

camoin associates
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION PLAN

City of Mechanicville
March 2006

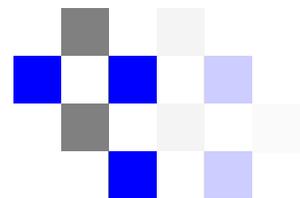


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Executive Summary

The City of Mechanicville Downtown Revitalization Plan was developed to address the needs of Mechanicville's downtown by identifying potential market opportunities and providing a foundation for the pursuit of future initiatives. Funded by a technical assistance grant from the New York State Governor's Office for Small Cities, the plan offered an opportunity for community members to assist in developing a long-range vision for Mechanicville's future. Major findings of the downtown revitalization plan include the following:

- Similar to many communities in Upstate New York, Mechanicville experienced a decline in population. However, the Mechanicville Retail Trade Area (defined as the entire City plus portions of Stillwater and Schaghticoke) has experienced population growth as a result of recent housing construction.
- The population in the Mechanicville Trade Area is aging, and the number of households in the 45-54 and 55-64 year age groups is increasing. These are highly desirable age groups from a sales perspective, as they represent households in their peak earning years.
- The Mechanicville Trade Area has a lower mean household income than Saratoga County or New York State. This is largely related to the number of individuals living in Section 8 public housing in the City of Mechanicville, and the higher than average proportion of seniors in Mechanicville.
- Approximately \$281.5 million in annual sales are generated by retailers in the trade area. Retail categories drawing the most customers from outside the trade area include automobile dealers and gas service stations, and home furniture and furnishing stores.
- Sales leakage, or the demand for goods and services not being met locally, is highest for lumber and other building materials (\$5.3 million), department stores (\$9.3 million), radio, TV, and computer stores (\$7.8 million), and eating and drinking places (\$8.0 million).
- The results of the business owner survey and focus group indicate a cautious optimism about the future of the City. While nearly 2/3 of businesses reported revenue growth and many said they were considering improving their space, hiring additional employees, or expanding their services or product lines, they also identified a number of improvements to the downtown business district that would make it a more attractive and inviting place to shop. Specifically, business owners identified the following necessary improvements: building and façade improvements, streetscape improvements, a greater diversity of shops/stores downtown, and enhanced marketing and promotion of the City, its attractions, and its businesses.
- According to the resident survey, the City's greatest challenge/need is for infrastructure improvements, specifically sewers and sidewalks. Residents also



reported they would patronize restaurants that locate in the downtown, and desired an additional grocery store.

- According to meeting participants, Mechanicville's greatest challenges include the lack of a main attraction, the lack of shopping in the business district, and a lack of promotion of the City's attractions. However, the City does have several desirable assets, including the Hudson River, Tallmadge Park, Colonel Elmer Ellsworth, and its heritage as a former railroad hub.
- Residents identified a number of opportunities for Mechanicville, including the potential to develop its historic places (specifically the train station and XO Tower) and the possibility of waterfront revitalization. However, threats identified were a lack of enthusiasm and support for revitalization, weak appearance standards for City businesses, and a lack of marketing to promote the City's assets.
- According to realtors interviewed, Mechanicville has affordable housing relative to much of Saratoga County, but there is currently a lack of demand for housing. To combat this, the City needs to re-develop its housing stock and improve its reputation through beautification improvements and marketing to make it more attractive to younger individuals.
- The City's industrial park has the potential to be redevelopment, particularly because Malta has limited commercial development outside of Luther Forest. However, the City needs to first remediate the sites before the industrial park would become attractive to developers.
- Realtors also noted Mechanicville suffers from the *perception* of inaccessibility, despite being close to Route 87 and within easy commuting distance of both Albany and Saratoga Springs.
- At the public sessions, City residents identified the development of their railroad history as their highest priority. Overall, the residents rallied around this vision for the City's future.
- Residents believe beautification (streetscape improvements, sidewalk repairs, signage, etc) of the City is a high priority. Residents also desire to create a new community image based on their vision of developing the City's railroad history.
- A number of initiatives to attract trade area residents were strongly supported by City residents: improving access to the Hudson River and Anthony Kill stream and holding events at these sites, improving the quality of equipment in City parks, holding community events to attract residents of neighboring communities.

