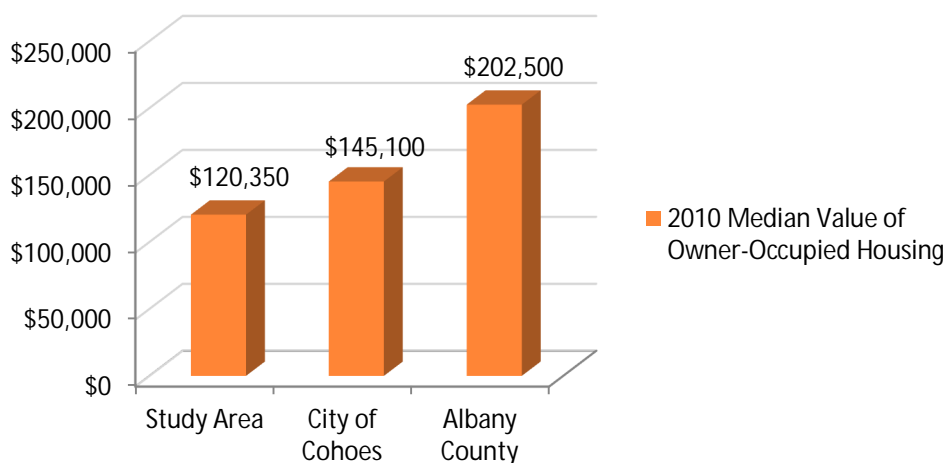
During the 20<sup>th</sup> century the City of Cohoes transitioned from an industrial, blue-collar city to that of a residential bedroom community serving the Capital District. This evolution has contributed to the presence of a variety of architectural styles and a diversity of housing types. While homes in the City date back to the 1730s (the Van Schaick Mansion was built between 1735 and 1755), most of the City's homes were built between 1930 and 1970 and thus represent the styles of that era. More recent housing developments include new loft-style apartments in the Harmony Mills complex and condominiums along portions of the Hudson River waterfront. Specific to the Study Area, housing styles include older row houses, single-family detached homes, multi-family homes, and apartment buildings.

### *Housing Values*

According to the 2010 American Community Survey, the median value for owner-occupied housing in the Study Area was \$120,350. Comparisons with the City of Cohoes indicate that Study Area owner-occupied housing values are only slightly lower than the City as a whole (see Figure 7), while considerably lower than those for Albany County.

Figure 7. Median Values for Owner-Occupied Housing, 2010

Source: US Census Bureau



## Housing Ownership

Although housing values in the Cohoes Boulevard Study Area indicate that the area is slightly more affordable than the City as a whole, the rate of owner-occupied units (17.8 percent) is considerably less than that of the City (38.5 percent; see Table 1). Within the Study Area, the highest rates of owner-occupancy occur south of Columbia Street, although even here the average rate of owner occupancy is only 35 percent, which is still lower than that of the City as a whole. The highest rates of rental-occupancy generally occur north of Ontario Street – 97 percent of the housing units in this area were renter-occupied in 2010.

Table 1. Housing Occupancy Characteristics, 2010

Source: US Census Bureau

Geographic Area	Total Housing Units	Vacant Units		Owner-Occupied Units		Renter-Occupied Units	
		Vacant Units	Percent of Total Housing Units	Owner-Occupied Units	Percent of Total Housing Units	Renter-Occupied Units	Percent of Total Housing Units
Study Area	2,730	372	13.6	485	17.8	1,873	68.6
City of Cohoes	8,394	927	11	3,234	38.5	4,233	50.4
Albany County	137,739	11,488	8.3	72,577	52.7	53,674	39.0

The availability of affordable and rental housing within the Study Area provides an opportunity to attract young families or singles that may be just starting out. Recent investments along Remsen Street have resulted in the renovation of many upper story apartments, with a heavy focus on artisan lofts. These modern residential units are attracting a host of new residents to the downtown business district. Additionally, many of the rental units in the Study Area are occupied by long-term renters. Long-term renters have a relatively high vested interest and therefore may act more like homeowners, taking greater care in maintaining their units/neighborhood.

It is important to note, however, that absentee landlords may facilitate the presence of nuisance properties. Although absentee landlords may not be a significant problem for the Study Area, the BOA process should focus on encouraging owner-occupancy to the extent possible, and identify policy areas that promote property maintenance and area revitalization where they are most needed.

## Vacancy Rates

In many instances, property values are often negatively impacted by the presence of vacant properties, which can degrade neighborhood aesthetics and attract crime. Not only do vacant properties threaten property values, but their presence often imposes higher costs on municipalities that may be forced to assume responsibility for maintenance, nuisance control and possible demolition costs.

Based on the 2010 U.S. Census, approximately 13.6 percent of all housing units in the Study Area are vacant, which is higher than the rates of vacancy in both the City of Cohoes and Albany County. Additionally, almost 40 percent of the City's vacant housing stock is located within the Study Area. Within the Study Area, vacancy rates are highest in the downtown business district and the areas between Columbia Street and George Street just south of the Central Business District. These two small areas contain just over 38 percent of all the vacant units in the Study Area.

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Study Area vacancy rates are highest in the downtown business district and the areas between Columbia Street and George Street just south of the Central Business District.

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Understanding the location of these vacant properties is an important component for developing the proper revitalization strategies for the Study Area. Specific to the Study Area, the City of Cohoes has selectively demolished several vacant and nuisance properties over the past decade. While there are many problems associated with vacant housing, the presence of vacant properties also provides an opportunity for the area to identify and pursue infill development opportunities. The presence of several contiguous vacant parcels may also be attractive to developers seeking to consolidate lands for larger projects. Re-urbanization efforts not only benefit area residents, but additionally discourage sprawl by guiding development within the urban core. Although re-use of properties may be limited by historic uses or existing site conditions, the BOA process can facilitate identification of suitable and context relevant redevelopment opportunities.

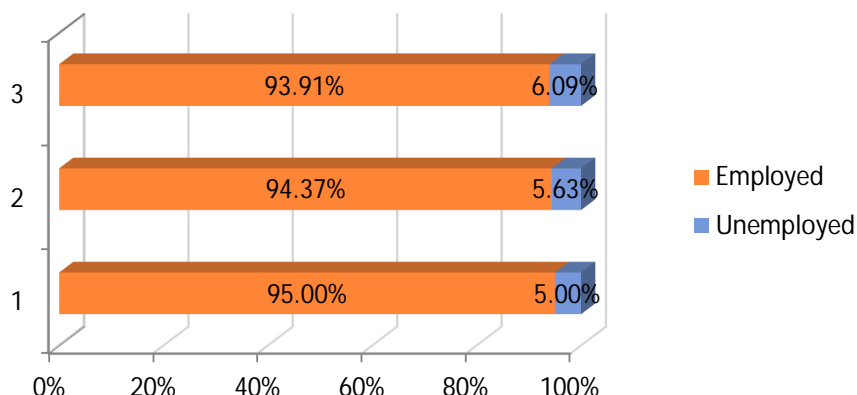
### *Employment, Occupation, and Income*

Most Upstate New York communities have gradually been transitioning from manufacturing to service-based economies. Understanding the employment and income characteristics of the City of Cohoes lends insight into the community's economic well-being, as well as emerging markets and local economic niches on which the City can capitalize. Employment and income characteristics provide insight into the ability of individuals and households to invest in their community.

According to the 2010 American Community Survey, approximately 67 percent of the Study Area population was in the labor force, compared with 66.0 percent for the City and 64.7 percent for the County. It should be noted, however, that 43.8 percent of the Study Area population is considered not to be in the labor force; of those individuals in the labor force, 95.0 percent were employed in 2010. This rate is slightly higher than the City of Cohoes (94.4 percent) and slightly higher than Albany County (93.9 percent) (see Figure 8). Data provided by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, however, indicates that county unemployment has been modestly increasing since 2000, with the greatest increases occurring in 2008 and 2009. The national recession that began in late 2007 has had a significant impact of employment, wages,

and the cost of living throughout the United States, and its impacts are recognizable in the Study Area (note that this data is not available for the City of Cohoes or the Study Area, but the county-level data provides an indication as to what could be occurring).

Figure 8. Labor Force Employment Status (16 years and older), 2010  
Source: US Census Bureau



Over a quarter (25.7 percent) of individuals within the Study Area are employed in the Education, Health and Social Services fields according to the 2010 American Community Survey. Education, Health and Social Services is also the largest sector for the City of Cohoes and Albany County. The following sectors also comprise a significant percentage of Study Area employees:

- Retail Trade (16.9 percent);
- Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, Accommodation and Food Services (10.8 percent);
- Public Administration (9.9 percent); and
- Manufacturing (9.2 percent)

### *Income Levels*

According to the 2010 American Community Survey, the median household income in the Study Area was \$30,290, which was almost 27 percent lower than the median household income for the City of Cohoes as a whole (see Table 2). Within the Study Area there is some variability in terms of median household income, with values ranging from a high of \$33,125 to a low of \$27,454. Generally speaking, the lowest median household incomes can be found in the northern portions of the Study Area, increasing as one moves south.

Table 2. Median Income, 2010

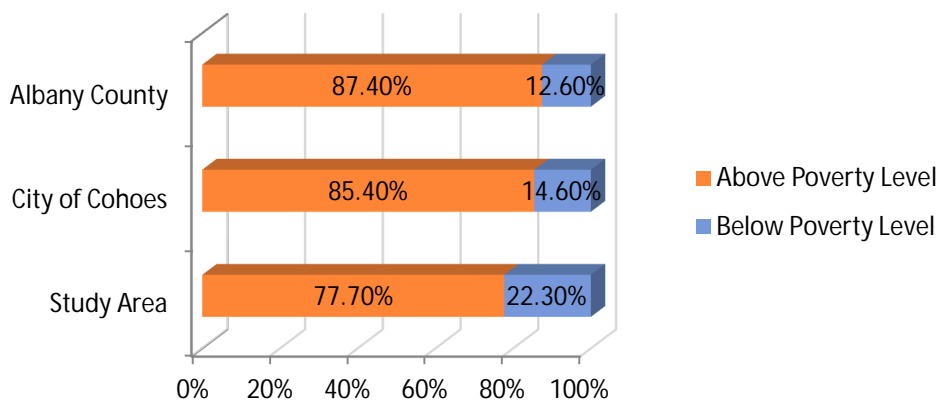
Source: US Census Bureau

Geographic Area	Median Household Income
Study Area	\$30,290
City of Cohoes	\$41,443
Albany County	\$56,090

Given the relatively low median incomes within the Study Area, poverty rates in the Study Area are considerably higher than those for the City of Cohoes and Albany County (see Figure 9). As with median incomes, poverty rates vary considerably within the Study Area and follow the same geographic pattern as do median incomes – poverty rates increase considerably as one moves north across the Study Area.

Figure 9. Poverty Statistics, 2010

Source: US Census Bureau



## KEY FINDINGS: COMMUNITY SETTING

1. Both the City of Cohoes and the Cohoes Boulevard BOA experienced a 4 percent population increase between 2000 and 2010, a greater increase than in both Albany County and New York State.
2. The median value of owner-occupied housing units within the Study Area is significantly lower than the remainder of the City.
3. The Study Area possesses a housing vacancy rate of 13.7 percent and contains approximately 40 percent of all vacant housing units located within the City of Cohoes.

## 3.2 Existing Land Use

Understanding existing land use patterns is important when considering potential redevelopment scenarios for the Cohoes Boulevard BOA Study Area. Evaluating this information assists in the identification of how proposed development can best fit into the existing urban fabric, and identifies where zoning changes might be required to realize the shared vision for the BOA Study Area.

According to parcel data obtained from the City of Cohoes, the Cohoes Boulevard BOA comprises 1,320 parcels encompassing approximately 386 acres of land (lands committed to public road rights-of-way and surface waters are not designated land uses and thus not included in these totals, see Map 3 and Table 3). The following section describes the land uses in the Cohoes Boulevard BOA Study Area, organized according to categories defined by the New York State Office of Real Property Services (NYSORPS).

- *Residential* – Residential land uses comprise the largest class of properties in the Cohoes Boulevard BOA Study Area both in terms of the number of parcels and total area, with 663 parcels (50 percent of the Study Area) covering 79.6 acres (21 percent of the Study Area). The largest concentration of residential land uses within the Study Area is found west of Saratoga Street and Remsen Street. As with many older cities in the northeastern U.S., there are numerous residential units located in and around the central business district, particularly along Main Street. Almost one-half (45 percent) of all residential land uses are two-family units, which are fairly evenly distributed amongst all residential uses. As previously noted, a number of housing renovation projects have been occurring along Remsen Street, particularly upper story apartments. Additionally, the Cohoes Hotel is currently being considered for conversion to artisan housing.

Table 3. Current Land Use

Property Classification	Property Classification Code	Cohoes Boulevard BOA Study Area			
		No. of Parcels	Percent of Total	Acres	Percent Cover
Residential	200s	663	50.2%	79.6	20.6%
Vacant	300s	181	13.7%	40.4	10.5%
Commercial	400s	246	18.6%	66.3	17.2%
Recreation & Entertainment	500s	7	0.5%	9.6	2.5%
Community Services	600s	55	4.2%	42.7	11.1%
Industrial	700s	8	0.6%	49.3	12.8%
Public Services	800s	14	1.1%	19.4	5.0%
Wild, Conservation, Forest, & Parks	900s	7	0.5%	11.6	3.0%
No Data	--	139	10.5%	67.1	17.4%
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>1,320</b>		<b>386.0</b>	



- *Vacant* – Vacant lands represent 11 percent, or 40 acres, of the land area within the Study Area. The largest of these areas is located along the Mohawk River waterfront, north of Dyke Avenue. These two parcels encompass 8.8 acres, which is approximately 25 percent of all the vacant land in the Cohoes Boulevard BOA Study Area. In total, there are 14 parcels covering 15.3 acres located along the Mohawk River waterfront, representing significant redevelopment opportunities for the City to explore as part of this BOA project. Aside from the waterfront, there are vacant parcels scattered throughout the Study Area, providing additional opportunities for small infill development projects.
- *Commercial* – The Cohoes Boulevard BOA Study Area includes 246 parcels classified as commercial properties, with 151 of these classified as apartment buildings or mixed-used commercial buildings with residential apartments. The majority of these apartment and mixed-use properties are located in the central business district, particularly along Remsen Street and Main Street. The juxtaposition of these mixed-use commercial/residential areas alongside single-family and multi-family residences creates the City's traditional urban feel. There are other pockets of commercial land located within the Study Area, including several large parcels along Saratoga Street and the Mohawk River waterfront. The parcels in these areas are classified as storage, warehouse, and distribution facilities. It is in these areas west of Saratoga Street, which are dominated by transportation infrastructure and large-scale commercial development, where the traditional urban character and form of the City begins to break down.
- *Industrial* – Despite only eight parcels being classified as industrial, this land use type covers 49 acres, or almost 13 percent of the Study Area. Of these 49 acres of industrial lands, approximately 34 acres are owned by the Norlite Corporation (a ceramic aggregate manufacturer) and located in the southwest corner of the Cohoes Boulevard BOA Study Area along Saratoga Street. A second large industrial parcel – Mohawk Paper Mills, Inc. – is located at the intersection of Saratoga Street and Dyke Avenue and covers 6.1 acres.
- *Recreation and Entertainment* – There are seven parcels classified as Recreation and Entertainment within the Study Area, all of which are classified as social organizations. According to NYSORPS, this land use category includes those organizations whose primary purpose is social activities for members (e.g., Elks, Moose, Eagles, and Veterans' Posts). Covering 10 acres, this is the smallest land use classification in the Study Area. The largest property is the St. Michaels Community Center (7.4 acres), located along Linden Street adjacent to the Mohawk River. The remaining social organizations within the Study Area include the Knights of Columbus on Remsen Street and Cohoes Rod and Gun Club on Lincoln Avenue.
- *Community Services* – The Community Service category includes facilities for education, religious assembly, health services, government buildings and properties, and cultural



facilities. This category encompasses only 43 acres, or eight percent of the total land area. The abandoned cemetery (Calvary Cemetery) is located at the intersection of Bridge Street and Lincoln Avenue in the southern portion of the Study Area; Remaining Community Services land uses are located in the northern portion of the BOA.

- *Public Services* – Public Services land uses are predominantly infrastructure and utility-related operations, such as communications, transportation, waste disposal, and energy. Fourteen parcels on 19 acres within the Study Area are classified as Public Service. The vast majority of these parcels (16.4 acres) are further classified as Ceiling Railroad properties and are located along the active railroad tracks running down the center of the Study Area.
- *Conservation and Parks* – Specific to the Study Area, lands within this use classification cover approximately 12 acres (3 percent of the Study Area) and include State Owned Public Parks, Recreation Areas, and Other Multiple Uses and City/Town/Village Public Parks and Recreation Areas. Of these 12 acres, 9.8 acres are part of the City-owned park located between Lincoln Avenue, George Street, Central Avenue, and Spring Street. This park offers one baseball/softball diamond and a large amount of open space. The remaining 0.3 acre is owned by the NYS Department of Transportation. Additionally, the western portion of the Study Area is bounded by the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail, which connects to more than 170 miles of trails in the region (see Section 3.9 for additional information on the trail system).

## KEY FINDINGS: LAND USE

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1. Over half (53 percent) of the Study Area is comprised of densely-developed residential properties.
  2. Mixed-use development along Remsen Street has caused a resurgence along Remsen Street and Main Street that should not only be fostered along these corridors, but also emulated on other streets within the central business district.
  3. Properties along the Mohawk River waterfront are generally vacant or underutilized, with non water-dependent uses.
  4. The close proximity of heavy industrial development (Norlite) negatively impacts dense residential development (Saratoga Sites) in the southern portion of the Study Area.
-

### 3.3 Zoning Districts

The City of Cohoes is divided into nine zoning districts, of which six are present in the Study Area. The zoning code and district map for the City were updated in 2007. Map 4 identifies the zoning designations of properties within the Study Area, while Table 4 provides the number of parcels and the total acres within each district. A brief description of each of these six districts can be found below:

- *C-1: Office/Retail Commercial* – The C-1 District assures that appropriate opportunities are provided for areas primarily dedicated to office and retail use. Within the C-1 District, particular attention should be paid to facade treatments and signage, pedestrian circulation and, if applicable, building location and vehicle circulation so that the existing development pattern remains intact. This district is located primarily in the northeast corner of the Study Area, between Mohawk Street, Bridge Avenue and the Mohawk River. A small area is also located along the southern edge of the Study Area, situated between SR 787 and SR 32.
- *I-1: Industrial* – The I-1 District identifies areas best suited for industrial-related uses. Industrial areas should be easily accessed by major roadways and/or rail and have appropriate buffers from residential and commercial uses. This district covers the largest amount of land in the Study Area, the entirety of which is at its southern end below Dyke Avenue.
- *MFR: Multi-Family Residential* – This district provides an area for mixed or multifamily residential development at a density consistent with the surrounding residential uses. In existing mixed use areas of the MFR District, and subject to a special use permit, small commercial uses may also be appropriate, generally in existing buildings. Generally, these areas are located near commercial/service centers, and provide a transition between residential and commercial/industrial areas. Specific to the Study Area, this district encompasses 55 acres along its western edge, south of Columbia Street and west of Main Street.
- *MU-1: Mixed-Use* – The MU-1 District provides for the location of shops, services, small workplaces, civic and residential buildings central to a neighborhood or grouping of neighborhoods and within walking distance of dwellings. First floor residential uses in mixed use structures or structures that were originally designed to have retail uses on the first floor are prohibited. This district encompasses most of the central business district and also extends south along Remsen Street and Saratoga Street.
- *MU-2: Waterfront Mixed-Use* – The purpose of this district is to provide for the location of shops, services, waterfront related services, offices, small workplaces, and civic and residential buildings central to the city's waterfront. All private development, where applicable, in the Waterfront Mixed Use District is to include public access directly adjacent to the water in the form of a 50-foot easement, which may be waived by the Planning Board

in cases where the City does not feel access is appropriate for reasons of public health, safety or welfare.

- *Parks* – This district includes existing neighborhood and regional parks, including George Street Park located between Lincoln Avenue, George Street, Central Avenue, and Spring Street, Silliman Park across from City Hall and a linear section of land along the railroad corridor that forms the Study Area's western boundary.

The City's zoning was updated to reflect recommendations made during recent planning efforts and initiatives, and seeks to preserve traditional neighborhoods, revitalize downtown, encourage an appropriate mix of uses, and reinvigorate the waterfront.

Table 4. Current Zoning

Zoning District	Cohoes Boulevard BOA Study Area		
	Parcels	Acres	Percent Cover
Office/Retail Commercial (C-1)	120	34.4	10.1%
Industrial (I-1)	45	75.3	22.2%
Residential- Multi-family (MFR)	380	55.2	16.3%
Mixed Use (MU-1)	644	82.4	24.3%
Waterfront Mixed Use (MU-2)	86	55.7	16.4%
Parks	7	16.8	5.0%
Right-of-Way	18	19.7	5.8%
TOTAL	1,300	339.6	

## KEY FINDINGS: ZONING

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1. Existing zoning allows for Mixed Use development within the central business district, as well as along the Mohawk River waterfront.
  2. The City of Cohoes Zoning Code includes a requirement for public access to the Mohawk River for all private development occurring within the Waterfront Mixed Use (MU-2) district, ensuring public access to the river where appropriate.
  3. Industrial zoning in the southern portion of the Study Area permits residential land uses that conflict with existing heavy industrial development.
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### 3.4 Brownfields

One of the primary objectives of the NYS Brownfield Opportunity Area program is to address blighted properties that are or have been impacted by the presence of brownfields. Brownfields are properties whose redevelopment may be complicated by the real or perceived presence of contamination. Typically these include industrial or commercial properties that may have compromised the area's environmental integrity through their use. A brownfield site may have an active commercial or industrial operation, or may be a vacant or abandoned property. Impacts of brownfields can be far-reaching, affecting the community at-large by lowering property values, discouraging reinvestment, or by imposing health and safety threats on the surrounding community.

Despite these challenges, brownfields also provide the opportunity for community redevelopment. When assessed in a strategic manner, as afforded by the BOA program, they enable communities to develop area-wide redevelopment strategies. Development of existing brownfields additionally removes development pressures from greenfield areas that may be present in outlying suburban areas. One benefit of redeveloping brownfields before greenfields involves stormwater runoff. The Environmental Protection Agency estimates that redevelopment of brownfields may reduce stormwater runoff 47 percent to 62 percent compared to greenfield development scenarios, which introduce impervious surfaces to formerly

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The inventory is intended to provide the City with a reference tool of historic land use and environmental condition so that it may easily identify next steps for properties when redevelopment is proposed. Recommendations stemming from the exercise are pertinent to a change in land use or ownership, and are not intended to suggest necessary actions on the part of existing land owners who are actively and appropriately using their properties. This research serves as one layer of analysis that should be taken into context with strategic sites and existing land use to refine site specific recommendations.

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permeable areas.

Community benefits associated with brownfield redevelopment are increasingly evident as projects are initiated and completed. Environmental site assessments are conducted and remediation, if determined necessary, is completed. This process is accomplished through Phase I, Phase II and Phase III Environmental Site Assessments (ESA's, see sidebar above), as determined necessary. As properties become shovel-ready, developers are eligible for tax credits and other financial benefits. Redevelopment may additionally encourage reuse of surrounding properties.

#### 3.4.1 Methodology

Each site within the Cohoes Boulevard BOA was evaluated for the likelihood of environmental impacts. The purpose is to create an inventory of sites that identifies known or potential environmental impacts and categorize each site according to the potential severity of contamination or other environmental impacts. These sites may be active and viable businesses, new developments, or vacant and derelict properties.

To identify potential brownfield sites, research was conducted on the historic use and potential environmental status of each parcel located within the Cohoes Boulevard Study Area. Facility and site information, maintained at both the state and federal level, was reviewed to determine preliminary site conditions. Information was obtained from five main sources including:

- *Spills Incident Database (NYS DEC)* – Maintained by the NYS DEC, this contains a listing of chemical and petroleum spills

## ENVIRONMENTAL SITE ASSESSMENTS

### Curbside Assessments

Completed as part of this investigation, these are visual assessments that are intended to identify the types of activities taking place on a site and characteristics of a site that allude to prior environmental impact (i.e. the presence of groundwater monitoring wells).

### Phase I Environmental Site Assessment

A Phase I Environmental Site Assessment is a voluntary, non-intrusive investigation into historical uses of the site and visible evidence of environmental conditions based on publicly available records and sources. Generally this phase consists of:

- site inspection;
- interviews of site owners;
- review of available documents and databases; and
- consideration of potential impacts from adjacent properties.

### Phase II Environmental Site Assessment

If a Phase I establishes that there is a recognized environmental condition, a Phase II ESA may be conducted to evaluate the potential impacts. Typically this includes sampling of environmental media which may include soil, air, groundwater and surface water.

### Phase III Environmental Site Assessment

Based on the Phase II report, a Phase III may be determined necessary. A Phase III consists of:

- design and implementation of remediation measures; and
- necessary reports and permits to achieve cleanup of the site to site specific standards.

throughout New York State, dating back to 1978. Information includes the type and/or volume of contaminant spilled, media impacted, and the status of the spill.

- *Remedial Site Database (NYS DEC)* – This database contains listing of all properties that are currently enlisted in one of the DEC’s remediation programs. The DEC programs are distinguished by property ownership, type of assistance and level of cleanup required.
- *Bulk Storage Database (NYS DEC)* – This database contains information on all Bulk Storage Facilities within New York State including petroleum bulk storage, chemical bulk storage, and major oil storage facilities. Facilities are classified by the volume of substance stored on-site.
- *Envirofacts Database (US EPA)* – Information contained within this database is used to identify whether or not a facility is certified to handle hazardous waste. The EPA utilizes specific testing methods to determine whether or not material is hazardous.
- *Property Assessment Database (City of Cohoes)* – This database contains the New York State Office of Real Property Services (NYSORPS) land use classes, which identify the types of activities that occur on individual properties.

Sites listed in any of the NYS DEC or EPA databases often warrant further attention because of documented historic contamination, or because the nature of the facility is such that the potential for environmental contamination is increased.

A visual site assessment was conducted for each property identified through preliminary site review to gain a better understanding of the types of activities taking place on each property. A total of 57 sites were identified as candidates for curbside

## BROWNFIELD QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE

### “Closed” Spill Event:

- Has been adequately addressed, according to the NYS DEC, and no further actions are required.
- In some cases, this does not indicate that the site has been fully remediated.
- A spill may be closed for administrative reasons, such as multiple reporting of the same incident.
- The NYS DEC retains the right to require additional remedial work in the future if it determines further action is necessary.

### “Active” Spill Event:

- Indicates that actions are necessary prior to acceptance for closure (i.e. groundwater monitoring or soil removal and disposal).

Chemical Bulk Storage Facility: storage of any of the more than 1,000 chemicals identified by the DEC.

Major Oil Storage Facility: storage of more than 400,000 gallons of product.

Petroleum Bulk Storage Facility: has combined capacity of more than 1,100 gallons.

Hazardous Waste: The EPA has specific procedures in place for identifying hazardous wastes, which it defines as any waste that is potentially hazardous to health or the environment.

Large Quantity Hazardous Waste Generator: Any facility that is certified to generate more than 1,000 kilograms of hazardous waste per month.

assessments. According to the latest NYSORPS data, only five of these properties are currently identified as vacant. Findings from the curbside assessment were incorporated into a GIS database to create an interactive site profile form. The database is designed to streamline the City's understanding of property-specific information.

Brownfield properties located within the Cohoes Boulevard Study Area are illustrated on Map 5 and described further below. Site Profile Forms for priority sites within the BOA are included in Appendix H, with Site Profile Forms for additional sites included in Appendix K.

### 3.4.2 Summary of Brownfield Sites

#### *Overview*

Upon completion of database research and visual site assessments, brownfield sites were categorized according to three levels:

LEVEL 3: Properties were generally considered to be a Level 3 Environmental Site if the environmental history of the site is minor and not anticipated to have significantly impacted the property.

LEVEL 2: Properties were generally identified as Level 2 Environmental Sites if they were listed in an environmental database, if prior use was unknown, if there was visual evidence of environmental impact or if groundwater wells were present on the property.

LEVEL 1: Sites that are considered Level 1 Environmental Sites have multiple environmental concerns and/or rigorous land uses that suggest that contamination is likely to be or have been present on-site.

#### *Level 3 Environmental Sites*

None of the sites listed in this category warrant any additional environmental investigation prior to reuse, and therefore are not discussed in further detail.

#### *Level 2 Environmental Sites*

Thirty-one of the 57 parcels identified for curbside assessments were categorized as Level 2 sites, comprising 54 percent of all properties that received curbside assessments. Typically, these properties may be considered eligible for Phase 1 or Phase 2 Environmental Site Assessments during BOA Step 3 if their redevelopment is anticipated as part of Master Plan implementation.

#### **SPILL EVENTS**

Within the Study Area, 19 of the Level 2 sites have historic spills where the quantity of material spilled is unknown. Only one of these properties is considered vacant, according to the latest NYSORPS data. This property is a sliver of land located at 35 Mechanic Street, adjacent to a



residential property. Each of these sites with history of a spill event would most likely require a Phase 1 ESA prior to any redevelopment.

#### BULK STORAGE FACILITIES

Seven sites were classified as Level 2 sites due to listing as petroleum bulk storage facilities. If storage tanks are not properly maintained, leaks or spills may occur, impacting soil and possibly groundwater.

#### HAZARDOUS WASTE GENERATORS

Two properties were designated as Level 2 sites because of their status as hazardous waste generators. The properties located at 625 Saratoga Street and 18 New Cortland Street are listed as Conditionally Exempt Small Quantity Generators (CESQG). To qualify as a CESQG, a site must generate less than 27.5 gallons (220 pounds) of hazardous waste per month, and store no more than 275 gallons of hazardous waste on-site. Hazardous wastes are those that are dangerous to public health or the environment, as defined by the EPA through sampling and testing methods. These sites are subject to stringent federal requirements to mitigate environmental impacts. Although listing as a CESQG does not indicate hazardous waste was generated, the facility has the necessary certification to undertake activities that may result in hazardous waste.

Curbside assessments indicate that the property at 625 Saratoga Street is currently a vacant gravel lot with evidence of a prior structure. A printing business and distribution facility are present at 18 New Cortland Street, though visibility of the site from the street was limited. A Phase I ESA would be required to more thoroughly identify the historic use of each of these sites and to determine if a Phase 2 would be warranted prior to any site redevelopment.

#### *Level 1 Environmental Sites*

Prior to any redevelopment, all of the sites listed as Level 1 sites will require a Phase 1 Environmental Site Assessment (ESA), and many will likely require a Phase 2 ESA. Findings from a Phase 1 ESA will indicate which sites are likely to need more extensive environmental investigations. Recommendations from a Phase 2 ESA will generally identify whether remediation, a soil management plan, or other mitigation measures are necessary prior to site redevelopment.

Sites categorized as Level 1 Environmental Sites include industrial uses with known site history (i.e. service garage, prior dry cleaner, etc.) or those with evident environmental concerns. In addition, sites listed as Large Quantity Hazardous Waste Generators, active spill locations, or as NYS DEC environmental sites with actions required are considered Level 1 sites. Sites that are determined to have already been remediated will not warrant any additional environmental investigations. In addition to being listed in one of the environmental databases with criteria that warrants additional investigation, sites were considered Level 1 if the following observations were made:



- Active petroleum or bulk storage facility, not in compliance with regulations.
- Petroleum Bulk Storage (PBS) or Chemical Bulk Storage (CBS) tanks not registered or abandoned. *Petroleum Bulk Storage (PBS) and Chemical Bulk Storage (CBS) facilities are parcels that currently possess, or possessed in the past, aboveground and/or underground storage tanks for the purpose of storing chemical and petroleum products.*
- Leaking drums observed.
- Possible on-site discharge of chemicals or sewage.
- Extensive on-site fill or dumping activity.

Twenty-one sites were identified as Level 1 sites, constituting 37 percent of all properties that received curbside assessments. Many of these properties were identified in multiple databases, indicating that rigorous industrial or commercial activities have taken place at the site. See Table 5 for a complete summary.

Table 5. Level 1 Environmental Sites

Address	Site Name or Owner	Land Use (bold indicates vacant land use class)	Hazardous Waste Generator			Spill Event History	Bulk Storage Facility	DEC Remediation Program	Recommended Action if a Redevelopment Opportunity	Rationale for High Concern Ranking
601 Saratoga St	Hess Station	Office/Retail Commercial	X	X	X		Phase 1			Listing as a hazardous waste generator and as a bulk storage facility indicates the handling of large volumes of material that are dangerous to public health and the surrounding environment. In addition, all of these sites have history of spill
465 Saratoga St	Mohawk Paper Mills Inc	Office/Retail Commercial	X	X	X		Phase 1 & Phase 2			
461 Saratoga St	Mohawk Paper Mills Inc	Office/Retail Commercial	X	X	X		Phase 1 & Phase 2			
628 Saratoga St	Norlite Corporation	Industrial	X	X	X		Phase 1 & Phase 2			
628 Saratoga St	Norlite Corporation	Industrial	X	X	X		Phase 1 & Phase 2			
41 Euclid St	Private Owner	Waterfront Mixed Use	X	X			Phase 1			This site has listing as a hazardous waste generator and has historic spill events, indicating the likelihood for future spills to occur and the potential to mis-handle hazardous material.
8 Linden St	Private Owner	Office/Retail Commercial	X				X	Phase 1 & Phase 2		This site is enlisted in a DEC remediation program, indicating known contamination on-site.
114 Saratoga St	Berdar Auto Service	Mixed Use		X	X		Phase 1			Bulk storage tanks require a higher level of regulation due to the volume of contaminants being handled. If a site is not in compliance with NSY DEC regulations, the threat for spills is higher. The history of spills at these sites additionally indicates the likelihood that on-site
112 Saratoga St	Berdar Auto Service	Mixed Use		X	X		Phase 1			
230 Remsen St	Langley Service Station	Mixed Use		X	X		Phase 1 & Phase 2			
211 Ontario St	Listed as Cohoes DPW	Office/Retail Commercial		X	X		Phase 1 & Phase 2			
465 Saratoga St	Mohawk Paper Mills Inc	Industrial		X	X		Phase 1 & Phase 2			This history of multiple spill events at each of these sites indicates that activities may be taken place that will result in future spills.
94 Columbia St	Stewart's	Mixed Use		X	X		Phase 1 & Phase 2			
628 Saratoga St	Norlite Corp	Industrial		X			Phase 1 & Phase 2			
3 White St	Private Owner	Mixed Use		X			Phase 1 & Phase 2			
Not listed	Rite Aid	Mixed Use		X			Phase 1 & Phase 2			
Sandusky St	Albany County	Mixed Use					X	Phase 1 & Phase 2		This site is enlisted in a DEC remediation program, indicating known contamination on-site.
191 Main St	Unknown	Mixed Use		X				Phase 1		This site is an active automotive service site with a closed spill event. The potential for contamination on-site is high due to the nature of activities.
Linden St	St Michael CC Inc	Office/Retail Commercial						Phase 1 & Phase 2		This site has groundwater well clusters throughout the property, indicating that environmental evaluation and possibly remediation is already being conducted.
Whitehall St	City Of Cohoes	Waterfront Mixed Use						Phase 1 & Phase 2		Property is a former landfill with a visible berm hill. It is unknown the type of waste that was disposed of at this location. Further environmental investigation is warranted.
1 Whitehall St	Nathan H Kelman Inc	Waterfront Mixed Use						Phase 1 & Phase 2		Property is a scrapyard that may handle products containing materials that are harmful to public health and the environment. A Phase II ESA would be recommended to better identify contamination that may be present.

### SPILL EVENT SITES

Fifteen of the 21 Level 1 Environmental Sites have had multiple documented petroleum spills that have impacted soil, air, and, in many cases, groundwater. These sites are located throughout the Study Area and are generally larger commercial and industrial properties. Many of the sites have had multiple spills that indicate the potential for contamination.

The highest number of spills was documented for the City of Cohoes Department of Public Works, Mohawk Paper Mills Inc. and Norlite Corporation. Norlite Corporation, which is located on Saratoga Street, manufactures ceramic materials and has more than 25 spill events, some of which are still active. Likewise, the Mohawk Mills Paper Co. and Department of Public Works sites both have a history of spill events that have impacted soil and surface water.

### BULK STORAGE FACILITIES

Two of the 11 Level 1 Environmental Sites are unregulated petroleum bulk storage facilities, indicating that tanks have been closed and removed. The property located at 94 Columbia Street is currently a Stewart's convenience store, but was used as a service station in the past. Historically there were four underground storage tanks (USTs) that have since been closed and removed. This site would require both a Phase I and Phase II ESA prior to be converted to a different use. The second unregulated property is Langley Automotive, an active service station, located at 230 Remsen Street. The pump pad appeared to be intact during site visits and several vent pipes were visible throughout the property. No wells are present to indicate that environmental investigation has been initiated on the property. A Phase I and II ESA would be required if this site were to be redeveloped.

### HAZARDOUS WASTE GENERATORS

Six sites located within the Cohoes Boulevard BOA are classified as hazardous waste generators. The EPA classifies hazardous waste generators by the volume of hazardous waste produced and requires waste to be treated on-site, off-site, or arranged for off-site disposal. Waste that is characterized as hazardous must be disposed of at certified landfills. Within New York State, the only landfill certified to accept hazardous waste is located in Niagara Falls, NY.

Three of the six sites are Large Quantity Hazardous Waste Generators, which are certified to generate more than 1,000 kilograms of hazardous waste per month. Two of the sites are associated with Norlite Corporation. The third large quantity hazardous waste generator is located at 8 Linden Avenue and is a former manufactured gas plant (MGP) site that is part of NYS DEC's Voluntary Cleanup Program. Each of these sites would require a Phase I and Phase II ESA. The status of environmental investigation underway at Linden Avenue is discussed further in the following section.

The remaining sites are classified as Conditionally Exempt Small Quantity Hazardous Waste Generators. These sites are associated with Mohawk Paper Mills Inc. and the Hess Corporation. The nature of activities on each property is such that a Phase I and likely Phase II ESA would be required if these sites were to be redeveloped.

### *NYS DEC Remedial Sites*

Two sites located within the Cohoes Boulevard BOA currently participate in NYS DEC remedial programs. Both sites are former or existing MGP sites and are enlisted in the Voluntary Cleanup Program. Byproducts from coal gas production are likely of concern at these locations.

- *Site 1: 8 Linden Avenue – Former MGP Site*

This site is located on Linden Street near Route 787 North. The Mohawk River borders the site on the east, and Route 787 forms the western boundary. The property is currently vacant, and is surrounded primarily by residential properties. A Remedial Investigation (RI) and Supplemental RI program were completed by early 2007 to delineate contamination at the site. Data gaps required additional investigation at the site and a comprehensive RI report was anticipated during the fall of 2009. Known site contamination includes polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) and volatile organic compounds benzene, toluene, ethylbenzene and xylene (BTEX). There are known exceedences of both PAHs and BTEXs in the soil and groundwater at the site. The river is additionally being evaluated to assess potential impacts from site contamination. Depending on the level of on-site remediation, it is likely that environmental easements will be placed on the property severely limiting the potential redevelopment of the property for residential or commercial uses.

The site's strategic location along the Mohawk River and proximity to downtown Cohoes presents an opportunity for a waterfront park with canoe and kayak access to the whitewater run that is located along the eastern boundary of the property.

- *Site 2: NM Cohoes – Sargent Street MGP*

The Sargent Street site is a vacant property located near the intersection of Sargent Street and White Street. The property operated as an MGP site from 1854 to 1870. The site was added to National Grid's multi-site Consent Order beginning December 14, 2009. To date, no site investigations have been completed, however a site characterization is planned. It is likely that significant levels of PAHs and BTEXs may be found in the soil or groundwater based on historic site use. In addition, it is anticipated that coal tar may be present on site. Once site investigation is completed, recommendations for site remediation will be developed and implemented. It may be necessary to impose environmental easements following remediation. These easements are generally used to restrict future land uses or to require engineering controls for the protection of both public health and the environment.

Contingent on effective remediation and any environmental easements that may be necessary, the Sargent Street property is a potential candidate for residential redevelopment to capitalize on the existing demand in Cohoes for newer townhouse construction within close proximity to the City's central business district.

### *Community Identified Sites*

In addition to sites listed in one of the NYS DEC or EPA databases, the community identified four additional sites known or suspected to have been environmentally impacted. Two of these sites are contiguous sites located in the eastern portion of the Study Area. The third site is located to the north on Linden Street. These three sites are also considered vacant or underutilized, providing a much greater potential for redevelopment. The fourth site, also in the northern portion of the Study Area, is an active business located on the corner of New Cortland Street and Route 32 (Saratoga Street). As an active business, no environmental investigations are recommended at this time.

- *Site 3: Linden Street*

This property is owned by St. Michael's Catholic Church, and is currently a vacant property that appears to have been excavated, adjacent to the Cohoes MGP site. Clusters of groundwater wells were visible throughout the site, which generally indicates that shallow and deep groundwater is being monitored on-site. In addition, floor slabs were visible remnants on the property. It is unclear whether or not remediation on-site has been completed. The site is being investigated as part of the Cohoes MGP site remediation project.

- *Site 4: Whitehall Street – Former Landfill*

The community identified this property located at Whitehall Street as a former landfill. The site is located east of State Route 787, west of the Mohawk River and between the Cohoes Safe Storage Facility and the NHK Scrap Recycling Facility. A berm hill located behind a fence line was observed on-site, however the site was poorly visible from the road. The extension of Whitehall Street that leads to the landfill is no longer visible.

A Phase I ESA was conducted on the property in the summer of 2012, which is included in Appendix I. The uncertainty of the types of materials disposed of while the site was an active landfill indicate that a Phase II ESA would be required if the site were to be targeted for redevelopment. A Phase II ESA is recommended for the investigation, design and remediation of the landfill including an evaluation of potential impacts to groundwater and other environmental media.

- *Site 3: 1 Whitehall Street – NHKelman Recycling Facility*

This property is located adjacent to the former Cohoes Landfill and is an active scrap yard. The scrapping of materials of unknown composition has the potential to release contaminants such as poly-chlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), heavy metals, or petroleum based compounds onto the site. This site would warrant a Phase II ESA if redevelopment were to become feasible, and future uses may be limited depending on the type and level of contamination that may be discovered.

- *Site 4: 8 Saratoga Street – Sheltertherm*

This property is currently owned and actively operated by Sheltertherm, a homebuilding business that uses the site to produce expanded polystyrene products for home insulation, molds for concrete pours and ceiling tiles. Intensive industrial use of the property dates back to the mid 1800's, when a foundry operated on the property. The property consists of a large brick/block manufacturing facility which borders the river and railroad tracks to the north of Saratoga Street. To the south of Saratoga Street are two vacant parcels where buildings once stood.

Past property uses indicate a probability of site contamination. In addition, the age of the building suggests the presence of asbestos and lead. A Phase I ESA was conducted on the property in the summer of 2012. A copy of the Phase I ESA is located in Appendix J. The Phase I ESA concluded that due to the property's rich industrial history, a Phase II ESA would be required if the site were to be targeted for redevelopment. If any building renovations were to take place, a thorough survey of suspect asbestos, lead, and PCB containing materials would have to be conducted. A fire on the property during the fall of 2012 may have resulted in additional on-site impacts, and a Phase II ESA would further aid in determining the type and extent of additional potential contamination caused by the fire.

While redevelopment of the property is limited due to the existing industrial use, the property owner has expressed an interest in expansion of the Sheltertherm operation on the existing property due to the success of the business within the past decade.

### 3.4.3 Brownfield Summary and Next Steps

If redevelopment is proposed on any site listed as Level 1, additional investigations would be required to determine whether or not contamination exists on the property at levels that would require remedial action prior to redevelopment. Many of the sites have multiple environmental threats, including status as a hazardous waste generator, history of spill events, and listing as a bulk storage facility. While many of the potential brownfield sites identified in this study are active, viable businesses, a number of vacant brownfield sites that have the potential to serve as revitalization catalysts are present within the Study Area. For sites with existing businesses, the intent of this investigation is to identify actions that would be recommended if site redevelopment or reuse becomes a feasible option in the future. Many of the recommendations include conducting a Phase I Environmental Site Assessment, which is a voluntary, non-intrusive investigation. Several sites may require Phase 2 investigation, which should be combined with a Phase 1 ESA, completed to industry standards. These subsequent environmental investigations are activities that can be funded through the implementation phase of the BOA program.