Introduction

Funded by a technical assistance grant from the New York State Governor’s Office for Small Cities, the City of Mechanicville Downtown Revitalization Plan was developed to address the needs of the City’s downtown by identifying potential market opportunities and providing a foundation for future initiatives to be completed by the City.

The approach to this project was based on the consultant’s belief that a successful revitalization plan requires an understanding of the market conditions and demographic trends that influence the local economy. The completion of a market analysis enables communities to identify opportunities for economic growth based on such factors as the existing business mix, resident purchasing power, and consumer spending patterns within the trade area. By understanding – and capitalizing on – market opportunities, practical strategies for community revitalization can be established. The scope of work for this project therefore included research regarding demographic, economic, and market trends and the characteristics of residential and commercial properties in the City’s downtown.

The development of this plan also involved a wide range of public input. Residents, businesses, and commercial building owners were surveyed early in the strategic planning process. The purpose of the surveys was to encourage community members to begin thinking about Mechanicville’s future. In addition, the City held a series of public meetings that provided an opportunity for community members to brainstorm ideas and build consensus.

Based on the recommendation of Camoin Associates (CA), a steering committee was appointed to guide the planning process. CA held meetings with the committee to discuss the scope of work and solicit input on various issues. Chaired by William Connors, the City’s Community Development Director, the downtown revitalization committee (whose names are listed in the table below) represents a variety of interests and skills. The committee will continue to play an important role by overseeing the implementation of the revitalization plan.

Downtown Revitalization Committee	
Name	Affiliation
William Connors	Community Development Director
Anthony & Jan Sylvester	Mayor & Wife
Jack Messore	City Public Works Commission
Jim Salmon	NYSEG Regional Manager
John Enzein	Executive Director, Mechanicville Housing Authority
Kimberly Plasse	Business Owner
Michelle Duell	Resident/Library Clerk
Sam Carabas	City Housing Rehabilitation Specialist

Prior Economic Development Initiatives

CA reviewed prior planning studies and grant applications to become familiar with the City's recent economic development initiatives. Over the past six years, Mechanicville has developed a comprehensive plan to examine a broad range of economic development issues, and has obtained grant funding to support these initiatives. Specifically, the 1999 comprehensive plan outlined the City's current priorities and developed action-oriented steps to guide development initiatives. Since implementing the comprehensive plan, the City has obtained the following grant awards:

- In 2002, the City received \$400,000 for a Governor's Office for Small Cities (GOSC) Housing Rehabilitation Project.
- In 2003, the NYS Division of Housing and Community Renewal (DHCR) awarded the City \$400,000 for an absentee landlord grant program.
- In 2004, the City received \$400,000 for a DHCR HOME project.
- In 2005, the City again received \$400,000 for a GOSC Housing Rehabilitation Project.

These projects, which are described below, detail the City's efforts to foster sustained economic development in a targeted manner.

1999 Comprehensive Plan

In 1999, the City drafted a comprehensive plan to help prioritize economic development goals and strategies. Early on, a fourteen-member Comprehensive Plan Committee was established to lead the planning process, communicate with City leaders and facilitate community involvement. In order to foster additional community involvement, a residential survey was distributed to assess opinions and priorities about various issues affecting Mechanicville's future.

The planning consultant and Comprehensive Plan Committee also conducted two community meetings early in 1999 to discuss the planning process, generate public involvement, and identify additional priorities and strategies. The survey results and community involvement sessions were largely used to shape the final recommendations of the report.

The Comprehensive Plan was comprised of two main sections: the Existing Conditions Report and the Action Plan. The Existing Conditions Report described the City, its residents and its resources; identified community needs, and examined key issues, opportunities, and challenges impacting future growth in Mechanicville. This section also provided a profile of the City of Mechanicville with respect to population, land uses, historic and natural resources, economic development, recreation, and other elements, and was designed to serve as a basis for developing community goals, objectives, strategies and policies.

The Action Plan began with a vision statement and a list of goals which would serve as the overall framework for addressing needs and changes in the City of Mechanicville. Specific actions were proposed to address these goals and the priority issues were identified by the Comprehensive Plan Committee and the public. The stakeholders and partners to be involved and, where appropriate, a list of funding sources for each action plan element were also identified.

The following vision statement was established by residents and leaders of the City.

“The City of Mechanicville is a city which values its history, its location on the Hudson River, and the family-oriented, small town lifestyle that it offers to its citizens. In the coming decades, Mechanicville will strive to become a vital residential community with an attractive, pedestrian-oriented downtown, healthy neighborhoods, and the high quality municipal infrastructure necessary to sustain the community in the 21st century.”