## KEY FINDINGS: BROWNFIELDS

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1. Several active commercial and industrial properties within the Study Area are identified as potential brownfields. If these businesses should cease on these properties in the future, additional investigations would be encouraged before future reuse is considered.
  2. Any site identified in Table 5 should have a complete ASTM Phase I Environmental Site Assessment (ESA) conducted prior to undertaking any future redevelopment initiatives.
  3. A number of large, vacant brownfield properties exist along the Mohawk River waterfront, including the St. Michael's property and the former Municipal Landfill. Upon investigation and remediation of contamination concerns, the location of these vacant properties along the Mohawk River make these sites attractive redevelopment options important to the transformation of the City's waterfront.
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### 3.5 Vacant & Underutilized Sites

Vacant and underutilized site offer strategic, near-term opportunities for redevelopment. A vacant or underutilized site is defined as property with one or more of the following characteristics:

- Is vacant, according to NYS Real Property Classification System.
- Is improved, but with no active uses.
- Is improved, but not functioning to the highest and best use.
- Is partially developed/utilized.

Based upon the criteria above, 181 vacant and underutilized properties are identified within the Study Area, covering 40 acres (refer to Map 5, *Brownfield, Vacant & Underutilized Properties*). Of these 181 properties, 61 are commercial or industrial properties, with the remaining classified as residential.

There are a few notable clusters of underutilized properties in the Study Area, including north of Ontario Street and east of Cohoes Boulevard. Twenty-seven underutilized properties within the Study Area are publicly-owned, accounting for 9.7 acres, or 2.4 percent of total BOA land area. The majority of these properties are small parcels under 0.5 acres in size that are not located adjacent to one another, limiting the potential for near-term land assembly within the BOA.

However, several large publicly-owned underutilized or vacant parcels are located within the BOA, including the former Municipal Landfill property on Whitehall Street and the City DPW property north of Ontario Street. These large, publicly-owned waterfront properties present significant redevelopment opportunities that can reconnect the City to its waterfront and return these parcels back into actively used, economically viable properties.

Underutilized and vacant sites can have negative impacts on a neighborhood or Study Area by attracting vandalism and unauthorized dumping, decreasing perceptions of safety and driving down property values. However, these sites can also present some of the greatest opportunities for near-term redevelopment. Vacant and underutilized sites are often less expensive to acquire and in many instances require fewer site preparation activities, which can reduce development costs and increase investor interest. Underutilized properties should be viewed as key opportunities for redevelopment in the BOA. Property that is both vacant and occupying high-value locations are given priority in determining strategic sites for redevelopment and infill development within the Study Area.

## KEY FINDINGS: VACANT & UNDERUTILIZED SITES

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1. Vacant and underutilized properties account for 10 percent of the total BOA land area.
  2. Residential and downtown mixed use (commercial with residential) properties account for approximately 66 percent of all underutilized properties within the Cohoes Boulevard Study Area and may pose opportunities for land assembly and infill development.
  3. A number of large, underutilized brownfield properties are located along the Mohawk River waterfront, including the St. Michael's property, NHKelman Recycling and the former Municipal Landfill.
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### 3.6 Land Ownership

Understanding property ownership and how it relates to future development opportunities within the Study Area is necessary when considering and identifying future projects and land uses. Specific projects may be more easily implemented and directed on lands owned by public entities. However, privately owned properties are equally important. Engaging property owners and working with them throughout the planning process is critical. If private property owners are involved in the process, they are more likely to willingly work toward an agreed upon vision, provide access easements, implement recommended design and site guidelines, sell property to investors interested in redeveloping, or redevelop the property themselves.

Table 6. Land Ownership

Parcel Ownership	Cohoes Boulevard BOA Study Area			
	No. of Parcels	Percent of Parcels	Acres	Percent Cover
Privately owned	1,233	93.4	328.6	85.1
Publicly owned	87	6.6	57.4	14.9
Albany County	5	0.4	1.1	0.3
City of Cohoes	51	3.9	34.9	9.0
City of Cohoes IDA	2	0.2	1.7	0.4
State of New York	22	1.7	18.8	4.9
United States Government	7	0.5	0.9	0.2
TOTAL	1,320		386.0	

As is provided in Table 6, the vast majority of land within the Study Area is under private ownership. Ownership patterns within the Cohoes Boulevard Study Area are illustrated on Map 6. The majority of these privately-owned parcels are small residential parcels 0.5 acres or smaller. A number of these parcels have been identified as underutilized, which presents opportunities for infill residential or mixed use development. However, the majority of these underutilized, privately-owned residential parcels are scattered throughout the BOA, limiting potential for land assembly.

The largest owner of publicly-held lands is the City of Cohoes (approximately 35 acres). The majority of the City's land is located in three areas:

- George Street Park, located between Lincoln Avenue, George Street, Central Avenue, and Spring Street (9.8 acres);
- The former Municipal Landfill located between SR 787 and the Mohawk River, south of a self-storage facility (4.3 acres); and

- The Department of Public Works garage located on Ontario Street between SR 787 and the Mohawk River (3.4 acres).

The State of New York is the second largest public landowner within the Cohoes Boulevard BOA, owning approximately 19 acres of land (approximately 5 percent of total BOA land area). Nearly all land owned by New York State within the BOA is encumbered. The 12.38 acres owned by NYS Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation is comprised of the Mohawk Hudson Bike-Hike Trail that forms the western boundary of the BOA. The remaining 6.41 acres are owned by the New York State Department of Transportation, and includes the former Champlain Canal route properties that now comprise the northern right of way of State Route 787. The land owned by NYSDOT includes a 1.3 acre linear parcel between the Cohoes Business Park and the current Cohoes DPW property. As the Cohoes Business Park properties are redeveloped, the strip owned by New York State provides a unique opportunity to reimagine the Champlain Canal, augmenting proposed private development with the renewed water feature while also providing the opportunity to interpret the rich history of the Champlain Canal in Cohoes.

## KEY FINDINGS: LAND OWNERSHIP

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1. Approximately 93 percent of all land within the Cohoes Boulevard Study Area is privately-owned.
  2. Brownfield properties that are publicly-owned account for 18 of all publicly-owned properties, and include strategically-located parcels such as the Cohoes DPW property and the former Municipal Landfill.
  3. While most publicly-owned parcels are actively used, 27 properties covering 9.7 acres are underutilized, accounting for 17 percent of all publicly-owned land area within the Cohoes Boulevard Study Area.
  4. Public ownership of vacant properties can often expedite redevelopment initiatives and provide additional public control over the future development of a parcel.
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### 3.7 Parks and Trails

As noted during the discussion of land uses, the Cohoes Boulevard BOA Study Area is home to several public parks and trails utilized by residents within the Study Area and visitors from across the region. Parks and trails, both existing and proposed, are highlighted on Map 7.

## *Parks*

### GEORGE STREET PARK

The large, ten-acre George Street Park is owned by the City of Cohoes. Located between Lincoln Avenue, George Street, Central Avenue, and Spring Street, this park offers one baseball/softball diamond and a large amount of open space (see Figure 16). Nearly 30 percent of Study Area residents are within 0.1 mile of this park. Further analysis reveals that almost two-thirds of Study Area residents are within 0.25 mile of the park.

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Average human walking speed is 3 miles per hour, or 264 feet per minute. At this speed, it takes the average human 2 minutes to walk 1/10 of one mile, and 5 minutes to walk 1/4 of one mile. Therefore, a significant number of residents live within a 2 to 5 minute walk of the George Street Park.

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### GRESTINI PARK

Grestini Park is a small, 0.84-acre park located between Ogden Mills Plaza and Olmsted Street, in the northeastern portion of the Study Area. This City-owned park is utilized primarily by the residents of Ogden Mills and the surrounding mill housing brownstones, as well as children from the nearby Cohoes Community Center. The park was renovated and rededicated in 2007, and now contains benches, a dog walk and several jungle gyms and other playground structures.

### SILLIMAN PARK

The 0.39 acre Silliman Park is a City-owned park located directly across Mohawk Street from City Hall. This park sits at the site of the former Silliman Memorial Presbyterian Church. The property remains on the National Register of Historic Places despite the demolition of the church in 1998. Silliman Park was constructed in 2004 and contains benches and paved paths for passive recreation, as well as decorative light fixtures, landscaping and interpretive signage.

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Based on Standards devised by the US National Recreation and Park Association, a neighborhood with the population of the BOA Study Area should have approximately 24 acres of close-to-home parks such as playgrounds, pocket parks and neighborhood parks.

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Although park space south of Columbia Street appears to be adequate, a lack of programmed public open space has been observed within the Central Business District between Ontario Street and Columbia Street. As this portion of the Study Area is comprised primarily of dense residential, commercial and mixed use development, formal and informal open space opportunities are limited. Opportunities for expanded public open space between Remsen

Street and Lancaster Street should be investigated as part of future community revitalization efforts. In addition, the BOA lacks formal parks or public access opportunities to the Mohawk River waterfront. As one of the City's most significant potential recreational resources, the BOA Master Plan should identify opportunities for public access to the waterfront through the development of additional parks to meet the recreation needs of the community.

### *Trails*

Like most traditional urban neighborhoods in the northeastern United States, much of the Study Area is characterized by an extensive sidewalk network. Residents of the Study Area also have access to an expansive network of trails through their direct connection to the Mohawk Hudson Bike-Hike Trail. The Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail began in the 1970s as an effort to establish trails along the Mohawk River and the NYS canal system. There are currently more than 130 miles of trail in this system. Specific to the Study Area, this trail travels along the abandoned railroad corridor that forms a portion of the area's western boundary.

The design phase was completed in 2012 for the Cohoes Heritage Trail that will connect Harmony Mills and the Cohoes Falls Overlook Park to downtown Cohoes and the Delaware Avenue multi-use trail located on Van Schaick Island. This trail will tie into the Mohawk Hudson Bike-Hike Trail in the western portion of the Study Area and travel east along Columbia Street. After crossing Bridge Avenue over the Mohawk River onto Van Schaick Island, the trail will continue along Bridge Avenue to Van Schaick Park and then to Delaware Avenue. The New York National Guard, in cooperation with the City of Cohoes, has been actively clearing the proposed right-of-way in 2011 and 2012. Construction of the trail and installation of kiosks interpreting the rich history of the Erie Canal and the City of Cohoes is anticipated to be completed in 2013.

## KEY FINDINGS: PARKS AND TRAILS

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1. The Cohoes Boulevard Study Area contains numerous public parks within close walking distance of most residential properties, yet lacks a sufficient amount of overall park land to adequately service the needs of residents.
  2. Residential areas between Columbia Street and Ontario Street lack sufficient public recreation space.
  3. Residents within the Study Area have easy access to pedestrian trails, including the existing Mohawk-Hudson Bike Path and the proposed Cohoes Heritage Trail.
  4. Opportunities to provide additional park space within neighborhoods and along the waterfront should be explored.
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### 3.8 Building Inventory

The Cohoes Boulevard Study Area contains a number of significant buildings with the potential to stimulate revitalization. Significant buildings included within this inventory have been identified using one or more of the following criteria:

- Buildings of significant size;
- Historically/culturally-important buildings;
- Buildings with adaptive reuse potential; and/or
- Buildings with the potential to serve as a revitalization catalyst in the neighborhoods surrounding the building.

The location of each building identified through this inventory is illustrated on Map 8, and a brief description of each building is included below.

#### *Cohoes Commons*

Opened in 1987, the Cohoes Commons was an enclosed outlet mall located on the corner of Mohawk Street and New Courtland Street. The 121,000 square foot building was anchored by Cohoes Fashions, a boutique department store. During operation as a mall, other tenants included Ralph Lauren, Corningware and Dansk Crystal. Most retail businesses left the mall by 2000. In the years since, the building has been primarily underutilized, though it has served as office space for the Cohoes Family Health Center, the Seton Health Business Office and the New York State Department of Civil Service Employee Health Service Facility. *The Cohoes Commons building is a large structure with the potential for adaptive reuse and/or expansion on underutilized portions of the site, and is a high value location near SR 32.*

#### *Cohoes Music Hall*

The Cohoes Music Hall is located at the northern end of Remsen Street, in the heart of the central business district. The five-story Cohoes Music Hall was constructed in 1874, serving as a music hall between 1874 and 1905, before the theater portion of the building was closed for safety concerns. The building remained in use as a bank until 1975, when the theater was restored to its historic grandeur. The building continues to operate as a theater today and serves as an anchor destination within downtown Cohoes. The building was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1971. *This large building is significant due to its rich history and potential to serve as a hub for economic development and heritage-tourism in downtown Cohoes.*

#### *Ogden Mill Complex*

The Ogden Mill Complex is located at the intersection of Ogden Mills Plaza and Ontario Street in the northeastern portion of the Study Area. Built in the 1840's, the Ogden Mill complex encompasses the main mill building as well as the former mill worker brownstones located west of the main mill building. The original route of the enlarged Erie Canal traveled between the

main mill building and the brownstone units. The main mill building served as a knitting mill from its opening until 1973. The mill remained empty until 1980, when it was converted into senior apartments. *The Ogden Mill Complex adds a significant population density to the northern portions of the Study Area which could be leveraged during revitalization efforts.*

#### *Cohoes Savings Bank Building*

Located at 75 Remsen Street in the northern portion of the Study Area, the beaux art Cohoes Savings Bank Building was constructed in 1905. The building contains a number of historic murals that interpret the history of Cohoes and the Mohawk River. Over the past decade the building served as a satellite office for the Albany County Sheriff's Department. The Albany County Sheriff's Department recently closed their office at the former Cohoes Savings Bank Building, yet the building has been purchased by a local businessman for use as a jewelry store. *The adaptive reuse potential of this structure and its status as a local historic landmark make it an important economic development catalyst along Remsen Street, and a potential destination for heritage-tourism in the BOA.*

#### *Manufacturers Bank Building*

Constructed in 1906, the former Manufacturers Bank Building is located on the corner of Remsen Street and Ontario Street in the northern portion of the Study Area. Most recently, the 5,000 square foot, three-story building served as a branch for Bank of America, however this branch was closed in 2012. *Similar to the Cohoes Savings Bank, the Manufacturers Bank Building at full occupancy could provide significant economic development spin off activity to the BOA.*

#### *Cohoes Armory*

The Cohoes Armory is located at the corner of Columbia Street and Main Street in the central portion of the Study Area. Constructed in 1892, the armory served as the home of Company B of the New York National Guard until 1964. The armory also served as a uniform apparel store between 1972 and the 1990's. *The 22,000 square foot building has recently been purchased for adaptive reuse and conversion into a brewery, adding significant economic activity and investment to the Main/Congress Street neighborhood.*

#### *Cohoes City Hall*

Cohoes City Hall is located on the northeastern corner of Main Street and Ontario Street in the north-central portion of the Study Area. Completed in 1895, the gothic building was constructed primarily of Indiana limestone. The building is generally three stories in height and includes an ornamental tower on the buildings southwest corner. The building is listed as a contributing structure to the National Register-listed Downtown Cohoes Historic District. *City Hall is classified as a significant building because of its size, its historical significance and its status as the center of government in the City of Cohoes.*

### *Cohoes Public Library*

Built in 1865, the Cohoes Public Library is located on the corner of Van Rensselaer Street and Mohawk Street in the north-central portion of the Study Area. The building originally served as the location of St. John's Episcopal Church, before closing in the 1960's. The City of Cohoes purchased the property in the 1970's and uses approximately 5,500 square feet of the building as the Cohoes Public Library. *This large building is significant because of its role as a nationally-recognized example as a successfully implemented adaptive reuse project and its historic character.*

### *St. Bernard's Church*

The former St. Bernard's Church is located at 250 Ontario Street in the northeastern portion of the Study Area. Dedicated in the 1868, the Roman Catholic Church actively served the Cohoes community until its closure in 2009. *The vacant building is currently under private ownership. This building was determined to be significant because of its size, adaptive reuse potential, historic significance and proximity to downtown Cohoes.*

### *St. Joseph's Church*

The former St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Church is located at 65 Congress Street in the west-central portion of the Study Area. St. Joseph's Church was constructed in 1868 and operated until the Roman Catholic Diocese of Albany closed the church in 2009. Now privately-owned, the church portion of the building remains vacant, while the rectory portion of the building has been repurposed for residential use. *The vacant St. Josephs Church is a significant opportunity to capitalize upon the pending adaptive reuse of the adjacent Armory building and infuse the surrounding neighborhood with investment and activity.*

### *Carter Building*

Located at 57 Remsen Street, the three-story Carter Building historically served as a department store serving downtown Cohoes. More recently, the 10,299 square foot building contained Calkins Pharmacy on the ground floor, until it closed in 2010, and offices and apartments on the upper two floors. The building is vacant and currently listed for sale by Weichert Realtors. *The Carter Building, in conjunction with adjacent historic structures such as the Manufacturers Bank Building and the Cohoes Saving Bank Building, offers the potential for significant mixed use density in the northern block of Remsen Street.*

### *Former Carlson Pool & Skating Rink Building*

The former Carlson Pool & Skating Rink Building is located at the corner of Cedar Street and Bridge Avenue in the east-central portion of the Study Area. The 2-story wood building with red terra cotta roof was once part of the Carlson Pool complex. The building included residential units on the second floor and pool/skating rink locker and dressing rooms on the ground floor. After the closing of the pool, the building served as a restaurant. The privately-owned building is currently vacant. *The building was deemed significant due to its strategic location in one of the Study Area's most visible gateways, its vacancy status and its historical significance.*



### *Vineyard Community Church*

Located at 121 Remsen Street, the former First United Methodist Church was constructed in 1860. The approximately 5,000 square foot church building is approximately 4 stories in height, exclusive of the steeple, and is constructed from red brick manufactured in Cohoes. The building has been home to the Vineyard Community Church since 2000. *The Vineyard Community Church was deemed significant because of its ability to attract people into downtown Cohoes.*

### *St. Rita's Church*

St. Rita's Church is located at 50 Lansing Street in the west-central portion of the Study Area. The existing 1-story brick building was constructed in the 1960's as a replacement for the original St. Rita's Church that previously existed on the site between 1940 and 1961. The building currently houses Heritage Baptist Church, which has occupied the site since 2009. *Similar to the Vineyard Community Church, the active use of St. Rita's Church draws people into the Study Area and may attract retail/restaurant spending.*

### *Delaware & Hudson Railroad Depot*

The former Delaware & Hudson Railroad Depot is located at 116 Saratoga Street in the east-central portion of the Study Area. The brick building was constructed in 1910 and was used by Delaware & Hudson for their Cohoes Freight Yard, immediately east of the Queen Anne-style Delaware & Hudson Rail Station. The building was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1998. Applied Labels, a label, coupon and direct mail printing facility currently occupies the building. *This structure occupies a key location within close proximity to Cohoes Boulevard and along SR 32, making its adaptive reuse a continued priority.*

### *Joshua Clarke House*

The Joshua Clarke House is located at 112 Mohawk Street in the north-central portion of the Study Area. The 4,139 square foot house was home to Joshua Clarke, one of the first trustees of the former Village of Cohoes and an architect of a number of historic buildings in Cohoes, including portions of the Harmony Mill complex, the Egbert & Bailey Mill and the First Episcopal Church. *The building is currently privately-owned and rented out as apartment space. The Clarke House was deemed significant due to its historic nature, proximity to downtown and ability to become a heritage-tourism destination within the BOA.*

### *Sheltertherm*

The Sheltertherm building is located at 8 Saratoga Street in the northern portion of the Study Area. The 89,000 square foot complex houses Sheltertherm, a local manufacturer of polystyrene building materials. The western portion of the building has been used for industrial purposes since 1880, and has been home to the Cohoes Iron Foundry & Machine Co., Peck Edge Tool Works, Mohawk Conduit and Star Woolen, Inc. *The Sheltertherm building was deemed significant due to its status as a major business and employer within Cohoes and its strategic location along the Mohawk River and Route 787.*

## KEY FINDINGS: BUILDING INVENTORY

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1. The Cohoes Boulevard Study Area contains a number of large historic buildings. Several of these buildings, including the former Manufacturers Bank, the Cohoes Armory and the former Carlson Pool Building are currently vacant. The adaptive reuse of these structures within the Cohoes Boulevard Study Area will contribute to revitalization efforts while at the same time ensuring the preservation of historic structures within the City of Cohoes.
  2. Some significant buildings within the Study Area, including the Cohoes Music Hall, the former Armory, and City Hall are actively used. Capitalizing upon this activity through the revitalization of adjacent parcels should be a key strategy within the Master Plan.
  3. Opportunities exist to capitalize on the significant buildings within the Study Area to enhance the economy and overall quality of life within the City of Cohoes, including the promoting and marketing of these buildings as viable locations for adaptive reuse.
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### 3.9 Historic & Cultural Resources

Historic resources are a physical reminder that connects the past to the present. They help form individual and collective identities, and contribute to a sense of place. In addition to their social and economic importance, these resources also have educational and recreational value. The cultural and historic heritage of the City has played an important role in defining its character, particularly along its waterfront and in its downtown business district. Specific to the Study Area are four historic districts and three historic sites, all of which are listed on the National Register of Historic Places (refer to Map 9 – *Historic or Archeologically-Significant Areas*). Given the number of resources within the Study Area, the City of Cohoes should use the BOA process to leverage these assets to market and promote this portion of the City as a heritage tourism destination.



Figure 10. The Cohoes Music Hall is one of several properties located within the Study Area listed on the National Register of Historic Place

The City's vast collection of cultural and historic resources can make it a destination for heritage tourism and contribute to the overall experience of visitors to the Central Business District.

#### 3.9.1 Historic Districts

Historic districts are groups of buildings, properties or sites that have been designated as historically or architecturally significant. Within designated districts, individual properties are classified as being contributing or non-contributing resources. Contributing resources are those buildings, structures, or objects that add to the historic integrity of architectural qualities that make the district significant. Additional information on each of the Historic Districts within the Study Area listed on the National Register is summarized below:

##### *Downtown Cohoes Historic District*

The Downtown Cohoes Historic District covers approximately 30 acres, encompassing most of the City's downtown business district. Of the 175 properties located within this district, 165 are considered to be contributing properties. Most of these contributing properties date to the period from 1820 to 1930, when both the Erie Canal and Harmony Mills were mainstays of the City's economy. In terms of architectural style, properties in the district range from Federal to Art Moderne, with only a few late 20<sup>th</sup> century intrusions. The Downtown Cohoes Historic District was officially recognized and added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1984. The Downtown Cohoes Historic District also contains a number of locally and state-designated historic sites, deemed contributing structures or sites to the historic district. These include:

- The former Egberts & Bailey Mill site;
- The “First Power Mill” site
- City Hall;
- St. Bernard’s Church;
- Joshua R. Clarke House;
- David Van Auken House;
- William Moore House;
- First Baptist Church;
- Vineyard Community Church; and
- United Church of Cohoes.

#### *Olmsted Street Historic District*

This district is directly adjacent to the Downtown Cohoes Historic District, but covers only four acres. Located along two blocks of Olmsted Street, this district is representative of the City’s economy at its peak during the mid- to late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Within this district is a former textile mill complex (Ogden Mill), a section of the original Erie Canal (now filled-in), and three blocks of row houses constructed for millworkers. The mill was used to manufacture clothing until late into the 20<sup>th</sup> century and has recently been converted into a mixed-use complex with apartments, retail and office space. The three blocks of row houses are now used to provide affordable housing through the Section 8 program. The Olmsted Street Historic District was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1973.

#### *Harmony Mills Historic District*

Although this historic district covers almost 200 acres, only 1.5 acres fall within the Study Area. When it opened in 1872, Harmony Mills was located along the Mohawk River and the old Erie Canal and was the largest cotton mill complex in the world. The Harmony Mills Historic District was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1978; it was further declared a National Historic Landmark in 1999. In 2007, the Clover Architectural Group renovated some of the mill structures into high-end residential lofts (i.e., The Lofts at Harmony Mills). The Lofts at Harmony Mills complex is located approximately ¼ mile outside of the northwestern boundary of the Study Area.

#### *Enlarged Erie Canal Historic District*

This linear historic district was established in 2003 as a “discontiguous” historic district of five lock “units” from the enlarged Erie Canal, with three of these units located in the Study Area. To facilitate the increase in the amounts of materials transported and the decrease in waiting time for “locking through,” the original Clinton’s Ditch was modified and expanded between 1836 and 1842. The canal route was moved west from its original location, generally running along the route of present-day Central Avenue. Unit 1 is comprised of Lock 9, a double lock constructed in 1842, is located between Spring Street and Alexander Street, in the central portion of the Study Area. The lock is maintained by the City of Cohoes as part of the linear George Street Park, and events like the Halloween Haunted Locks are held regularly at the site.

Unit 2 is comprised of lock 10, located north of lock 9 within the George Street Park. This lock was also a double lock constructed in 1842, however, most of the lock and canal bed has been filled in. The remnants of the limestone western wall are located just west of the George Street Park baseball diamond. Unit 3 is comprised of locks 14 and 15, however only lock 14 is located within the Study Area. Also constructed in 1842, lock 14 is located along the eastern edge of Standish Place. Only the top portion of the original lock wall is visible along Standish Place, however the southern portion of the lock is visible behind the Cohoes Bowl bowling alley.

### 3.9.2 National Register Historic Sites

There are three National Register Historic Sites located within the Study Area, only one of which has a structure still standing as of March 2013:

#### *Cohoes Music Hall*

Built in 1874, the Cohoes Music Hall is located at 56 Remsen Street and is located within the Downtown Cohoes Historic District. This four-story brick building is characterized by an unusually decorative front façade and is considered the best example of the Second Empire architectural style in the City of Cohoes. The music hall was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1971 and, in 1984, was listed as a contributing property when the Downtown Cohoes Historic District was added to the National Register of Historic Places. After falling into disrepair during the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the music hall began putting on performances again following an extensive renovation during the early 1970s. In addition to being the fourth oldest music hall currently in use in the country, the building is also home to the City's Visitor Center.

#### *Delaware and Hudson Railroad Freight House*

Officially added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1998, this historic freight house was located on property owned by the Delaware and Hudson Railroad between Cohoes Road and Mohawk Street. As with the Silliman Memorial Presbyterian Church, this site remains on the National Register despite the demolition of structure.

#### *Silliman Memorial Presbyterian Church*

Built in 1896 and originally located at the intersection of Ontario Street and Mohawk Street, this Romanesque Revival sandstone structure was demolished in 1998. This structure was first listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1979 and still appears on the list even though it is no longer standing.

### 3.9.3 Locally Designated Historic Sites

#### *Juncta*

The "Juncta" is a local and state-designated historic site located approximately 200 feet south of the intersection of Saratoga Street and Main Street. The juncta is the location of the historic

intersection of Clinton's Ditch and the Champlain Canal. Although only remnants of the Champlain Canal locks exist at present in the vicinity of the site, a historic marker was erected in 2000 by the Spindle City Historic Society and the New York State Department of Transportation to mark the historic location of the juncta.

### 3.9.4 Historic Preservation Efforts within Cohoes

#### *Historic Preservation Code*

The City of Cohoes established a mechanism for promoting Historic Preservation through the City's Zoning Code in Chapters 285-21 through 285-24. The Historic Preservation Code established the City of Cohoes Historic Preservation and Architectural Review Board and includes a procedure for designating properties as local historic landmarks. The ordinance also requires that a property owner must obtain a Certificate of Appropriateness from the Historic Preservation and Architectural Review Board when a property owner proposes alteration, addition, reconstruction or demolition of historic structure within the designated Historic Overlay District.

#### *Certified Local Government*

At present, the City of Cohoes is not currently designated as a Certified Local Government (CLG). The program strengthens efforts at the local level by assisting communities with preservation goals and the development of a plan for historic preservation. Benefits to the City of Cohoes in becoming a CLG include direct access to the technical expertise of National Park Service staff, access to federal grant funding and the ability to market Cohoes as a place committed to preserving its history for future generations. The New York State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) administers the CLG program through a variety of services designed to help communities protect, preserve, and celebrate their historic resources. At minimum, a community must take the following steps to become a CLG:

- Establish a qualified historic preservation commission;
- Enforce state and local legislation for the designation and protection of historic properties;
- Maintain an inventory of local historic resources; and
- Provide for public participation in the program.

## KEY FINDINGS: HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

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1. At the junction of the Erie Canal and the Champlain Canal, the City of Cohoes served as one of the most prominent centers for textile manufacturing and waterway transportation in American History.
  2. A significant number of historic structures and districts are in place to be marketed as attractions that can serve as redevelopment catalysts in the City and make the BOA a destination for heritage tourism.
  3. The City lacks a sufficiently prominent signage and wayfinding program within the Cohoes Boulevard Study Area to promote historic resources and educate the public and visitors.
  4. The formal designation as a Certified Local Government (CLG) is a logical next step following the established mechanisms in the Historic Preservation Code.
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## 3.10 Transportation Systems

### 3.10.1 Roadways

The City's downtown core is characterized by a well organized road network, with a traditional grid pattern street system typical of small, historical cities in upstate New York. The grid pattern street system is interrupted by larger, arterial streets and highways constructed in the former beds of the Erie Canal, Champlain Canal and Mohawk River. The roadway network within the Cohoes Boulevard Study Area is illustrated on Map 10.

The Cohoes Boulevard BOA Study Area is traversed by just over 15 miles of roadways, of which almost 6 miles are classified as New York State (NYS) Routes (i.e., NYS Route 32, NYS Route 470, and NYS Route 787). As noted previously, access into the Study Area is provided by the following roadways:

- Columbia Street (NYS Route 470) from the west;
- Saratoga Street (NYS Route 32) from the north and south;
- Ontario Street (NYS Route 470) from Simmons and Van Schaick Islands to the east;
- Bridge Avenue from Van Schaick Island to the east;
- Dyke Avenue from the southeast; and
- NYS Route 787 from the south.

The NYS Route 32/NYS Route 787 corridor is the dominant transportation corridor within the Study Area. Running parallel to one another along the eastern edge of the Study Area, these two roadways create a visual and physical barrier between the downtown to the west and the island neighborhoods to the east. The primary east-west roadway for vehicles traveling through the Study Area is Ontario Street (NYS Route 470). Unlike NYS Route 787, this state road is situated on a local street and is thus better integrated into the urban fabric. City streets carry all other vehicular traffic, providing arterial, collector and local level roadways that link together neighborhoods, commercial centers, municipal services and the larger transportation context.

### 3.10.2 Traffic Volumes

Traffic volumes provide an indicator for both safety and economic potential. While larger and faster traffic flows are considered a positive when siting commercial and retail development, they are also a potential impediment to pedestrian connectivity and safety, or form a barrier between two neighborhoods, as it does with Cohoes.

The Route 787 corridor represents an additional detriment to the City of Cohoes by routing travelers around the City's central business district, bypassing the downtown. Identifying a balance between safety, visibility, economic interests and the needs and functions of the transportation network are critical to making land use recommendations within the BOA.

Traffic volumes along major roadway segments within the BOA are provided in Figure 11, as obtained from the NYS Department of Transportation. Average Annual Daily Traffic (AADT) is the total volume of vehicle traffic of a highway or road for a year divided by 365 days. These figures are typically estimated through traffic counts conducted over the course of several days and extrapolated.

In addition to existing AADT data, a corridor capacity analysis was performed for both morning and evening peak periods within the Study Area. The following provides a brief summary of findings; further information can be found in Appendix E.

#### *Corridor Capacity Analysis and Observations*

Traffic conditions within the Study Area are categorized into three different classifications: Good, Fair and Poor (refer to Appendix E for relevant figures). "Good" sections of the roadway are illustrated in green and indicate minimal to negligible delays. "Fair" sections are illustrated in yellow and indicate minimal to excessive delays. "Poor" sections are illustrated in red and indicate excessive delays, requiring improvement. Both NYS Route 787 and Route 32 operate at Fair to Good condition and no traffic congestion issues were observed during field observation in the morning peak. Poor traffic conditions were observed northbound along NYS Route 787 between NYS Route 32 and Ontario Street during the evening peak period. Evening peak traffic on NYS Route 32 between NYS Route 787 and Ontario Street was also observed to be delayed northbound through the Ontario Street intersection, as well as on Ontario Street eastbound between NYS Route 787 and NYS Route 32.

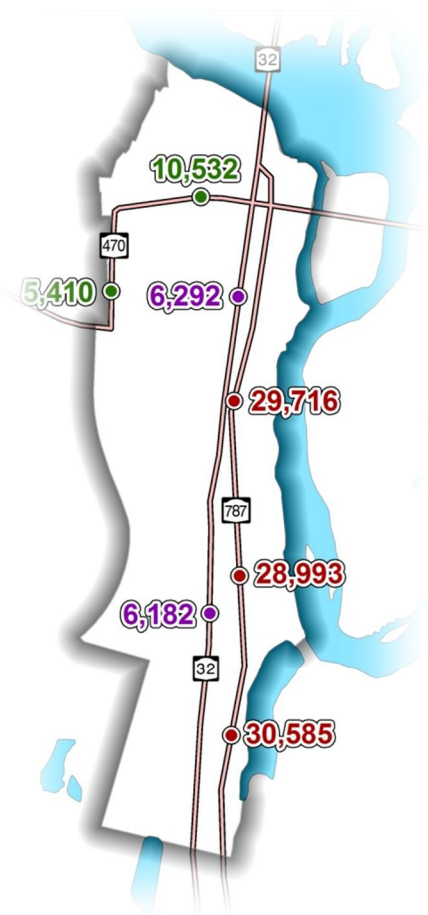


Figure 11. AADT Values for State Roads in the Study Area (2008)

Roadway intersections are typically analyzed using a measurement called “Level of Service,” or “LOS,” which assesses the operational conditions of the intersection and the perception of problems at that intersection by motorists and passengers. The LOS of an intersection falls into one of six categories, ranging from “LOS A,” in which an intersection has low volumes, high speeds and low traffic density, to an “LOS F,” where an intersection regularly experiences forced flow with low speeds and low volumes. Within the study area, the intersection of North Mohawk Street and Vliet Street was observed to experience an overall Level of Service (LOS) B during the morning peak and an overall LOS A during the evening peak. Northbound approach has the worst approach LOS C and LOS B during morning and evening peaks respectively. The remaining roadway sections within the study area experience Fair to Good conditions.

### *Future Traffic Conditions*

The Master Plan for redevelopment in the Brownfield Opportunity Areas envisions a three-phased build out over a 20 year time-frame. This development will be mixed use consisting of residential, commercial, office, flex space, recreational and park land. A review of the street network indicates that, except for NY 787 and NY 32 at NY 787, the existing street network is expected to continue to function with acceptable levels of traffic capacity level of service with the planned development.

The North/South Corridor Study prepared by CDTA in 2009 considered the establishment of Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) service along the Hudson River corridor between Albany and Mechanicville, traveling through Cohoes. Bus Rapid Transit is a public transportation system which utilizes buses to provide faster and more efficient service through measured improvements to existing infrastructure, buses and route scheduling. The study concluded that the River Corridor possesses high potential benefits in the provision of new BRT services through Cohoes, due to high ridership and new commercial and residential growth in Cohoes within close proximity to the River Corridor.

### *Potential Mitigations*

Overall, the greatest area of traffic concern within the Study Area is the intersection of NY 787 with NY 32, occurring primarily during the afternoon commute. Long delays northbound on NY 787 occur on a daily basis and will continue to increase as development takes place. The anticipated traffic flow impacts of the phased Master Plan build out was modeled for the afternoon period using SYNCHRO Version 7 and SIMTRAFFIC. The results indicate that improvements on NY 787 at the intersection with NY 32 can be obtained if a northbound NY 787 to northbound NY 32 free flowing right turn lane were to be incorporated into the operation. A concept sketch of this right turn lane is included in Appendix E, the construction of which would improve the overall intersection from a Level of Service F to E. Additional mitigations, such as the installation and monitoring of a real time Adaptive Traffic System could help improve congestion and reduce delay.

The continued use best-practices for access management can also reduce traffic congestion during future development scenarios by minimizing driveway curb cuts and providing cross

access between parcels. In addition, multi-modal improvements for pedestrians and bicyclists such as convenient sidewalks, bikeways and trails should be included to encourage alternative forms of transportation.

### 3.10.3 Rail Service

The Canadian Pacific railroad traverses the Study Area, running to the west of NYS Route 32. The rail line runs centrally through an industrial area of the City in the south, and primarily functions as a freight railway. Although passenger rail service isn't accessible within the Study Area, Amtrak passenger rail service is located within a 20-minute drive from the Study Area in downtown Rensselaer. Amtrak provides service to regional cities in New York, including Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse, and New York City, as well as national service.

### 3.10.4 Public Transportation

The City of Cohoes and Cohoes Boulevard Study Area are served by the Capital District Transportation Authority (CDTA). Several bus routes are available that connect the City of Cohoes to outlying areas, particularly the City of Albany. Bus routes 29 and the Northway Express enter the City of Cohoes primarily from the north and south along NYS Route 9. Bus Route 29 additionally extends west of the City, and connects to Bus Route 432 north of Peebles Island. The North/South Corridor Study prepared by CDTA in 2009 identifies the City of Cohoes as a potential bus rapid transit (BRT) stop location, and identifies the Route 32 corridor as a future potential BRT route. Availability of BRT within the City of Cohoes would improve the efficiency of transit service available to residents, reducing commute times and delays.

### 3.10.5 Parking

An assessment of existing parking resources within the study area, both on-street and off-street, was performed to assess utilization and excess capacity of existing parking within the Study Area. Aerial and Google Streetview™ photography was utilized to approximate the amount of on-street and off-street parking spaces within the Study Area. There are approximately 4,675 parking spaces within the Study Area. On-street parking within the Study Area accounts for approximately 2,129 spaces (46 percent) within the Study Area, while off-street parking accounts for approximately 2,546 spaces (54 percent) within the Study Area. Of the 2,546 off-street parking spaces within the Study Area, approximately 408 are on publically-owned parcels, while approximately 2,138 spaces are on privately-owned land.

In order to determine access and utilization of parking within close proximity to downtown Cohoes, the Study Area was segmented into two distinct "pedestriansheds." A northern pedestrianshed is centered at the intersection of Ontario Street and Remsen Street, and a southern pedestrianshed is centered at the intersection of Columbia Street & Remsen Street (see Figures 12 and 13). In-field verification was then conducted for public off-street lots and for on-street parking along main thoroughfares within each pedestrianshed.



A “pedestrianshed” is the area within ¼ mile walking distance of a key intersection in downtown Cohoes.

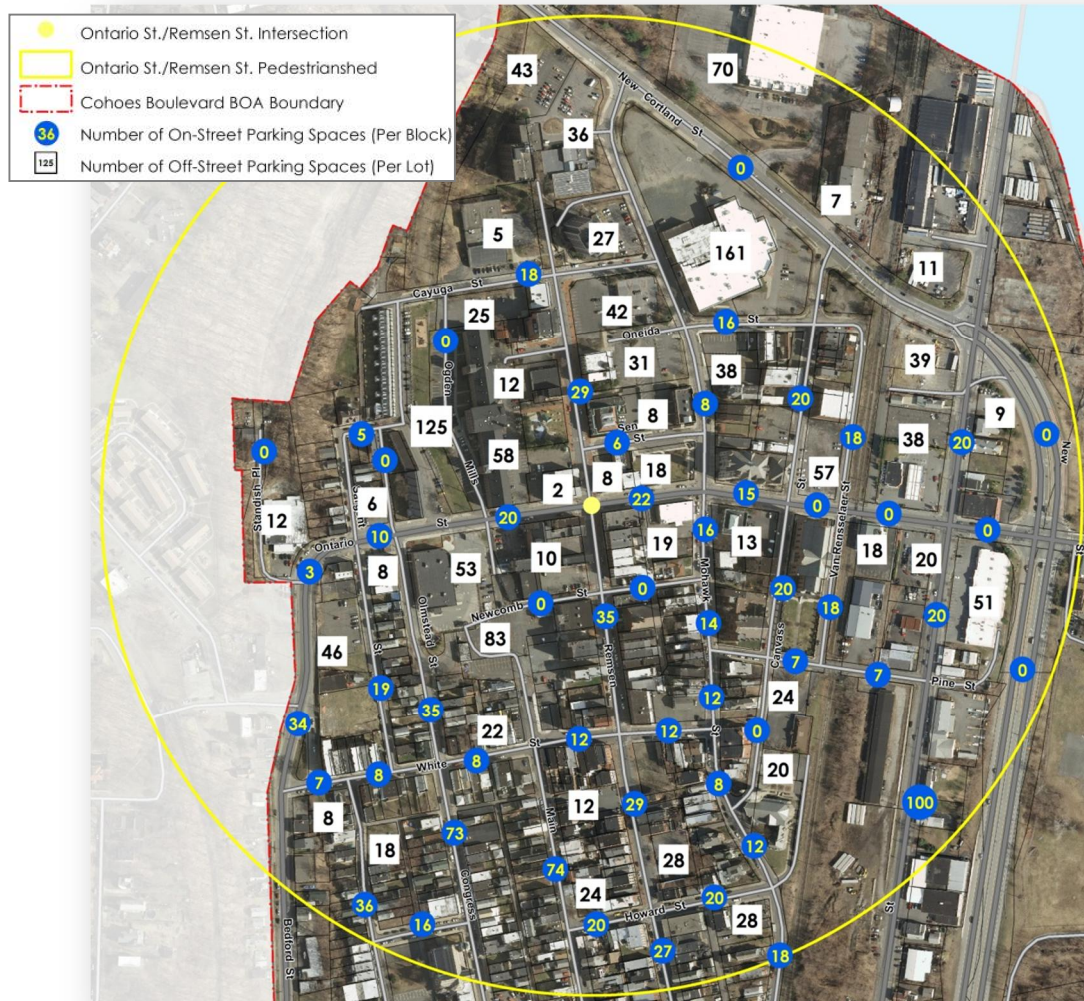


Figure 12: Northern Pedestrianshed at Ontario & Remsen Streets

Based on review of aerial and Google Streetview photography, approximately 4,200 parking spaces were identified within the Remsen Street/Ontario Street and Remsen Street/Columbia Street pedestriansheds. A breakdown by pedestrianshed is included below.

#### *Remsen Street/Ontario Street Pedestrianshed*

- On-Street Parking: 927 spaces
- Off-Street Parking: 1,393 spaces
  - Publicly-Owned Off-Street Parking: 248 spaces
  - Privately-Owned Off-Street Parking: 1,145 spaces



An in-field survey of both “pedestriansheds” was documented during a typical weekday, both during daytime and evening hours, in order to assess actual utilization of existing public parking. Within both pedestriansheds, utilization averaged approximately 50 percent of capacity for public parking lots. Within downtown Cohoes, on-street parking was observed to be approximately 100 percent utilized, with few free on-street parking spaces. Outside of downtown Cohoes, on-street parking was observed to be approximately 50 percent utilized during the day. However, during the evening, on-street parking was observed to be approximately 100 percent utilized outside of the core.



Figure 13: Southern Pedestrianshed at Remsen & Columbia Streets

#### *Remsen Street/Columbia Street Pedestrianshed*

- On-Street Parking: 1,249 spaces
- Off-Street Parking: 579 spaces
  - Publicly-Owned Off-Street Parking: 94 spaces
  - Privately-Owned Off-Street Parking: 485 spaces

### 3.10.6 Pedestrian & Bicycle Infrastructure

In addition to the pedestrian and bicycle trails discussed in Section 3.7 of this Nomination Study, the Study Area contains a comprehensive network of sidewalks throughout the Study Area. The grid-based pedestrian sidewalk system maximizes pedestrian-level accessibility between the central business district of the City and the surrounding residential commercial and industrial properties. State Bike Route 9 traverses the Study Area west along Route 470 from Troy and north on SR 32 to Waterford. In addition, the portion of the proposed Cohoes Heritage Trail along Columbia Street and Bridge Avenue is slated to serve as a locally-designated on-road bicycle route upon completion of the trail in 2013.