The consultant and Plan Committee identified seven goals the City could pursue to enhance its quality of living. These goals were as follows:

- Goal 1: Upgrade the City’s physical infrastructure.
- Goal 2: Increase the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of municipal services.
- Goal 3: Collaborate with other communities on issues, problems, and opportunities of mutual interest.
- Goal 4: Preserve and enhance the quality and appearance of Mechanicville’s residential neighborhoods and downtown business district.
- Goal 5: Create a healthy, affordable living environment for its residents.
- Goal 6: Maintain a diverse mix of businesses which provide jobs and necessary services to the City and surrounding area.
- Goal 7: Preserve and promote the City’s assets, including its historic resources and waterfront areas.

Goals 4, 5 and 6 were most closely linked to traditional economic development revitalization initiatives. A brief synopsis of the relevant components for these three goals has been included below.

Goal 4: To preserve and enhance the quality and appearance of Mechanicville’s residential neighborhoods and downtown business district.

Actions

#4-1. Adopt the revised City Code and increase public awareness and enforcement of code requirements affecting the quality of neighborhoods in the City.

The condition of property and quality of neighborhoods in the City has been a major priority for the City of Mechanicville. In 1999 the City updated the zoning laws to make them consistent with desired uses. In addition, new chapters were added to address both

administrative and quality of life issues. Code enforcement requirements were upgraded, which helped to bring about better code enforcement procedures and compliance.

#4-3. Adopt a 485(b) program in the City to encourage home improvements without penalizing the homeowner through property tax increases.

Many homeowners have been reluctant to make improvements to their residences because they fear a property tax increase. Although not all types of home improvement projects result in increased taxes, it is a common misconception that often serves as a disincentive for housing rehabilitation.

To encourage continued enhancement of Mechanicville's residential neighborhoods, the City of Mechanicville considered adoption of a 485(b) program. This program is authorized by New York State but a municipal resolution is required for a community to adopt it. The 485(b) program allows the City to give a property owner a 50% tax exemption on the increase in assessed valuation in the first year after an improvement has been made, decreasing at 5% per year for a period for 10 years (i.e., a 45% exemption in year two, 40% in year three, etc.).

#4-4. Continue to support efforts by the Downtown Beautification Committee to improve the appearance of the downtown.

The Downtown Beautification Committee, a volunteer group formed by the Mechanicville Area Chamber of Commerce in 1998, planted new trees, installed decorative banners, and undertook a series of beautification projects in downtown Mechanicville, assisted by contributions from the City, local businesses, and a \$50,000 legislative grant.

#4-5. Modify land use regulations to encourage compatible streetscape and development patterns in the central business district, particularly along North Main Street and Park Avenue.

Several older buildings in the City's central business district have been demolished and replaced with newer structures whose design seeks to maximize visibility to passing motorists. Sites have also been modified through the placement of parking lots and curb cuts to maximize convenience for motorists. The unintended consequence of these changes has been a gradual erosion of the City's streetscape and pedestrian friendly atmosphere, particularly along Central Avenue. To counter this trend, the City Planning Board initiated a study to identify and draft regulations that attempted to curtail the erosion of the City's valuable streetscapes. The study also focused on modifying the City's land use regulations and educating Planning Board members on how to enforce them.

Goal 5: To create a healthy, affordable living environment for its residents.

Actions

#5-1. Continue to pursue funding to address housing rehabilitation needs citywide.

More than three-quarters of all housing units in the City of Mechanicville were constructed before 1940. The City has been subject to the gradual deterioration of many of its older

buildings, particularly its housing stock. A 1998 survey estimated that approximately 13% of the residential structures in Mechanicville were in substandard condition, although they are not concentrated in any one area of the City. Based on requests for assistance from the Mechanicville Community Development Agency, it is clear that homeowners would welcome assistance in planning and financing new electrical systems, replacing leaky roofs, and undertaking other maintenance and repair projects necessary for older homes.

In 1998, the City of Mechanicville applied for a grant from the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development to implement a housing rehabilitation program citywide. Although the application was unsuccessful, “imminent threat” funds from HUD were made available to the City later that year to help repair residential properties damaged by the May tornado. In August 1999, the City’s overall level of accomplishment in running this program led HUD to award the Mechanicville Community Development Agency \$400,000 for housing rehabilitation. These funds were used to assist an estimated 43 income-eligible households in various areas of the City.

#5-2. Continue the City’s first-time homebuyer program as part of a long-term strategy to reverse the decline in owner-occupancy.

Like many older cities, the City of Mechanicville has had a gradual decline in the rate of owner-occupancy. According to the 2000 census, 47.6% of all housing units in the City are owner occupied. In comparison, 77.3% of all housing units in Saratoga County were reported as owner occupied. Most of the housing structures in Mechanicville are older, and often lack the amenities found in newly constructed homes and townhouses in rapidly-growing communities like Clifton Park and Halfmoon.

To provide opportunities for homeownership in the City and help to reduce the decline in owner-occupancy, the Mechanicville Community Development Agency applied for and was awarded \$400,000 from the NYS Division of Housing and Community Renewal in 1998 to implement a first time homebuyer program. This program provided home acquisition assistance to income-eligible households in the form of a deferred loan for purchase price write-down and the financing of associated closing costs.

The 1999 plan recommended that the first-time homebuyer program be continued as part of a long range strategy to address the decline in owner-occupancy in Mechanicville.

#5-3. Develop a “Mechanicville Pride” campaign to promote the City’s assets (availability of city services, its neighborhoods, location, etc.) and attract new residents, especially young families and homeowners.

The 1999 Comprehensive Plan cites the City’s viable residential neighborhoods, safe streets, and access to municipal services, and proximity to other parts of the region as assets which could encourage residents to stay in Mechanicville. In addition, according to the plan, residents strongly valued Mechanicville’s close-knit, family-oriented, small-town character.

The plan indicated that efforts were needed to encourage prospective homeowners, young families, and others from outside the community to consider Mechanicville as a desirable place to live and raise their families. One element of this strategy was to

continue the City's first-time homebuyer program, which provided incentives for the purchase of a home in Mechanicville. Another element was a proposed "Community Pride" marketing campaign.

Goal 6: To maintain a diverse mix of businesses which provide jobs and necessary services to the City and surrounding area.

Actions

#6-1. Develop a long-term marketing strategy for the business/industrial park which addresses perceived environmental impediments to development.

The City of Mechanicville currently owns a large tract of land in the northwest corner of the City known as the business/industrial park. Several petroleum spills occurred on the property, once the site of the railroad yards, prior to its acquisition by the City. The Mechanicville Community Development Agency studied the contamination issue and consulted with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC), which indicated that the level of contamination should not pose an obstacle to development of the site. However, the perception existed in 1999 that the site was significantly contaminated.

In order to address this perception, the plan recommended that the Mechanicville Community Development Agency retain an environmental engineering firm to prepare a summary report to clarify remediation and marketing of the area, and identify the steps to be taken to facilitate further development of the park. The plan further stated that the City should pursue federal and state funding for redevelopment activities. In addition, the plan indicated that the City should speak with legislative representatives for the protection of lenders financing Brownfield projects.

The plan also recommended that the Community Development Agency study strategies of other communities and regional markets to determine the uses most suitable for the business/industrial park from both an environmental and economic development perspective. These activities were to involve consultation with the Mechanicville-Stillwater Industrial Development Agency and the Saratoga Economic Development Corporation and site information was to be provided to both organizations for use in marketing. The plan then recommended that the CDA develop a long-term marketing strategy to identify individual firms and/or economic sectors that could be best served by locating in the business/industrial park.

#6-2. Continue to provide assistance to potential and existing entrepreneurs to encourage small business development in the City.

Through a 1998 grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the City of Mechanicville developed Mechanicville MicroWorks, a program that assists in the establishment and development of small businesses by educating existing and prospective entrepreneurs in business planning and related skills. The MicroWorks program focuses on encouraging entrepreneurial activity and developing jobs for low and moderate income residents.

The plan recommended that the Mechanicville Community Development Agency monitor the educational program developed, the success of loan recipients and the long-term viability of businesses that grew out of these efforts to assess the effectiveness of the City's efforts and to modify the programs as needed. The plan also recommended that the City continue pursuing federal funding for these programs.

#6-3. Work with the Chamber of Commerce to attract additional retail businesses to the central business district (CBD).