## KEY FINDINGS: TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS

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1. Because redevelopment within the study area will generate new traffic patterns, a detailed assessment of the traffic and pedestrian control devices in the BOA should be considered to determine if changes in the operation would help to improve traffic and pedestrian flow as development occurs.
  2. Additional studies are needed to assess the congestion issues on NY 787, and should include an analysis of the timing and coordination of the traffic signals on NY 787, as well as the traffic signals located on NY 32.
  3. On-street parking spaces are typically filled to capacity during evening hours. However, off-street parking generally has 50 percent availability at all times. Wayfinding should be considered to direct visitors to available parking in off street lots as an alternative to on-street parking.
  4. While traffic within the Study Area is not an issue during the morning commute, it becomes a significant issue for the evening commute, resulting in extensive congestion on Route 32, Ontario Street and SR 787.
  5. Access to pedestrian, bicycle and public transportation routes is plentiful throughout the Cohoes Boulevard Study Area.
  6. The City should investigate the feasible development of a bus rapid transit (BRT) station in proximity to SR 787 in support of the CDTA's recent planning endeavors to establish BRT lines along SR 787 between Cohoes and downtown Albany.
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### 3.11 Public Infrastructure

The ability of existing infrastructure to support additional demand is an important aspect to consider during community revitalization efforts. Upgrades to these infrastructure components is time consuming and very expensive. Prior knowledge of service and capacity limitations will help determine development phasing and financing strategies.

#### 3.11.1 Water Service

The City of Cohoes obtains its water supply from the Mohawk River. Water is drawn from the source to a 75 million gallon capacity storage reservoir, located on Upper Vliet Boulevard, where it is treated before distribution. The City provides water to approximately 15,551 people, via residential and industrial services. The City additionally supplies water to a small section of the Town of Colonie. In 2009, the average daily demand was 1.9 million gallons, while the maximum demand was 2.7 million gallons.

A number of capital improvements were proposed for fiscal year 2010 to improve the City's water infrastructure. These improvements included the following:

- Installation of new meters in the filtration plant;
- Replacement of pipe supports in pipe gallery;
- Pipe gallery masonry repairs;
- Upgrading the computer SCADA software program; and
- Replacement of water main on Vliet Street, from Garner Street to Summit Street.

The City of Cohoes will pursue water system infrastructure improvements using a \$587,000 Community Block Development Grant (CDBG) awarded in 2010.

#### 3.11.2 Combined Sewer Service

The entire Study Area is serviced by a combined public sewer system that collects sanitary sewage and stormwater runoff and distributes it to the Albany County Sewer District's South Plant. This treatment facility is located in the Port of Albany and treats 29 MGD of waste. The Cohoes Boulevard Study Area contains two Combined Sewer Overflows (CSO's). One CSO (CSO 15) is located just south of the intersection of Columbia Street and Central Avenue in the west-central portion of the Study Area. CSO 15 discharges directly into the Salt Kill, which ultimately drains into the Hudson River. The second CSO, CSO 18, is located near the intersection of Saratoga Street and Main Street, and discharges directly into the Mohawk River.

In 2010, the City of Cohoes received a \$792,000 grant from the New York State Clean Water Revolving Loan Fund for sewer upgrades to separate combined sewer lines in the hill portion of

the City. Infrastructure upgrades are anticipated to alleviate flooding that has occurred in this area of the City due to the limited capacity of the combined sewer system. The sewer separation will also positively impact the sewer budget, due to the reduction of waste that will need to be sent to Albany for treatment.

The City of Cohoes is also an active member of the Stormwater Coalition of Albany County, a partnership between all of the regulated MS4 municipalities located in Albany County. The coalition was formed to ensure each municipality has the capacity and resources to fully comply with the MS4 permit requirements established by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. These requirements are designed to address factors relating to stormwater including public education and outreach, public involvement and participation, detection and elimination of illicit stormwater discharges, construction site stormwater runoff control, post-construction stormwater management and pollution prevention for municipal operations.

## KEY FINDINGS: PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE

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1. Existing potable water infrastructure within the Study Area has sufficient capacity to allow for expansion in the future.
  2. As potable water is drawn directly from the Mohawk River, water quality issues upstream have a significant impact on the City of Cohoes.
  3. The presence of Combined Sewer Overflows (CSO's) within the Study Area indicate a lack of existing capacity for both sanitary and storm sewer effluent, and can result in significant water quality impairments to receiving waterbodies.
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### 3.12 Natural Resources

The natural characteristics of a community have a critical impact on overall land use patterns and on the choice between conservation and development. In some instances, these natural characteristics are limitations that will create impracticalities to development because of associated costs of land preparation, improvements, or construction. In other instances, critical and unique areas would be forever lost if development were to proceed unencumbered. Efforts must be made to protect valuable natural resources which still exist. Development can also highlight or enhance the utilization of natural resources, such as the Mohawk River, resulting in the best design alternative for the community and environment. The following provides a summary of relevant Natural Resources located within the Study Area. A more detailed analysis can be found in Appendix F.

### 3.12.1 Waterbodies

In addition to the Mohawk River flowing along the Study Area's eastern boundary, there are also several minor tributaries to the Mohawk River that flow through the area.

#### *Watersheds*

Watersheds are those areas of land from which groundwater and surface water drain into a particular waterbody. Watersheds into which the Study Area drains include the Lisha Kill watershed (HUC-11) and the Mohawk River watershed (HUC-8). As the Lisha Kill subwatershed is located at the terminus of the Mohawk River watershed, it serves as a receiving point for drainage within the region, and therefore is more susceptible to impacts associated with erosion, sedimentation and general water quality impairment.

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The City of Cohoes draws its potable drinking water from the Mohawk River, requiring a greater level of drinking water treatment prior to distribution to mitigate potential impairments. Additionally, the erosion of riverbanks and contamination on riverfront properties has the potential to impact water quality for municipalities located further down the Mohawk and Hudson Rivers.

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#### *Mohawk River*

The Mohawk River and Hudson River are the two predominant natural features in the City of Cohoes. Specific to the Study Area, the Mohawk River travels along its eastern boundary for more than a mile before it turns north and drains into the Hudson River. The Mohawk River is classified by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) as a "Class C" waterbody from the mouth to the dam above Cohoes Falls. A Class C waterbody is defined by NYSDEC as a waterbody most suitably used for fishing and fish, shellfish, and wildlife propagation and survival. The water quality is also suitable for primary and secondary contact recreation, although other factors may limit the use for these purposes." A number of small tributaries to the Mohawk River flow through the northern and southern portions of the Study Area and are classified by NYSDEC as "Class C," while the tributaries in the southern portion are classified as "Class D." Class D waterbodies are defined by NYSDEC as streams best used for fishing and primary/secondary contact recreation. The segment of the River from which potable water is drawn, from the dam above Cohoes Falls to Crescent Dam, is a "Class A" waterbody and is suitable as a water supply source.

### 3.12.2 Water Quality

Based on water quality monitoring and reporting done on the portion of the Mohawk River adjacent to the Study Area, the NYSDEC has classified this section of the river as having *Minor Impacts*. Waterbodies having *Minor Impacts* are those where less severe water quality impacts

are apparent but uses are still considered fully supported. According to the *2002 Mohawk River Basin Waterbody Inventory and Priority Waterbodies List*:

*Aquatic life support and recreational uses (fishing, swimming) in this portion of the Mohawk River are affected by silt/sediment loads, elevated nutrient concentrations and pathogens. Urban runoff and municipal CSOs [combined sewer overflows] are considered the primary sources. Although there is no agriculture along this reach of the river, nonpoint source loadings from agricultural activities throughout the basin are also thought to contribute to impacts in this reach. Hydro-modification and flow diversions also impact water uses.*

The Mohawk River, above Cohoes Falls, is a “Class A” waterbody; suitable as a source of water supply for drinking, primary and secondary contact recreation, and fishing. The river is stressed for water supply and recreation, due to suspected nutrients (phosphorus), pathogens, and silt/sediment from suspected agriculture, municipal, urban/storm runoff sources.

Drinking water supply and recreational uses (fishing, swimming) in this portion of the Mohawk River, are known to experience minor impacts and threats from silt/sediment loads, elevated nutrient concentrations and pathogens. Urban runoff and municipal wastewater discharges in the watershed are considered the primary sources. Although there is no agriculture along this reach of the river, nonpoint source loadings from agricultural activities throughout the basin are also thought to contribute to impacts in this reach. A source water assessment of this water supply reach of the Mohawk found an elevated (very high) susceptibility to contamination from pathogens and protozoa due to the extensive amount of agricultural pastureland as well as the total amount of wastewater discharges in the watershed. This assessment was conducted through the NYSDOH Source Waters Assessment Program (SWAP) which estimates the potential for untreated drinking water sources to be affected by contamination and does not address the quality of treated finished potable tap water. This reach of the Mohawk River is one of only a handful of surface water supplies in the state that received assessments as high as “very high” susceptibility.

### 3.12.3 Flood Hazard Areas

Flooding is a natural and recurring event that results from heavy or continuous rainfall that exceeds the soil's absorptive capacity and the flow capacity of rivers and streams. Once these capacities are exceeded, the waterway overflows its banks and spills into adjacent low-lying areas called the floodplain. Floodplains have the potential for recurring inundation, and urban expansion in these areas presents a broad range of issues, including water quality and property impacts. Of primary concern to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is the economic loss due to structural damage from flood waters. When floodplains are developed, flood elevations are increased resulting in serious consequences for existing development.

Based on an analysis of the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Q3 flood data, approximately 27 percent of the Study Area is within a mapped floodplain. Most of these

floodplains are located along the Mohawk River, between Cohoes Boulevard and the shoreline (refer to Appendix F and Map 12 – *Floodplains and Wetlands* for further information).

#### 3.12.4 Wetlands

Wetlands are some of the most productive and diverse ecosystems in the world and, as such, provide important habitat for a variety of species along the Hudson River and Mohawk River corridors. Wetlands also contribute to water quality by impeding drainage flow from developed land and filtering out pollutant- and sediment-laden run-off prior to entering streams. Wetlands can also act as natural stormwater retention basins, preventing excessive erosion and run-off through its storage capacity. To accurately account for wetland areas within the Study Area, two data sets were included in this analysis – NYSDEC wetlands and National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) wetlands.

Based on the results of an analysis of the NYSDEC wetland data, only 0.10 acre of NYSDEC Class I wetlands are located within the Study Area. Class I NYSDEC wetland “TN-6” is located along the southeastern boundary of the Study Area (refer to Map 12 – *Floodplains and Wetlands*). A 100-foot protective buffer area adjacent to wetland “TN-6” extends into the BOA, primarily along the Cohoes Boulevard and Dyke Avenue corridors, including a portion of the Hudson River Community Credit Union property. Any future development proposed within this 100-foot adjacent area will likely require a freshwater wetland disturbance permit from NYSDEC.

Based on an analysis of NWI data (see Map 11 and Appendix F for more information), almost nine acres of federally-jurisdictional wetlands are located within the Study Area. With the exception of two small wetlands totaling less than one-half acre, all of these wetlands are associated with the Mohawk River.

As smaller, unmapped wetlands may be present on parcels within the Study Area, detailed site-specific wetland delineations would need to be conducted in order to ascertain the degree to which wetlands are present. If deemed jurisdictional, unmapped wetlands can act as a constraint on future redevelopment initiatives.

#### 3.12.5 Fish and Wildlife Habitats

The primary fish and wildlife habitat within the Study Area is the Mohawk River, which forms the northern and eastern boundaries of the Cohoes Boulevard BOA. The location of the Study Area along the Mohawk River is one of the biggest assets to future redevelopment initiatives in the Study Area. In addition to the existing dense urban development within the City of Cohoes, fish, amphibian and macroinvertebrate species have been affected by a number of natural and constructed impediments within the Mohawk River itself, namely the Cohoes Falls and the State Dam north of the Study Area and the Troy Dam located southeast of the Study Area. The Mohawk River remains an important fishery and waterway to be protected for its environmental value and utilized as a recreational resource. A further discussion of plant and animals species is included in Appendix F.

According to the NYSDEC, a number of state-listed rare, threatened and endangered (RTE) species have historically been known to inhabit the Study Area and adjacent lands. The United States Fish & Wildlife Service also maintains an Inventory of Threatened and Endangered Species for all County's in NYS. Based on state and federally-listed RTE species found in Albany County, development may require further investigation of potential impacts as part of the State Environmental Quality Review (SEQR) process.

The Significant Coastal Fish and Wildlife Habitats (SCFWH) program, authorized under the Waterfront Revitalization and Coastal Resources Act (WRCR) of 1981, acts to protect important fish and wildlife habitats that contain "*a unique combination of environmental and biological conditions which fish and wildlife need for survival.*" No Significant Coastal Fish and Wildlife Habitats are mapped within the Study Area.

### 3.12.6 Upland Natural Resources

The majority of the Cohoes Boulevard BOA is comprised of densely-developed urban buildings, roads and parking areas. Despite this dense development, a number of upland open space opportunities presently exist. Portions of several historically developed properties located along the Mohawk River, including the former municipal landfill and the St. Michael's Community Center property, have reverted to forested upland areas, buffering the Rivers from Cohoes Boulevard and the City of Cohoes. The most significant area of uplands runs along the northwestern boundary and the west-central portion of the BOA associated with the route of the original "enlarged" Erie Canal. Most of George Street Park is maintained green space and athletic fields, although portions of the park in the vicinity of the remains of locks 9 and 10 have also been renaturalized. Portions of George Street Park surrounding the maintained green space are forested, comprised of mature hardwood species.

### 3.12.7 Erosion Hazard Areas

Steep slopes are more susceptible to erosion than flatter slopes. As such, understanding the location of steep slopes can help to determine an area's development potential and identify the most appropriate use or form for that area. When considering erosive potential, slopes greater than eight percent are considered to be steep; slopes greater than 15 percent are considered to be very steep, limiting their development potential. Appendix F and Map 4 provide further detail regarding slopes within the BOA Study Area. Nearly 25 percent of the Study Area is located on slopes greater than eight percent, yet most of these areas are confined to lands directly adjacent to roadways and railroad tracks, as well as the Mohawk River waterfront. The average slope for the Study Area is six percent.

### 3.12.8 Soil Characteristics

According to data provided by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (1992), there are 15 mapped soil units present within the Study Area (see Appendix F and Map 7 for further

information). Of these 15 mapped soil units, three comprise approximately 70 percent of the Study Area. A brief description of each of these three soil units follows:

*Urban land- Udorthents complex* - 154.5 acres (38.3 percent)

This soil group consists of nearly level and gently sloping areas of Urban Land and areas of clayey and loamy Udorthents. Within this soil group, Udorthents are typically covered concrete, asphalt, buildings, or other impervious materials. As such, most of these soils are artificially drained by sewer systems, gutters, and ditches. Onsite investigation is needed to properly evaluate and plan the development of sites for a specific purpose. This soil type dominates the northern half of the Study Area, although a small grouping is also present along the southern boundary.

*Nassau channery silt loam* - 83.3 acres (20.7 percent)

This shallow soil is generally confined to bedrock-controlled ridges and hills and is somewhat excessively drained. The depth of the soil is limited by the presence of bedrock, which is located only 10 to 20 inches below the surface. The location of this material can be a serious limitation when attempting to construct dwelling units with basements or local roads and streets. This mapped soil unit is limited to the southern portions of the Study Area, west of Cohoes Boulevard.

*Teel silt loam* - 44.6 acres (11.1 percent)

Located primarily on floodplains along major watercourses, this nearly level soil is very deep and moderately well drained. While the depth to bedrock exceeds 60 inches, this soil group is characterized by a seasonal high water table that is only 18 to 24 inches below the surface from February to April. Given the soil group's location along major watercourse, flooding is the primary limitation for dwellings with basements and local roads and streets. This mapped soil unit is confined to the waterfront areas along the Mohawk River, east of Cohoes Boulevard.

Of direct importance to brownfield redevelopment is the soils ability to absorb precipitation. Accordingly, the Natural Resource Conservation Service has classified soils into four Hydrologic Soil Groups (HSG) based on the soil's runoff potential – A, B, C, and D. Less than 50 percent of the Study Area had Hydrologic Soil Group data available for analysis. Of these areas, the majority were classified as Group C. Group C soils have moderately high runoff potential when thoroughly wet. The ability of soils to absorb precipitation will have direct impacts upon the storm water management practices utilized on site, including the ability to implement green infrastructure practices as required by Chapter 5 of the 2010 NYSDEC Stormwater Management Design Manual.



### 3.12.9 Surface Geology

An analysis of surface geology was also conducted for the Cohoes Boulevard BOA as the type and location of these materials can have important implications for development. Areas characterized by shallow bedrock, for example, can complicate construction activities that require excavation to depths below the exposed bedrock. Using data provided by the New York State Museum (NYSM), it was determined that surface geology of the Study Area is comprised of approximately 97 percent recent alluvium and 3 percent lacustrine silt and clay. Alluvium is loose, unconsolidated (not solid rock) soil or sediments that have been eroded or reshaped by water. The presence of alluvium is generally considered not a limiting factor for site development.

#### 3.12.10 Bedrock Geology

According to the New York State Museum Bedrock Geology Map, the Cohoes Boulevard BOA is mapped as Normanskill Shale (On). While primarily composed of shale, this bedrock unit also contains deposits of mudstone and sandstone. While generally concealed by the surficial deposits described above, bedrock outcroppings do exist in several places within the BOA, primarily along the Mohawk River and below the State Dam across the Mohawk River, just north of the Cohoes Industrial Park. Future development initiatives along the waterfront will need to take into consideration constraints associated with the presence of bedrock outcroppings.

#### 3.12.11 Groundwater

It is important to understand the location and type of aquifers that underlie the Cohoes Boulevard BOA Study Area, as development activities aboveground can have a detrimental effect upon water quality within the aquifer. Generally, two types of aquifers exist – confined and unconfined.

*Confined aquifers* are those groundwater storage areas sandwiched between two layers of impermeable materials (e.g., clay) and impede the flow of water into and out of the aquifer.

*Unconfined aquifers* do not possess an upper confining layer and are instead bounded by the water table; these aquifers are particularly vulnerable to contamination.

According to NYSDEC mapping, no primary or principal aquifers are mapped within the Study Area. In addition, EPA sole source aquifer mapping does not indicate any sole source aquifers within the Study Area.

Based on an analysis of data provided by the NYSDEC, approximately 72 percent of the Study Area lies over an unconfined aquifer. Although located above an unconfined aquifer, the City of Cohoes does not utilize this aquifer as a drinking water source. Therefore, exposure of drinking water to potentially-contaminated groundwater is highly unlikely. Contaminated properties,

erosion and runoff within the BOA do have the potential to adversely impact the quality of existing groundwater within the BOA. Protection of existing groundwater resources in future revitalization initiatives will be imperative in realizing the City's vision for a sustainable and successful redevelopment of the Cohoes Boulevard corridor.

#### 3.12.12 Air Quality Non-Attainment & Maintenance Areas

Air Quality Non-Attainment Areas are those places that persistently violate National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for one or more of six air criteria contaminants as determined by the Federal Clean Air Act. Air Quality Maintenance Areas are places that had a history of non-attainment, yet are now consistently meeting NAAQS. Albany County was designated as a "non-attainment area" in 1997. In 2008, the EPA issued a revised the NAAQS and as such, Albany County was recommended for reclassification as an "attainment area." Albany County received the final designation by EPA as an attainment area in April 2012. Albany County is currently listed as an "attainment area" for the remaining five "criteria contaminants." Although a positive indicator for public health, status as an "attainment area" may limit the ability of Cohoes to access federal transportation funding sources tied to air quality conditions, such as the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) Program.

#### 3.12.13 Visual Quality

Many of the roads within the Cohoes Boulevard BOA offer scenic views of historic buildings and remnants of the original Erie Canal. The North Mohawk Street/New Cortland Street/Route 32 corridors are part of the Mohawk Towpath National Scenic Byway, designated by the Federal Highway Administration in 2003. The 26.2 mile byway runs between Schenectady and Waterford along the general route of the historic Erie Canal. Many of the historic resources and scenic views along the byway are located outside of the Study Area, and views within the Study Area are limited to industrial buildings, public housing high-rises and the vacant Cohoes Commons building. Opportunities exist for augmenting the experience of byway travelers within the Study Area, particularly through strategic redevelopment of vacant properties located between the byway and the Mohawk River. The route of the Mohawk Towpath National Scenic Byway is illustrated on Map 7.

#### 3.12.14 Agricultural Lands

The Study Area is comprised of urban residential, commercial and industrial development, paved roadways, surface waters and dedicated park and preserve land. No agricultural lands are located within the Cohoes Boulevard BOA.

#### 3.12.15 Local, State and Federally-Designated Resources

No local, state or federally-designated resources are known to exist within the Cohoes Boulevard BOA.

## KEY FINDINGS: NATURAL RESOURCES

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1. The Mohawk River waterfront represents a significant redevelopment opportunity to improve public access to an important natural resource within the Study Area. Future redevelopment initiatives should be undertaken in ways that protect and improve the water quality of the Mohawk River and its tributaries.
  2. The utilization of green infrastructure to retain and/or treat on-site run-off prior to discharge into the City sewer system and Mohawk River will be an important consideration to protect water quality.
  3. Constraints associated with plant and wildlife habitat are not major considerations for future redevelopment initiatives. However, opportunities exist along the Mohawk River to interpret and protect plant and wildlife that utilize the river for habitat.
  4. The presence of the Mohawk Towpath National Scenic Byway presents an opportunity to augment the user experience through the redevelopment of adjacent vacant and underutilized properties.
  5. Development within the BOA should protect natural resources through the use of sustainable design techniques, such as green infrastructure, a reduction in impervious paving and the maintenance of appropriate buffers adjacent to the waterfront.
  6. The large amounts of Urban Land classified soils indicates that onsite investigations will likely be required to properly evaluate and plan for redevelopment.
  7. The shallow soil depth for Nassau channery silt loams indicates a high potential for erosion and most areas will require additional soil material for landscaping.
  8. Poorly drained soils and high water tables indicate a limitation for structures developed with basements in areas characterized by Teel silt loam.
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### 3.13 Market Analysis

The development of a Market Analysis ensures that market-based considerations within the Study Area are considered in conjunction with physical and spatial recommendations. The market analysis enables the identification of realistic redevelopment sites, a multi-phased land use plan, and timeframes for redevelopment scenarios. Understanding the development scenarios that will lead to the greatest long-term investment and benefit for the community is directly tied to understanding the local markets, both regionally, citywide, and within the Study Area.

#### 3.13.1 Regional Economic Outlook

The general economic outlook for the region was analyzed using data from the 8-county Capital Region (which includes Warren, Washington, Rensselaer, Columbia, Greene, Albany, Schenectady, and Saratoga Counties, as defined by Empire State Development) to determine what factors may impact the ability of the Cohoes Boulevard BOA to capitalize on various redevelopment scenarios. This section compares the Capital Region to New York State and the Nation in terms of job growth, regional industry demands and economic base. A more extensive overview of this information is provided in Appendix G.

The economic base of the Capital Region is heavily weighted towards government and services, with approximately 50 percent of the region's jobs attributed to these two sectors. Industry experts project a seven percent growth in the number of new jobs between 2011 and 2021. As a comparison, the Upstate region has projected growth of five percent, the State projects seven percent growth, and the United States projects twelve percent growth.

Among the industries expected to see the largest employment increases, *Business and Financial Services* would be the most appropriate for locating within the Cohoes Boulevard Study Area. This industry was examined in more detail. Within this category, occupations expected to increase by more than 500 jobs by 2021 include management analysts, personal financial advisors, and securities, commodities, and financial services sales agents. Additionally, accountant and auditor occupations are expected to increase by 19 percent with over 748 additional jobs.

## KEY FINDINGS: REGIONAL ECONOMIC OUTLOOK

1. From 2011 to 2021, employment in the Capital Region is projected to grow 7.15 percent, exceeding that of Upstate New York (4.76 percent) and New York State as a whole (6.95 percent).
2. The Industries expected to add the most jobs in the Capital Region from 2011 through 2021 include Health Care and Social Assistance (14,541 jobs); Finance and Insurance (5,906 jobs); and Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services (5,362 jobs).
3. Employing over 121,500 workers, Government is the largest industry by employment in the Capital Region.

### 3.13.2 Retail Market Analysis

A retail market trade area was established to study the local factors that would impact local reuse and redevelopment. The Trade Area consists of a 15-minute drive time from the intersection of Remsen Street and White Street. This Trade Area captures a segment of the regional population that can reasonably be assumed to comprise a majority of the market that the City of Cohoes would serve. As such, analysis of this Trade Area will provide insights into consumer characteristics and behaviors for the Cohoes market that local leaders can use to guide their discussions on redevelopment potential within the area. Figure 14 illustrates the 15-minute drive time Trade Area boundary.

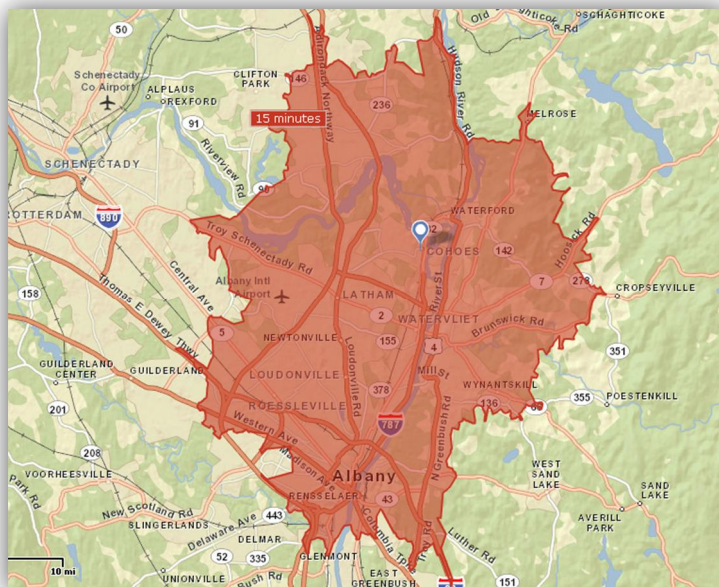


Figure 14: Trade Area Defined by 15-Minute Travel Time

### *Retail Leakage/Surplus Analysis*

The difference between existing retail sales (“Supply”) and retail potential (“Demand”) is called a “retail gap.” A large retail gap can identify a potential opportunity for retail growth. For example, sectors with a positive retail gap (leakage) might be appropriate markets to pursue because residents are currently leaving the Trade Area to make purchases, so a new business

might be able to capture that spending. Alternatively, a category showing a negative retail gap (surplus) might indicate the presence of a niche market that the area could build on. A more detailed analysis of sales leakage and surplus is included in Appendix G.

### *Sales Leakage*

The demand for goods and services that is not being met locally is referred to as sales leakage, indicated as a positive retail gap. The leakage occurs because consumers make purchases at establishments located outside the defined trade area. For example, there were approximately \$41.5 million of retail sales in the Clothing Stores category in the Retail Trade Area. However, residents of the Retail Trade Area spent approximately \$66.6 million on these goods. Therefore, residents spent about \$25 million outside of the Retail Trade Area, such spending considered sales leakage.

Sales leakage is normally viewed as an opportunity to capture unmet demand in a trade area by opening new or expanding existing businesses. However, not all retail categories that exhibit leakage within a particular trade area are a good fit for that region. Overall, very little sales leakage seems to be occurring in the Retail Trade Area. However, the industry groups experiencing some leakage from the Retail Trade Area include:

- Gasoline Stations
- Electronic Shopping & Mail-Order Houses
- Clothing Stores
- Jewelry, Luggage, & Leather Goods Stores
- Shoe Stores

### *Sales Surplus*

If the supply of goods sold exceeds trade area demand, it is assumed that consumers who live outside a defined trade area are coming into the trade area to spend money. This creates a sales surplus, which is indicated as a negative retail gap. All retail categories other than the five categories noted above in the Sales Leakage section, exhibit a surplus. This is not surprising, given the vast retail offerings located in the 15-minute drive time Trade Area, including Colonie Center Mall, Crossgates Mall and numerous national chain stores located along major travel corridors throughout the region including NYS Route 9, Wolf Road, Route 7, etc.

The sales surplus numbers themselves do not tell a very specific story, except that the Trade Area already has a substantial amount of retail. Undoubtedly, there is a great deal of consumer spending occurring in the Trade Area that Cohoes could potentially capture. The degree of success that Cohoes might experience in this regard will depend largely on the quality of any retail development that takes place. The fact that the sales surpluses are so high across the board means that the competition for retail dollars within this Trade Area is strong. As a result, any proposed large-scale retail development will need to distinguish itself from other offerings



in the area in order to attract consumers. This means taking great care to ensure that a strong retail concept is built through careful planning. If the City desires to pursue large-scale retail as part of their revitalization strategies, one recommendation is to look into building a waterfront retail entertainment district, which is something that the Capital District does not currently offer. If large-scale retail is not something that Cohoes would like to pursue, then focusing on the retail leakage categories that fit best into a smaller-scale downtown setting would be more appropriate. The next section looks at those categories in more detail.

### *Retail Use Feasibility Study*

While the previous section identifies a number of industry sectors experiencing leakage from the Trade Area, it does not indicate that brand new businesses of those types within the Trade Area would inherently be successful. A retail use feasibility analysis identifies which of the categories with leakage have enough demand to potentially support a new business in the Trade Area. The analysis assumes that 25 percent of the existing leakage in each category can potentially be recaptured by new businesses. The actual recapture rate for each category will vary and depends on existing amenities, commuting patterns, and consumer affinity towards certain stores or brands.

Table 7 depicts the number of potential new businesses that could theoretically be supported in each category in the Trade Area if 25 percent of the leakage is recaptured and the new businesses have similar annual sales as the national average for stores in each category. Of note is the high number of clothing stores that could be supported by capturing some of the existing sales leakage.

Table 7: Retail Opportunities  
Retail Trade Area Retail Opportunities

Industry Group	Retail Gap	25% Recapture Rate	Average Sales in Upstate NY	# of Potential Businesses
Clothing Stores	\$25,029,734	\$6,257,434	\$378,768	16.5
Used Merchandise Stores	\$3,132,892	\$783,223	\$66,992	11.7
Jewelry, Luggage & Leather Goods Stores	\$5,822,886	\$1,455,722	\$131,375	11.1
Shoe Stores	\$4,997,925	\$1,249,481	\$268,745	4.6
Florists	\$1,764,580	\$441,145	\$153,264	2.9
Gasoline Stations	\$41,658,857	\$10,414,714	\$3,902,276	2.7
Book, Periodical & Music Stores	\$1,937,370	\$484,343	\$294,798	1.6
Other Miscellaneous Store Retailers	\$1,196,552	\$299,138	\$282,014	1.1

Source: ESRI, Camoin Associates

#### **Legend**

25% Recapture Rate: Equals 25% of the Retail Gap.

**# of Potential Businesses:** Potential recapture divided by Upstate Average Sales.



## KEY FINDINGS: RETAIL MARKET ANALYSIS

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1. Residents of Cohoes appear to be well served by retail offerings within the trade area; sales within nearly all the major retail categories meet or exceed local demand.
  2. Opportunities exist for niche retail within the Study Area, including clothing stores, jewelry stores, luggage stores, shoe stores and convenience retail such as gasoline stations. To a more limited extent, opportunities also exist for used merchandise stores, florists, and book and music stores.
- 

### 3.13.3 Residential Market Analysis

This analysis will help to identify potential residential developments that could serve currently unmet needs (in the Capital Region in general and the City in particular) as well as be feasible and marketable in the current real estate atmosphere. A more detailed account of this analysis is included in Appendix G.

The analysis examined two distinct development possibilities for the BOA, each with its own market trade area:

- (1) The Downtown Residential Trade Area is defined as a select group of nearby municipalities with similar offerings that were assessed to identify opportunities for apartments in the downtown portion of the BOA.
- (2) A second much larger area was defined as the Greater Residential Trade Area for an assessment of the potential for higher-end residential development opportunities along the waterfront areas of the BOA.

Market demographics and existing housing characteristics in terms of total number of units, vacancy, values, rents, units per structure and age of structure were examined for each trade area. Case studies were established for the second larger trade area gain an understanding market demand for upscale housing in the area, and are included in Appendix G.

The number of households has grown by about ten percent from 2000-2011 and is projected to grow by about another six percent by 2016. At the same time, average household size has decreased slightly and the average age of the population has increased to roughly 40. Translated into general market terms, this means that there has been modest growth in demand for new units that would be, on average, for slightly smaller households.

Underlying this general trend, however, has been a sea change in the actual distribution of demand across types of units. Both locally and nationally, the trend has moved markedly away from single-family owner-occupied houses to an array of other products. The new trends include:

- Empty-nesters looking to downsize into a smaller, less maintenance-intensive property, including townhouses and condos.
- Senior housing, for those looking to have amenities tailored to the needs of retirees.
- Both the 20- and 30-somethings and empty-nesters rediscovering the benefits of living in a downtown setting with urban amenities and short commutes.
- Families displaced by foreclosures and/or job losses that cannot access financing and are thus looking for an adequate alternative to home ownership.
- Young people who are just starting out on their careers or who are having trouble finding employment and need safe, clean, and cheap housing options.
- Relatively wealthy professionals, often without children, who are looking for upscale and luxury housing options and who have no interest in ownership.
- Communities rethinking zoning restrictions such as minimum lot sizes, density and layout; with an eye towards environmental and fiscal sustainability.

In the aggregate, we have seen a substantial change in the attitudes, tastes and market choices of the population as a whole, moving towards more non-traditional options. These options present an opportunity for the City to encourage market-sensitive developments. In total, there have been around 2,200 units of housing planned and/or added to the market in the last decade in the City, about 90 percent of which have been rentals. Many have been upscale/luxury in nature and cater to a specific target market, such as empty-nesters, seniors, or 20- and 30-somethings.

The future of residential development in the City and the region is uncertain. Some economists believe the move away from owner-occupied to renter-occupied units has been overdone and there will be a strong swing back in the owner-occupied direction<sup>1</sup>. Indeed, the national slump in housing prices which began in 2007 seems to have abated and certain areas have seen single family home prices and new building ramp back up. But we see a series of secular market trends (see list above), some of which pre-date the housing crisis, and most of which should persist through a general housing recovery. The aging baby-boomer set is moving away from single-family houses and is not being replaced at the same rate by new households seeking that product. Urban living has taken on a special cache, buttressed by cost and time savings from a more modest commute. The propensity for young couples and even families to move frequently makes renter-occupied options highly attractive. Communities themselves are seeing the cost advantages of higher density development in terms of infrastructure investment and service delivery efficiencies. So, we believe that these trends are here to stay, even if they soften somewhat as the housing market corrects to a more normal level on a national basis.

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<sup>1</sup> A recent local example from the Daily Gazette, July 8, 2012:

[http://www.dailygazette.net/standard/ShowStoryTemplate.asp?Path=SCH/2012/07/08&ID=Ar00902&Section=Local\\_News](http://www.dailygazette.net/standard/ShowStoryTemplate.asp?Path=SCH/2012/07/08&ID=Ar00902&Section=Local_News)

## KEY FINDINGS: RESIDENTIAL MARKET AND TRADE AREA ANALYSIS

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1. The City of Cohoes has seen its number of households grow by about 10 percent from 2000-2011 with projections of another 6 percent growth by 2016.
  2. There have been around 2,200 units of housing planned and/or added to the market since 2000 in the City, about 90 percent of which have been rentals.
  3. Both locally and nationally, the trend has moved markedly away from single-family owner-occupied houses to an array of other products.
  4. The residential real estate market in the Capital Region is undergoing a major transition; products that were not readily available, in the Capital Region a decade ago are becoming more and more popular to consumers, including lofts, live work space and studio apartments.
  5. Rents in the area have increased substantially following the housing crash and financial market crisis, as more households turn to rental properties over owner-occupied ones.
  6. There is additional unmet market demand for upscale rental units that the City could harness both for the redevelopment of its waterfront and to increase residential activity downtown.
  7. Opportunities continue to exist within the Central Business District for mixed use development that includes retail on the ground floor and upper floor offices and residential units.
- 

### 3.13.4 Comparison Developments

When thinking about potential upscale waterfront developments, the City is intimately familiar with the Harmony Mills project and other riverfront projects. However, there are a number of other interesting developments in the Capital District that are planned, permitted, under construction or occupied. Many of them reflect the fact that surprising developments can occur in surprising places and that the residential real estate market is clearly in a major transition right now. Products that were almost unheard of in the Capital Region a decade or two ago are becoming more and more popular. Below are highlights of developments that point to the “hidden” demand that is becoming more and more apparent to communities in the area as consumer tastes change. For the sake of good comparisons, we are focusing on development projects north of Albany and in proximity to the I-87 corridor, yet still within the Greater

Residential Trade Area boundaries. A detailed analysis of these comparison developments is included in Appendix G.

### 3.14 Strategic Sites

A total of eight sites and areas have been identified within the Cohoes Boulevard BOA as strategic sites based upon their potential to catalyze change and revitalization in the Study Area. In many instances, the identified strategic sites include multiple properties, or encompass several blocks of the Study Area. These larger strategic sites were selected based upon the same evaluation criteria utilized for individual or smaller sites. However, the recognized goals of the community and the vision of the BOA supported the need for expanded strategic sites to provide catalytic development on a broader scale.

The following evaluation criteria were utilized to determine which sites possess the qualities inherent of a strategic site: Location (waterfront, downtown, gateway, etc.); Site is considered underutilized; Existing environmental or public health considerations; Ownership status; Adequacy of infrastructure; Potential to provide public amenities or improve quality of life; Furthers the recognized goals of the community; Size of individual properties; and Accessibility.

Summary descriptions of each strategic site identified for the Cohoes Boulevard BOA are included below. Identified strategic sites are located in each of the four delineated character areas, allowing for targeted revitalization initiatives appropriate to the character area where the strategic site is located. Strategic sites are illustrated on Map 14.

#### 1. 32 New Cortland Street

The property located at 32 New Cortland Street is considered a high priority strategic site within the Central Business District Character Area. The vacant 3-acre property is located on the Mohawk River waterfront and offers majestic views of Cohoes Falls. The property is also within walking distance of the City's central business district. The property is zoned "Waterfront Mixed Use," and emphasis should be placed on revitalization efforts that leverage the waterfront location while providing an appropriate transition between the riverfront and adjacent development through the use of appropriate design standards. Public access to the Mohawk River waterfront should be ensured via an easement and the development of quasi-public spaces, such as dining.

The site meets several strategic site planning criteria; however redevelopment is complicated by ownership status and its location in a floodplain: Located in a gateway and along the waterfront; Potential to provide public access to the Mohawk River; Property size is adequate for redevelopment; Infrastructure in the vicinity of the site is adequate; Property is vacant; and Overall importance to revitalization in the Study Area.

## 2. Central Business District

The Central Business District strategic site is comprised of 248 parcels on 30.3 acres roughly bounded by Cayuga Street, White Street, Main Street and Canvass Street. The contains a collection of several individual strategic sites identified as critical to revitalization efforts, including Canal Square and Silliman Parks, the former Manufacturers Bank, the Carter Building, the Cohoes Savings Bank Building and the site of the former Cohoes Theatre. Properties within the Central Business District have been identified in nearly every planning initiative undertaken by the City of Cohoes over the past 15 years for targeted investment. Ongoing revitalization efforts in this area have transformed and rehabilitated numerous structures, including the Cohoes Music Hall, City Hall and several historic buildings along the Remsen Street corridor. The presence of the dense residential St. Josephs Park neighborhood to the south and both McDonald Tower and Cayuga Plaza Apartments to the north places a large number of City-residents within walking distance of the Central Business District.



*Remsen Street is the spine of the Central Business District.*

The Central Business District meets the following planning criteria for a strategic site: Within downtown area; Critical to revitalization efforts within the BOA; Proximity to high-density residential; Infrastructure within and around the central business district is adequate; Contains a number of vacant properties; Possesses access to public amenities including parks and trails; and Capacity for enhancement of existing buildings and streetscapes.

## 3. St. Joseph Park Neighborhood

The St. Joseph Park Neighborhood includes 132 parcels covering 11.8 acres roughly bounded by Main Street, Columbia Street, White Street and Bedford Street. The neighborhood is a dense



*View of the St. Joseph Park Neighborhood from above.*



mixed use residential development pattern with individual catalytic sites located at the former Armory, the Columbia/Main intersection, St. Josephs Roman Catholic Church and along Bedford Street. The site's Congress Street and Main Street corridors contain several vacant and/or underutilized properties, and the BOA Program represents a significant opportunity to revitalize the neighborhood and enhance the public realm to improve the quality of life for existing residents. The Congress Street corridor is relatively isolated from the Main Street and Remsen Street corridors, and the revitalization of the St. Josephs Park neighborhood should seek to strengthen connections to the Central Business District.

The St. Josephs Park Neighborhood meets the following planning criteria for a strategic site: Located adjacent to Central Business District; Potential to provide public amenities or improve quality of life; Furthers the recognized goals of the community; Site is accessible from several major arterials; Infrastructure in the vicinity of the site is adequate; and High visibility site.

#### 4. Cohoes Business Park

The 1.45 acre Cohoes Business Park property is privately-owned and is currently vacant and for sale. Located across SR 32 from Sheltertherm Industries, the Cohoes Business Park is also strategically located on both the Mohawk River waterfront and the junction of New Cortland Street, SR 32 and Cohoes Boulevard. Impediments to revitalization include traffic issues at the SR 32, New Cortland Street and Cohoes Boulevard intersection. Despite this, the Cohoes Business Park site has the ability to serve as a location for immediate revitalization due to its location, vacancy status and the presence of a property owner willing to sell.

In addition, the site meets the following strategic site planning criteria: Located in a gateway and along the waterfront; Potential to provide public access to the Mohawk River; Site is accessible from several major arterials; Infrastructure in the vicinity of the site is adequate; High visibility site; and Property size is adequate for enhancement or redevelopment.



*The former Cohoes Business Park site (A) and the adjacent Department of Public Works site (B) occupy a significant amount of waterfront within the BOA.*

## 5. Cohoes Department of Public Works (DPW) Property

The 3.4 acre Cohoes DPW property is located at 211 Ontario Street. This city-owned property is located on the Mohawk River waterfront and in close proximity to Cohoes Boulevard and SR 32 corridors. This publicly-owned property is considered critical to revitalization efforts within the Cohoes Boulevard BOA. Impediments to revitalization of the site include the need to relocate the DPW facility to another, more appropriate location within the City of Cohoes, and the risk associated with findings of a recommended Phase 2 Environmental Site Assessment.

The DPW site meets the following strategic site planning criteria: Gateway site in high visibility location along the waterfront; Potential to provide public access to the Mohawk River; Site is accessible from several major arterials; Property is publicly-owned; Potential brownfield site; and Property size is adequate for enhancement or redevelopment.

## 6. St. Michael's CC, Inc. Site

The 7.4 acre St. Michael's property is located along Linden Street, approximately 300 feet south of Ontario Street. The property was most recently used as a community center for St. Michael's Roman Catholic Church, however the former community center has been razed and the property is currently vacant and fenced off. Prior to its use as a community center the property was the historic location of the Cohoes Manufactured Gas Plant. The site is ranked as a high priority environmental site and is a registered NYSDEC Voluntary Cleanup Program Remediation site. While some remediation has occurred on the site, remaining contamination in the southern and eastern portions of the property and the potential for contaminant migration to the northern portion of the property are potential constraints to redevelopment of the property. The property includes frontage on the Mohawk River, along the east side of Linden Street, which is attractive for revitalization initiatives focused on water-based uses and public access to the Mohawk River.



*The St. Michael's CC site is a large, prime waterfront property that could provide significant public access to the Mohawk River.*

Additionally, the site meets the following strategic site planning criteria: Located in close proximity to a gateway and along the waterfront; Potential to provide public access to the Mohawk River; Site is vacant; Site is accessible from several major arterials; Infrastructure in the vicinity of the site is adequate; Potential brownfield; and Property size is adequate for enhancement or redevelopment.



## 7. Former Municipal Landfill

The 4.3-acre former Municipal Landfill site is located between Route 787/Cohoes Boulevard and the Mohawk River in the east-central portion of the Study Area. Between the 1960's and 1980's, the site served as a landfill. The property is owned by the City of Cohoes and is currently vacant. Impediments to redevelopment include the potential environmental contamination on the site due to the historic use of the site as a landfill, as well as lack of a defined, permanent access route from a public road. Additional funding provided by the New York State Department of State enabled the undertaking of a Phase I Environmental Site Assessment at the former Municipal Landfill site, which recommended further environmental investigations into on-site environmental conditions as a potential implementation project. Despite these impediments, the site remains a viable location for strategic redevelopment.