In the community survey, Mechanicville residents expressed interest in developing and attracting more retail businesses to the City. There was strong support for an additional grocery store and other businesses selling basic household goods, with small downtown shops generally preferred over the chain stores or shopping malls.

The plan outlined that Mechanicville has strong potential for the growth of retail businesses. Although the population of the City was declining (at the time of the plan), Mechanicville is located in a market experiencing rapid growth due to a significant increase in the number of residents in southern Saratoga County.

Although there were few locations available to support the typical large-sized supermarket, the plan cited that it could be possible for Mechanicville to attract a specialty grocer. The Comprehensive Plan recommended that the City of Mechanicville work with the Mechanicville Area Chamber of Commerce to attract additional retail businesses downtown by offering assistance with marketing, site selection, financing, and permitting as needed. Prospective entrepreneurs were also to have access to the Mechanicville MicroWorks Program and the incentives available through the Mechanicville-Stillwater Industrial Development Agency.

Tenandaho Estates Housing Rehabilitation Program

In 2002, the City of Mechanicville applied for and received \$400,000 from the Governor's Office for Small Cities for a housing rehabilitation project. This project provided grants to 19 low and moderate income households in the Tenandaho Estates apartment complex. Originally, the Tenandaho Estates site was nicely landscaped and included a small park accessed by a footbridge over a creek; however, the poor quality of the building construction led to numerous problems. The exposed wood siding and porches became weathered, and many of the homes developed severe moisture damage. Inadequate electrical systems also caused some fires. In addition, most of the occupants relied on costly and inefficient electric heat.

The housing rehabilitation program successfully brought all eligible housing units up to code standard and complemented Mechanicville's efforts to improve conditions in the northwestern part of the City.

In 2005, the City again successfully applied for housing rehabilitation funds from the GOSC. These funds are being used as part of a City wide program to improve the housing stock.

NYS Division of Housing and Community Renewal

In 2002, the City of Mechanicville was awarded a \$400,000 DHCR grant to provide assistance to owners of rental apartments who were unable to secure the financial resources to make necessary repairs on their own. Prior to that award, the City's previous HOME funding had been restricted to single-family homes, many of which required extensive emergency repairs caused by the devastating tornados which struck in 1998.

In 2004, Mechanicville won another \$400,000 DHCR grant. This grant enabled the City to extend its housing rehabilitation program to lower income residents who live in either a single-family house or a home with up to three rental apartments, as long as the owner also lives in the home as their primary residence. Needed repairs focused on roofs; electrical wiring; windows and doors; heating and plumbing for eligible home owners; as well as any other items needed to bring the homes up to state and local codes and meet current fire safety standards.

Resident Survey

To inform residents about the strategic planning process and initiate interest in the public sessions, CA developed a one-page resident survey to gather information about the perceptions and attitudes of City residents. The surveys were mailed or hand delivered to a total of 890 City residents. Surveys were also available at the Community Center, Senior Center, Library, the City Accounts Office, and on the City’s website. At the request of the City’s Community Development Director, the Gazette, a local newspaper, ran an advertisement to help increase the survey response rate and publicize the upcoming public sessions.

The survey asked City residents to identify the current economic development assets in the City, any hindrances to economic development, and their vision for the City’s downtown. The survey was reviewed by the City’s community development director before distribution. To view a sample resident survey please refer to Appendix A.

Survey Results

In total, 120 surveys were received, representing 2.4% of the total City population. Due to time and budget constraints, the survey was not intended to represent a statistically significant segment of the population. Nonetheless, at a 95% confidence level the margin of error was 8.8%. Based on CA’s experience conducting similar surveys, the response rate is somewhat low.

What are the City’s greatest assets and challenges/needs?

When asked to identify the City’s three greatest assets, individuals provided a variety of written comments. The highest number of individuals (38 individuals, 31.7% of the total) noted that the Hudson River is the City’s greatest asset, with a similar number of individuals identifying the friendliness/close-knit community atmosphere as among the City’s greatest assets. A total of 26 individuals noted that the City is strategically located within the Capital region, and 22 individuals identified the quality of City government services as the City’s greatest assets. Other frequent answers were the small town atmosphere (21 individuals) and the senior center/community center (17 individuals).

List the City's 3 Greatest Assets	
Asset	# of Responses
Hudson River	38
Friendly Community/Close-Kint	35
Proximity to I-87/Albany/Saratoga	26
Police, Fire, and Emergency Services	22
Small Town Atmosphere	21
Senior Center/Community Center	17
List the City's 3 Greatest Challenges or Needs	
Challenge/Need	# of Responses
Infrastructure	78
Marketing & Business Attraction	38
Vacant and/or UnderUtilized Buildings	24
Cleanliness/Beautification	22
Taxes/Tax Base	16
Activities for Youth	15

When asked to identify the City’s greatest challenge or need, a total of 78 individuals (65.0%) provided responses related to the City’s infrastructure. The majority of these responses were related to sewer and sidewalk problems.

The next greatest challenge/need identified was a lack of marketing and business attraction, with numerous residents noting that the City had difficulty attracting and retaining small businesses. Somewhat related to this topic is the number of persons (24) noting the City had a number of vacant and underutilized buildings in the downtown. Although the City has a relatively low vacancy rate, there are several prominent buildings that are not fully utilized. As such, City residents may have developed an inaccurate perception regarding the vacancy rate. Other responses cited by a high number of individuals were cleanliness/beautification (22), taxes/tax base (16) and activities for youth (15).

What businesses or cultural/entertainment/recreational venues would you like to see downtown?

As a resident, what types of businesses would you patronize if they were located in downtown Mechanicville?	
Business Type	# of Responses
Restaurant/Diner	52
Grocery Store	42
Clothing	32
Bakery	19
Movie Theater	16
Dept. Store	14
Fast Food	14
What, if any, cultural, entertainment, and/or recreational venues would you like to have downtown?	
Venue	# of Responses
Movie Theater	53
Theater/Concert Venue	36
Kids Recreation/Activities	33
Bike Paths/Riverwalk	12
Museum/Rail Museum	8
Gym/YMCA	7

Many residents noted they would patronize a restaurant or diner located in downtown Mechanicville. Of the 120 survey responses, these individuals comprised 43.3% of the total. A large number of residents also noted they would patronize a grocery store located in the downtown¹.

Other major categories of responses were clothing stores (32) and a bakery (19). A total of 16 individuals noted they would patronize a movie theater located downtown, while 14 individuals voted for a department store and 14 individuals selected fast food.

Regarding cultural, entertainment, and recreational venues residents would like to have downtown, a total of 53 survey respondents (44.2%) noted they would

like to have a movie theater downtown. However, as noted previously for grocery stores, there is not sufficient available commercial space within downtown Mechanicville to accommodate a movie theater.

A theater/concert venue was written by 36 individuals, with some noting the City used to host outdoor concerts and plays during the summer months. A total of 33 persons desired recreational activities for children, which was also noted as a current challenge/need by individuals responding to the survey.

What improvements to downtown Mechanicville would make it a more attractive and inviting commercial district?

¹ Due to the limited amount of commercial space in downtown Mechanicville the City cannot accommodate a full-size grocery store or movie theater.

When asked to identify those improvements that would make the City’s downtown more attractive and inviting, the largest number of individuals (36) noted that storefronts needed cosmetic improvements. These individuals comprised 30.0% of the total number of responses. A total of 25 individuals expressed their desire to see flowers, tree plantings, and/or landscaping, and 21 individuals noted they wanted the downtown to be kept cleaner. On a similar note, 17 individuals provided other answers related to beautification.

What improvements to downtown Mechanicville would make it a more inviting and attractive commercial district?	
Improvement	# of Responses
Storefronts	36
Flowers/Trees/Landscaping	25
Cleaner	21
Sidewalks	19
Other Beautification	17
Lighting	14
More Stores	14

Although infrastructure was overwhelmingly cited as the City’s greatest challenge/need, a relatively small number of individuals cited infrastructure related answers as a desired improvement. A total of 19 individuals provided answers related to sidewalk improvements, and 14 individuals provided answers related to lighting improvements. Lastly, 14 individuals noted they believed that more stores would make the downtown more attractive and inviting.

What qualities or characteristics would residents like the City of Mechanicville to be known for in 10 years?

List 3 qualities or characteristics you would like the City of Mechanicville to be known for in 10 years.	
Business Type	# of Responses
Friendly, Small Town Atmosphere	60
Safe, Family Oriented	50
Thriving Downtown Businesses	41
Cleaner/More Beautiful	25
History/Historic Architecture/Historic Charm	18
Good Schools	16

When asked to identify characteristics they would like the City to be known for in the future, the highest number of residents provided answers related to the “small town atmosphere” of the City. These individuals represented 50.0% of the 120 total survey responses. There were also significant numbers of responses related to the safety/family orientation of the City (50) and the desire for thriving downtown businesses (41).