*The former municipal landfill has already begun the natural process of succession.*

The property meets the following strategic site planning criteria: Located along the Mohawk River waterfront with potential for public access; Site is publicly-owned; Site is vacant; Site is accessible from several major arterials; Potential brownfield; Property provides an opportunity for future land assembly; and Property size is adequate for enhancement or redevelopment.

## 8. South Columbia Neighborhood ("SoCo")

The South Columbia Neighborhood strategic site is comprised of 275 parcels along the Lancaster Street, Lansing Street, Congress Street and Main Street corridors. The site is approximately 24.3 acres in size and is primarily comprised of residential properties. A number of these properties are vacant, underutilized or in disrepair. The majority of the properties within the



*The South Columbia neighborhood is one of the most densely developed neighborhoods in the City.*

site are privately-owned, resulting in a potential impediment to larger-scale revitalization initiatives. Revitalization efforts centered on enhancement of existing occupied properties and potential land assembly of vacant properties for more widespread, long-term revitalization are most appropriate for this site.

Additionally, the South Columbia Neighborhood meets the following planning criteria: Located in close proximity to a gateway and downtown; Contains a number of brownfield properties; Site is accessible from several major arterials; Infrastructure within and around the Columbia South Neighborhood is adequate; Contains a number of vacant properties; Possesses access to public amenities including parks and trails; and Furthers the recognized goals of the community.

## KEY FINDINGS: STRATEGIC SITES

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1. Publicly-owned strategic sites represent a significant opportunity to provide direct public access to the waterfront for both active and passive recreational uses.
  2. The establishment of larger strategic sites at the neighborhood level creates the opportunity for the City to establish a focused-investment-strategy to concentrate public revitalization spending.
  3. The redevelopment of the BOAs largest vacant waterfront properties away from industrial uses could promote a dramatic shift in the perception of Cohoes as a progressive waterfront community.
- 

### 3.15 Summary Analysis & Findings

The Nomination Phase of the BOA is intended to identify existing conditions and neighborhood trends that may impact redevelopment opportunities within the Study Area. Revitalization goals and initiatives need to be based on the market realities of the area while also supporting the community's vision of their neighborhood. The following provides an overview of redevelopment opportunities and challenges as they relate to the City of Cohoes and the greater Capital Region.

The Cohoes Boulevard BOA is striving to become a location within the Capital District where people choose to live, work and play. Local and regional trends are vital factors in the direction of revitalization efforts and must be carefully considered to achieve local successes. Key findings from the existing conditions analysis are summarized in the following sections.

#### *Population trends*

- The majority of the Study Area is comprised of residents over the age of 40 (54 percent) and school-aged children (18 percent). School-aged children need access to resources to ensure proper growth and academic successes. Families additionally benefit from access to recreational resources, goods, services, and community resources, which enhance the quality-of-life within an area.
- Between 2000 and 2010, the Study Area gained 206 residents. New housing initiatives in surrounding areas of the City have worked to reverse the trend of population losses seen between 1990 and 2000. Population retention will continue to be important in order for the Study Area to attract businesses that benefit from residential density.

### *Housing Characteristics*

- The Study Area is known for a variety of housing styles, some dating back to the 1830s while newer loft-style developments, as exemplified by the upper story conversions on Remsen Street, cater to more current housing market trends. The City will need to ensure that a range of housing opportunities continue to be available within the Study Area in order to attract a variety of income levels. Supporting a diverse residential population will contribute to the vibrancy of the Study Area.
- Within the Study Area, only 17.8 percent of homes are owner-occupied. Owner-occupancy should be encouraged as much as possible to promote property investment and community activism.
- Housing vacancies within the Study Area (13.6 percent) are nearly double the rate observed in the City of Cohoes (9.8 percent) and Albany County (7.3 percent). In addition, 50 percent of the City's vacant properties are located within the Study Area. Identifying opportunities to promote infill development, encourage property assembly, and to return vacant properties to active uses will be important for the Study Area to achieve redevelopment goals.
- Housing within the Study Area is affordable compared to the remainder of the City and other locations within the Capital District. This provides the opportunity to attract young professionals that may be looking for a starter home and relatively short commute times.

### *Income and Employment*

- Individuals within the Study Area are primarily working in the Education, Health and Social Services fields (25.7 percent), followed by Retail Trade (17.1 percent). The City can work with area employers in these sectors to encourage residency within the Study Area, and to facilitate residents' commutes to work.
- The majority of the Study Area's population that was considered to be in the labor force in 2010 was actively employed (93.9 percent). Ensuring needed goods and services are available locally will improve consumption patterns and strengthen the Study Area's economy.
- For the Capital Region as a whole, the greatest job growth over the next decade is expected in the following industries: *Health Care and Social Assistance*, *Finance and Insurance*, and *Professional, Scientific and Technical Services*. The City can capitalize on this market trend by working to attract these types of businesses downtown.

### *Retail Market*

- Residents of Cohoes appear to be well served by retail offerings within the trade area (defined as within a 15 minute drive time). Sales data indicates nearly all the major retail categories meet or exceed local demand. Limited opportunities exist for traditional retail development within Cohoes. However, the creation of a mixed use destination on the

waterfront, the continued revitalization of Remsen Street, or creation of a transit-oriented development may offer non-traditional opportunities for niche retail.

### *Office Real Estate Market*

- The Greater Albany Area office market is one characterized by oversupply in general. Net absorption has been very weak in recent years and a significant vacancy rate persists. The largest oversupply is seen in the Albany Central Business District, Glens Falls, and Schenectady.
- Cohoes is included in the “Suburban” office market statistics, which are more positive but still show weak net absorption of space and weak pricing power.
- It is projected that the office market will remain weak for some time into the future. Opportunities for office development would need to leverage unique aspects of the community, such as the Mohawk River waterfront. The development of a BRT station may also provide a boost to small scale office space as part of a transit oriented development.

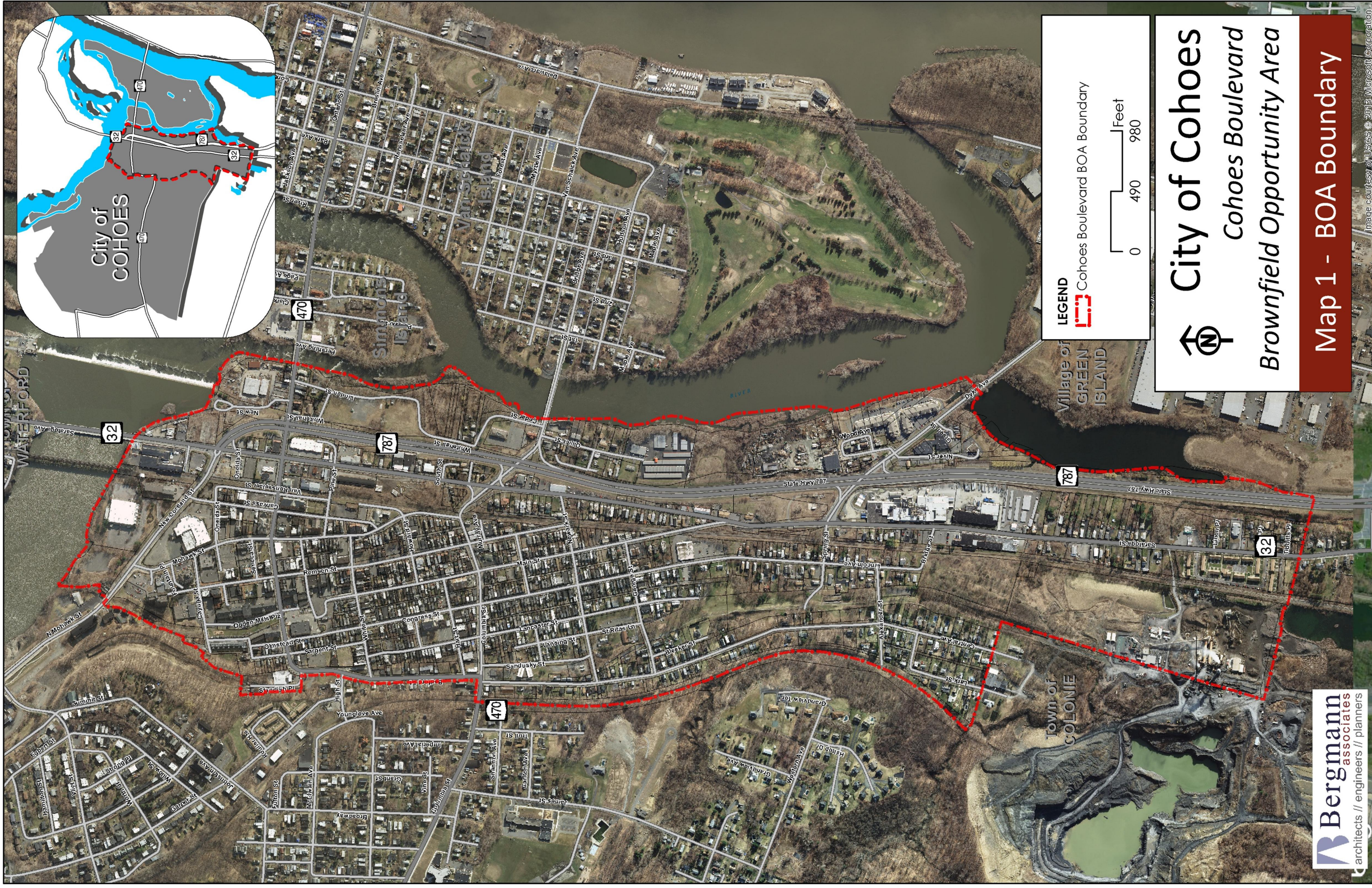
### *Residential Real Estate Market*

- There have been around 2,200 units of housing planned and/or added to the market in the last few years in the City, about 90 percent of which have been rentals. Many have been upscale/luxury in nature and cater to a specific target market of one type or another. In the aggregate, a substantial change has occurred in the attitudes, tastes and market choices of the population as a whole, moving towards more non-traditional options. These options present an opportunity for the City to encourage market-sensitive developments.
- Rents for the downtown trade area (including nearby communities of a similar nature) are currently very weak and likely insufficient to attract a major new development or redevelopment in the downtown. Part of this problem may self-correct as the oldest, cheapest and least desirable properties are removed from the marketplace and are replaced or remodeled. The City may be able to accelerate this process by adopting and enforcing strict Code Enforcement ordinances and/or by providing incentives to remodel or replace existing substandard properties. Once this occurs, a “virtuous cycle” may ensue as landlords see that that they can achieve higher rental income through remodeling/rehabbing of older structures.
- As the general rental market improves, developers may become interested in new-build projects. There are certain aspects to the downtown area that the City may also be able to address that would enhance the development potential to downtown, including improvements to appearance and the perceptions of safety. With those improvements and the fact that Cohoes benefits from great vehicular access to a wide range of

employment centers, the City could attract residents to the downtown in more upscale types of developments. However, this is more of a long-term opportunity that could exist once additional waterfront developments have taken place and other issues have been addressed.

- There is additional unmet market demand for upscale rental units that the City could harness both for the redevelopment of its waterfront and for elsewhere. More than 10,000 rental units in the Greater Residential Trade Area (30 minute drive time) have monthly rents in excess of \$1,000. As an illustration of demand potential, we note that Cohoes is 16 miles away from the new GLOBALFOUNDRIES plant in Malta, which will have well over 1,400 employees once fully operational.
- Market research shows that rents in the area have increased substantially following the 2007 housing crash and financial market crisis, as more households turn to rental properties over owner-occupied ones.





**LEGEND**



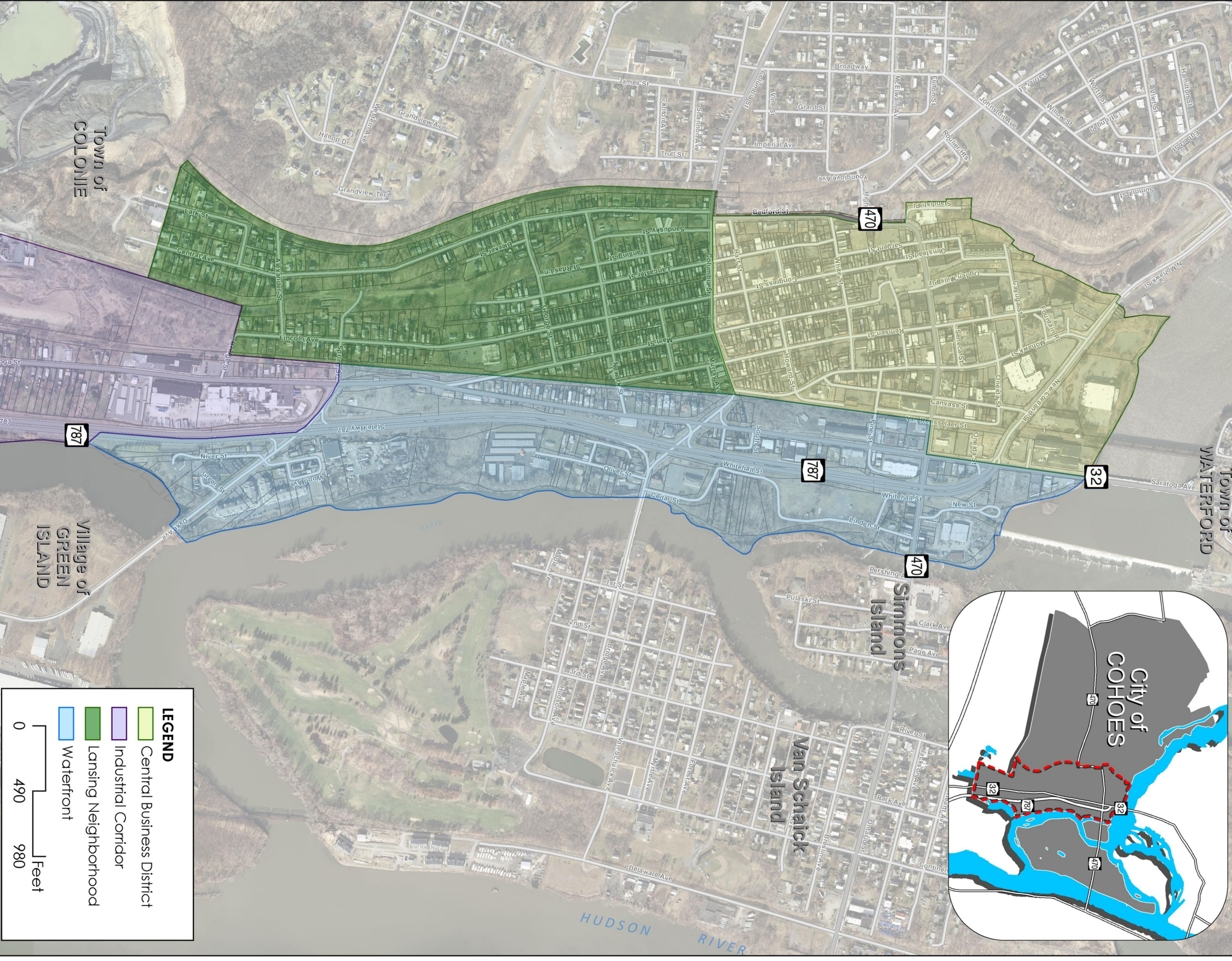
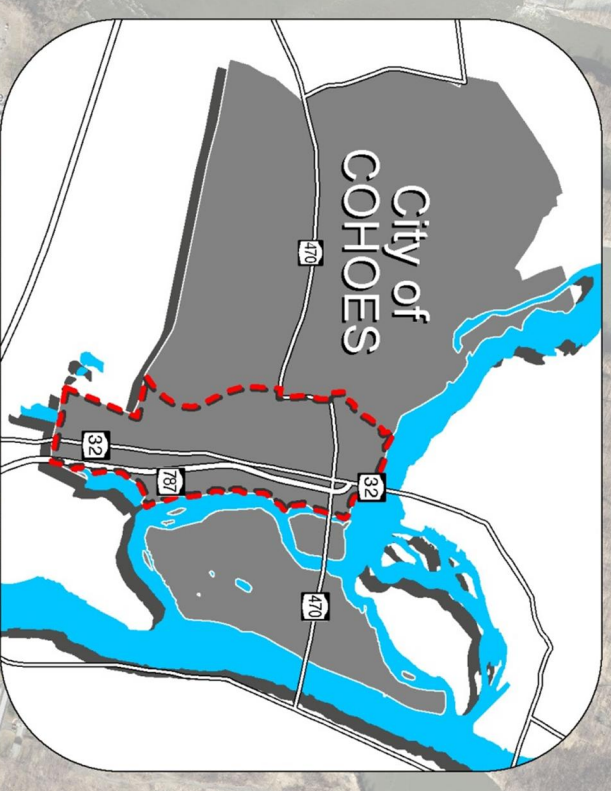
Cohoes Boulevard BOA Boundary



**City of Cohoes**  
Cohoes Boulevard  
Brownfield Opportunity Area

**Map 1- BOA Boundary**





**LEGEND**

- Central Business District
- Industrial Corridor
- Lansing Neighborhood
- Waterfront

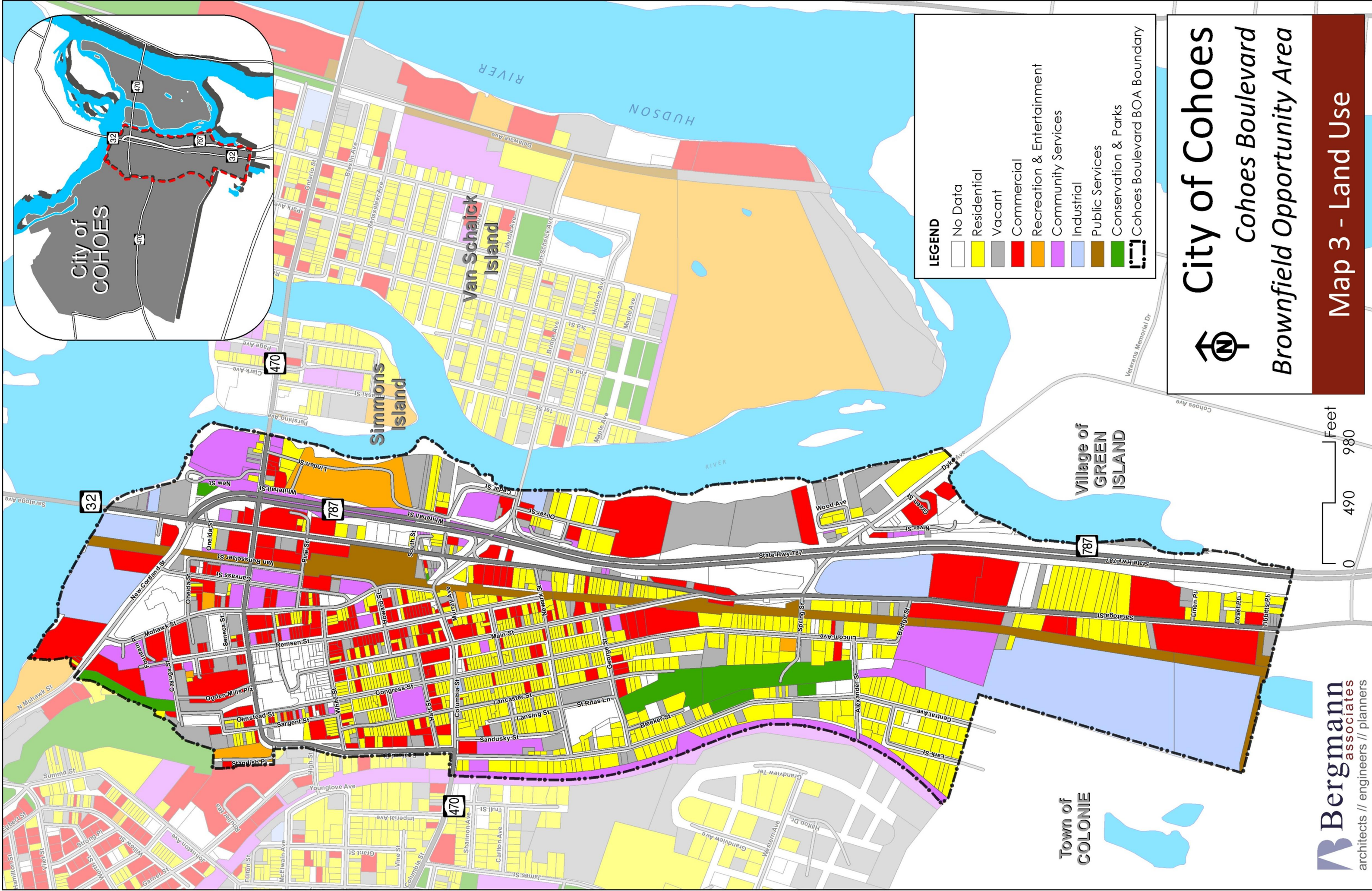
0 490 980 Feet

**City of Cohoes**

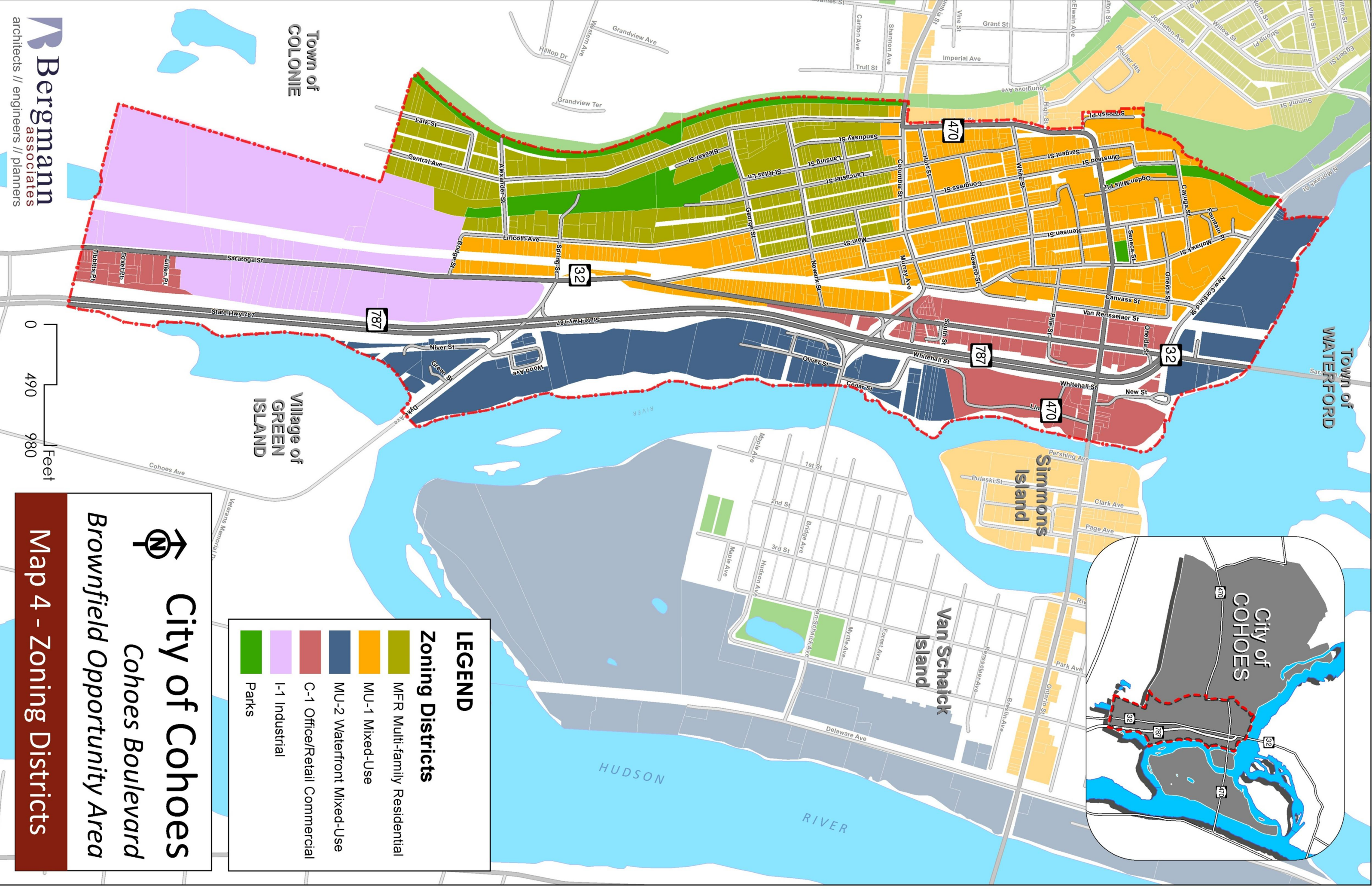
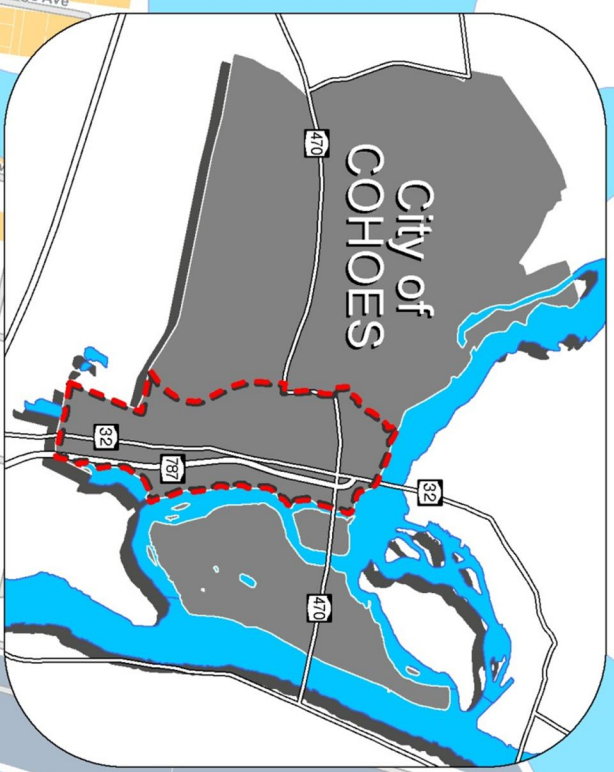
**Cohoes Boulevard**

**Brownfield Opportunity Area**

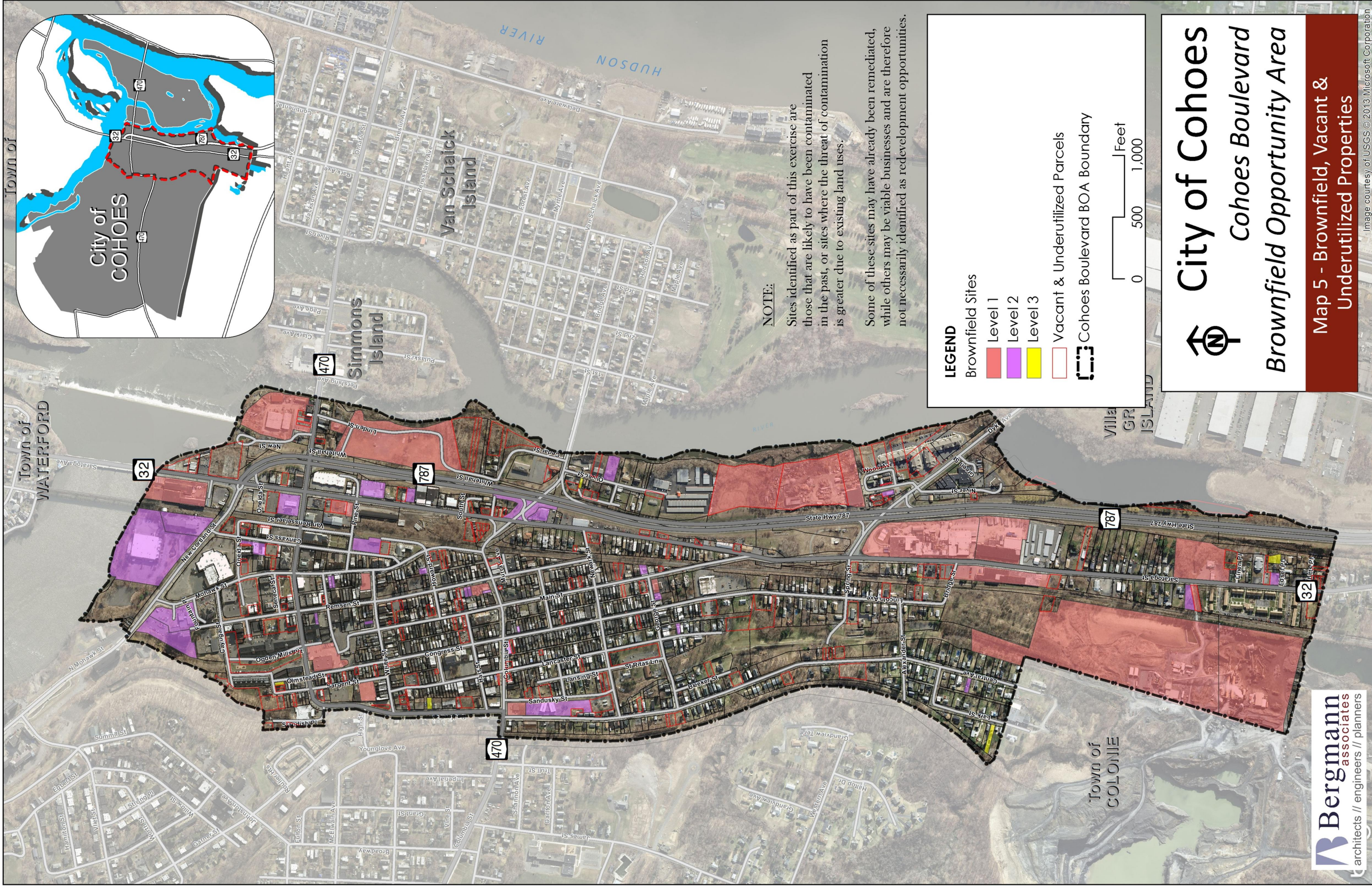












**NOTE:**

Sites identified as part of this exercise are those that are likely to have been contaminated in the past, or sites where the threat of contamination is greater due to existing land uses.

Some of these sites may have already been remediated, while others may be viable businesses and are therefore not necessarily identified as redevelopment opportunities.

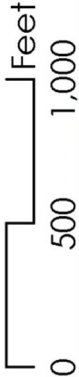
**LEGEND**

**Brownfield Sites**

- Level 1
- Level 2
- Level 3

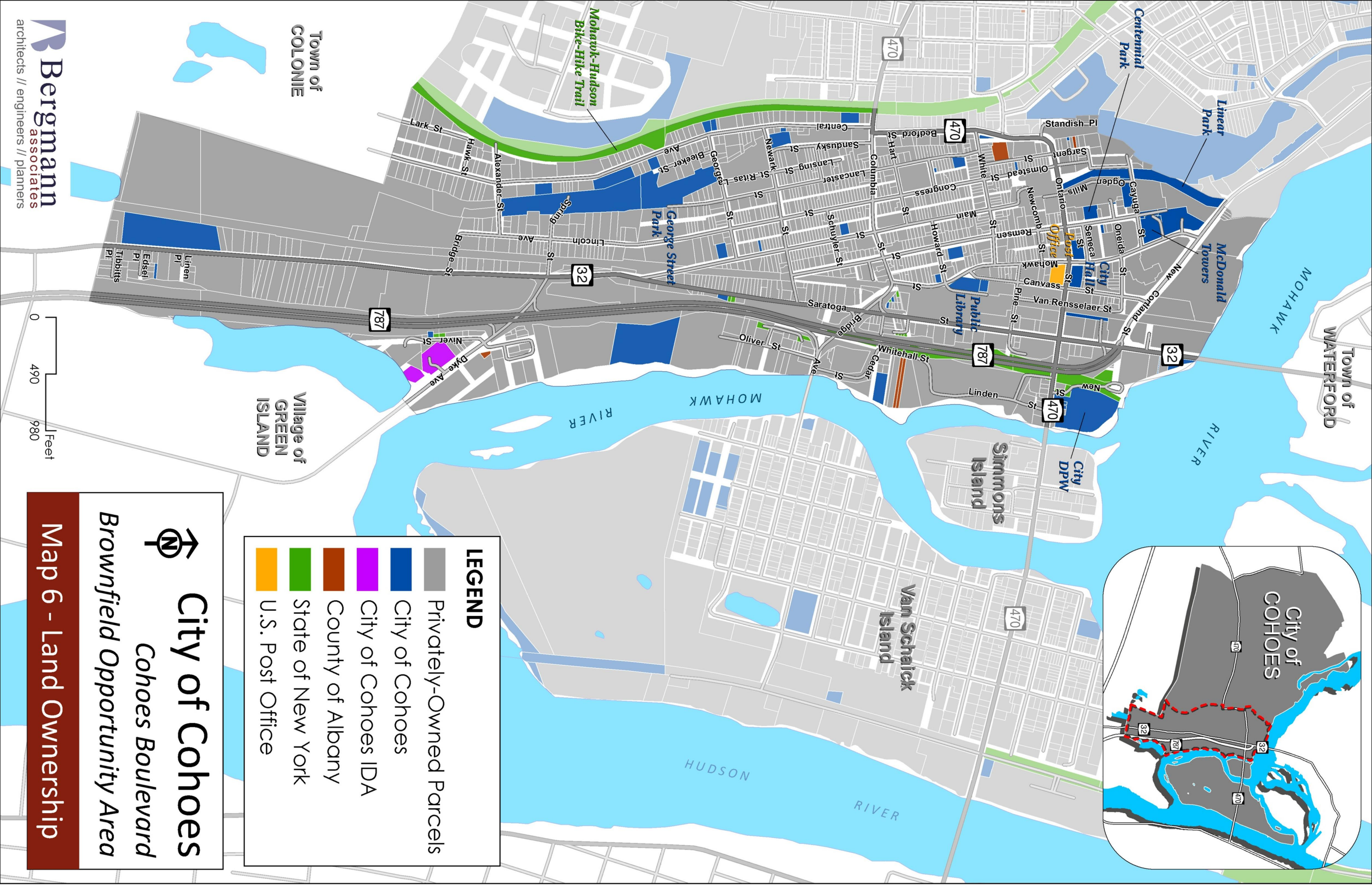
Vacant & Underutilized Parcels

Cohoes Boulevard BOA Boundary



**City of Cohoes**  
*Cohoes Boulevard*  
**Brownfield Opportunity Area**





**LEGEND**

- Privately-Owned Parcels
- City of Cohoes
- City of Cohoes IDA
- County of Albany
- State of New York
- U.S. Post Office

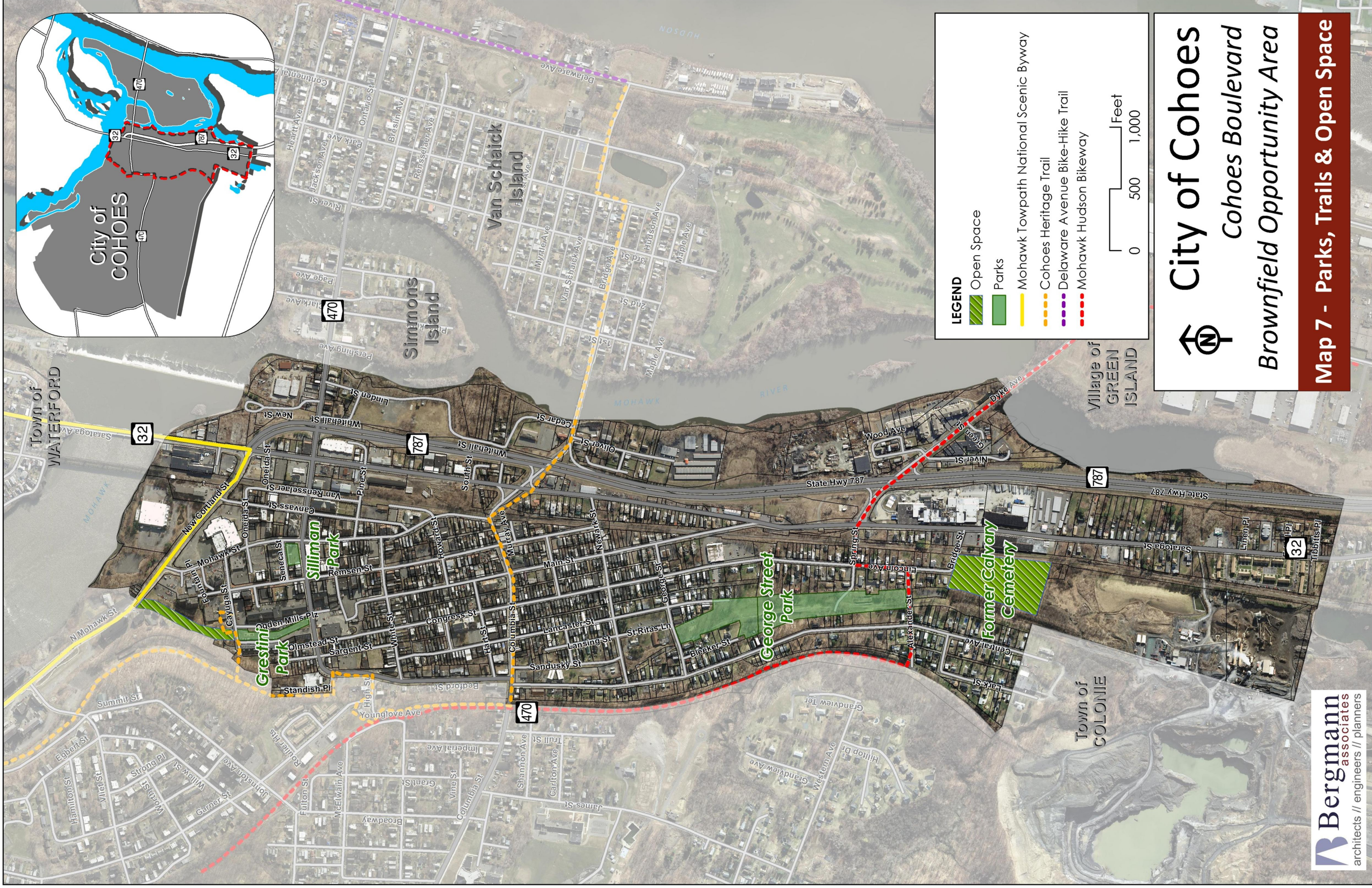
**City of Cohoes**

**Cohoes Boulevard**

**Brownfield Opportunity Area**

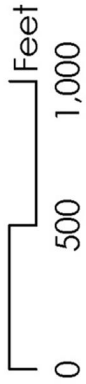
**Map 6 - Land Ownership**





**LEGEND**

- Open Space
- Parks
- Mohawk Towpath National Scenic Byway
- Cohoes Heritage Trail
- Delaware Avenue Bike-Hike Trail
- Mohawk Hudson Bikeway



**City of Cohoes**  
*Cohoes Boulevard*  
**Brownfield Opportunity Area**





### Significant Buildings

1. Sheltertherm
2. Cohoes Commons
3. Cohoes Music Hall
4. Ogden Mill Complex
5. Carter Building
6. Former Cohoes Savings Bank
7. Former Manufacturers Bank
8. Cohoes City Hall
9. St. Bernard's Church
10. Joshua Clarke House
11. Vineyard Community Church
12. Delaware & Hudson Railroad Depot
13. Cohoes Public Library
14. St. Joseph's Church
15. Cohoes Armory
16. Former Carlson Pool Building
17. St. Rita's Church

### LEGEND

-  Significant Buildings
-  Cohoes Boulevard BOA Boundary

0 490 980 Feet

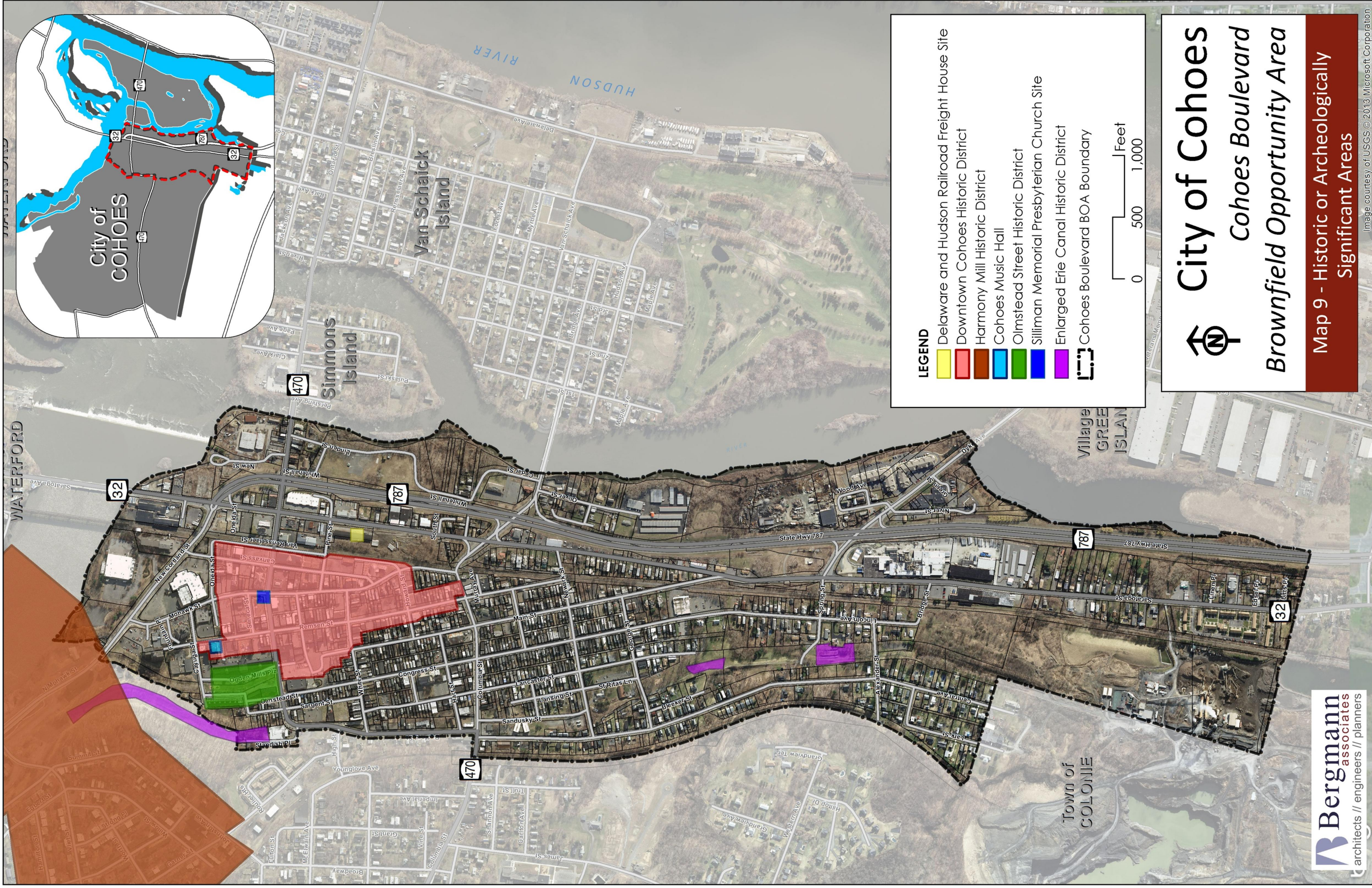


## City of Cohoes

### Cohoes Boulevard Brownfield Opportunity Area

## Map 8 - Building Inventory





LEGEND

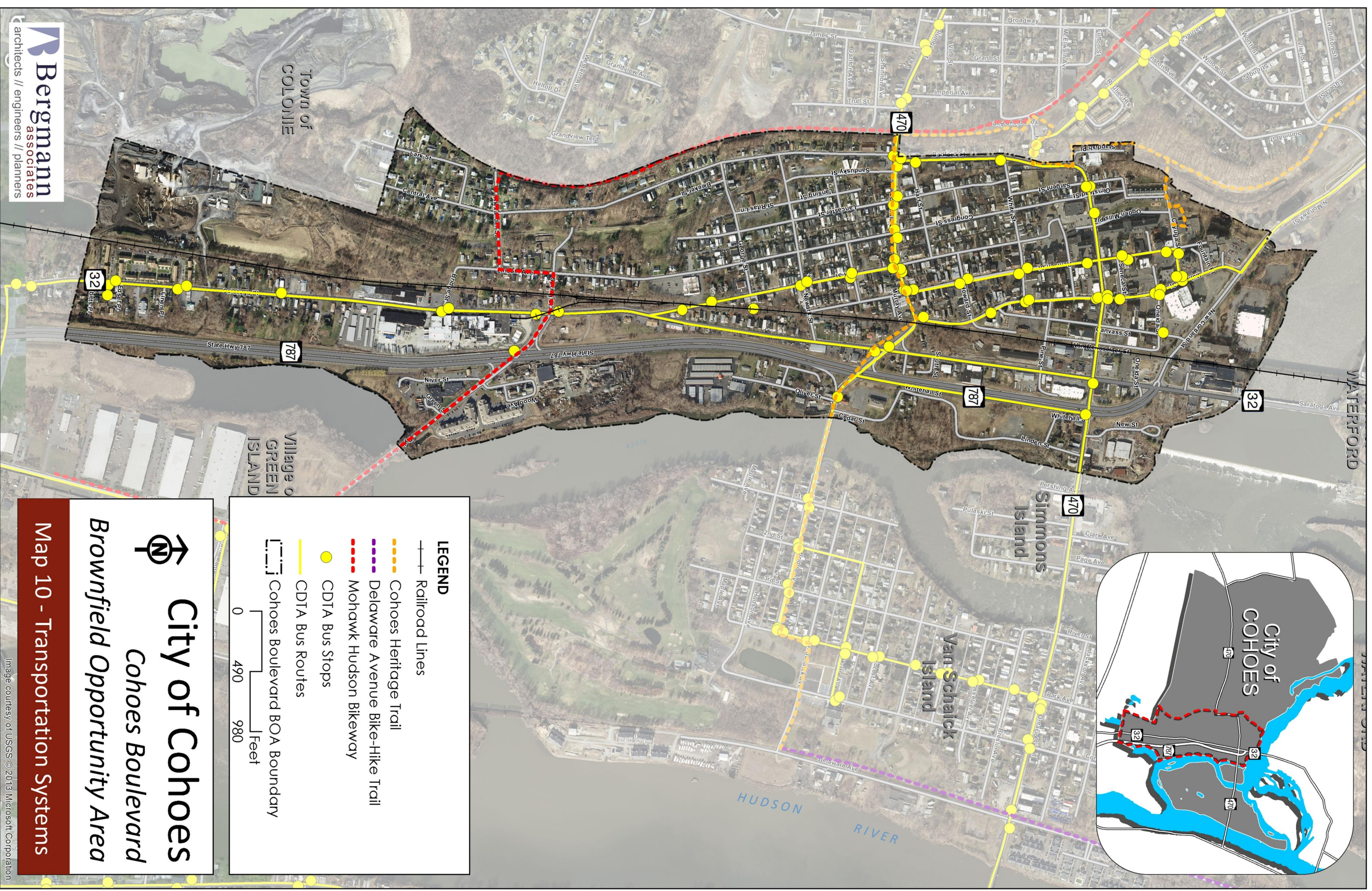
- Delaware and Hudson Railroad Freight House Site
- Downtown Cohoes Historic District
- Harmony Mill Historic District
- Cohoes Music Hall
- Olmstead Street Historic District
- Silliman Memorial Presbyterian Church Site
- Enlarged Erie Canal Historic District
- Cohoes Boulevard BOA Boundary