Fewer numbers of individuals desired for the City to become cleaner/more beautiful (25), a number of individuals wanted the City to be known for its history and architecture (18), and a total of 16 individuals desired for the City schools to have an excellent reputation.

Business Survey & Focus Group

Concurrent with the resident survey, CA surveyed owners of businesses in the City of Mechanicville to assess needs and solicit opinions about the City’s commercial areas. Survey forms were distributed by City staff to local businesses, with the intention of surveying every business operating within the City. After reviewing the results of the survey, CA scheduled a focus group with several City business owners to further discuss several of the issues identified through the survey responses.

A total of 47 businesses responded to the survey, representing approximately 25% of the total number of businesses within the City. For purposes of confidentiality, individual businesses will not be identified. For a copy of the business survey, please see appendix B.

Responses to Business Owner Questions

The survey respondents described their primary business activities as the following: retail sales (15), professional services (10), personal services (7), finance, insurance, or real estate (6), food/liquor (6), manufacturing (1), and other (6).

Most businesses had been located in Mechanicville for a number of years. A total of 25 businesses have been in Mechanicville for 10 or more years, and a further 9 businesses have been in the City for 5 or more years.

Nearly all of these businesses have remained at the same location within the City since opening. The average business is fairly small and has 4.4 full-time employees and 3.0 part time employees. Slightly more than half of all businesses own their space.

When asked to describe their sales trends businesses provided the following set of responses:

Which of the following best describes your overall revenues over the past 2 years?	Total	% of Total
Increased by More Than 10%	18	40.0%
Increased slightly	10	22.2%
Stayed the same	10	22.2%
Decreased slightly	2	4.4%
Decreased by more than 10%	5	11.1%
Grand Total	45	100.0%

Most businesses, 62.2%, described their sales trends as increasing, 22.2% noted their sales have stayed the same, while 15.5% of businesses noted declining sales trends. When asked to explain the underlying reasons for the sales trends, the businesses that reported positive sales trends most commonly cited population growth and the overall strong local economy.

To further identify where businesses are drawing their customers, respondents were asked to provide sales percentages. As detailed in the graph above, most Mechanicville businesses rely on the local market. Drive through traffic accounts for just 18.9% of total sales, while the local market (both employees of local businesses, and local area residents/businesses) accounts for 58.0% of total sales.

Approximately What % of Your Sales Are Derived From:	
Employees of local businesses	14.0%
Local residents / businesses	44.0%
Drive through traffic	18.9%
Other	23.1%

Mechanicville businesses were also asked to identify which attractions, stores, or services are most needed and would be successful in the downtown. Several businesses identified restaurants/bakeries, and several identified specialty retail stores as business types that would thrive in Mechanicville. However, there was no clear consensus.

Which of the following improvements to downtown Mechanicville would most benefit your business?	
Improvement	# of Responses
Building & Façade	33
Greater Diversity of Shops and Stores	28
Streetscape	24
Enhanced marketing / promotion	23
Sidewalk / Pedestrian	22
More Special Events	20
Additional parking	15
Better Signage	15
Expanded business hours	3

When asked which improvements to the City’s downtown would make the most positive impact on their business, building and façade improvements (33) received the highest number of responses, followed by greater diversity of shops and stores (28), streetscape improvements (24), and enhanced marketing and promotion (23). Sidewalk and pedestrian improvements (22) and more special events (20) also received a significant number of responses. In general, the results of this question corresponded well with the results of the resident survey, as many residents felt the appearance of the downtown needed to be improved.

Are you planning any of the following changes for your business over the next 24 months?	
Change	# of Responses
Improving condition or building/space	19
Hiring Additional Employees	13
Expanding our services or product lines	13
Selling or closing the business	2
Relocating the business (outside Mech'ville)	2
Relocating the business (within Mech'ville)	1

A large number of businesses were able to identify changes they planned on making over the next 24 months. Specifically, 19 businesses noted they planned to improve the condition of the building or commercial space they occupy. Additionally, 13 businesses

planned to hire additional employees, and 13 planned to expand their services or product lines.