0 500 1,000  
Feet



City of Cohoes  
Cohoes Boulevard  
Brownfield Opportunity Area



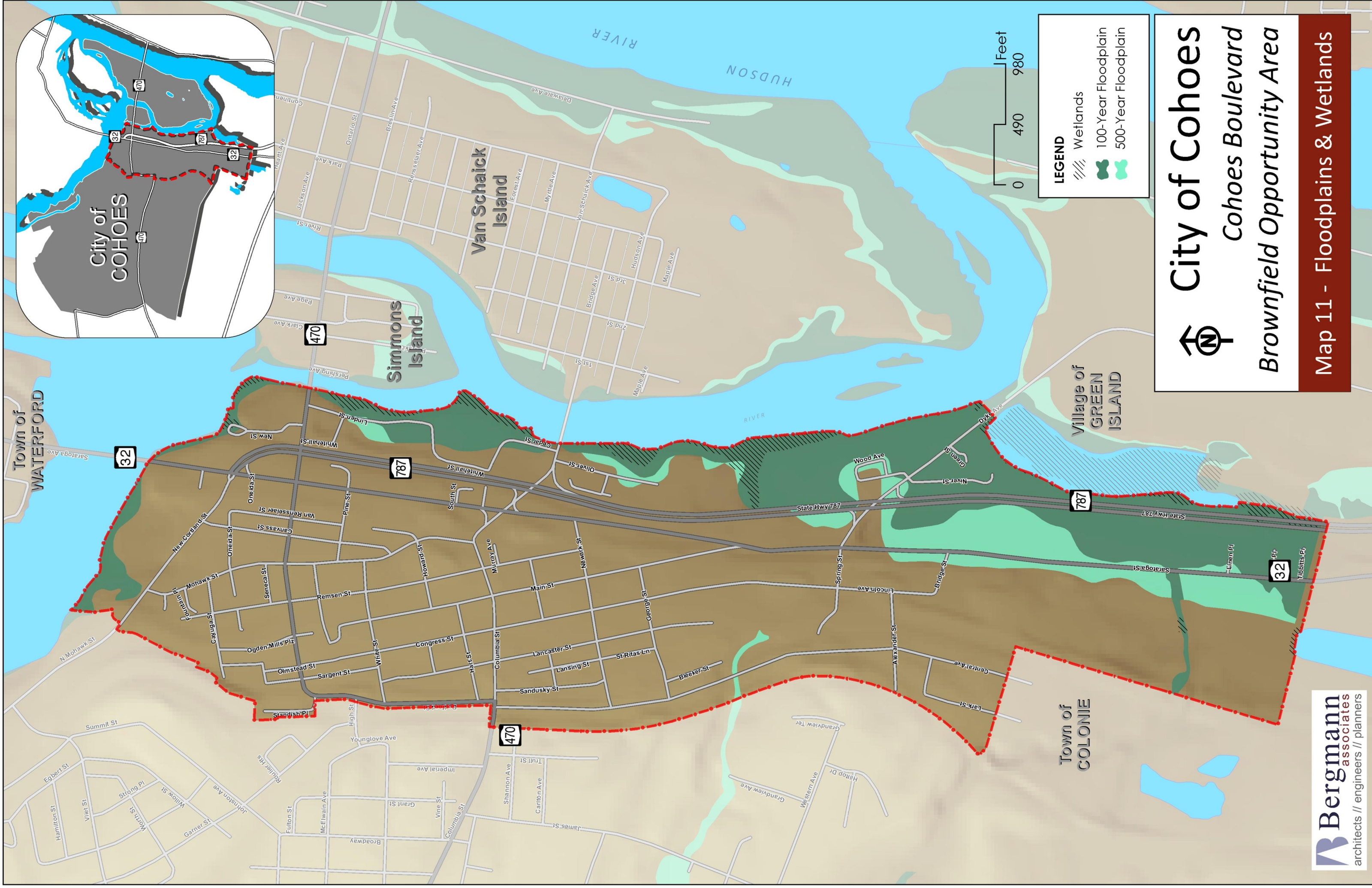


- LEGEND**
- +— Railroad Lines
  - Cohoes Heritage Trail
  - Delaware Avenue Bike-Hike Trail
  - Mohawk Hudson Bikeway
  - CDIA Bus Stops
  - CDIA Bus Routes
  - Cohoes Boulevard BOA Boundary
- 0 490 980 Feet

**City of Cohoes**  
**Cohoes Boulevard**  
**Brownfield Opportunity Area**

Map 10 - Transportation Systems





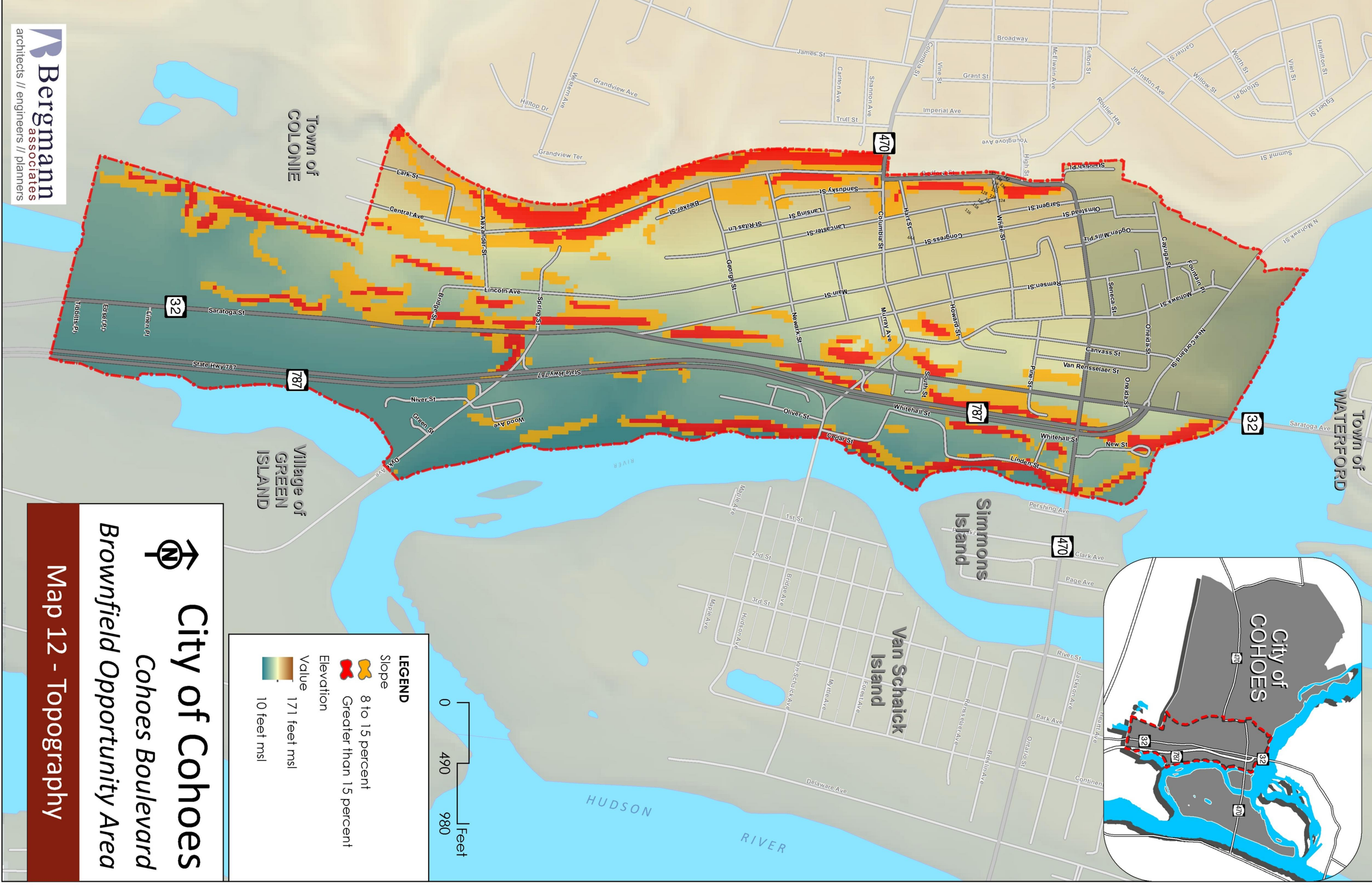
**LEGEND**

- Wetlands
- 100-Year Floodplain
- 500-Year Floodplain

**City of Cohoes**  
*Cohoes Boulevard*  
**Brownfield Opportunity Area**

**Map 11 - Floodplains & Wetlands**





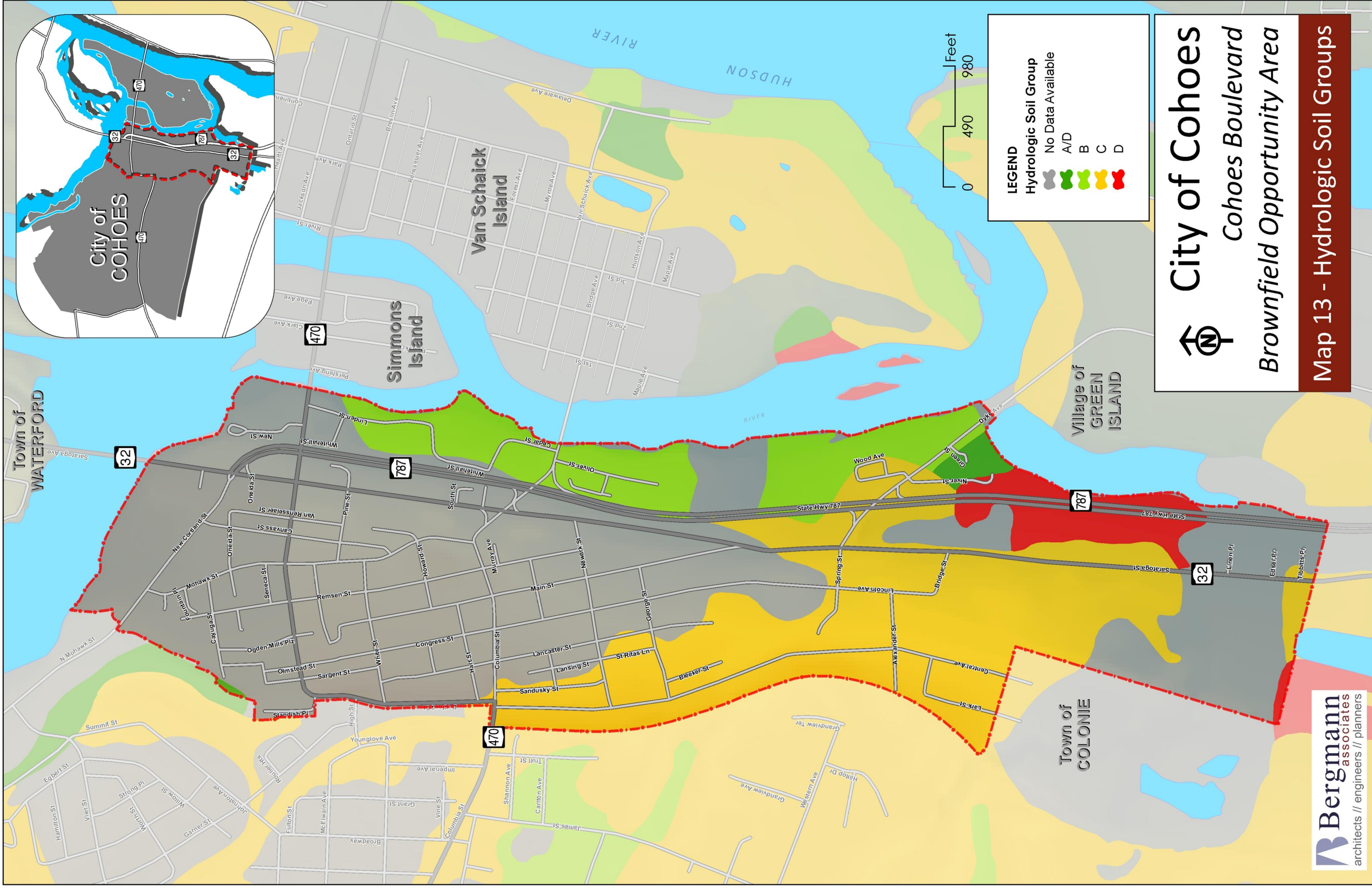
# City of Cohoes

## Cohoes Boulevard

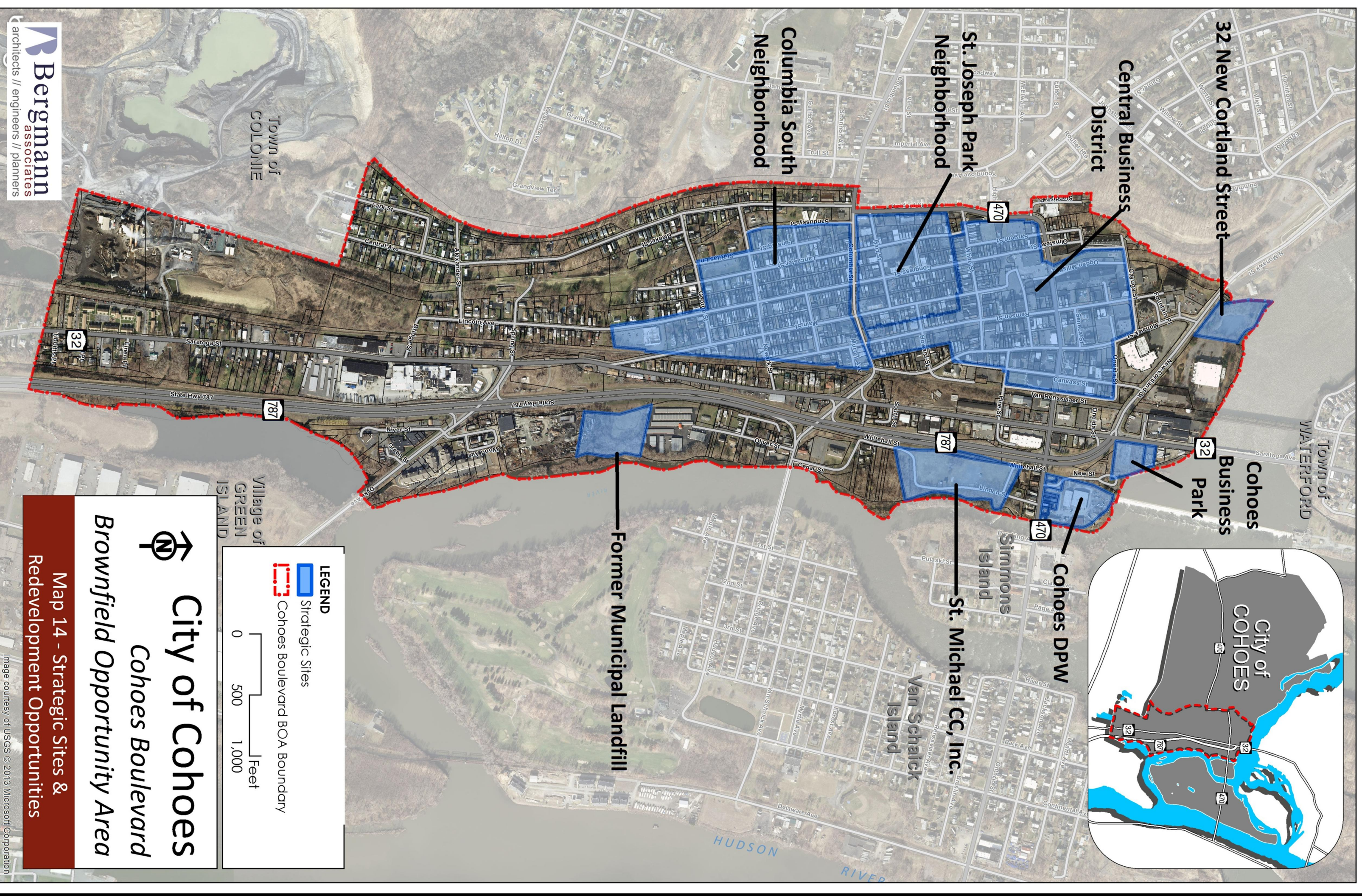
### Brownfield Opportunity Area

Map 12 - Topography













character. Examples of high ranked images from the Community Character Survey are reflected on the following pages in conjunction with the summary of community feedback from the Public Design Workshop.

The feedback generated at the Public Design Workshop identified four distinct community-defined topic areas for the study area:

1. Downtown,
2. Waterfronts,
3. Housing and Heritage, and
4. Corridors and Gateways.

The issues and opportunities identified under these topic areas provided a framework for the development of Master Plan Design Principles, as described in Section 4.2. The consistent themes and ideas generated by the community, as summarized below, are further reflected in the Master Plan Design Principles.

#### *Downtown*

- Redevelopment and infill along Remsen Street should focus on creating a vibrant, mixed-use downtown that retains the existing scale (3-4 stories).
- Single story strip commercial should be discouraged/prohibited in the downtown core.
- Increasing the density on core fringe streets like Saratoga Street should be encouraged but should minimize impacts to traffic/access problems.
- Design in the downtown should be consistent with existing building stock and valued historic forms.
- Remsen Street could be beautified using selective, appropriate planters and street treatments like historic light fixtures and banners.
- Hope VI residential akin to what has successfully been implemented in North Albany would be appropriate along the Congress Street and Main Street corridors. These locations may also be appropriate for the relocation of the Saratoga Sites housing units, providing those residents with housing that is not downwind of the Norlite Incinerator.
- The new housing/apartment complex along Saratoga Street can be built upon by targeted revitalization for the properties surrounding the development.
- Conduct a housing study to understand existing housing stock, land assembly opportunities, etc.

- Targeted revitalization efforts at the former theater property would ideally involve a restaurant use with outdoor sidewalk seating area and office or residential space on the upper floors.
- Redevelopment of the former D&H Depot on Saratoga Street could include an “internal mall,” yet redevelopment should retain the historic nature of the existing building.
- The establishment of a Business Improvement District (BID) should be explored for the downtown/Remsen Street area.
- More off-street parking is needed downtown to accommodate future development.
- A mix of uses should be encouraged in the Central Business District/Remsen Street area to give patrons a reason to stay downtown longer.



*The above images scored highest within the Community Character Survey for development associated with the Central Business District and downtown portions of the BOA. They reflect the community's ideas for creating a walkable, safe, attractive and mixed use downtown.*

### *Waterfronts*

- Improved wayfinding/signage directing people between the waterfront and downtown core would be a great way to get people onto Remsen Street.
- Pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure should be enhanced to the Mohawk River waterfront to improve public access and enjoyment of natural resources.
- New/redeveloped residential units should be concentrated downtown and along the waterfront, taking advantage of the existing demand for new housing.
- Access to Remsen Street and the waterfront from 787 should be improved.

- A new public waterfront park would be an appropriate use for the St. Michaels site or the former municipal landfill site.
- Keep the waterfront public.

### *History & Heritage*

- Revitalization of historic mill housing, particularly along Cataract Street, Front Street and Bedford Street should resemble Georgetown-esque residential facades.
- Redevelopment in the South of Columbia ("SoCo") neighborhood should resemble the historic architecture prevalent in Cohoes.
- The "Juncta" gateway located at the intersection of Saratoga Street and Main Street should be significantly improved, and should include an element interpreting the history/significance of the Champlain and Erie Canals.
- Identify opportunities to interpret the Erie Canal.
- Signage and features should use historically appropriate materials, such as canal limestone.

### *Corridors & Gateways*

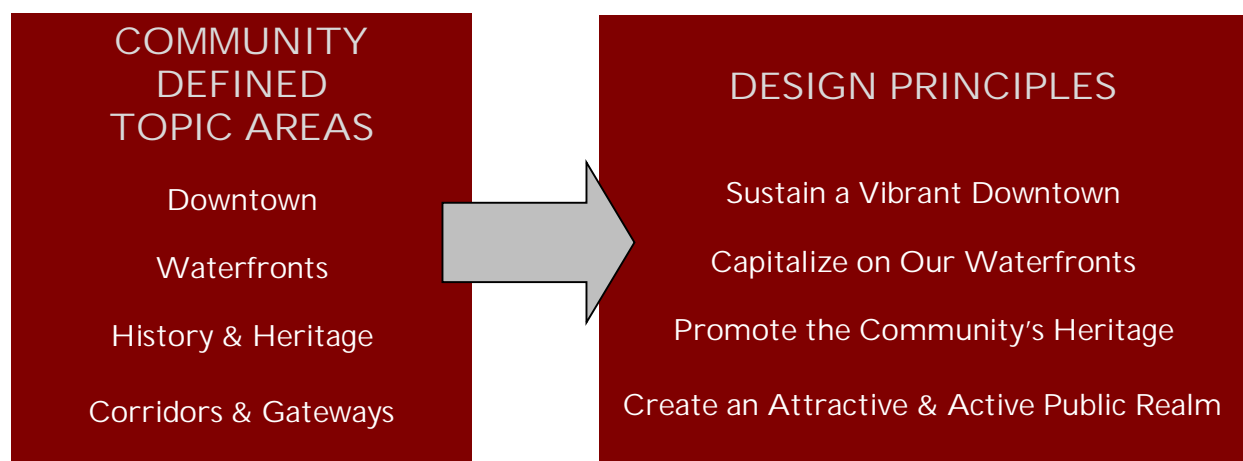
- Make 787 into a "true boulevard" with a landscaped median, and ensure that a plan is in place to maintain the landscaped median once constructed.
- Avoid single-story commercial development and signage along the 787 corridor.
- Install an attractive, welcoming gateway at the southern boundary of the Study Area.
- Gateway signage should be constructed of historically consistent materials (i.e. excess canal limestone blocks).
- Intersections in need of improvement include Bedford Street/Columbia Street, Remsen Street/Columbia Street and Mohawk Street/Columbia Street.
- Wayfinding for important places in Cohoes, including the Central Business District, off-street parking areas, the Cohoes Music Hall, City Hall and the Cohoes Falls should be improved within the Study Area.
- Multi-modal/on-road bicycle treatments and mass transit provisions should be provided within the Study Area, particularly along Columbia Street and Bridge Street, as part of the Cohoes Heritage Trail.
- A pedestrian connection should somehow be preserved along the Pine Street corridor across the railroad tracks to maintain this vital connection to the downtown.



## 4.2 Design Principles

Throughout the planning process, a primary goal was established to make Cohoes a destination community and a desirable place to live, work and visit. The Master Plan also seeks to encourage residents and visitors to enjoy the City's wealth of cultural and heritage offerings and out-the-door access to land and water-based recreational amenities.

During the public involvement process, several consistent themes were identified that formed a common thread on which to base the future Master Plan (see Section 4.1). At the conclusion of the Public Design Workshop, four topic areas emerged as being priorities for the revitalization of the Cohoes Boulevard BOA. These topic areas set the framework for the identification of the Master Plan Design Principles.



The public identified the revitalization of Remsen Street and surrounding neighborhoods as a critical factor for the future growth of Cohoes. Additionally, the residents desired to connect the City's extensive waterfront with downtown to spur economic development. Tying the downtown and waterfront together are adjacent neighborhoods and the City's wealth of trails and healthy living infrastructure. The stabilization of residential areas and their connectivity with adjacent services was identified as a priority to helping revitalize downtown. The following Design Principles are founded on feedback obtained from community members, local policy makers and stakeholders, and are described in further detail below:

### *Sustain a Vibrant Downtown*

The City's pedestrian-friendly scale, unique historic character and wealth of recreational opportunities make it a destination for small-city living and a high quality of life within a manageable commute to the Capital District's regional research and employment centers. As a result, the City of Cohoes is the only city in the Capital District to experience growth between

2000 and 2010, with an additional 450 new residential units projected in the next five to ten years. These factors support the development of vibrant neighborhoods and nodes of activity focused on mixed use, transit-oriented development.

Renssen Street is the active spine of the City's CBD, supporting independent businesses and encouraging pedestrian foot traffic and local shopping opportunities. The neighborhoods surrounding Renssen Street reflect a mix of well maintained historic homes and structures, as well as areas where disinvestment is apparent. The success of the CBD revitalization strategy will be contingent on stabilizing the surrounding neighborhoods and providing a variety of housing options that attract a range of income levels. The City should encourage property owners to develop upper story apartments and implement façade improvement programs to improve the aesthetics and livability of downtown and to attract more young professionals. The Central Business District and Renssen Street corridor should be the destination for events, programs and opportunities to experience the City's vast cultural and heritage offerings, further supporting a vibrant and dense node of activity within the core of Cohoes. The public realm should be enhanced as a series of connected outdoor spaces within streets, parks and building frontages. Residents and visitors should be drawn from the surrounding neighborhoods into the CBD and to waterfront destinations guided by intuitive and thoughtful wayfinding techniques.

The Capital District Transportation Authority (CDTA) recently conducted a study of potential transit corridor improvements which include the development of a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) line along Cohoes Boulevard and a BRT station within Cohoes. A BRT station within the Study Area adjacent to Cohoes Boulevard could promote increased density, encourage modal shift, and help alleviate anticipated failures of the transportation system resulting from projected housing and population expansion in Cohoes. Saratoga Street should be explored as a convenient location for a potential BRT station between the Ontario Street and Columbia Street intersections. Areas within the Central Business District and along Saratoga Street should be targeted for higher density residential development in support of transit-oriented development within walking distance to the proposed BRT station.

### *Capitalize on Our Waterfronts*

The City of Cohoes should continue to capitalize on the waterfront as a vital part of its identity through the establishment of public realm destinations and signature



*The Battery Park Promenade in New York City offers residents a respite along the waterfront from a hectic urban life.*



outdoor spaces to attract residents and visitors. Waterfront development should provide a vibrant mix of uses with a unique sense of place, while providing opportunities to actively or passively experience the Mohawk and Hudson Rivers. The design of these spaces should reinforce the connection of the City to its waterfront through visual and physical linkages. Building setbacks from the waterfront should be sufficient to support expanded public access, and ground floor tenant spaces should be targeted for quasi-public establishments, such as restaurants, which generate activity and formal opportunities to enjoy the waterfront. Several opportunities exist to provide spectacular views of the Cohoes Falls and Peebles Island from both public and private development sites. In addition, sites east of SR 787 provide the potential for expanded public open space on the waterfront to include water-based recreation and tourism opportunities such as kayaking or canoeing the Mohawk and Hudson Rivers. Continuing to transition the Cohoes waterfront from industrial uses to appropriate water-based uses will be critical to successful revitalization of the Mohawk River waterfront. By integrating public access and developing public spaces along the waterfront, the City can take full advantage of the economic and healthy living benefits on the Mohawk and Hudson rivers.

### *Promote the Community's Heritage*

The City of Cohoes' central and waterfront location within the northern Capital Region provides a significant opportunity to capture a portion of Upstate New York's burgeoning heritage and recreation-based tourism spending. The City's extensive legacy of industrial innovation and technology powered by its Erie and Champlain Canal history has significant economic potential to capture tourism spending within the RiverSpark Hudson Mohawk Heritage Area. Much of this legacy remains visible in distinct districts, and should be leveraged to support interpretive, educational and recreational-based tourism and economic development efforts. Similar to the Harmony Mills district to the north of the BOA, the City should explore the creation of a new cultural heritage district within the Central Business District that maximizes the presence and proximity of historically significant structures such as the Cohoes Music Hall, the Carter Building,



*Genesee Country Museum may offer ideas on how Cohoes can utilize heritage-based tourism as part of its community marketing strategy.*

the former Cohoes Savings Bank building and the Manufacturers Bank building. The branding and development of this district should promote the City's canal history and industrial legacy through events, marketing, and public realm improvements.

The City also benefits from a location at the hub of several local and regional trail systems. Tens of thousands of New Yorkers utilize these regional trails each year, providing a significant opportunity to capture tourism

spending and brand Cohoes as the region's starting point for recreation-based tourism.

### *Encourage an Active and Sustainable Public Realm*

The City of Cohoes is actively pursuing its *Healthy Cohoes* initiative to enhance the public realm and expand the availability of healthy-living amenities within City limits. These efforts are highlighted by the ongoing development of a city-wide network of out-the-door bicycle and pedestrian trails. Cohoes should continue to provide public realm enhancements in locations that further support spin-off economic development activity generated by trail users, such as along the Cohoes Heritage Trail, which crosses nearly every primary roadway corridor within the BOA. The City is also promoting the development of Active Living Exercise Loops through the Central Business District to generate additional foot traffic for businesses while improving the safety and accessibility of the public realm (Figure 16). These exercise loops are proposed to link with local and regional trail systems in an effort to draw system-wide trial users into downtown Cohoes and experience all the City has to offer.

Future public realm enhancements should leverage on-going efforts to increase foot traffic within the City by enhancing the aesthetics, safety and visual interest of the City's public outdoor spaces. The City should seek to expand the definition of the public realm by including building facades and storefronts. The interface of the building and sidewalk and business storefronts are essential components of the public realm, and should add to the vibrancy and activity to the street. An extensive network of trails and walking paths can also facilitate development patterns that are more sustainable and supportive of transit usage. Promoting safe, efficient and convenient pedestrian access throughout the downtown supports the potential development of a BRT station in Cohoes, which may lead to further density increases through infill development that capitalizes on existing infrastructure.

In addition, sustainable infill development policies that promote balanced land use and transportation alternatives should be employed to meet the needs of the existing community without compromising the ability of future generations to do the same.



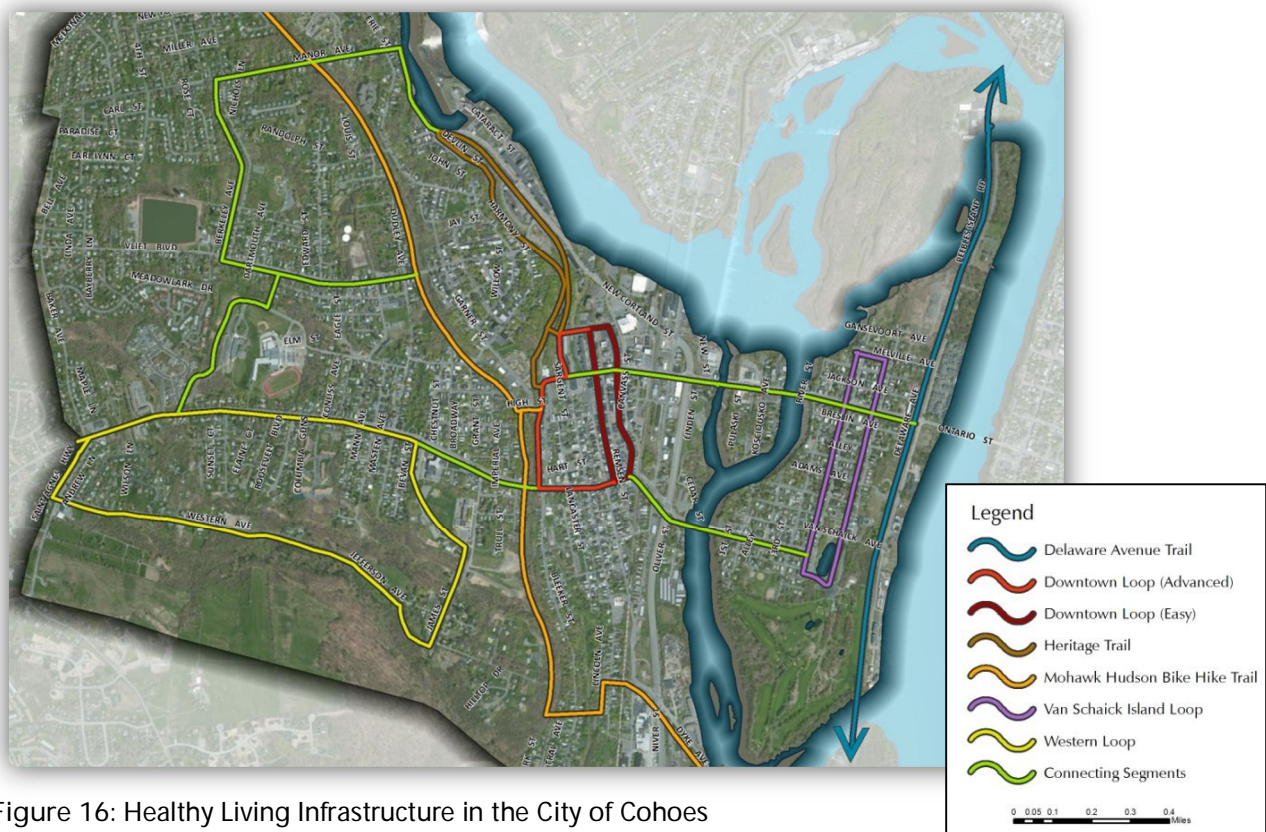


Figure 16: Healthy Living Infrastructure in the City of Cohoes

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## 5 BOA Master Plan

### 5.1 Introduction

The vision of the City of Cohoes is to be the Capital District's premiere small-city, offering a vibrant downtown and world-class recreation and cultural amenities within the framework of a multi-modal and sustainable community. As the catalyst for the City's continued revitalization, the Cohoes Boulevard Brownfield Opportunity Area includes the community's central business district, primary transportation corridors, dense mixed-use neighborhoods, and the majority of the its developable waterfront. The significant growth Cohoes has experienced between 2000 and 2012 has in part been driven by its location within the Capital District's regional research and employment center. This growth has also been spurred by the inherent high quality of life provided by the City's walkability, affordability, and accessibility to recreational amenities such as trails and the Mohawk River and Hudson River waterfronts.

#### *Master Plan Organization*

The Cohoes Boulevard Master Plan has several critical layers which assure that the community vision, goals and objectives are achieved, while also identifying a clear path to move forward with implementation. The Master Plan begins with Section 5.2, Overview of the Master Plan. The preferred Master Plan (Map 15) is described and summarized, with a broad discussion of key highlights including strategic sites, build out implications, and general development patterns.

In order to achieve the preferred Master Plan, a series of actions and strategies will need to be implemented including phased capital projects, land use and regulatory changes, administrative recommendations, and short-term activities to better position the study area for investment.

#### **Phasing and Capital Projects (Section 5.3)**

The Master Plan graphically depicts public and private development activities to be conducted in three phases over the next 20 years. Each project is individually discussed with specific implementation strategies detailed in Tables 8, 9, and 10. At the conclusion of Section 5.3, a summary table (Table 11) reflects how each of the Capital Projects supports the project goals and objectives as identified by the local community.

Maintaining a sustainable and enjoyable urban environment will play a critical role in the attraction of future residents, business expansion and tourism spending. The Master Plan provides a framework to encourage sufficient densities, promote nodes of activity, and enhance the public realm to achieve the community's vision and make Cohoes a desirable place to live and invest.

### Land Use & Regulatory Changes (Section 5.4)

This section provides guidance on the desired pattern of land uses and the visual characteristics of development within the Cohoes Boulevard BOA. Modest changes proposed to the land use patterns within the BOA are not anticipated to require significant changes to the existing zoning code. These recommendations are summarized in Table 12, and tied back to how each reflects specific goals and objectives which have guided the master planning process.

### Administrative Recommendations (Section 5.5)

Administrative recommendations include local policy changes, pre-development activities and economic development initiatives. Administrative recommendations, and their relationship to project goals and objectives, are summarized in Table 13.

### Activities to Advance Revitalization (Section 5.6)

Activities to Advance Revitalization represent the most time-sensitive and significant recommendations necessary to kick-start the revitalization process, and form the core components of the City's application for Project Advancement to Step 3 - Implementation Strategy of the BOA Program. Included are highly catalytic actions required to spur further investment such as site preparation activities, feasibility studies, environmental investigations and land assembly strategies.

## 5.2 Overview of the Master Plan

The BOA Master Plan builds upon 13 years of progressive planning, and concentrates on the transformation of the City into a unique destination within the Capital Region. The goals and objectives identified in Section 1.4.3 form the foundation of Master Plan recommendations, with leadership and direction provided by the public and local policymakers. The identification of strategic sites (Section 3.15) and the summary of design principles (Section 4.2) accomplished through the planning process provides necessary guidance for the physical Master Plan depicted on Map 15. In addition, several tools and techniques required for successful implementation were highlighted for use and/or exploration by the City.

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Destination cities need destination neighborhoods; therefore the stabilization and revitalization of residential neighborhoods within the BOA will strongly correlate with the success of revitalization efforts.

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The Master Plan focuses on the revitalization of the Central Business District and the gateway corridor along Cohoes Boulevard, including the City's vast Mohawk River waterfront. Recommended capital projects are intended to generate density, foot traffic and visitation in and effort to spur economic development. A significant portion of the Master Plan includes enhancements to the public realm, including parks, trails, streetscapes and the waterfront. The

development of this infrastructure and the provision of public access to recreational resources has a direct impact upon the quality of life within a community. Improvements to the motorized transportation system will also be necessary to change the perception and experience of residents and visitors to Cohoes. These public realm and infrastructure improvements will be paramount to re-frame the identity of the City as a community of choice within the Capital District.

Destination cities need destination neighborhoods; therefore the stabilization and revitalization of residential neighborhoods within the BOA will strongly correlate with the success of revitalization efforts. A diversity of high quality housing alternatives in strong neighborhoods within walking distance to Remsen Street and the waterfront will be attractive to new residents, including employees of companies considering Cohoes for expansion.



*High quality, walkable neighborhoods will be important for the continued revitalization of the BOA.*

Several sites of strategic importance (see Section 3.15) were identified during the planning process, including multiple vacant, underutilized and/or brownfield properties along the City's waterfront. Long term vacancy associated with environmental contamination adversely impacts surrounding land use values, often causing a progressive deterioration of the neighborhood or district over time. In response, the Master Plan provides guidance on how to return these lands to active and viable uses, bolstering the local economy, spurring development opportunities and making properties appealing to potential developers.

The rich industrial and manufacturing history of Cohoes has provided a wealth of historic structures and sites within the BOA. The Master Plan utilizes these assets as building blocks to establish a distinct identity and sense of place within downtown and along the waterfront that promote the City as a great place to live and a destination for visitors.

The Master Plan supports the City's development pattern by sustaining a dense and walkable urban environment capable of supporting multi-modal travel. The Master Plan strives to improve pedestrian and bicycle safety, accessibility, and circulation while also encouraging transit based development within walking distance of the Central Business District.





*The development of a bus rapid transit station within Cohoes as part of a larger regional system would expand employment and service accessibility for all residents of the City.*

The Master Plan is both visionary and realistic, yet the recommendations identified in this plan will require focus and dedication. A 25-year implementation horizon is envisioned that simultaneously balances the desire to create a destination for small-city living within the confines of market and economic realities.

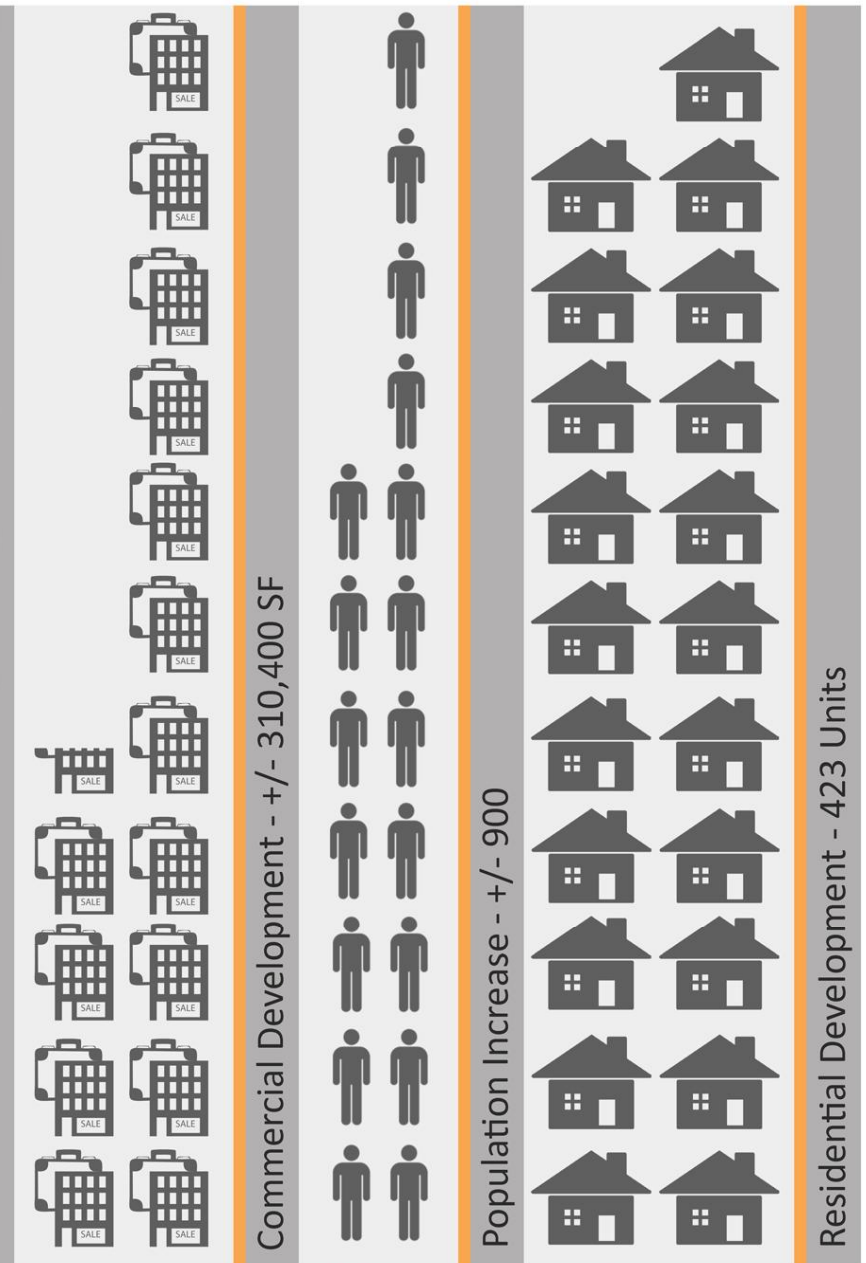
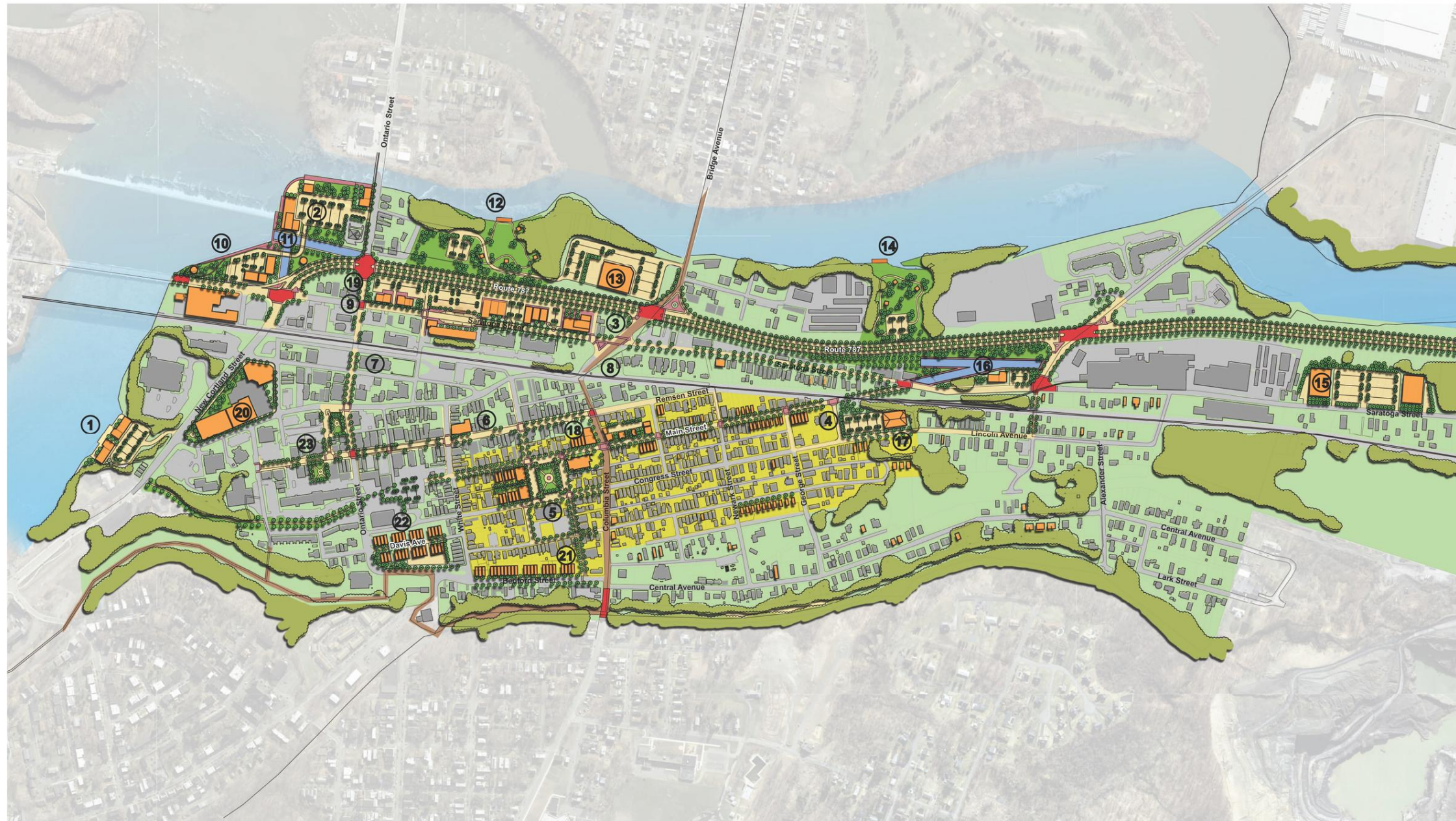
What significant changes can be expected in the 25-year timeframe? If development were to transpire as depicted on the preferred Master Plan, in 2037 the Cohoes Boulevard BOA would have an additional 310,400 square feet of

commercial development. Commercial development would provide jobs to local residents while also supporting resident and visitor needs and the City's tax base. In stand-alone buildings and as part of mixed use developments, proposed commercial uses would strengthen key corridors, support the revitalization of downtown, and draw people to the waterfront.

The 2037 Master Plan envisions 423 new housing units ranging from single family infill development to multi-family units integrated into larger mixed use projects. New housing units would support established residential neighborhoods while also providing a diversity of residential options that would appeal to a range of perspective buyers. The new housing units would be expected to attract up to 900 new residents into the study area to take advantage of the vibrant downtown, out-the-door recreational amenities, cultural attractions, and waterfront destinations.

Although all projects may not transpire exactly as depicted in the Master Plan, the vision set forth should guide decision making for future public and private investments within the study area.





## Master Plan

### KEY

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1. Mixed Use Waterfront Development                            | 14. Waterfront Park  |
| 2. New Waterfront Mixed Use                                    | 15. Commercial / Office Flex Space                               |
| 3. Saratoga Street Mixed Use / Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Station | 16. The Erie Canal & Champlain Canal Juncta Interpretive Area    |
| 4. New Residential Infill / Main Street Rehabilitation Area    | 17. New Multi-Family Housing                                     |
| 5. St. Joseph Park Neighborhood                                | 18. New Mixed Use Development at Main Street and Columbia Street |
| 6. Remsen Street at White Street Redevelopment                 | 19. Cohoes Boulevard (SR 787) Improvements                       |
| 7. Ontario Street (SR 470) Improvements                        | 20. Retail / Office Space  |
| 8. Cohoes Heritage Trail Wayfinding Improvements               | 21. Bedford Street Townhouse Development                         |
| 9. Gateway and Signage Improvements, Typ.                      | 22. George Davis Avenue Housing Development                      |
| 10. New Office Development                                     | 23. Heritage & Arts District / Canal Square & Silliman Parks     |
| 11. Champlain Canal Interpretive Center                        |  |
| 12. Improved Public Park with Water Access                     |  |
| 13. Potential Grocery Store                                    |  |



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### 5.3 Phasing and Capital Projects

Flexibility and adaptations in the phasing and implementation of the Master Plan should be anticipated and expected. During the course of the next 16 to 20 years available funding streams, property ownership, the marketplace and local economy will all likely change. In addition, the availability of information regarding site conditions will increase, and the feasibility of individual Master Plan components will be determined. As development variables change, the proposed land use patterns and the development potential of significant parcels may be altered. Therefore, the actual implementation of projects and the redevelopment of properties may differ than as presented in the Master Plan. However, success will continue to be achieved when the larger vision and desired outcomes of community revitalization are realized.

The Master Plan is graphically depicted on Maps 16 through 18. Table 8 correlate individual capital projects with the Goals and Objectives identified during the planning process. Tables 9 through 11 provide guidance on the implementation of each Capital Project, including estimated costs, potential funding sources and project phasing. A three-dimensional model of the BOA and recommended capital projects was also developed as part of the Master Plan development process. The design team utilized this tool to refine the Master Plan and capital project development process. Images taken from the model have been utilized, where appropriate, to provide a more realistic interpretation of the desired scale and extent of development as proposed in the Master Plan.



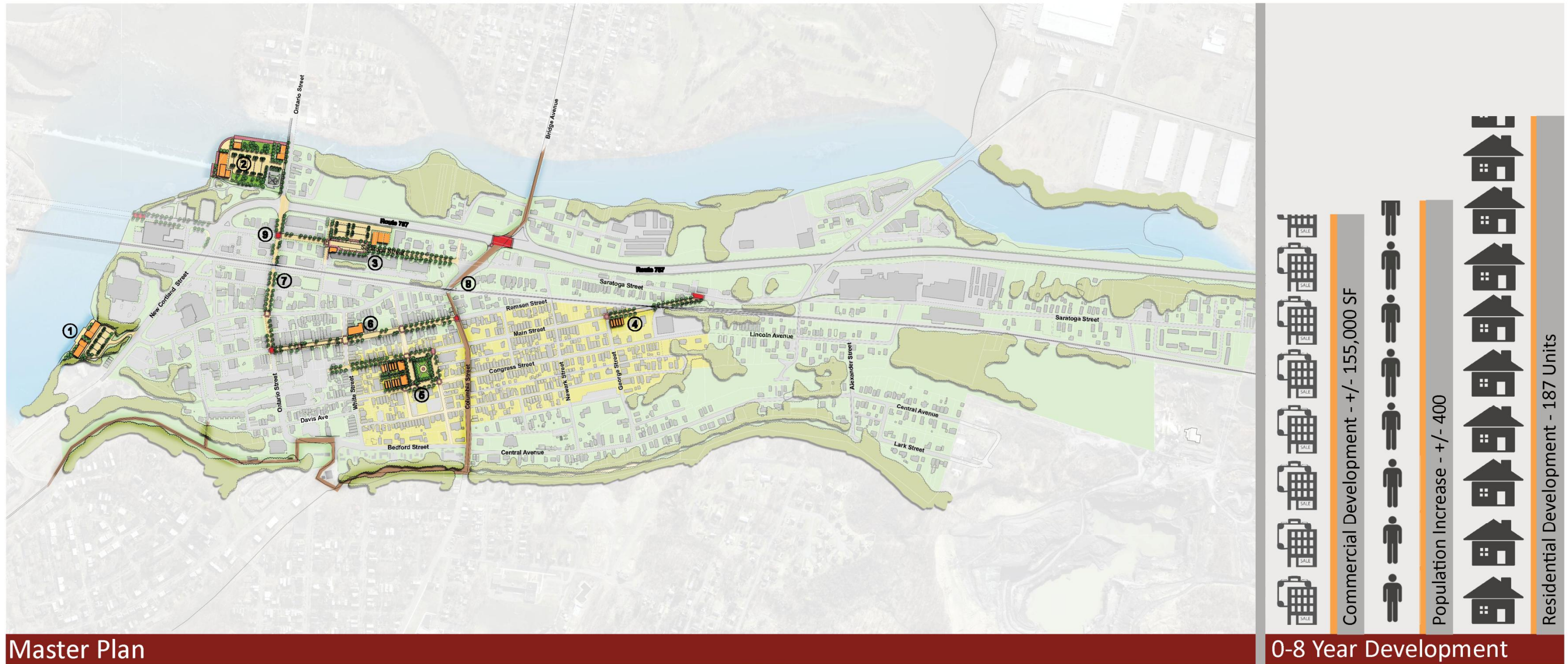
*An example view of the model looking southwest towards the DPW site and downtown Cohoes.*

### *Phasing*

Map 15 identifies the Preferred Master Plan, which is divided into three development phases:

- Phase 1 projects represent initial and catalytic investments along the City's northern Mohawk River waterfront and within downtown over the next eight years that lay the groundwork for future projects and establish a benchmark for quality to be achieved or eclipsed by subsequent efforts (see Map 16 and Table 8).
- Phase 2 projects are anticipated to build upon the momentum and groundwork provided in Phase 1. These projects are expected to occur in years nine through 16, and should promote early signature projects enhancing the identity of the BOA Study Area (see Map 17 and Table 9).
- Phase 3 projects represent the culmination of 16 years of continued public and private investment. These projects are intended to maximize available density and development potential, while capitalizing upon the renewed identity of Cohoes as a viable, transit-oriented waterfront destination within the greater Capital Region (see Map 18 and Table 10).





**City of Cohoes**  
*Cohoes Boulevard*  
*Brownfield Opportunity Area*



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### *Phase 1 - 0-8 Years*

The first eight years of Master Plan implementation involve a significant level of public expenditure on environmental investigations, the assembly and acquisition of property, the demolition of substandard structures, and the relocation of critical infrastructure to support continued investments by private interests. Significant coordination with New York State and federal agencies will also be required for waterfront access improvements.

As indicated on Map 16 and Table 8, the following provides a detailed discussion of Phase 1 projects and required implementation activities associated with the Master Plan.

#### 1. Mixed Use Waterfront Development

The property at 32 New Cortland Street is a 3-acre strategic site along the Mohawk River waterfront with significant views upriver to Cohoes Falls. The vacant site is proposed to be redeveloped with a mixed use structure consisting of first floor restaurant/dining space and upper story residential units. Public realm improvements along the waterfront should include expansive outdoor dining and plaza space which offers opportunities for viewsheds both up and down stream. The Master Plan proposes a 3 to 4 story structure with approximately 20,000 square feet of first floor Class A office space, restaurant or personal services such a fitness center in support of upper story residential units.



*The proposed redevelopment should provide significant opportunities for public access and enjoyment of the waterfront, such as outdoor dining and public gathering spaces to afford views of the Cohoes Falls.*

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The BOA Study Area has numerous opportunities to fill a void in the marketplace through the development of outdoor dining establishments to take advantage of the City's expansive waterfront.

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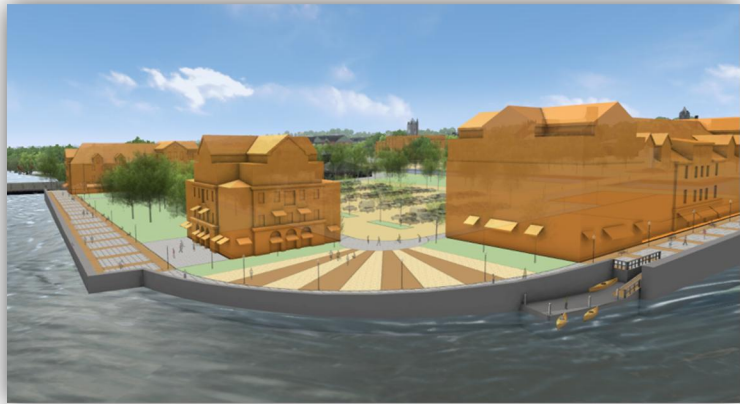
## 2. Waterfront Mixed Use

The current Department of Public Works facility on Ontario Street is proposed to be relocated and replaced with approximately 60,000 square feet of mixed use development. The redevelopment should include a signature structure located on the waterfront with upper story residential units to take advantage of high value views along the waterfront. Ground floor space would be occupied by water-enhanced uses such as restaurants. The perimeter of the site would include a waterfront promenade which links the Ontario Street Bridge along the Mohawk River shoreline to a future connection at the Champlain Canal Interpretive Center. An important component of this project will be the coordination of the removal of a non-functioning electrical transmission tower by the private utility. In addition, the City will also need to begin coordination and negotiations with the State Office of General Services Real Estate Planning and Development office for use and/or development of near-shore lands under State control for the construction of a proposed kayak launch.

Water-dependent uses are those that require access to water resources, such as a marina or a boat launch.

Water-enhanced uses are defined as those that do not directly require access to the waterfront, yet their operations and value are significantly enhanced by a waterfront location. These uses include restaurants, housing, and public open space.

The BOA offers significant opportunities for development of both water-dependent and water-enhanced uses.



*View from 3D model looking southwest*



*The redevelopment of the DPW facility should include the City's signature waterfront public space, providing residents with encompassing views of the Mohawk River and Peebles Island.*

### 3. Saratoga Street Mixed Use / Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Station

The rapid growth of residential development within Cohoes over the past decade has increased population and housing densities to levels approaching those capable of supporting transit-oriented development. Further, the Capital District Transportation Authority recently completed a River Corridor Bus Rapid Transit Plan suggesting that Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) service along the Hudson River corridor between Albany and Mechanicsville is a viable alternative, and that Cohoes is a logical location for a BRT station. The proposed BRT site on Saratoga Street has excellent access to SR 32, SR 787 and SR 470. In addition, the BRT site is at the hub of the larger regional trails system which converge at Cohoes, including the Champlain Canal Trail, the Cohoes Heritage Trail and the Mohawk Hudson Bike Hike Trail. The segment of Saratoga Street between Ontario Street and Columbia Avenue has already experienced an increase in new residential development, and the Master Plan propose additional development south of the BRT station to further increase the density of downtown Cohoes. The proposed BRT site would be within walking distance of Remsen Street and the adjacent North Columbia mixed use neighborhood. The maintenance of the Pine Street crossing of the Canadian Pacific Railway would be important to the provision of pedestrian access to the BRT station, and should be studied further as part of BOA Step 3 Implementation efforts.



*The proposed BRT station is similar to a concept currently utilized in Charlottesville, NC, where the station is part of a larger transit-oriented section of the City.*

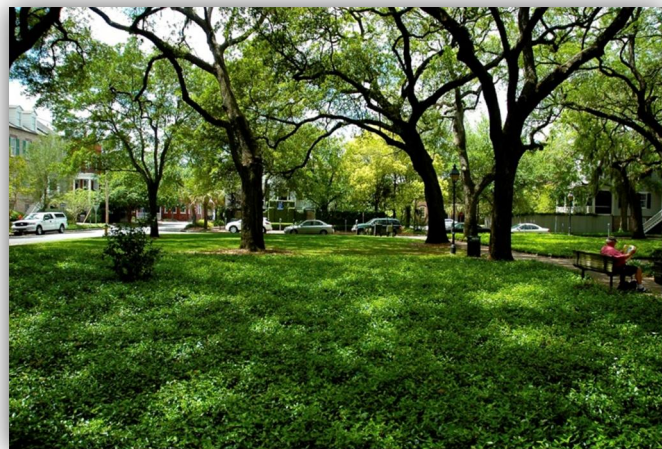


#### 4. New Residential Infill / Main Street Rehabilitation Area

Main Street in Cohoes is built upon the original Clinton's Ditch-era Erie Canal prism and begins at the intersection of SR 32 with Saratoga Street. Proposed improvements include enhanced pedestrian connectivity via wider sidewalks, safety improvements at the railroad crossing, the removal of brush and overgrowth, and general streetscape enhancements to increase the appeal of the southern gateway to Main Street. Infill development is encouraged to maintain an appropriate urban form respectful of adjacent valued historic character, with a focus on single-family detached and two to three-story townhouse structures. These improvements mark a first phase of a more significant set of development recommendations outlined in Project 16.

#### 5. St. Joseph Park Neighborhood

A significant redevelopment project is proposed north of Columbia Street, bounded roughly by Hart Street, Main Street and Congress Street. The two-acre project includes the extension of Howard Street west to Congress Street, and the construction of a half-acre park to function as a central community gathering space. A lack of adequate open space north of Columbia Street was identified during the inventory of existing conditions, and the proposed park would help meet identified recreation needs with plentiful areas of open lawn bounded by a perimeter of high-branching shade trees. The park is envisioned to be bordered by angled parking spaces to support the redevelopment of the former Armory building and expected demand in the Central Business District. New development along Howard Street should be two to three stories in height with new multistory residences facing the park. The extension of Howard Street to Congress will link the St. Joseph Park Neighborhood with Remsen Street, enhancing resident access to the expanding retail and restaurant services available along the corridor.



*The squares of Savannah, GA provide a green, shaded respite within the dense urban form of the City. A smaller-scale version of these spaces is proposed for the St. Joseph Park neighborhood.*



## 6. Remsen Street at White Street Redevelopment

The site of the former Cohoes Theatre is proposed to be redeveloped with a three to four story mixed use structure consisting of 7,000 to 8,000 square feet of first floor retail and potentially upper story residential units or an anchor public use, such as a new library. The new structure will anchor the high-profile intersection and become a prominent feature central to the continued revitalization of Remsen Street. In addition to the redevelopment of the former Theater site, the Master Plan proposes streetscape improvements along Remsen Street, including curb bump outs and street trees at appropriate locations. The additional residential units will boost foot traffic along Remsen Street, enhance the viability of corridor businesses,



and increase the density of residents within walking distance of the proposed bus rapid transit station on Saratoga Street. The City should conduct a targeted market analysis to identify feasibility for a mixed use structure consisting of first floor retail with the upper stories utilized by the public library. Such a concept would regularly generate a significant level of foot traffic to the benefit of surrounding businesses along the Remsen Street corridor.



*The public library in Pittsford, NY contains first floor commercial space, with the library occupying the rear and upper floors of the structure.*

The City should seek to identify an anchor tenant along Remsen Street to generate pedestrian traffic and make the corridor a regular destination in the lives of City residents. The Towns of Pittsford, NY and Webster, NY have relocated their public libraries to new or renovated mixed use structures, which has amplified the success of adjacent businesses through enhanced visitation and visibility.

## 7. Ontario Street (SR 470) Improvements

The Ontario Street corridor is the primary east/west gateway into the heart of Cohoes. Streetscape improvements will seek to incorporate Complete Streets components to enhance pedestrian and bicyclist safety and enjoyment, as well as motorist wayfinding from the highly traveled Cohoes Boulevard and Saratoga Street corridors. Overall, the corridor is in fair to poor conditions, with failing pavements and curbing. The Master Plan recommends the reconstruction of the roadway to include new curbing, sidewalks and tree lawns. Streetscape improvements should enhance the separation of the pedestrian realm from the roadway, driveways and parking lots, most notably the large parking lot adjacent to City Hall. Safety improvements should be implemented at the railroad crossing and at primary intersections to include high visibility crosswalks and potentially a raised table intersection at Remsen Street. Wayfinding improvements should direct travelers from northbound Cohoes Boulevard and southbound SR 32 onto Ontario Street and towards the Remsen Street shopping district.



*Complete streets components, such as bike lanes and high visibility crossings would enhance the City's Healthy Living Infrastructure and support the City's goal for multi-modal transportation options.*

## 8. Cohoes Heritage Trail Wayfinding Improvements

The City of Cohoes is at the confluence of the Region's primary regional bicycle and pedestrian systems, including the Champlain Canal Trail, the Cohoes Heritage Trail and the Mohawk Hudson Bike Hike Trail. Additionally, State Bicycle Route 9 traverses the study area. When complete, it will connect the Hudson River waterfront to the Mohawk Hudson Bike Trail and the Harmony Mills District via both on-road and off-road trails that traverse through the BOA Study Area. The proposed project includes expanded wayfinding / interpretive signage and design elements at key intersections, such as Remsen Street. Through expanded wayfinding signage, the project will provide enhanced connectivity to the Remsen Street shopping district, the future St. Josephs Park, and the proposed BRT station.



*Trail wayfinding signage can also incorporate public art.*

## 9. Gateway and Signage Improvements

Cohoes benefits from high levels of connectivity to the regional transportation network, including State Routes 32, 470 and 787. With over 40,000 cars traveling within the Study Area per day, there is a great need for traffic calming, wayfinding and identification signage. One of the most critical areas of improvements is the intersection of Bridge Avenue and Cohoes Boulevard (SR 787). Although Bridge Avenue is approaching the northern extent of Cohoes Boulevard within the City limits, it is the second of three primary opportunities to funnel visitors and traffic into the historic downtown core. Wayfinding signage at the Bridge Avenue intersection should be enhanced to provide call-outs for destinations, such as the Remsen Street Shopping District, the future bus rapid transit station, and future destinations along the Mohawk River waterfront. In similar fashion, high visibility signage should also be installed at the Ontario Street intersection to direct patrons and visitors into downtown Cohoes.



*Gateway signage can announce entry into the City, while also providing wayfinding and directional information.*

The Study Area experiences significant traffic volumes along Cohoes Boulevard and Ontario Street, yet the majority of these trips by-pass the Central Business District. Wayfinding and signage improvements could improve the awareness and visibility of Cohoes to both through-traffic and those seeking destinations within the City.



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Table 8: Phase 1 Capital Projects

Project No.	Name	Project Phasing and Anticipated Costs (\$2012)		Potential Funding Resources	Time Frame	Notes
1	Mixed Use Waterfront Development	Design	Unknown	Private, City, BOA	2014	Dependent upon final end use.
		Construction	\$12,000,000 to \$15,000,000	Private, CIDA, PILOT, NMTC	2016-2018	Based on 80,000 square foot structure.
2	New Waterfront Mixed Use	Environmental Investigation	\$20,000	City, BOA, ERP	2014	Environmental investigations conducted during BOA Step 3 Implementation activities.
		Remedy Selection and Remediation	Unknown	City, ERP	2016	As required, based on findings from site investigation.
		Design	Unknown	Private, City, BOA	2014-2016	Dependent upon final end use determined during remedy selection.
		Demolition/Construction	\$15,000,000 to \$20,000,000	Private, CIDA, PILOT, NMTC, LWRP	2016-2020	Assumes all existing structures will be demolished for site preparations. Costs based on 80,000 to 100,000 square feet of development.
3	Saratoga Street Mixed Use / Bus Rapid Transit Station (BRT)	Site Acquisition (estimate)	\$250,000+	Private, City	2013-2020	Site acquisition costs based upon property appraisal conducted in Step 3 of BOA.
		Design	TBD	Private, City, BOA	2013-2020	Conceptual and preliminary design conducted during BOA Step 3 Implementation activities.
		Demolition/Construction	\$5,000,000+	City, TIP, Private, TA, CDTA, STEP, STP-Flex	2016-2021	Dependent upon findings from development master plan.
4	New Residential Infill / Main Street Rehabilitation Area	Site Acquisition (estimate)	\$100,000	Private, City, BOA, UPWP	2014-2016	Site acquisition for private development estimate based upon assessed value of property.
		Design	TBD	City, BOA, UPWP	2014-2016	Conceptual and preliminary design of street improvements conducted during BOA Step 3 Implementation activities.
		Public Construction	\$500,000+	TIP, RHCP, TA, Canadian Pacific Railway, SLIHTC/LIHTC	2016-2020	Project may be eligible for federal transportation Railway-Highway Crossing Program funding.
		Private Construction	\$750,000+	Private	2016-2020	Private development costs based on construction of 5 townhomes.
5	St. Joseph Park Neighborhood	Site Acquisition (estimated)	\$400,000+	City, BOA, Private	2014-2020	Anticipated that the City would bear costs to acquire property for roadway extension and construction of St Josephs Park. Land assembly strategy included within BOA Step 3 activities. Costs based on current assessed values.
		Conceptual/Schematic Design	TBD	Private, City, BOA	2014-2020	Conceptual and preliminary design conducted during BOA Step 3 Implementation activities.
		Final Design	TBD	Private	2016-2018	Dependent upon findings from schematic design and site acquisition process.
		Demolition/Construction	\$3,000,000 to \$6,000,000	Private, City, TIF/PIF, TIP, TA, EPF Parks	2018-2021	Costs based on +/- 20 new housing units, and approximately \$1,000,000 contributed by the City for roadway and park construction.

Project No.	Name	Project Phasing and Anticipated Costs (\$2012)		Potential Funding Resources	Time Frame	Notes
6	Remsen Street at White Street Redevelopment	Planning	TBD	Private, City, BOA	2014	Feasibility studies and conceptual design conducted during BOA Step 3 Implementation activities.
		Design	TBD	Private	2016	Design of building to be completed with private funding.
		Construction	\$5,000,000+	Private, CIDA, PILOT, NMTC	2016-2018	Costs based on 28,000 square feet of building, including 20,000 square foot public library.
7	Ontario Street Improvements	Schematic Design	TBD	City, BOA, TA	2014-2016	Schematic and preliminary design conducted during BOA Step 3 Implementation activities.
		Final Design	TBD	City, TA, STP	2014-2016	After schematic design, City should apply for inclusion on the TIP through the CDTC.
		Construction	TBD	TA, STP, City	2018-2022	Costs dependent upon recommendations made in Step 3 activities.
8	Cohoes Heritage Trail Wayfinding Improvements	Design	\$25,000	City, BOA	2014	Preliminary design conducted during BOA Step 3 Implementation activities.
		Construction	TBD	TIP, City, TA	2016	Costs dependent upon results of design process.
9	Gateway and Signage Improvements	Schematic Design	\$40,000	City, BOA, TA	2014-2016	Preliminary design conducted during BOA Step 3 Implementation activities.
		Final Design	TBD	City, TA, STP	2014-2016	After schematic design, City should apply for inclusion on the TIP through the CDTC.
		Construction	TBD	TA, STP, City	2020	Costs dependent upon results of design process.



### *Phase 2: 8-16 Years*

After approximately eight years, initial investments in the BOA should be well underway and the City will be poised to leverage the infrastructure improvements and catalytic development activities taking place in Phase 1. Map 17 and Table 9 depict Phase 2 development projects which are anticipated to further attract a critical mass of new residents and create a high-quality public realm both within the core of the Study Area and along the Mohawk River waterfront.

The majority of investments in Phase 2 focus on the Cohoes Boulevard corridor and adjacent lands. The transition of this corridor from a limited access arterial to a green, tree-lined boulevard with a vegetated central median will drastically improve the perception of Cohoes as a destination community within the Capital District, will reduce the appearance of a divided City, will improve walkability and safety, and will significantly enhance the attractiveness of the Study Area for investors and new residents.

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Master Plan

8-16 Year Development

**KEY**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1. Mixed Use Waterfront Development                            | 14. Waterfront Park  |
| 2. New Waterfront Mixed Use                                    | 15. Commercial / Office Flex Space                               |
| 3. Saratoga Street Mixed Use / Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Station | 16. The Erie Canal & Champlain Canal Juncta Interpretive Area    |
| 4. New Residential Infill / Main Street Rehabilitation Area    | 17. New Multi-Family Housing                                     |
| 5. St. Joseph Park Neighborhood                                | 18. New Mixed Use Development at Main Street and Columbia Street |
| 6. Remsen Street at White Street Redevelopment                 | 19. Cohoes Boulevard (SR 787) Improvements                       |
| 7. Ontario Street (SR 470) Improvements                        | 20. Retail / Office Space  |
| 8. Cohoes Heritage Trail Wayfinding Improvements               |  |
| 9. Gateway and Signage Improvements, Typ.                      |  |
| 10. New Office Development                                     |  |
| 11. Champlain Canal Interpretive Center                        |  |
| 12. Improved Public Park with Water Access                     |  |
| 13. Potential Grocery Store                                    |  |



**City of Cohoes**  
*Cohoes Boulevard*  
*Brownfield Opportunity Area*



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## 10. New Office Development

The former Cohoes Business Park is a vacant 1.5 acre site located adjacent to the terminus of the SR 787 arterial corridor at Saratoga Street. Proposed improvements include approximately 60,000 square feet of Class A office space in a 2 to 3 story structure that takes advantage of river views and proximity to proposed interpretive improvements associated with the historic Champlain Canal. The site would also include portions of a riverfront promenade connecting the SR 32 bridge with the Ontario Street Bridge. The site currently contains basement structures

that would need to be investigated for environmental hazards and rubbleized prior to redevelopment. The transition of adjacent properties to the north away from truck storage would be required to create a large public space along the waterfront with views downstream to Peebles Island. As part of future BOA Step 3 Implementation efforts, the City should also study the feasibility for internal connectivity between this site and the redevelopment of the DPW site across the future interpretation of the Champlain Canal.



The impressive views of the Mohawk River afforded by the Cohoes Business Park site should be highlighted through key public access opportunities.

*Architectural scale and massing consistent with the above is considered appropriate for the redevelopment of the Cohoes Business Park site.*

## 11. Champlain Canal Interpretive Center

The historic crossing of the Mohawk River by the Champlain Canal is proposed to be interpreted between the river and Ontario Street. The project is also proposed to include an educational interpretive center that would become a new centerpiece in the Hudson-Mohawk (RiverSpark) Heritage Area, and function as a new southern-most starting point for canal-tourism enthusiasts to retrace the Lakes to Locks Passage of the Champlain Canal. A critical component of this project will include the assembly of lands from the New York State Department of Transportation and the New York State Office of General Services. In addition, the feasibility for the relocation of existing electrical transmission and distribution services will need to be completed prior to construction activities.

*The potential to reconstruct or interpret the former Champlain Canal would create a destination along the Cohoes waterfront similar to the reconstruction of the Erie Canal at the Buffalo Inner Harbor.*





## 12. Improved Public Park with Water Access

The former St. Michael's Roman Catholic Church property is proposed to be redeveloped as a waterfront public park with picnic areas, expanses of open lawn, groves of shade and ornamental trees and untouched woodland areas. A kayak launch is proposed along the shoreline as a node within a potential waterside blueway trail that could circumnavigate Simmons and Van Schaick Islands and provide a canoe/kayak loop system with several stopping and portage points along the Mohawk and Hudson Rivers. The 7-acre park would be accessible from Linden Street on the north and Cedar Street on the south, and should include park shelters, restrooms and children's play areas to make this a family-friendly destination for impromptu visits or large group events. The property is the historic location of the Cohoes Manufactured Gas Plant and is a registered NYSDEC Voluntary Cleanup Program remediation site. Further remediation activities are anticipated to prepare the site for public use, and a preliminary park master plan should be completed as part of BOA Step 3 Implementation activities.



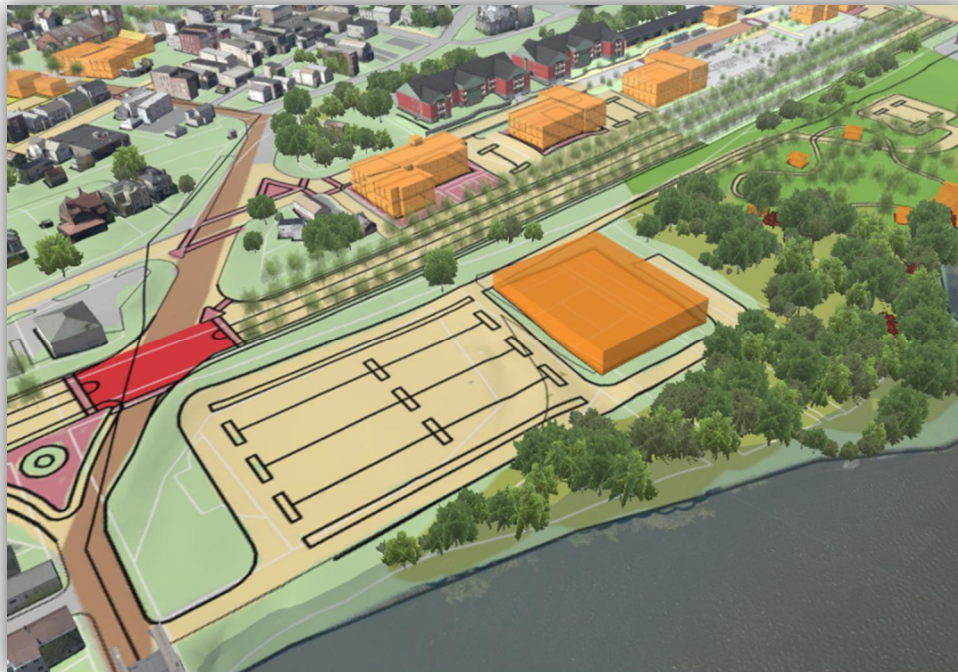
*The proposed public park should include opportunities for active and passive enjoyment of the Mohawk River.*



### 13. Potential Grocery Store

The properties adjacent to the northeast corner of Bridge Avenue and Cohoes Boulevard are proposed to be redeveloped for commercial/retail uses to leverage their high value/high visibility location. This site is one of two potential locations for a modern grocery store to replace an existing outdated and undersized grocery store along Congress Avenue. The redevelopment as proposed in the Master Plan would include an approximately 42,000 square foot store, likely requiring a coordinated land assembly effort. In addition, the project should also strive for the sustainable management of on-site stormwater to protect the water quality of the adjacent Mohawk River. The project should seek to achieve LEED certification and become an exemplary Green Building within the City of Cohoes. A site selection evaluation report and targeted market analysis should be completed for this project as part of BOA Step 3 Implementation activities.

Throughout the public involvement process, the community has identified the need for a modern grocery store to improve access to fresh foods in the Central Business District.



*The intersection of Cohoes Boulevard and Bridge Street offers the high visibility sought after by retailers.*



## 14. Waterfront Park

The publicly owned 4.3-acre former municipal land fill located between Cohoes Boulevard and the Mohawk River is proposed to be redeveloped as public open space with access to the waterfront. The property is to include picnic areas placed within expanses of meadow, low-mow grasses and successional old field plantings surrounded by preserved woodland areas. The park's design should enhance the natural reclamation processes currently taking place while providing a recreational experience with interpretive and educational offerings on multiple themes. Potential themes include:

- the environmental remediation of the site to include demonstrations of engineered, biological and phytoremediation techniques and methodologies;
- the enhancement of the riparian habitat and water quality of the Mohawk River; and
- interpretation of the interface of the river and land.

The creative use of landform to enhance the user experience could be coordinated with future remediation measures in the event that additional material will be required to cap the landfill. Proposed shoreline improvements include wetland enhancements and a kayak launch along a potential waterside blueway trail connecting the mainland with nodes along Simmons and Van Schaick islands. Additional environmental investigations are proposed during BOA Step 3 Implementation activities to include a Phase 2 Environmental Site Assessment to gain a greater understanding of on-site environmental conditions. A significant design component will be the provision of access from SR 787, which should be planned for as part of future corridor improvements.



*The use of low maintenance ground covers within the park would reduce mowing costs, protect the landfill cap, and provide a unique waterfront destination within an urban environment.*



## 15. Commercial / Office Flex Space

The 7.6-acre site is currently composed of 17 separate properties located within the industrial zone and adjacent to the Norlite incinerator facility. The proposed reuse of these properties



*The development of office space within the industrial district complements the commercial/industrial character of surrounding land uses.*

may include flexible commercial/office space that is more compatible within the City's industrial zone. The site is large enough to encourage modern, Class A space that could be utilized by expanding local businesses. In addition, the site is also considered appropriate for manufacturing and distribution activities due to its proximity to Cohoes Boulevard. The development of this site should seek LEED certification through the utilization of green building design and construction techniques. The City should explore a land assembly strategy during BOA Step 3 Implementation activities.

## 16. The Erie Canal and Champlain Canal 'Juncta' Interpretive Area

Similar to the reconstruction and interpretation of a segment of the Champlain Canal at the Mohawk River, the 'Juncta' represents a significant opportunity to highlight the City's prominent Erie Canal heritage. The junction, or 'Juncta', of the 1825 Erie Canal with the Champlain Canal made Cohoes a major transfer station for goods traveling from the North Country southbound to New York City. The reconstruction of the Juncta includes the redevelopment of 5 acres of land, the majority of which is under public control by the NYS DOT, and includes an original Clinton's Ditch-era lock adjacent to the SR 787 corridor. The redevelopment may include an interpretive center building constructed of appropriate period materials such as limestone, and



could become an important destination within the RiverSpark Hudson-Mohawk Heritage Area.

*The Juncta Interpretive Center could function as a gateway to Cohoes, and further supports the City's use of heritage-tourism as an economic and community development catalyst.*

## 17. New Multifamily Housing

The site of the grocery store along Congress Avenue is proposed for redevelopment as multifamily housing upon the potential relocation of the current use to either Project Site 13 or 20. The redevelopment of this site for residential use will complement to the surrounding neighborhood pattern and would reduce traffic volumes within the largely residential area.



*The historic Pullman Townhomes in Chicago, IL offer a comparable scale and character for appropriate redevelopment on the current Price Chopper site.*

Multifamily structures should be up to three stories in height and maintain an architectural character complementary to the valued historic forms existing in the surrounding neighborhood. The additional residential density would assist in supporting local businesses, and would be within walking distance of the George Street Park and two CDTA bus stops on Main Street. Site slopes of greater than 15 percent along the eastern boundary of the property and proximity to the Canadian Pacific freight rail corridor should be considered during redevelopment.

## 18. New Mixed Use Development at Main Street and Columbia Street

Significant momentum for revitalization along Main Street near Columbia Street is anticipated to follow the construction of St. Joseph Park and adjacent private mixed use redevelopment. The adaptive reuse of the former Cohoes Armory also proposed in Phase 1 could provide an additional boost to neighborhood activity and investment. The proposed project includes the redevelopment of six parcels totaling less than one acre fronting on Main Street, Columbia Street and Remsen Street. The mixed use project could include the construction of three-story residential structures along Main Street and a four-story signature mixed use structure at the corner of Main and Columbia. The immediate corner of Columbia and Remsen Street could be redeveloped as an urban plaza to enhance the potential for outdoor dining of the adjacent mixed use structures. This project will likely entail significant efforts to gain comprehensive site control, and will require the exploration of model strategies during BOA Step 3 activities.



*Redevelopment should seek projects that utilize the public realm as an extension of private, active spaces to add vibrancy to the streetscape.*



## 19. Cohoes Boulevard (SR 787) Improvements

Previously studied as an Expanded Project Proposal by the City of Cohoes and the NYS DOT, the BOA Master Plan supports the reconfiguration of Cohoes Boulevard into a tree lined signature transportation corridor that unifies downtown Cohoes with the Mohawk River waterfront. Significant gateway, wayfinding and pedestrian/bicycle improvements would accompany the project, which is anticipated to include a central vegetated median with ornamental lighting and a multiuse path on one or both sides of the corridor. The current roadway is negatively impacted by substantial overgrowth of invasive plant species; this scrub is suggested to be removed and replaced with sustainable native vegetation to buffer adjacent uses. Low maintenance, tall species are recommended for the outside plantings, with smaller, ornamental plantings within the central median. The next step for the advancement of this project is to exit the scoping phase (EPP) and complete a draft design report which entails the evaluation of alternatives, an analysis of social, environmental and economic impacts, the selection of a preferred alternative and the development of preliminary design drawings.

A signal optimization study should be completed from Dyke Avenue to the intersection with SR 32 to improve the efficiency of traffic flow during peak periods, and save energy during off peak periods. This should include corresponding intersections on Bridge Avenue, SR 32 and SR 470.

Based upon our traffic analysis, traffic flow and intersection performance will improve within the SR 787 corridor if a dedicated north bound slip lane is constructed at the intersection of SR 787 and SR 32.



*Seabreeze Drive in Irondequoit, NY was formerly NY 590 and underwent a transformation into a signature, multi-modal corridor complete with a green central median, multiuse trail and sidewalks.*



*Concept sketch of proposed right turn lane from NY 787 to northbound NY 32.*



## 20. Retail / Office Space

The Cohoes Professional Center currently occupies 3.6 acres in the northern portion of the Study Area, 2.5 acres of which are utilized for surface parking. The Master Plan envisions the complete build-out of this site with structured parking and additional office and retail space, potentially to include a new small-scale grocery of approximately 20,000 square feet with office or residential above. The scale, character and massing of nearby development would likely be supportive of structures as large as four to six stories in this location. The site has high quality access to SR 32 and SR 787, making it a logical destination for retail shopping or a regional employment center. The City should seek to engage the property owner to identify future plans with the property, and offer available assistance towards the future redevelopment of the site.



*The Price Chopper in Saratoga Springs provides a small urban grocery within a larger mixed use building. A similar project in Cohoes would add 24-hour vibrancy and activity to the northern portions of the Central Business District.*



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Table 9: Phase 2 Capital Projects

Project No.	Name	Project Phasing and Anticipated Costs (\$2012)		Potential Funding Resources	Time Frame	Notes
10	New Office Development	Environmental Investigation	\$20,000	City, BOA	2014-2015	Environmental investigations conducted during BOA Step 3 Implementation activities.
		Remedy Selection and Remediation	TBD	ERP, City	2015-2016	As required, based on findings from investigation.
		Design	TBD	Private	2015-2016	Dependent on final end use. Conceptual design conducted during BOA Step 3 Implementation activities
		Demolition/Construction	\$6,000,000 to \$8,000,000+	Private, ACIDA, PILOT, CDREDC, LWRP, ERP	2018-2022	Costs based on 40,000 square feet of office space; site demolition costs currently unknown.
11	Champlain Canal Interpretive Center	Site Acquisition (Estimated)	\$50,000	City, BOA	2014-2016	Site acquisition costs anticipated to be largely due diligence and legal for transfer from NYSDOT.
		Environmental Investigation	\$20,000	City, BOA	2016-2018	Environmental investigations conducted during BOA Step 3 Implementation activities.
		Remedy Selection and Remediation	TBD	City, NYSDOT, ERP	2018-2020	As required, based on findings from investigation.
		Design	TBD	City, BOA, EPF Parks, NPS	2018-2020	Master planning and utility relocation studies conducted during BOA Step 3 Implementation activities.
		Demolition/Construction	Unknown	Private, City, EPF Parks	2020-2023	Seek to have private involvement potentially through incentive zoning. Costs will be dependent upon findings from feasibility studies conducted in BOA Step 3.
12	Improved Public Park with Water Access	Environmental Investigation	\$20,000	City, BOA	2016-2018	Environmental investigations conducted during BOA Step 3 Implementation activities.
		Remedy Selection and Remediation	TBD	City, ERP	2018-2020	As required, based on findings from investigation.
		Schematic Design	TBD	City, BOA	2014-2016	Schematic design and utility relocation studies conducted during BOA Step 3.
		Final Design	TBD	City, EPF Parks, EPF LWRP	2018-2020	City should seek funding through CFA process at completion of BOA Step 3.
		Demolition/Construction	Unknown	Private, City, EPF Parks, EPF LWRP	2020-2025	Seek to have private involvement potentially through incentive zoning. Costs will be dependent upon findings from feasibility studies conducted in BOA Step 3.
13	Potential Grocery Store	Planning/Feasibility	\$50,000	Private, BOA	2014-2016	Site evaluation reports and targeted market analysis conducted as part of the BOA Step 3 Implementation activities.
		Site Acquisition (estimated)	\$1,000,000+	Private, City, CLDC, CIDA	2014-2016	3 Cedar Street (largest lot) currently for sale for \$1,000,000.
		Design	TBD	Private	2016-2018	Dependent upon findings from targeted market analysis.
		Construction	\$10,000,000+	Private, PILOT, CIDA, NYSERDA	2016-2020	Price based on 42,000 square foot store. NYSERDA New Construction Program, or similar, should be considered for energy efficiency funding.



Project No.	Name	Project Phasing and Anticipated Costs (\$2012)		Potential Funding Resources	Time Frame	Notes
14	Waterfront Park	Environmental Investigation	\$20,000	City, BOA	2016-2018	Environmental investigations conducted during BOA Step 3 Implementation activities.
		Remedy Selection and Remediation	TBD	City, ERP	2018-2020	As required, based on findings from investigation.
		Schematic Design	TBD	City, BOA, EPF Parks, EPF LWRP	2014-2016	Master planning conducted during BOA Step 3 Implementation activities.
		Final Design	TBD	City, EPF Parks, EPF LWRP	2018-2020	City should seek funding through CFA process at completion of BOA Step 3.
		Construction	Unknown	Private, City, EPF Parks, EPF LWRP	2020-2025	Seek to have private involvement potentially through incentive zoning.
15	Commercial / Office Flex Space	Site Acquisition (estimated)	\$350,000+	City	2020-2025	City to assist in land assembly process, where possible. Costs based on current assessed value.
		Design	TBD	Private	2023-2025	Dependent upon available land.
		Construction	\$12,000,000+	Private, PILOT, CIDA, NYSERDA	Beyond 2025	NYSERDA New Construction Program, or similar. Cost based on 60,000 square feet of Class A Office Space.
16	Erie Canal and Champlain Canal Juncta Interpretive Center	Feasibility/Planning	\$50,000	City, BOA, EPF Parks	2014-2016	Feasibility and planning conducted during BOA Step 3 Implementation activities.
		Site Acquisition (estimated)	\$50,000	City, BOA, NYSDOT, EPF Parks	2014-2016	City to lead land assembly efforts. Costs anticipated for due diligence and legal transfer from NYSDOT.
		Design	\$150,000+	City, EPF Parks	2014-2016	Dependent upon findings from feasibility study.
		Construction	TBD	Private, EPF Parks, CC	2020-2023	Seek to have private involvement potentially through incentive zoning or private not-for-profits. Dependent upon final design.
17	New Multifamily Building	Design	Unknown	Private	2022-2024	Dependent upon market and ownership.
		Construction	\$1,000,000	Private, CLDC, SLIHTC/LIHTC, CLFCR	2024-2026	Community Loan Fund of the Capital Region, or similar CDFI. Costs based on 12 market-rate rental units in 3-story building.

Project No.	Name	Project Phasing and Anticipated Costs (\$2012)		Potential Funding Resources	Time Frame	Notes
18	New Mixed Use Development at Main Street and Columbia Street	Site Acquisition (estimated)	\$400,000+	City, Private	2020-2023	Land assembly strategy included within BOA Step 3 activities should provide meaningful input. Costs based on current assessed values.
		Planning/Design	TBD	Private	2020-2023	Dependent upon available land and final developer.
		Demolition/Construction	\$4,000,000 to \$5,000,000	Private, TIF/PIF	Beyond 2025	Costs based on 5 townhouses and 15 market-rate apartments. Potential TIF/PIF revenues to fund public realm improvements.
19	Cohoes Boulevard Improvements	Signal Optimization Study	\$125,000	City, STP, BOA	2014-2015	
		Slip Lane Design and Construction	\$350,000	City, STP, TA, NYS DOT	2016-2020	
		Schematic Design - Road	\$250,000	City, STP, TA	2015-2020	City to apply for next 4-year TIP funding cycle in 2014.
		Final Design - Road	\$500,000	City, STP, TA	2015-2020	City to apply for next 4-year TIP funding cycle in 2014.
		Construction	\$7,000,000+	STP, TA, CMAQ, NYS DOT	Beyond 2025	Seek to coordinate activities with next major capital pavement maintenance program.
20	Retail / Office Space	Design	Unknown	Private, CLDC	2016-2020	CLDC to assist, where possible, in tenant attraction
		Construction	\$15,000,000+	Private, PILOT, CIDA, NYSERDA	2021	NYSERDA New Construction Program, or similar for energy efficiency improvements. Costs based on 50,000 square feet of construction plus structured parking for 250 cars.

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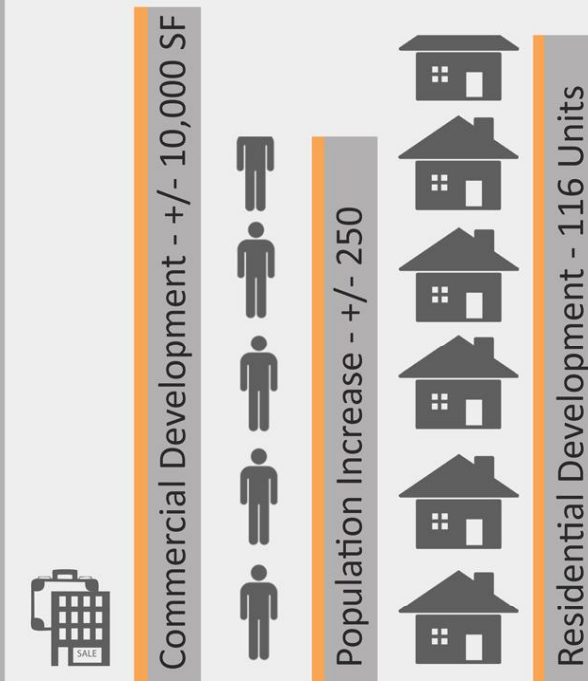
### *Phase 3: Beyond 16 Years*

After 16 years of development, revitalization and investment, the BOA should have established a critical mass of new residents and businesses and a self-sustaining neighborhood economy. By 2029, the private real estate and development marketplace should be capable of undertaking investment opportunities absent of public subsidies. Map 18 and Table 10 depict the final Build Out of proposed development projects which seek to greatly increase the density of the Central Business District and the South Columbia neighborhood. By the beginning of Phase 3, downtown Cohoes will be a community of choice within the Capital District with a diversity of housing alternatives and convenient access to employment opportunities, recreation options, and retail and personal services establishments.

Development within Phase 3 is concentrated north of Columbia Street and consists of townhouse redevelopment in currently underutilized areas along Remsen Street, Bedford Street and Sargent Street. Development character should be capable of obtaining market or luxury rates, with buildings ranging from two to four stories and a significant emphasis placed upon the quality and definition of public realm improvements.

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# Master Plan

## 16-24 Year Development

### KEY

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1. Mixed Use Waterfront Development                            | 14. Waterfront Park  |
| 2. New Waterfront Mixed Use                                    | 15. Commercial / Office Flex Space                               |
| 3. Saratoga Street Mixed Use / Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Station | 16. The Erie Canal & Champlain Canal Juncta Interpretive Area    |
| 4. New Residential Infill / Main Street Rehabilitation Area    | 17. New Multi-Family Housing                                     |
| 5. St. Joseph Park Neighborhood                                | 18. New Mixed Use Development at Main Street and Columbia Street |
| 6. Remsen Street at White Street Redevelopment                 | 19. Cohoes Boulevard (SR 787) Improvements                       |
| 7. Ontario Street (SR 470) Improvements                        | 20. Retail / Office Space  |
| 8. Cohoes Heritage Trail Wayfinding Improvements               | 21. Bedford Street Townhouse Development                         |
| 9. Gateway and Signage Improvements, Typ.                      | 22. George Davis Avenue Housing Development                      |
| 10. New Office Development                                     | 23. Heritage & Arts District / Canal Square & Silliman Parks     |
| 11. Champlain Canal Interpretive Center                        |  |
| 12. Improved Public Park with Water Access                     |  |
| 13. Potential Grocery Store                                    |  |



# City of Cohoes

## Cohoes Boulevard

### Brownfield Opportunity Area



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## 21. Bedford Street Townhouse Development

Proposed townhouses along Bedford Street are envisioned to reestablish the residential character of the street and provide high quality housing alternatives within a short walk to the St. Joseph's Park redevelopment from Phase 2. Townhomes should maintain a modest scale and



*These new townhouses in the Old Town neighborhood of Lansing, MI provide an example of appropriate scale and site design for infill development along Bedford Street.*

massing, potentially with a contemporary interpretation of historically valued forms. Parking for townhouse structures should be in the rear, with shared access drives located between groupings of two, three or four structures. Residences should have direct sidewalk access to the street, with generous front porches and potentially small gardens in shallow front yards. This project would require the developer to gain comprehensive site control, and may require a public-private partnership conducted over the course of several years to acquire a development-ready site.

## 22. George Davis Avenue Housing Development

The Master Plan envisions a new affordable housing neighborhood between Congress Street and Ontario Street. The project will rename Sargent Street to Davis Street in honor of George Stacy Davis, a prominent Cohoes native and former Major League Baseball player. Similar in scale, quality and character to the housing located in the adjacent Olmsted Historic District, the revitalization of George Davis Avenue envisions the relocation of public housing from the Saratoga Sites property adjacent to the Norlite manufacturing facility. The development of a central public space between the housing units could provide recreation and playground space in a unique, high quality housing alternative for low/moderate income residents within downtown. Similar to Project 21, the development as proposed would require extensive site acquisition, likely conducted over an extended time period.

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The relocation of the Saratoga Sites public housing complex away from the Norlite manufacturing facility was identified as an important long-term goal to protect the health and safety of residents, and to transition incompatible uses out of the industrial zone to more appropriate locations.

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### 23. Heritage and Arts District / Canal Square and Silliman Square Parks

The area bounded by Cayuga Street, Remsen Street, Mohawk Street and Ontario Street is proposed to be re-branded as the City's Heritage and Arts District. The district contains several structures and sites of historic/cultural significance, including City Hall, Cohoes Music Hall, the historic Cohoes Savings Bank building, the former Manufacturers Bank building, the Carter Building and Canal Square and Silliman Parks. The project focuses on high quality public realm improvements to the streetscape and public spaces within the proposed district to include public art installations, a state-of-the-art educational and interpretive system, a cultural wayfinding system and updated streetscape elements. Electronic kiosks and self-guided educational/interpretive tours could further enhance this district as a destination within the RiverSpark Hudson-Mohawk Heritage Area, drawing canal and history enthusiasts from the waterfront and Harmony Mills districts into the heart of the Remsen Street Central Business District. The district is anchored on the north by the Cohoes Music Hall (CMH) - the City's signature arts and cultural destination. Canal Square and Silliman Parks are proposed to become outdoor performance spaces, and the focal point for future festivals and events organized to attract visitors from throughout the Capital District and beyond to explore Cohoes.



The use of technology and art to guide visitors through the history of Cohoes could provide a unique heritage-tourism interpretive system that provides tailored programming and continuously updated content.



*Digital maps and wayfinding kiosks provide a unique opportunity to present interpretive information that can be regularly updated at a reduced cost, while maintaining relevance. This technology would permit the user experience to change throughout the year, encouraging return trips by visitors for a fresh, new interpretive environment.*



Table 10: Phase 3 Capital Projects

Project No.	Name	Project Phasing and Anticipated Costs (\$2012)		Potential Funding Resources	Time Frame	Notes
21	Bedford Street Townhouse Development	Site Acquisition	\$100,000+	City, Private	2020-2025	Cost based on current assessed values.
		Site Design	TBD	Private, CDBG, HOME	2020-2025	Dependent upon available land and developer.
		Demolition/Construction	\$1,500,000	Private, SLIHTC/LIHTC, HOME, HWF	Beyond 2025	Cost based on 12 market rate and 3 low/mod housing units
22	George Davis Avenue Housing Development	Site Acquisition	\$400,000+	City, Private	2020-2025	City to assist, where possible, in land assembly strategy.
		Site Planning	TBD	Private	2020-2025	Dependent upon available land and developer.
		Design	TBD	Private, CDBG, HOME	2025-2029	Dependent upon available land and developer.
		Demolition/Construction	Unknown	Private, SLIHTC/LIHTC, HOME, HWF	Beyond 2025	Costs dependent upon final design.
23	Heritage and Arts District / Canal Square and Silliman Parks	Master Planning	\$40,000	City, BOA	2013-2015	Conceptual planning and preliminary design conducted during BOA Step 3 Implementation activities.
		Design	\$100,000	City, Private, EPF Parks	2015 to 2018	Seek to have private involvement potentially through incentive zoning and private donations.
		Design/Construction	Unknown	City, Private, EPF Parks	2015 to 2025	Cost dependent upon final design and funding availability.

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Table 11: Summary of Capital Project Recommendations (Goal Areas 1 – 3)

GOALS		Goal 1 - Make the Waterfront a Destination					Goal 2 - Ensure the CBD Supports City and Regional Residents				Goal 3 - Offer a Diverse Urban Experience						
OBJECTIVES		1.1	1.2	1.3	1.4	1.5	2.1	2.2	2.3.	2.4	3.1	3.2	3.3	3.4	3.5	3.6	3.7
		Attract mixed-use development with high quality public access opportunities.	Capitalize on and market the Study Area's developable waterfront property.	Improve connections between the Mohawk River waterfront and downtown.	Provide attractive housing alternatives for businesses and employees.	Enhance waterfront recreation opportunities to encourage active, healthy lifestyle choices.	Increase the visibility and accessibility of the Central Business District from outside.	Locate modern amenities and services downtown while preserving historic character.	Support the viability of businesses along Remsen Street.	Improve conditions in the neighborhoods within and adjacent to the Central Business District.	Create an atmosphere that attracts new residents, visitors, and businesses to downtown.	Promote the small-scale, walkable urban form with access to transit.	Embrace "Complete Streets" design concepts.	Improve awareness of the remaining Erie Canal assets.	Promote and expand the area's healthy living characteristics.	Encourage sustainable infill development within the Central Business District.	Continue to provide programming on Remsen Street that attracts visitors all year.
Recommendations																	
1	Mixed Use Waterfront Development	X	X	X	X			X			X					X	
2	New Waterfront Mixed Use	X	X	X	X	X		X			X	X		X	X	X	
3	Saratoga Street Mixed Use / Bus Rapid Transit Station	X			X		X	X	X		X	X	X		X	X	
4	New Residential Infill / Main Street Rehabilitation Area				X					X		X	X	X		X	
5	St. Joseph Park Neighborhood	X			X		X	X		X	X	X	X		X		
6	Remsen Street at White Street Redevelopment						X	X	X	X	X					X	X
7	Ontario Street Improvements			X			X		X		X	X	X		X		
8	Cohoes Heritage Trail Wayfinding Improvements			X			X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
9	Gateway and Signage Improvements			X			X		X		X	X	X		X		
10	New Office Development	X	X					X			X			X		X	
11	Champlain Canal Interpretive Center	X	X	X		X		X			X			X		X	
12	Improved Public Park		X			X					X				X		
13	Potential Grocery Store		X					X		X	X					X	
14	New Waterfront Park		X			X					X				X		
15	Commercial / Office Flex Space															X	
16	Erie Canal and Champlain Canal Juncta Interpretive Center						X	X			X			X		X	
17	New Multi-Family Housing									X	X					X	
18	New Mixed Use Development at Main and Columbia						X	X	X	X	X					X	
19	Cohoes Boulevard Improvements			X			X		X		X	X	X		X		
20	Retail / Office Space		X				X	X	X	X	X					X	
21	Bedford Street Townhomes									X	X					X	
22	Stacy Davis Avenue Public Housing									X	X					X	
23	Heritage and Arts District / Canal Square & Silliman Parks						X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X		X



Table 11. Summary of Capital Project Recommendations, continued (Goal Areas 4 – 7)

GOALS		Goal 4 – Promote Land Use Diversity					Goal 5 – Celebrate Our History, Culture and Recreational Resources					Goal 6 – Ensure Public Investments Benefit All Modes of Transportation					Goal 7 – Advance Environmental Stewardship			
OBJECTIVES		4.1	4.2	4.3	4.4	4.5	5.1	5.2	5.3	5.4	5.5	6.1	6.2	6.3	6.4	6.5	7.1	7.2	7.3	7.4
		Encourage the horizontal and vertical mixing of compatible uses.	Identify and remove regulatory barriers to mixed-use development downtown and along the waterfront.	Make the City an appealing place to live for a range of income levels.	Encourage a vibrant sense of place in the Central Business District.	Focus City resources on capital investments that will most likely incentivize private investment.	Preserve, reuse and celebrate historic and cultural assets, keeping them safe, attractive and informative places to visit.	Promote historic and cultural assets to attract tourism locally and regionally.	Utilize technology to expand seasonal and relevant programming in the downtown and waterfront areas.	Enhance community pride through effective education and marketing of our industrial and canal heritage.	Evaluate opportunities for permanent and rotating public art in the downtown area.	Enhance pedestrian and bicycle safety throughout the Cohoes Boulevard corridor.	Improve awareness of and wayfinding to Remsen Street from Cohoes Boulevard.	Promote sustainable transportation options including bus transit.	Ensure land use decisions support multiple modes of transportation.	Improve connectivity of on- and off-road trail systems throughout the Study Area.	Actively work to reduce green house gas emissions and encourage sustainable design practices.	Remediate existing brownfields to facilitate future development opportunities.	Return vacant, underutilized or blighted properties to productive uses, focusing on strategic sites identified as part of this plan.	Identify opportunities to leverage the assistance provided by the BOA program to encourage private and federal reinvestment.
Recommendations																				
1	Mixed Use Waterfront Development	X	X	X	X												X	X	X	X
2	New Waterfront Mixed Use	X	X	X	X	X						X				X	X	X	X	X
3	Saratoga Street Mixed Use/BRT	X	X	X	X	X						X		X	X	X	X		X	X
4	New Residential Infill / Main Street Rehabilitation Area			X																
5	St. Joseph Park Neighborhood	X	X	X	X	X	X												X	X
6	Remsen Street Redevelopment	X	X	X	X	X											X		X	X
7	Ontario Street Improvements			X	X							X	X	X		X				X
8	Cohoes Heritage Trail Wayfinding Improvements			X	X		X	X		X		X	X	X		X				
9	Gateway and Signage Improvements			X	X							X	X	X		X				X
10	New Office Development	X		X	X	X						X				X	X	X	X	X
11	Champlain Canal Interpretive Center			X	X	X	X	X	X	X								X	X	X
12	Improved Public Park			X				X				X				X	X	X	X	X
13	Potential Grocery Store			X													X		X	
14	New Waterfront Park			X				X				X				X	X	X	X	X
15	Commercial / Office Flex Space			X															X	
16	Erie Canal and Champlain Canal Junction Interpretive Center			X	X	X	X	X	X	X								X	X	X
17	New Multi-Family Housing			X										X			X		X	
18	New Mixed Use Development at Main and Columbia	X	X	X	X	X											X		X	X
19	Cohoes Boulevard Improvements			X	X							X	X	X	X	X				X
20	Retail / Office Space			X													X		X	
21	Bedford Street Townhomes			X										X			X		X	
22	Stacy Davis Avenue Public Housing			X										X			X		X	
23	Heritage and Arts District / Canal Square & Silliman Parks			X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X				X

## 5.4 Land Use Character and Regulatory Changes

The Cohoes Boulevard BOA Master Plan does not propose any significant changes to the Study Area land use patterns. Primary land use types along the Mohawk River waterfront should continue to include a mix of commercial, retail, housing and public space uses. Land uses within the Central Business district, particularly along Remsen Street, should continue to highlight this area as the City's premiere mixed use shopping, entertainment and business services district. Neighborhoods in the Central Business District and the Lansing Street Character Areas should maintain their density while supporting targeted opportunities for niche, neighborhood-scale services. The following is an overview of land use recommendations within the Cohoes Boulevard Master Plan. Table 12 correlates Land Use and Regulatory Recommendations with the Goals and Objectives identified through the planning process.

### *Central Business District and Neighborhoods*

The Central Business District is centered on Remsen Street, and the City should create and adopt design standards for this corridor to ensure new development accurately reflects the vision of the community. These standards should focus on the use of appropriate materials and design cues taken from valued historic forms within the community, such as the use of stone facades, pronounced cornice lines, enhanced window and door detailing, increased first floor transparency, and active storefronts.

The City should continue to concentrate new and redeveloped residential units in downtown, focusing residential demand into the Central Business District within walking distance of the proposed BRT station along Saratoga Street. The relocation of core community resources, such as the library, to Remsen Street would further define this corridor as a destination for the broader community and would enhance street-level activity. Further, the City should promote Remsen Street as a desired location for mixed-use redevelopment and rehabilitation. To assist in this endeavor, the City should evaluate methods to streamline, simplify and reduce the time and cost of development review and approvals of mixed-use development projects.

The City should identify appropriate locations for public open space within the Central Business district to improve the quality of life for residents. This should include areas of open lawn and playgrounds with sufficient shade. These areas could potentially be provided within vacant lots, or in other formalized redevelopment areas. Commercial portions of the Central Business



*High quality urban environments with an active public realm and vibrant street life are of significant importance to attracting young couples and their spending dollars.*

District should celebrate the City's canal and industrial heritage through public realm improvements, including streetscape and wayfinding enhancements and public art installations that interpret the story of Cohoes.

The City should implement a strategy to attract niche retail and a small grocery to the Central Business District. The availability of fresh foods within walking distance to dense mixed use neighborhoods further promotes the *Healthy Cohoes* initiative, and would be a unique community development catalyst within the City.

The Lansing Street neighborhood should be maintained with a residential focus, permitting opportunities for appropriately-scale commercial and retail services in targeted nodes. The City should continue to evaluate opportunities for infill redevelopment in areas where restoration of existing building stock is not feasible. In addition, opportunities to improve connectivity with the George Street Park and the Cohoes Heritage Trail should be identified to supply access to needed recreational amenities for neighborhood residents.



*New infill housing in the Lansing Street Neighborhood should maintain the urban form and building setbacks important to the neighborhood's character.*

### *Cohoes Boulevard and Waterfront*

Cohoes Boulevard and lands along the Mohawk River should continue to transition away from industrial uses to those that invite the public enjoyment of the waterfront. Similar to the recommendations for Remsen Street, the City should create and adopt design standards for waterfront areas with strict requirements for public access and public realm improvements. The City's waterfront should provide high quality public gathering spaces and recreation opportunities, including active and passive opportunities to experience the waterfront. Some of the highest residential densities within the City are proposed along Saratoga Street adjacent to the BRT station to promote Cohoes as a unique transit-oriented small city in the Capital Region. Redevelopment in this area should encourage market-rate and above market-rate housing to attract young professionals and households with greater disposable incomes to be spent within downtown. Cohoes Boulevard should transition away from an arterial that divides the community towards a green corridor that links the City with its waterfront. The roadway should offer welcoming gateway signage, street trees, ornamental lighting and a multiuse path, integrating the corridor within the City's brand as a premiere destination in Upstate New York for small city living and a high quality of life.



Higher intensity manufacturing and industrial activity should be promoted within the industrial corridor along Cohoes Boulevard in the southern extent of the BOA. Modifications to zoning should include generous buffer requirements to protect existing incompatible land uses. In the long-term, the City should seek to resolve land use conflicts between the Norlite manufacturing facility and adjacent residential and public housing uses through a transition to commercial and industrial-only uses in the zone. Opportunities to expand commercial and corporate offices within the corridor should be explored as appropriate alternative land uses for the Saratoga Sites public housing complex and other residential areas.

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Table 12. Summary of Land Use and Regulatory Recommendations (Goal Areas 1 – 3)

GOALS		Goal 1 - Make the Waterfront a Destination					Goal 2 - Ensure the CBD Supports City and Regional Residents				Goal 3 - Offer a Diverse Urban Experience						
OBJECTIVES		1.1	1.2	1.3	1.4	1.5	2.1	2.2	2.3.	2.4	3.1	3.2	3.3	3.4	3.5	3.6	3.7
		Attract mixed-use development with high quality public access opportunities.	Capitalize on and market the Study Area's developable waterfront property.	Improve connections between the Mohawk River waterfront and downtown.	Provide attractive housing alternatives for businesses and employees.	Enhance waterfront recreation opportunities to encourage active, healthy lifestyle choices.	Increase the visibility and accessibility of the Central Business District from outside.	Locate modern amenities and services downtown while preserving historic character.	Support the viability of businesses along Remsen Street.	Improve conditions in the neighborhoods within and adjacent to the Central Business District.	Create an atmosphere that attracts new residents, visitors, and businesses to downtown.	Promote the small-scale, walkable urban form with access to transit.	Embrace "Complete Streets" design concepts.	Improve awareness of the remaining Erie Canal assets.	Promote and expand the area's healthy living characteristics .	Encourage sustainable infill development within the Central Business District.	Continue to provide programming on Remsen Street that attracts visitors all year.
Recommendations																	
1	Update the City's waterfront mixed use district to include design standards that ensure new development accurately reflects the vision of the community.	X	X		X	X					X	X		X			X
2	Encourage new housing in the CBD and waterfront to achieve a minimum of 12 units / acre, focusing on higher value residential development.	X			X		X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X	
3	Include design standards in the City's Code that are consistent with NYSDOT Smart Growth Screening Tool and ensure future road reconstruction follows tenants of Complete Street design.			X		X	X		X	X	X	X	X		X		
4	Evaluate and update the City Zoning Code for the South Columbia neighborhood in order to achieve the vision set forth in this Master Plan.	X			X		X	X	X		X	X				X	X
5	Evaluate methods to streamline the review and approval process for mixed-use development projects within the BOA, including electronic submissions and the use of 3D GIS.	X							X		X					X	
6	Identify and prioritize investments in out-the-door recreation loops throughout the study area, including the identification of needed easements or updates to the Official map.			X		X	X		X	X	X	X	X		X		
7	Revisit incentive programs that will help ensure sustainable design, including incentive zoning allowances	X	X	X	X	X		X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	



Table 12. Summary of Land Use and Regulatory Recommendations, continued (Goal Areas 4 – 7)

GOALS		Goal 4 – Promote Land Use Diversity					Goal 5 – Celebrate Our History, Culture and Recreational Resources					Goal 6 – Ensure Public Investments Benefit All Modes of Transportation					Goal 7 – Advance Environmental Stewardship			
OBJECTIVES		4.1	4.2	4.3	4.4	4.5	5.1	5.2	5.3	5.4	5.5	6.1	6.2	6.3	6.4	6.5	7.1	7.2	7.3	7.4
		Encourage the horizontal and vertical mixing of compatible uses.	Identify and remove regulatory barriers to mixed-use development downtown and along the waterfront.	Make the City an appealing place to live for a range of income levels.	Encourage a vibrant sense of place in the Central Business District.	Focus City resources on capital investments that will most likely incentivize private investment.	Preserve, reuse and celebrate historic and cultural assets, keeping them safe, attractive and informative places to visit.	Promote historic and cultural assets to attract tourism locally and regionally.	Utilize technology to expand seasonal and relevant programming in the downtown and waterfront areas.	Enhance community pride through effective education and marketing of our industrial and canal heritage.	Evaluate opportunities for permanent and rotating public art in the downtown area.	Enhance pedestrian and bicycle safety throughout the Cohoes Boulevard corridor.	Improve awareness of and wayfinding to Remsen Street from Cohoes Boulevard.	Promote sustainable transportation options including bus transit.	Ensure land use decisions support multiple modes of transportation.	Improve connectivity of on- and off-road trail systems throughout the Study Area.	Actively work to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and encourage sustainable design practices.	Remediate existing brownfields to facilitate future development opportunities.	Return vacant, underutilized or blighted properties to productive uses, focusing on strategic sites identified as part of this plan.	Identify opportunities to leverage the assistance provided by the BOA program to encourage private and federal reinvestment.
Recommendations																				
1	Update the City's waterfront mixed use district to include design standards that ensure new development accurately reflects the vision of the community.	X	X	X			X	X	X										X	
2	Encourage new housing in the CBD and waterfront to achieve a minimum of 12 units / acre, focusing on higher value residential development.	X	X	X	X									X					X	X
3	Include design standards in the City's Code that are consistent with NYSDOT Smart Growth Screening Tool and ensure future road reconstruction follows tenants of Complete Street design.			X	X			X				X		X		X				
4	Evaluate and update the City Zoning Code for the South Columbia neighborhood in order to achieve the vision set forth in this Master Plan.	X	X	X	X		X						X	X	X		X			
5	Evaluate methods to streamline the review and approval process for mixed-use development projects within the BOA, including electronic submissions and the use of 3D GIS.	X	X				X												X	
6	Identify and prioritize investments in out-the-door recreation loops throughout the study area, including the identification of needed easements or updates to the Official map.	X	X	X	X		X						X	X	X		X			
7	Revisit incentive programs that will help ensure sustainable design, including incentive zoning allowances			X	X			X				X		X		X				

## 5.5 Administrative Recommendations

Administrative recommendations include 37 activities loosely organized into three broad categories representing predevelopment actions, public-private coordination efforts, and policy changes recommended to advance revitalization (see Table 13). These actions also include the further investigation or study of potential capital projects or economic development initiatives prior to investment, potentially as part of the City's BOA Step 3 Implementation Strategy. Non-capital actions include a call for public-private coordination efforts to facilitate investment and revitalization. Administrative actions, such as the creation of developer requests-for-proposal (RFP) and the formation of information databases, websites and marketing/branding initiatives are also key non-capital actions necessary to implement the BOA vision.

### *Coordination and Business Development*

The City should maximize the utilization of the Cohoes Local Development Corporation (CLDC) through continued coordination with public agencies, private employers and local, regional, and state economic development organizations to leverage the myriad simultaneous efforts on-going within and adjacent to Cohoes. The City and CLDC should continue to work with the Albany County Convention and Visitor's Bureau and the Albany County Chamber of Commerce to further support the *Choose Cohoes* initiative and market Cohoes as a destination. The Choose Cohoes organization should be involved in the formation of a BOA Implementation Committee, and function as a liaison with the business community. In addition, the City should reach out to state and federal agencies to promote the Master Plan and identify funding resources that can be used to implement catalyst projects.

Coordination with several key property owners within the Study Area should include efforts to obtain public access easements to the Hudson River and Mohawk River waterfronts. In addition, area employers should be engaged to develop housing incentive programs that attract more diverse income levels to the neighborhoods surrounding the Central Business District. The City should assist the CLDC in reaching out to existing local employers to identify future expansion opportunities within the Study Area to increase the daytime population and enhance the local economy.



"Choose Cohoes is a diverse organization, comprised of local business leaders, educators, residents and governmental representatives who take pride in assisting with building a community where individuals, families, businesses and not-for-profit organizations can develop and thrive while enhancing the quality of life within the City of Cohoes."

Several business development initiatives should be conducted to attract investment and activity to appropriate locations within the Study Area. Remsen Street should continue to be targeted for mixed use niche retail, commercial, office and residential development. The former Cohoes Theater site is located at the center of the corridor, and would be a logical site for an anchor tenant to generate foot traffic and visitation, such as a relocated public library or a large retail establishment. The City should continue to support and promote the Cohoes Music Hall throughout the region, while also encouraging its owners to explore reprogramming the structure to include retail businesses.

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The City of Cohoes does not currently have an approved Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan. The development of this document should be a short-term task for the City to ensure it can access applicable sources of State funding.

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### *Community Marketing and Brand Identity*

The City should build upon the Choose Cohoes brand, with consideration given to its regional location, its mill architecture, Erie Canal heritage, and waterfront location. The brand should further strive to distinguish Cohoes' downtown from other communities in the region, highlighting the authenticity of areas such as Remsen Street. In tandem with the focused brand identity, the City should develop marketing strategies to attract visitors, employers and residents. Events and festivals that celebrate the City's canal heritage, community arts, and local history should be developed and marketed for tourism. The City's inherent walkability, small-town atmosphere and convenient accessibility to transportation resources and the waterfront should be targeted to potential residents. The central location of Cohoes in the Capital region's research and employment district is also of value to employers and their employees.

The marketing campaign should be an interactive, multimedia-based strategy to promote the community to local businesses and area attractions to new residents and visitors. A significant component of the strategy should market the Study Area's recreational assets and promote urban healthy living initiatives, including enhanced park space, city-wide recreational and cultural walking loops and waterfront access opportunities.

### *Sustainable Design and Quality of Life Policies*

A series of community development and investment best practices should be established that encourage and promote sustainable design and development. The dense network of neighborhoods and streets within the Study Area provide for increased walkability, and the City should partner with the Capital District Transit Authority (CDTA) and the Capital District Transportation Council (CDTC) to plan for improvements that support multiple modes of transportation. This should include a feasibility analysis for a bike-share program as well as the development of a BRT to encourage sustainable transportation alternatives and promote use of existing infrastructure and recreational resources. The City should also evaluate opportunities to



incentivize sustainable practices on private property, such as the removal of excessive pavements or the installation of permeable pavement, downspout disconnections and the utilization of rainwater harvesting.

Community development and investment policies and practices should also support a high

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The City of Rochester's Neighborhood of the Arts (NOTA) is the center of the local arts and cultural community. The Memorial Art Gallery and the George Eastman House International Museum of Photography and Film spawned a synergistic cluster for the arts in a small neighborhood only fifteen blocks long and just three blocks wide.

Functioning as a permanent urban art trail dubbed the ARTWalk, this 'arts and culture' promenade links the Memorial Art Gallery, the George Eastman House, and large 'public performance' spaces at the center of the project.

The City of Cohoes can actively transform the concept of an urban art trail into an arts and heritage trail by incorporating heritage, history, and culture into the physical forms along the Remsen Street corridor.



*An example of urban art elements produced by area artisans and students, which provide interest and function to the streetscape.*

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quality of life. The City should evaluate the feasibility of establishing free Wi-Fi within the downtown to increase its marketability for residents and small businesses. In addition, a public art program focused on Remsen Street would improve the identity of the corridor as a destination for people. The City could also identify opportunities to use historic sites and transportation infrastructure to create interpretive, educational and recreational resources that will leverage the region's significant tourism industry. A critical factor for resident quality of life is the condition of neighborhoods. The City should consider the establishment of rehabilitation programs with local lenders and non-profit organizations to improve the quality of surrounding neighborhoods.

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Table 13. Summary of Administrative Recommendations (Goal Areas 1-3)

GOALS		Goal 1 - Make the Waterfront a Destination					Goal 2 - Ensure the CBD Supports City and Regional Residents				Goal 3 - Offer a Diverse Urban Experience						
OBJECTIVES		1.1	1.2	1.3	1.4	1.5	2.1	2.2	2.3.	2.4	3.1	3.2	3.3	3.4	3.5	3.6	3.7
		Attract mixed-use development with high quality public access opportunities.	Capitalize on and market the Study Area's developable waterfront property.	Improve connections between the Mohawk River waterfront and downtown.	Provide attractive housing alternatives for businesses and employees.	Enhance waterfront recreation opportunities to encourage active, healthy lifestyle choices.	Increase the visibility and accessibility of the Central Business District from outside.	Locate modern amenities and services downtown while preserving historic character.	Support the viability of businesses along Remsen Street.	Improve conditions in the neighborhoods within and adjacent to the Central Business District.	Create an atmosphere that attracts new residents, visitors, and businesses to downtown.	Promote the small-scale, walkable urban form with access to transit.	Embrace "Complete Streets" design concepts.	Improve awareness of the remaining Erie Canal assets.	Promote and expand the area's healthy living characteristics.	Encourage sustainable infill development within the Central Business District.	Continue to provide programming on Remsen Street that attracts visitors all year.
Recommendations																	
1	Complete a Local Waterfront Revitalization Program.	X	X	X		X					X	X		X	X		
2	Consider becoming a Certified Local Government.						X	X	X	X	X			X		X	X
3	Coordinate with waterfront property owners to obtain access easements.	X	X	X											X		
4	Develop a multi-media marketing strategy to promote the City to visitors.	X			X	X	X	X	X		X	X		X			X
5	Identify appropriate sites for the relocation of the City's DPW.		X														
6	Identify and solidify an anchor retail or community service tenant downtown.	X					X									X	
7	Work with employers to develop a housing incentive program to attract more residents to the downtown.			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X		
8	Develop a community prospectus that promotes local businesses and area attractions to new residents.						X	X	X	X	X						X
9	Consider moving the Visitor's Center to the Harmony Mills District, creating an opportunity for retail in Cohoes Music Hall.	X					X	X			X						
10	Identify areas where current building stock is not conducive to reinvestment and prepare area-specific redevelopment plans.						X	X	X	X							
11	Focus the Cohoes LDC on actions to attract niche retail, restaurants, and entertainment establishments on Remsen Street.	X					X	X	X		X					X	
12	Evaluate the feasibility of establishing free Wi-Fi throughout the downtown.						X	X			X						
13	Develop a branding campaign that distinguishes the downtown from others in the region.	X			X	X	X	X	X		X	X		X			X
14	Update the Downtown Revitalization Plan to address changes in the economy.	X			X			X	X	X	X						
15	Work with Choose Cohoes & Cohoes LDC to modernize downtown event programming.						X				X			X			X
16	Market the study area's recreation assets and implement healthy living initiatives, including a city-wide exercise trail system.	X		X		X	X					X	X		X		
17	Work with local start-up businesses to encourage expansion and entrepreneurship.						X		X			X					X
18	Establish a branding campaign that links Erie Canal heritage, the waterfront, and local mill history.		X					X			X			X			



GOALS		Goal 1 - Make the Waterfront a Destination					Goal 2 - Ensure the CBD Supports City and Regional Residents				Goal 3 - Offer a Diverse Urban Experience						
OBJECTIVES		1.1	1.2	1.3	1.4	1.5	2.1	2.2	2.3.	2.4	3.1	3.2	3.3	3.4	3.5	3.6	3.7
		Attract mixed-use development with high quality public access opportunities.	Capitalize on and market the Study Area's developable waterfront property.	Improve connections between the Mohawk River waterfront and downtown.	Provide attractive housing alternatives for businesses and employees.	Enhance waterfront recreation opportunities to encourage active, healthy lifestyle choices.	Increase the visibility and accessibility of the Central Business District from outside.	Locate modern amenities and services downtown while preserving historic character.	Support the viability of businesses along Remsen Street.	Improve conditions in the neighborhoods within and adjacent to the Central Business District.	Create an atmosphere that attracts new residents, visitors, and businesses to downtown.	Promote the small-scale, walkable urban form with access to transit.	Embrace "Complete Streets" design concepts.	Improve awareness of the remaining Erie Canal assets.	Promote and expand the area's healthy living characteristics.	Encourage sustainable infill development within the Central Business District.	Continue to provide programming on Remsen Street that attracts visitors all year.
Recommendations																	
19	Continue to work to attract niche businesses and a grocery store to the downtown.	X					X	X			X						
20	Continue to work with the Regional Economic Development Council to ensure City projects are incorporated into regional initiatives.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
21	Utilize the City's downtown inventory as a framework for marketing sites online.	X					X										
22	Evaluate the feasibility of relocating the Saratoga Sites housing complex to a more appropriate location.				X												
23	Establish a public arts program focused on North Remsen Street.								X		X	X					X
24	Evaluate the feasibility of a blueway trail circumnavigating Simmons and Van Schaick Islands.		X	X											X		
25	Identify opportunities to use historic sites to create interpretive, educational, and recreation destinations.													X			
26	Continue to work with the Albany County Convention and Visitor's Bureau to market the Cohoes' attractions.						X	X			X						
27	Promote the Cohoes Music Hall throughout the region and evaluate updates to RiverSpark displays.						X	X			X			X			
28	Coordinate events and festivals that celebrate the City's canal heritage, community art, and local history.						X	X			X			X			
29	Work with Choose Cohoes and Cohoes LDC to market City as the hub for local and regional trail excursions.			X		X	X				X				X		
30	Implement the recommendations set forth in the Reconfiguration of Cohoes Boulevard Expanded Project proposal.			X			X					X	X				
31	Work with CDTA to evaluate and select a preferred BRT Station location.						X			X		X					
32	Evaluate the feasibility of implementing a bike share program.														X		
33	Identify sites eligible for Phase 2 ESA's through BOA and submit funding requests.		X							X							
34	Form a BOA implementation committee focused on overseeing implementation of recommendations set forth in this study.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
35	Become a Climate Smart Community.											X	X		X	X	
36	Identify opportunities to educate public about environmental remediation process.						X			X							

Table 13. Summary of Administrative Recommendations, continued (Goal Areas 4 - 7)

GOALS		Goal 4 – Promote Land Use Diversity					Goal 5 – Celebrate Our History, Culture and Recreational Resources					Goal 6 – Ensure Public Investments Benefit All Modes of Transportation					Goal 7 – Advance Environmental Stewardship			
OBJECTIVES		4.1	4.2	4.3	4.4	4.5	5.1	5.2	5.3	5.4	5.5	6.1	6.2	6.3	6.4	6.5	7.1	7.2	7.3	7.4
		Encourage the horizontal and vertical mixing of compatible uses.	Identify and remove regulatory barriers to mixed-use development downtown and along the waterfront.	Make the City an appealing place to live for a range of income levels.	Encourage a vibrant sense of place in the Central Business District.	Focus City resources on capital investments that will most likely incentivize private investment.	Preserve, reuse and celebrate historic and cultural assets, keeping them safe, attractive and informative places to visit.	Promote historic and cultural assets to attract tourism locally and regionally.	Utilize technology to expand seasonal and relevant programming in the downtown and waterfront areas.	Enhance community pride through effective education and marketing of our industrial and canal heritage.	Evaluate opportunities for permanent and rotating public art in the downtown area.	Enhance pedestrian and bicycle safety throughout the Cohoes Boulevard corridor.	Improve awareness of and wayfinding to Remsen Street from Cohoes Boulevard.	Promote sustainable transportation options including bus transit.	Ensure land use decisions support multiple modes of transportation .	Improve connectivity of on- and off-road trail systems throughout the Study Area.	Actively work to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and encourage sustainable design practices.	Remediate existing brownfields to facilitate future development opportunities.	Return vacant, underutilized or blighted properties to productive uses, focusing on strategic sites identified as part of this plan.	Identify opportunities to leverage the assistance provided by the BOA program to encourage private and federal reinvestment.
Recommendations																				
1	Complete a Local Waterfront Revitalization Program.						X					X								
2	Consider becoming a Certified Local Government.						X	X	X	X	X									
3	Coordinate with waterfront property owners to obtain access easements.		X														X	X	X	X
4	Develop a multi-media marketing strategy to promote the City to visitors.				X		X	X	X	X	X									
5	Identify appropriate sites for the relocation of the City's DPW.		X	X																
6	Identify and solidify an anchor retail or community service tenant downtown.	X	X	X		X														
7	Work with employers to develop a housing incentive program to attract more residents to the downtown.		X	X	X	X														
8	Develop a community prospectus that promotes local businesses and area attractions to new residents.			X				X		X										
9	Consider moving the Visitor's Center to the Harmony Mills District, creating an opportunity for retail in Cohoes Music Hall.						X	X												
10	Identify areas where current building stock is not conducive to reinvestment and prepare area-specific redevelopment plans.	X	X		X	X												X		
11	Focus the Cohoes LDC on actions to attract niche retail, restaurants, and entertainment establishments on Remsen Street.		X			X	X	X										X		X
12	Evaluate the feasibility of establishing free Wi-Fi throughout the downtown.			X	X															
13	Develop a branding campaign that distinguishes the downtown from others in the region.			X			X	X	X	X	X									
14	Update the Downtown Revitalization Plan to address changes in the economy.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
15	Work with Choose Cohoes & Cohoes LDC to modernize downtown event programming.			X	X				X											

GOALS		Goal 4 – Promote Land Use Diversity					Goal 5 – Celebrate Our History, Culture and Recreational Resources					Goal 6 – Ensure Public Investments Benefit All Modes of Transportation					Goal 7 – Advance Environmental Stewardship			
OBJECTIVES		4.1	4.2	4.3	4.4	4.5	5.1	5.2	5.3	5.4	5.5	6.1	6.2	6.3	6.4	6.5	7.1	7.2	7.3	7.4
		Encourage the horizontal and vertical mixing of compatible uses.	Identify and remove regulatory barriers to mixed-use development downtown and along the waterfront.	Make the City an appealing place to live for a range of income levels.	Encourage a vibrant sense of place in the Central Business District.	Focus City resources on capital investments that will most likely incentivize private investment.	Preserve, reuse and celebrate historic and cultural assets, keeping them safe, attractive and informative places to visit.	Promote historic and cultural assets to attract tourism locally and regionally.	Utilize technology to expand seasonal and relevant programming in the downtown and waterfront areas.	Enhance community pride through effective education and marketing of our industrial and canal heritage.	Evaluate opportunities for permanent and rotating public art in the downtown area.	Enhance pedestrian and bicycle safety throughout the Cohoes Boulevard corridor.	Improve awareness of and wayfinding to Remsen Street from Cohoes Boulevard.	Promote sustainable transportation options including bus transit.	Ensure land use decisions support multiple modes of transportation .	Improve connectivity of on- and off-road trail systems throughout the Study Area.	Actively work to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and encourage sustainable design practices.	Remediate existing brownfields to facilitate future development opportunities.	Return vacant, underutilized or blighted properties to productive uses, focusing on strategic sites identified as part of this plan.	Identify opportunities to leverage the assistance provided by the BOA program to encourage private and federal reinvestment.
Recommendations																				
16	Market the study area's recreation assets and implement healthy living initiatives, including a city-wide exercise trail system.				X							X	X		X	X				
17	Work with local start-up businesses to encourage expansion and entrepreneurship.		X		X														X	
18	Establish a branding campaign that links Erie Canal heritage, the waterfront, and local mill history.						X	X	X	X	X									
19	Continue to work to attract niche businesses and a grocery store to the downtown.	X	X	X	X	X														
20	Continue to work with the Regional Economic Development Council to ensure City projects are incorporated into regional initiatives.					X	X					X		X	X					
21	Utilize the City's downtown inventory as a framework for marketing sites online.	X			X													X	X	X
22	Evaluate the feasibility of relocating the Saratoga Sites housing complex to a more appropriate location.			X											X					
23	Establish a public arts program focused on North Remsen Street.									X	X									
24	Evaluate the feasibility of a blueway trail circumnavigating Simmons and Van Schaick Islands.													X		X				
25	Identify opportunities to use historic sites to create interpretive, educational, and recreation destinations.				X		X	X		X										
26	Continue to work with the Albany County Convention and Visitor's Bureau to market the Cohoes' attractions.				X		X	X	X	X	X									
27	Promote the Cohoes Music Hall throughout the region and evaluate updates to RiverSpark displays.						X	X	X	X	X									
28	Coordinate events and festivals that celebrate the City's canal heritage, community art, and local history.						X	X	X	X	X									



GOALS		Goal 4 – Promote Land Use Diversity					Goal 5 – Celebrate Our History, Culture and Recreational Resources					Goal 6 – Ensure Public Investments Benefit All Modes of Transportation					Goal 7 – Advance Environmental Stewardship			
OBJECTIVES		4.1	4.2	4.3	4.4	4.5	5.1	5.2	5.3	5.4	5.5	6.1	6.2	6.3	6.4	6.5	7.1	7.2	7.3	7.4
		Encourage the horizontal and vertical mixing of compatible uses.	Identify and remove regulatory barriers to mixed-use development downtown and along the waterfront.	Make the City an appealing place to live for a range of income levels.	Encourage a vibrant sense of place in the Central Business District.	Focus City resources on capital investments that will most likely incentivize private investment.	Preserve, reuse and celebrate historic and cultural assets, keeping them safe, attractive and informative places to visit.	Promote historic and cultural assets to attract tourism locally and regionally.	Utilize technology to expand seasonal and relevant programming in the downtown and waterfront areas.	Enhance community pride through effective education and marketing of our industrial and canal heritage.	Evaluate opportunities for permanent and rotating public art in the downtown area.	Enhance pedestrian and bicycle safety throughout the Cohoes Boulevard corridor.	Improve awareness of and wayfinding to Remsen Street from Cohoes Boulevard.	Promote sustainable transportation options including bus transit.	Ensure land use decisions support multiple modes of transportation .	Improve connectivity of on- and off-road trail systems throughout the Study Area.	Actively work to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and encourage sustainable design practices.	Remediate existing brownfields to facilitate future development opportunities.	Return vacant, underutilized or blighted properties to productive uses, focusing on strategic sites identified as part of this plan.	Identify opportunities to leverage the assistance provided by the BOA program to encourage private and federal reinvestment.
Recommendations																				
29	Work with Choose Cohoes and Cohoes LDC to market City as the hub for local and regional trail excursions.						X	X				X			X	X				
30	Implement the recommendations set forth in the Reconfiguration of Cohoes Boulevard Expanded Project proposal.											X	X	X	X	X				
31	Work with CDTA to evaluate and select a preferred BRT Station location.													X	X					
32	Evaluate the feasibility of implementing a bike share program.											X		X		X				
33	Identify sites eligible for Phase 2 ESA's through BOA and submit funding requests.																	X	X	X
34	Form a BOA implementation committee focused on overseeing implementation of recommendations set forth in this study.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
35	Become a Climate Smart Community.																X	X	X	X
36	Identify opportunities to educate public about environmental remediation process.									X										X

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## 5.6 Activities to Advance Revitalization

The City of Cohoes has outlined a series of initial tasks for inclusion within the Implementation Strategy (Step 3) of the NYS Brownfield Opportunity Areas Program based on findings and recommendations included in the Nomination Study. These tasks have been compiled into a coordinated program of complementary activities that advance the BOA vision and Master Plan. The proposed Implementation Strategy encompasses a wide range of activities, including environmental investigations, predevelopment due diligence, infrastructure analysis, and refined site-level master planning necessary to limit risk and liability while preparing for and attracting private investment. The City's Step 3 application is expected to be submitted in early 2013, and includes the projects described below.

### 1. Coordinated Transportation Wayfinding and Gateway Master Plan

There are several priority corridors and intersections within the Study Area, including those along Cohoes Boulevard (SR 787), Ontario Street (SR 470), Remsen Street, Main Street and Saratoga Street (SR 32). There is the need for a coordinated wayfinding strategy that directs pedestrians and motorists to priority destinations within downtown Cohoes, including the Remsen Street shopping district, the future Heritage and Arts District, the Mohawk River Waterfront, public parking and others. The Wayfinding and Gateway Master Plan should identify priority decision-making locations and develop model wayfinding techniques, including conceptual signage, to employ in a phased approach.

### 2. At-grade Railroad Crossing Safety Improvement Study

The potential location of a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) east of the Canadian Pacific Railroad corridor requires pedestrian crossing safety improvements at several locations, including Ontario Street, Pine Street, Columbia Street and New Cortland Street. The City is presently undertaking a Railroad Crossing Modernization Project that recommends upgrading the New Cortland Street, Ontario Street and Columbia Street crossings, while eliminating crossings at Pine Street and Newark Street. The maintenance of the Pine and Newark Street crossings for pedestrians should be further evaluated to maintain the viability of the BRT station along Saratoga Street.

### 3. Signal Optimization Study and Free-Flowing Right-Turn Lane Feasibility

The City of Cohoes currently experiences significant congestion during the afternoon peak at the SR 787 and SR 32 intersection, and these conditions are anticipated to worsen upon full build out of the BOA Master Plan without intervention. The proposed project will include a real time adaptive traffic signal optimization analysis for the primary signals in the study area. The Cohoes Boulevard BOA Nomination Study highlights this as a needed step to ensure improved traffic flow and efficiency and to reduce delay and idle times, also resulting in improved air quality. The project also includes the scoping and preliminary design documents for a free-flowing right-turn lane from SR 787 northbound to SR 32 northbound.



#### 4. Saratoga Street Transit-Oriented Development Master Plan and BRT Feasibility Study

The proposed project includes two primary tasks. The first task will conduct a preliminary engineering study to identify a preferred location for a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) station within downtown. Additional task elements include identification of necessary traffic and transportation infrastructure improvements to NY 32 and NY 787 required for implementation. The proposed task should result in a design approval document (DAD) to include preliminary design, cost estimates and visualizations. In addition, the project should include a cost-benefit analysis to support anticipated public investments in infrastructure, while also projecting private economic activity spurred by the location of a BRT in downtown Cohoes.

The potential development of a Bus Rapid Transit Station at the intersection of Pine Street and Saratoga Street may drastically increase the demand for transit oriented housing and services along Saratoga Street. Therefore, the second primary task is a master plan identifying the preferred development scenario for the revitalization of Saratoga Street. This task should include future land uses, development densities, design standards, and public realm improvements to provide for the coordinated redevelopment of the corridor as the City's signature transit-oriented node.

#### 5. St. Joseph's Park Neighborhood Implementation Strategy

The potential redevelopment of the neighborhood adjacent to St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Church and the former Cohoes Armory building will require a coordinated land assembly strategy utilizing a suite of tools, including outright purchases, land swaps, condemnations and takings. The Implementation Strategy should identify the preferred redevelopment alternatives for private development sites, and preliminary design for St. Joseph Square Park, the neighborhood's new central public space. In addition, the strategy should evaluate the utilization of Tax Increment Financing, Municipal Redevelopment Law and/or Urban Renewal District as tools to effectuate implementation.

#### 6. Department of Public Works Relocation Study

The relocation of the City's Department of Public Works will require a site selection study to include a cost-benefit analysis and relocation strategy for DPW facilities. The project should also determine a current appraisal and fair market value for the property, and should identify any easements and encumbrances to the fee-simple transfer of the property. The project should result in the identification of a preferred relocation site, cost estimates for the transfer of the property, a funding strategy, and required next steps.

#### 7. Waterfront Access Plan and Implementation Strategy

The Waterfront Access Plan and Implementation Strategy should identify, program and conceptually design public space improvements and historic/cultural interpretation opportunities within the BOA. In addition, the Strategy should be used by the City of Cohoes for capital improvement project planning purposes. The BOA Master Plan envisions several waterfront public spaces, including the reinterpretation of the Champlain Canal, the

development of a Mohawk River waterfront promenade from SR 32 to SR 470, the redevelopment of the former St. Michaels site, and the redevelopment of the former municipal landfill. The proposed Waterfront Access and Implementation Strategy should add significant detail to the programming and design of activity/gathering spaces along the waterfront, including a gathering spaces and interpretive areas. The BOA Study Area has a rich industrial and cultural history to be celebrated through the interpretation of sites of local and regional significance. One of the most dramatic opportunities within the Study Area is the potential to physically interpret the former Champlain Canal, including the construction and re-watering of a portion of the historic canal bed. The Strategy should also provide preferred conceptual designs for the canal reinterpretation, the waterfront promenade and the two waterfront parks, including design standards for development, cost estimates and potential funding strategies.

#### 8. Utility Relocation Strategy

The potential redevelopment of the DPW site and reinterpretation of the Champlain Canal will require the relocation of active utilities and the decommissioning of inactive utility infrastructure. The utility relocation strategy should seek to engage National Grid (purported owners) early in the process to coordinate efforts and identify a feasible alternative location to allow for proposed redevelopment.

#### 9. Unified Brand Identity and Community Marketing Strategy

The City should engage public relations, branding and marketing consultants to guide the development of a unified brand identify for the City of Cohoes. It is anticipated that key themes for the brand should include the City's Erie Canal heritage, former industrial mill prominence, and its significant waterfront and recreational resources. The Strategy should identify demographic and socio-economic target audiences and a series of coordinated marketing strategies to reach these audiences through the use of the brand. The project should also develop brand and marketing collateral for use by the City of Cohoes and its partners, including logos, multi-media materials and sites, and a community prospectus to promote local destinations to new residents and visitors.

#### 10. Remsen Street Streetscape Improvements and Design Standards for Development

Historic Remsen Street is becoming the City's premiere shopping/retail destination, yet the corridor has not undergone significant aesthetic/streetscape improvements since the 1980s. The Streetscape Improvement Plan should develop a set of preferred improvements for the corridor by segment from Ontario Street to Newark Street. In addition, the study should create a series of adoption-ready design standards to enhance existing zoning.

#### 11. Unified Heritage Interpretation Master Plan

A unified Heritage Interpretation Master Plan should identify potential thematic programs for inclusion at the proposed Champlain Canal and Erie Canal Juncta interpretation areas and the Heritage and Arts District centered on Remsen Street north of Ontario Street. The Master Plan should include recommendations for interpretive and interactive programming

elements to make Cohoes a destination for heritage tourism and family-oriented educational experiences. The Master Plan should conceptually identify interactive, working installations of historic mechanical and physical processes that allow the user hands-on involvement with the educational experience in a provocative, memorable, and safe environment. The Master Plan should identify a series of programs, sites and installations complete with phasing and funding strategies.

## 12. Developer Site Evaluation Reports and Pro-formas

A primary outcome of the Step 3 BOA Implementation Strategy is the encouragement of private redevelopment of strategic sites within the BOA. In coordination with property owners, the City will complete Site Evaluation Reports for select strategic sites that aggregate extensive data and information pertaining to the condition of the site and its viability as an investment. These reports are intended to spur developer interest and speed the redevelopment process, and will be modeled from those currently utilized within the private real estate development industry during the due diligence and investment decision making process. As part of these reports, a model pro-forma will be developed to determine required cash flow, income and anticipated tax implications. Together, the Site Evaluation Reports and pro-formas will be utilized by the City to market the viable redevelopment or reuse of the following sites within the BOA:

- New Cortland Street Site;
- DPW Site;
- Cohoes Business Park Site; and
- Former Cohoes Theater Site.

## 13. Land Appraisals

The BOA Master Plan recommends the redevelopment of public and private property to spur economic activity and private investment. The completion of land appraisals for both potential development parcels and portions of properties that may be required for right-of-way locations will be required for budgeting, cost estimating, financing and legal due diligence aspects to implement future activities within the BOA.

## 14. Phase 1 / Phase 2 Environmental Site Assessments

The City should conduct expanded Environmental Site Assessments at several sites identified within the Master Plan for future redevelopment, including:

- Former Cohoes Business Park;
- Cohoes DPW;
- St. Michael's Catholic Church site; and
- Former Cohoes municipal landfill.



### 15. Central Business District and South Columbia Neighborhoods Reinvestment Strategy

The Nomination Study identified a significant concentration of vacant housing units in the Central Business District and neighborhoods north of Columbia Street. In addition, the South Columbia neighborhood contains a significant concentration of 19<sup>th</sup> century homes in need of reinvestment. The City should complete a Housing Reinvestment Strategy for the Central Business District and South Columbia neighborhoods to identify a series of recommendations that support the continued revitalization of these areas. Recommendations for the focused revitalization of neighborhood and housing conditions should address the following:

- The identification of strategies to spur private reinvestment within the neighborhoods.
- Strategies for managing and overcoming vacant and abandoned housing;
- Strategies for decision making regarding investing limited resources in public infrastructure;
- The identification of how the PLEX neighborhood fits into the surrounding residential marketplace; and
- The development of strategies to promote a mix of housing types for a range of incomes and needs.

### 16. Remsen Street Commercial/Retail Targeted Market Analysis and Business Recruitment Strategy

The City and Cohoes Local Development Corporation have identified Remsen Street as the City's premiere retail/shopping destination, and propose to undertake a targeted market analysis and business recruitment strategy to identify and attract retail, restaurant and entertainment establishments to the corridor. The project should identify the types of establishments that can currently be attracted to the corridor, as well as the scale and scope of the desired business mix along Remsen Street. The Study should identify strategies to improve upon deficiencies currently separating the existing and desired marketplace along Remsen Street, and should include a model recruitment strategy for niche businesses.

### 17. Generic Environmental Impact Statement

The City will complete a Generic Environmental Impact Statement (GEIS) to identify potential adverse environmental impacts and mitigation alternatives to expedite future private redevelopment activities. Based upon the results of previous studies conducted throughout the Step 3 program, the GEIS will establish a set of development thresholds for development density, open space, traffic generation and parking as well as examine proposed zoning changes. Future development proposals that meet these criteria will be afforded the opportunity for an expedited review pursuant to the State Environmental Quality Review process.

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## 6 Funding

Funding for BOA Master Plan initiatives will come from a host of public and private resources. The overwhelming majority of investment within the BOA will be provided by the private-sector. However, near-term public-sector involvement will be required to shoulder upfront risk, reduce liability, and speed development timelines that facilitate private investment. In addition, public-sector investments in major infrastructure or public-realm improvements will also be required to set the stage for viable private-sector opportunities. The timing and extent of these investments will be predicated on numerous issues including the disposition of State and Federal budgets and the regional, State and national economic outlook.

The need for public-sector involvement and action to implement the Master Plan cannot be understated. The Master Plan includes several catalytic projects that can likely only be undertaken within the public realm, such as the proposed BRT station, signature waterfront parks and the historic interpretation of the Champlain and Erie Canals. In addition, the City as a public entity has access to development and funding tools to effectuate large-scale projects, including mechanisms such as tax-increment-financing, urban renewal area designation, and municipal redevelopment area designation. The City will likely be required to employ these and other available methods to plan for and assemble sufficient real estate to realize area-wide revitalization in strategic sites such as St. Josephs Park. However, the long-term sustainability and financial viability of development within the Cohoes Boulevard BOA will require the ability of projects to persist absent of public subsidies.

Maintaining momentum developed during the Nomination process is critical to ensuring that revitalization efforts take hold. Therefore, the City should identify 'low-hanging fruit' - short-term projects and initiatives that can be accomplished with limited funding to provide maximum impact. The implementation of a few highly visible quick-wins, such as the installation of gateway and wayfinding signage along Cohoes Boulevard, will signal commitment, activity, and momentum that should translate into continued public support and private investment.

### 6.1 Urban Renewal and Municipal Redevelopment Laws

As part of the BOA Step 3 Implementation Strategy, the City should investigate the establishment of Urban Renewal Districts and/or Municipal Redevelopment Project Areas within the BOA pursuant to General Municipal Law Articles 15-A and 18-C. These enabling laws provide tools for the acquisition, assembly, redevelopment and access to varying forms of funding for the redevelopment of blighted or deteriorating areas. The designation of one or more urban renewal districts may be required to facilitate property assembly, construct necessary infrastructure improvements, and clear blighted or deteriorating areas for redevelopment in accordance with the BOA Master Plan by private interests. The City may also seek to establish a concurrent Tax (TIF) or PILOT Increment Financing (PIF) District for the urban renewal area and surrounding properties to provide revenues for public improvements, such as parks and roadway extensions. A further discussion of TIF and PIF opportunities is included in Section 6.6.



## 6.2 Economic Development Funding in New York State

The following provides an overview of available New York State funding resources and the recently enacted regional economic development policy approach promoted by the NYS Governor's Office.

### *NYS Regional Economic Development Councils*

In 2011, New York State created ten regional economic development councils (REDC) and mandated that each develop a five-year strategy which identifies an overall economic development approach for the region. Each regional strategy is updated annually to promote priority public sector investments and compete for access to a pool of State funding and development support. The use of State economic development funding for public or private sector projects is now directly tied to the advancement and implementation of regional economic development strategies. Funding priority will be given to projects which meet or advance the strategies and goals identified by the corresponding regional economic development council.

The Capital Region Economic Development Council (CREDC) identified eight goal areas to promote a unified approach to public and private investment in the eight-county region. Each of the eight goal areas further outlines a series of specific projects that will enhance economic development and competitiveness within the Capital.

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### CAPITAL REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL Goals of significant to the Cohoes Boulevard BOA

**Goal 4:** Build a superhighway and ensure that a 21st Century infrastructure exists, including increasing accessibility for business growth, expanding broadband connectivity, supporting high performance computation, a diverse and efficient energy supply, and improved transportation.

**Goal 5:** Bring cities to life by capitalizing on our history and culture, revitalizing our neighborhoods and return them to centers of influence that are alive with business, residential and cultural programs.

**Goal 7:** Capitalize on our inherited and created assets, leveraging the beautiful, natural environment, deeply rooted in history, arts and culture, and use them as beacons and anchors to make our communities thrive.

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The Cohoes Boulevard BOA Master Plan directly aligns with Goal 4 of this regional strategy through the creation of a BRT station that increases accessibility and supports private-sector growth. In addition, the Master Plan supports Goals 5 and 7 by capitalizing on the City's wealth of Erie Canal and industrial history, the revitalization of the St. Josephs Park and Central Business

District neighborhoods, and leveraging the Mohawk and Hudson Rivers as destinations within the community. Further, the City's centralized location to major centers of employment, its rich Erie Canal heritage, and its identity as a hub for regional trails make the implementation of the Master Plan a regionally significant priority.

Each Regional Economic Development Council has a Capital Fund for catalytic projects within the region. The alignment of the BOA Master Plan with the regional economic development strategy will be critical to accessing these and other funds for implementation projects. Further, the ability of the City of Cohoes to obtain priority project status for the Cohoes Boulevard BOA will greatly increase the likelihood of receiving large, potentially 'game-changing' infusions of seed funding for critical activities, such as obtaining comprehensive site control and preparation of lands for development.

#### *Consolidated Funding Application Process*

A significant amount of State funding is now procured through the Consolidated Funding Application (CFA) process, an initiative begun in 2011 in concert with the establishment of the Regional Economic Development Councils. The CFA process functions as a funding clearinghouse, whereby applicants can apply for multiple sources of traditional funding via a single application. Applications for CFA resources must be reviewed by both the funding agency and the CREDC to be scored for compliance with agency and regional goals. The Cohoes Boulevard BOA Master Plan will require a broad range of capital projects, including waterfront and roadway infrastructure, environmental remediation, building demolition, housing rehabilitation, park and recreational amenities, and the construction of multi-story mixed use structures. These projects have several components which may be eligible for funding via the CFA process.

For 2011 and 2012, the Governor's Office announced a pool of funding from several sources, such as the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF), New York Main Street, and the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA), among others. Funding availability is typically announced once per year in late spring, with application deadlines in July or August.

### **6.3 State Funding and Incentive Programs**

The following is a brief overview of key funding and incentive programs in existence as of 2013 organized by agency and important factors for consideration during the application process.

#### *New York State Department of State*

#### **ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION FUND**

The NYS Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) was created in 1996 as part of a statewide bonding initiative. This fund is utilized by two primary grant programs: the Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP); and the Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation Program (OPRHP). Each of these programs will fund improvements up to \$400,000, requiring at least a 1:1 match, and state funds cannot equate to greater than 50 percent of the total project cost.

Therefore, a project requesting the maximum of \$400,000 will be required to have additional resources committed equivalent to \$400,000 or more. Funding priority is given to projects within an approved BOA.

#### *Local Waterfront Revitalization Program*

The NYSDOS administers LWRP funding, which can be utilized for waterfront and near-shore area improvement projects by municipalities with an approved Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan. Funds can be utilized to finalize the design and construction of infrastructure and shoreline improvements and other capital projects such as trails and parks. Cohoes Boulevard BOA capital projects, as depicted on Map 15, that should be competitive for this funding program include: Mohawk River Promenade Improvements (Projects 2, 10 and 11) and the construction of waterfront parks and kayak launches (Projects 2, 11, 12 and 14).

#### *Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation Program*

The Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) administers a separate EPF grant program focusing on the acquisition, preservation and construction of park and historic preservation projects. This funding program supports the purchase of property and easements, the construction of public parks, and the preservation of historic resources and structures.

Several projects within the BOA should be a good fit for this funding program, including: acquisition and development of a new park on the St. Michael's site (Project 12); the development of a park on the former landfill (Project 14); and the development of St. Josephs Park, Canal Square Park and Silliman Park (Projects 5 and 23).

Funding programs associated with the EPF are extremely flexible. Applicants can utilize other local, state, and in-kind funds towards their dollar for dollar match, and must be capable of funding the entire project prior to requesting reimbursement.

#### *NYS Office of Community Renewal*

#### **NEW YORK MAIN STREET PROGRAM**

The New York Main Street (Main Street) Program is funded by the NYS Housing Trust Fund and administered by the Office of Community Renewal. The Main Street Program mainly supports investment in private property. The Cohoes Local Development Corporation has successfully administered Main Street funding in the past, and should continue to seek program funding for façade renovations, tenant space improvements, signage, and wayfinding improvements. The revitalization and reinvestment in existing commercial spaces along Remsen Street and Main Street (Project 4) would be an appropriate target area for this funding source. This corridor would also be able to leverage the streetscape component of the funding program, and potentially provide assistance for renovations for historic structures such as the Carter Building or Manufacturers Bank building (Project 23). Main Street funding is also flexible, yet requires proof of committed investment by other state, federal or private sources. Similar to EPF programs, Main Street is also a reimbursement program, with varying levels of match dependent upon project type.



## LOW INCOME HOUSING TAX CREDITS AND NYS HOME

The New York State Department of Housing and Community Renewal provides State Low Income Housing Tax Credits similar to federal HUD tax credits for qualified low to moderate income housing projects. In addition, the NYS HOME program further leverages private investments for the rehabilitation and construction of modern, affordable housing.

## NYS COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM

The New York State Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG) is also funded by the NYS Housing Trust Fund and administered by the Office of Community Renewal. The CDBG program provides funding for accessible and affordable housing, drinking water and wastewater projects, and needed public facilities. CDBG funding is available via two funding programs: Annual Competitive and Open Round Economic Development.

### *Annual Competitive*

The Annual Competitive Round of CDBG funding can be utilized for housing rehabilitation (affordable), public facilities and public infrastructure (water/sewer only). The City should seek to access CDBG funding for infrastructure improvements on at the DPW site (Project 2), along Saratoga Street (Project 3) and at 32 Cortland Street (Project 1), as required, to facilitate private investment. The caveat to this funding source is that funds should predominantly benefit individuals of low to moderate income, which may preclude their use in limited instances. Additionally, during any future reconstruction of local roads the City should also seek funding to improve and/or replace public water and sanitary/combined sewer services. Annual Competitive Round funding does not require matching funds from the applicant.

### *Open Round Economic Development*

The Open Economic Development Round of CDBG funding can provide financial assistance directly to businesses which will result in the creation or retention of jobs. Additionally, these funds can be utilized to construct publicly owned infrastructure necessary to support the creation or expansion of a business. Similar to the Annual Competitive Round of funding, Cohoes should seek CDBG funding to help fund a portion of the proposed BRT station along Saratoga Street (Project 3). The required matching funds for Open Round Economic Development Round funding vary by project type from 10 percent to 60 percent.

### *NYS Environmental Facilities Corporation*

## GREEN INNOVATIONS GRANT PROGRAM

The Green Innovation Grant Program (GIGP) is funded and administered by the New York State Environmental Facilities Corporation and funded through the NYS Clean Water Revolving Loan Fund which is capitalized largely through federal support. The GIGP supports projects that incorporate unique ideas for stormwater management, innovative green infrastructure design, and cutting-edge green technologies. GIGP-funded projects range from simple rain gardens to large-scale wastewater treatment sites. Uncontrolled stormwater runoff can overwhelm

separate or combined-sewer systems in aging communities such as Cohoes, leading to overflows into streets and homes and pollutants in the Mohawk and Hudson Rivers.

There are several opportunities for green infrastructure in the Cohoes Boulevard BOA, including the proposed St Joseph Park Neighborhood (Project 5) and in streetscape and public realm improvements such as the interpretive re-construction of a segment of the former Champlain Canal (Project 11) or the Heritage and Arts District (Project 23).

The GIGP program funds up to 90 percent of project costs with no defined maximum yet will only fund the green infrastructure portions of the project. Non-sustainable components will require coverage via other project funding.

### *NYS Department of Environmental Conservation*

#### **BROWNFIELD CLEANUP PROGRAM**

In 2004, the establishment of the Brownfield Cleanup Program (BCP) provided tax credits for the remediation and redevelopment of brownfield sites in New York State. These tax credits are further enhanced within Brownfield Opportunity Areas and areas the Empire State Development Corporation has designated as Environmental Zones (EN Zone). The BCP establishes four separate levels of remediation based on final permissible uses and the need for continued engineering controls to protect the public health, safety and welfare; projects that pursue more extensive levels of remediation are eligible for greater tax benefits. Credits cannot be issued prior to the issuance of a Certificate of Completion which certifies remediation activities have been completed per agreement with the NYSDEC. As of January 2013, funding for the BCP will expire in December of 2015. The extensive timeline anticipated for projects entering the BCP to achieve a COC will require the City of Rochester and project partners to move quickly to take advantage of this important source of project financing.

There are three separate tax credits available in the BCP Program:

#### *Brownfield Redevelopment Tax Credit*

The brownfield redevelopment tax credit consists of the sum of three separate credit components: (1) site cleanup, (2) groundwater cleanup, and (3) development on a brownfield site. The brownfield redevelopment tax credit is available to taxpayers who incur costs for the remediation or redevelopment of a brownfield site in New York State that is, or will become, a qualified site. Upon completion of the required remediation, the DEC will issue a written Certificate of Completion (COC) to the remedial party. The COC will include the applicable percentages used to determine the amount of the credit. The amount of the brownfield redevelopment tax credit is a percentage of the eligible costs paid or incurred to clean up and redevelop a qualified site. A greater percentage is allowed for sites that are cleaned up to a level that requires no restrictions on use, sites located in a designated EN Zone, and sites located in a BOA. Within portions of the Cohoes Boulevard BOA north of Ontario Street this equates to an additional 10 percent credit.

### *Remediated Brownfield Credit for Real Property Taxes*

A developer who has been issued a COC for a brownfield site, or who has purchased or acquired all or part of a qualified site is allowed a remediated brownfield credit for real property taxes paid. The amount of the credit is 25 percent of the product of the taxpayer's employment factor (a percentage based on the number of persons employed on a qualified site) and the taxpayer's "eligible real property taxes." If the Site is located in an EN Zone (north of Ontario Street) the credit is 100 percent of the product of the employment factor and the real property taxes paid.

### *Environmental Remediation Insurance Credit*

This credit is available for premiums paid for Environmental Remediation Insurance up to the lesser of \$30,000 or 50 percent of the cost of the premiums.

## ENVIRONMENTAL RESTORATION PROGRAM

Under the Environmental Restoration Program (ERP), the State provides grants to municipalities to reimburse up to 90 percent of on-site eligible costs and 100 percent of off-site eligible costs for site investigation and remediation activities. Once remediated, the property may then be reused for commercial, industrial, residential or public use. Applications for this program have not been accepted since 2008 due to a lack of funding, but the 2013 proposed NYS Budget includes the reappropriation of approximately \$40 million in unencumbered funding from previous years. The ERP is a significant potential source of funding for the City of Cohoes to remediate City-owned property within the BOA, including the Cohoes DPW Site and the former municipal landfill. The State has indicated that funding priority will be given to projects within an approved BOA.

### *NYS Empire State Development Corporation*

New York State has established several programs in support of brownfield and economic development activities that incentivize private investment, including the remediation and redevelopment of contaminated properties. The NY Empire State Development Corporation's Environmental Zone (EN Zone) program enhances BCP tax credits in designated census tracts based on poverty and unemployment levels. The Excelsior Jobs Program (EJP) contains three relevant components which package tax credits for job creation, capital investments, and research and development activities.

## ENVIRONMENTAL ZONE PROGRAM

The Empire State Development Corporation established EN Zones as designated areas in which tax credits acquired through the BCP program could be further enhanced as an incentive for developers to remediate property in areas challenged by high poverty and unemployment. All land within Census Tract 129 (north of Ontario Street) is designated as an EN Zone and is available for up to an additional eight percent in credits under the Brownfield Redevelopment Tax Credit.



## EXCELSIOR JOBS PROGRAM

Business investment within the Vacuum Oil BOA may qualify for fully refundable tax credits via the Excelsior Jobs Program (EJP). Businesses within the BOA may be eligible for three of the four EJP credits, which can be claimed over a 10 year period. To earn any of the following credits, firms must first meet and maintain the established job and investment thresholds as outlined by the New York Empire State Development Corporation, which include minimum eligibility criteria for jobs, overall investment and benefit-cost ratios.

### *The Excelsior Jobs Tax Credit*

A credit of 6.85 percent of wages per net new job to cover a portion of the associated payroll cost.

### *The Excelsior Investment Tax Credit*

The Investment Tax Credit is valued at two percent of qualified investments in tangible property, such as buildings or structural components of buildings located within New York State that have a useful life in excess of four years. This credit may be taken in tandem with the Investment Tax Credit for investments in research and development property or with brownfield tangible property credit, but not both.

### *The Excelsior Research and Development Tax Credit*

The Research and Development Tax Credit is valued at 50 percent of the Federal Research and Development Credit, up to three percent of total qualified research and development activities conducted in New York State.

To be eligible for inclusion in the EJP, firms must operate in one of seven key industries:

- financial services data center or back office operation;
- manufacturing;
- software development and new media;
- scientific research and development;
- agriculture;
- creation or expansion of back office operations;
- distribution center, or
- an industry with significant potential for private sector growth and development.

## OTHER EMPIRE STATE DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION PROGRAMS

Empire State Development Corporation maintains discretionary capital funds in support of statewide economic development initiatives and business investments. This includes development bonds to support significant private sector investments, the Urban and Community Development Program for feasibility and pre-development activities, and the Build Now-NY/Shovel Ready Program, among others.

## 6.4 Transportation Funding

The most likely means of implementing transportation improvement recommendations identified in the BOA Master Plan will be to seek multiple funding sources, including a combination of public funding from various governmental levels.

### *Federal Sources*

Federal transportation funding for projects associated with road reconstruction or trail development are typically available via the formalized Transportation Improvement Program process coordinated by the Capital District Transportation Council (CDTC). This would include Projects 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 19, and 23.

The Federal Government provides funds for transportation projects through various funding programs contained within multi-year federal transportation legislation, with the current appropriations bill referred to as MAP-21, or Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century. MAP-21 is a new two-year federal transportation act that was signed in July 2012 after the expiration of SAFETEA-LU in March 2012. The new act created the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) which combines several SAFETEA-LU programs under a single heading, continuing funding support for programs and projects defined as transportation alternatives, including:

- on- and off-road pedestrian and bicycle facilities;
- community improvement projects;
- recreational trail program projects; and
- safe routes to school projects.

MAP-21 also continues the Surface Transportation Program (STP) and the Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) which supply potential federal funding sources for roadway and trail improvements.

### **SURFACE TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM (STP)**

The Surface Transportation Program is a primary core Federal-aid program within MAP-21 utilized for local highway and trail improvement projects. The STP provides flexible funding that may be used for a variety of projects through numerous sub-programs, including all project types eligible for funding under the Transportation Alternatives Program. STP funds can also be 'Flexed' or transferred to fund multi-modal and transit projects, as approved by CDTC. STP funds would support the following activities associated with the Cohoes Boulevard BOA Master Plan:

- Capital costs for transit projects;
- Recreational trail projects;
- Reconstruction of roadways and installation of bicycle lanes on roadways;
- Bicycle transportation and pedestrian walkways, and ADA sidewalk modifications;
- Highway and trail intersection improvements; and
- Traffic signal improvements and traffic calming techniques.

### HIGHWAY SAFETY IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (HSIP)

The Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) is a core Federal-aid program with an overall purpose to achieve a significant reduction in traffic fatalities and serious injuries on all public roads through the implementation of infrastructure-related highway safety improvements. HSIP funds must be consistent with the State Strategic Highway Safety Plan. The following projects may be eligible for HSIP funds:

- 4 - New Residential Infill / Main Street Rehabilitation Area;
- 9 - Gateway and Improved Signage; and
- 19 - Cohoes Boulevard Improvements.

### TRANSPORTATION ALTERNATIVES PROGRAM (TAP)

The Transportation Alternatives Program functions as an umbrella for three separate programs formerly functioning separately under SAFETEA-LU. With some minor exceptions within the Recreational Trails program, all TAP funding requires a 20 percent local match that may be cash or in-kind services.

#### *Transportation Enhancements (TE)*

Transportation Enhancements (TE) funds are now included under the Transportation Alternatives Program, and administered by the New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) with assistance in project solicitation and selection being provided by the Capital District Transportation Council (CDTC). In order to maximize the use of the available TE funding, this program provides innovative financing alternatives for local matching requirements of 20 percent.

TE funds would support the following Projects associated with the Cohoes Boulevard BOA:

- 4 - New Residential Infill / Main Street Rehabilitation Area;
- 5 - St. Joseph's Park Neighborhood;
- 7 - Ontario Street Improvements;
- 8 - Cohoes Heritage Trail Improvements;
- 16 - Erie Canal and Champlain Canal Junction Interpretive Center; and
- 19 - Cohoes Boulevard Improvements.

#### *Safe Routes to School (SRTS)*

Similar to TE funds, SRTS funds are now included under the TAP umbrella. The SRTS Program provides funding to enable and encourage children, including those with disabilities, to walk and bicycle to school; to make walking and bicycling to school safe and more appealing; and to facilitate the planning, development and implementation of projects that will improve safety, and reduce traffic, fuel consumption, and air pollution in the vicinity of schools. SRTS funding within the Cohoes Boulevard BOA would likely be limited to the Columbia Street and the Cohoes Heritage Trail (Project 8) corridor to a connection with the nearby Abram Lansing School.



### *Recreational Trails (RT)*

The Recreational Trails Program provides funding to construct and maintain recreational trails. Each state must establish a State Recreational Trails Advisory Committee that represents both motorized and non-motorized recreational trail users to distribute funds. Of funds distributed to a state, 30 percent must be used for motorized trails, 30 percent must be used for non-motorized trails, and the remaining 40 percent can be used for either type of trail. A typical RT award is \$50,000 to \$100,000. RT funds would support the development of the continued development of the Cohoes Heritage Trail (Project 8).

### *State Sources*

#### **STATE MULTI-MODAL PROGRAM**

The State Multi-Modal Program provides funding for authorized port, airport and local highway and bridge projects. State Multi-Modal funds can be used to finance project costs for the construction, reconstruction, improvement, reconditioning and preservation of county, town, city and village roads, highways, parkways and bridges. All Multi-Modal projects must have a ten year "bondable" service life and must be for public transportation or freight transportation purposes. The State Multi-Modal Program may be a significant source of funding for the BRT station on Saratoga Street (Project 3).

## **6.5 Other Funding Sources**

Several other local and federal grant, funding and financing programs will likely be required to facilitate additional implementation projects. The following is a brief overview of other relevant funding sources to be considered for the revitalization of the BOA Study Area.

### *Industrial Development Agencies*

The Cohoes Industrial Development Agency (CIDA) has a suite of tools to assist private development, including tax exempt bond financing, sales/mortgage tax exemptions, and payment-in-lieu-of-tax (PILOT) exemptions for property taxes. In addition, CIDA can assist projects through the purchase and sale/leaseback of land, existing facilities and new equipment. Private development projects within the BOA may potentially be eligible for assistance from CIDA.

### *Federal Programs*

The US EPA's Brownfields Program provides direct funding for brownfields assessment, cleanup, revolving loans, and environmental job training. In addition to direct brownfields funding, EPA also provides technical information on brownfields financing matters. The remediation of the St. Michael's site and former landfill site may be eligible for EPA assistance.

The New Markets Tax Credit Program (NMTC) was established by Congress in 2000 to spur new or increased investments into operating businesses and real estate projects located in low-

income communities. The NMTC Program attracts investment capital to low-income communities by permitting individual and corporate investors to receive a tax credit against their Federal income tax return in exchange for making equity investments in specialized financial institutions called Community Development Entities (CDEs). The credit totals 39 percent of the original investment amount and is claimed over a period of seven years. The Community Fund of the Capital Region is the only CDE within Albany County that has received CDFI program assistance in the past.

The following Projects may be capable of obtaining credits through this program.

- 1 - Mixed Use Waterfront Development;
- 2 - New Waterfront Mixed Use;
- 3 - Saratoga Street Mixed Use / Bus Rapid Transit Station;
- 6 - New Mixed Use building at Remsen Street and White Street; and
- 13 - New Grocery Store.

Owners of commercial properties on the National Register of Historic Places are eligible for a tax credit of up to 20 percent of rehabilitation work from the federal government. Additionally, the New York State Historic Preservation Office offers a 20 percent tax credit on income-producing and residential properties, up to \$5 million and \$50,000, respectively, as part of the NYS Rehabilitation Tax Credit program.

## 6.6 Tax and Pilot Increment Financing

### *Tax Increment Financing*

As part of Municipal Redevelopment Law (MRL) GMU-Article 18-C, the State of New York has approved the use of Tax Increment Financing (TIF), which enables municipalities and private entities to borrow capital for significant investments and allocate the proceeds from resultant increases in property tax revenues to cover debt service. Tax increment financing has two primary variations: Project TIFs and Area TIFs. Project TIFs are organized around financing for a single project, utilizing a small TIF district that may coincide with a few properties or even just a few buildings. Area TIFs designate a larger district within the City, and divert the resultant increased tax revenues into district-wide improvements such as infrastructure, parks, museums, and other public or quasi-public amenities.

New York State, through the MRL, permits the establishment of TIF districts which contain an area suffering from blight or a preponderance of abandoned structures; the St. Josephs Park Neighborhood and Saratoga Street could be classified as having a blighting influence on the community. To take advantage of potential TIF financing, these areas would need to be established as a Redevelopment Project Area pursuant to GML Article 18-C §970-f.

TIF utilization within New York State remains low due to legal concerns regarding the constitutionality of revenue diversion to repay TIF debt. These concerns have led municipalities and their bond counsels to shy away from the use of TIF as a redevelopment financing mechanism.

### *PILOT Increment Financing*

The uncertainty associated with TIFs has led municipalities to utilize PILOT (Payment in Lieu of Taxes) Increment Financing, or PIFs, to finance property acquisition, demolition, infrastructure and construction. The most significant difference between TIF and PIF financing is that PIFs establish a fixed dollar payment to taxing jurisdictions, which eliminates uncertainty for bond underwriting. In addition, a fixed tax payment schedule also provides a greater level of comfort for taxing jurisdictions and developers to project future revenues and expenditures. PIFs also allow for taxing jurisdictions to receive full base year taxes plus an annual increment to partially offset inflationary costs. After the diversion of the fixed ‘increment’ portion of the taxes to cover debt service, the remaining tax revenue, if any, continues to flow to the taxing jurisdiction. Similar to TIF, PIF can utilize the BOA study area to formulate the PIF District, therefore accelerating the process.

Finally, a significant benefit of PIF over TIF financing within BOA redevelopment projects is the inclusion of a private party to the transaction. Private entities may be eligible for tax credits, which can be utilized as a partial or full reimbursement for PILOT payments. The ability of private interests to leverage potential BCP tax credits towards a PIF financing agreement would be very appealing for public/private projects requiring significant upfront infrastructure or development costs.