Business Focus Group Session

After reviewing the business surveys CA met with a group of local business leaders to discuss the survey results and solicit more detailed input.

Business owners at the focus group session overwhelmingly stressed the need to improve the appearance of the City. Traffic counts were discussed and business owners noted they were quite high. However, due to the appearance and reputation of the City, this did not translate into sales for local businesses.



A view of the street, building facades, and sidewalks on North Main Street. In many instances, business names are difficult to see when driving through the downtown at typical travel speeds.

Business owners discussed the possibility of future businesses locating to Mechanicville, and noted they felt the market could support another downtown restaurant or bakery. Further, these types of businesses used to be located in the City, but the owners ultimately retired. More recently, the Cloverleaf restaurant was recently re-opened in downtown Mechanicville. Although the restaurant closed after several months, those business owners at the focus group felt the closure was due to management problems rather than a lack of business.

Several business owners stated that the City had made efforts in the past to improve its appearance and reputation – citing the tree planting program and community clean-up day. For a variety of reasons, these programs were discontinued.

Commercial Real Estate Interviews

CA conducted a total of four (4) realtor/developer interviews to understand development trends for both residential and commercial property in and around the City of Mechanicville and identify potential market opportunities. The following realtors/developers were interviewed:

- CB Richard Ellis (CBRE)
- Roohan Realty
- Platform Realty
- BBL Construction Services

The realtors all noted that Mechanicville suffers from problems of perception: the City is viewed as old and depressed. Several realtors noted that a large percentage of the residential properties within the City are in need of repair. Additionally, the realtors all commented on the high vacancy rate in the City of Mechanicville. Although the City does not have a high vacancy rate in terms of the number of vacant properties, the former elementary school building is vacant. This is a large, prominent facility located on Main Street. As a result, realtors may have the perception that there exists a high number of vacant properties in the City's downtown.

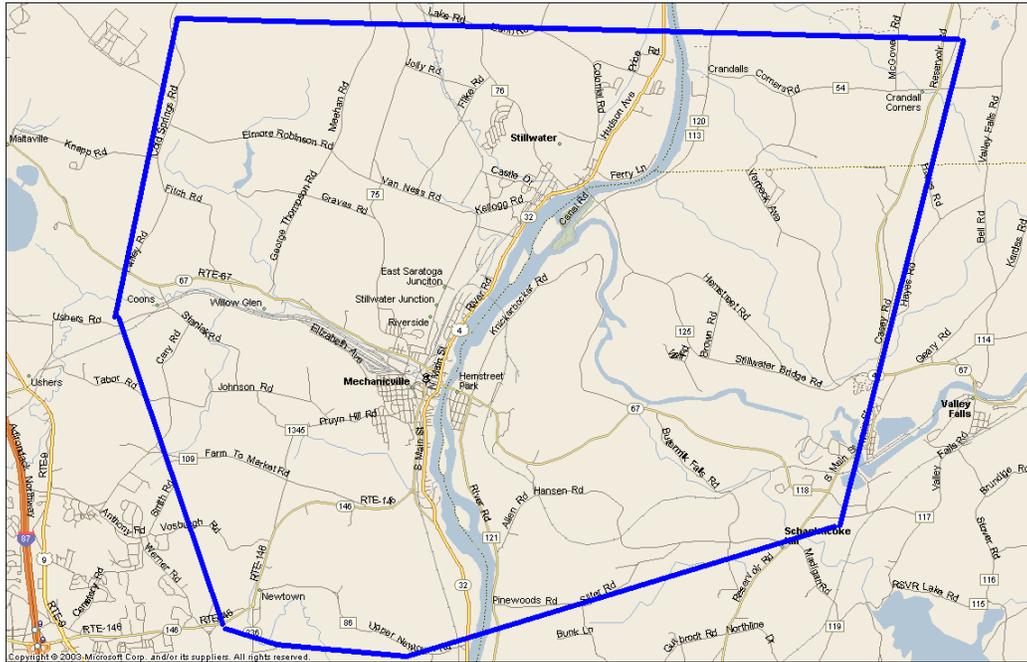
Several developers also noted the City does not advertise its available commercial and industrial properties, and does not market its attractions. Additionally, the realtors noted the City could capitalize on its close location to Malta, which is currently attempting to develop the Luther Forest Industrial Park. Realtors felt Mechanicville would become an attractive location for businesses serving occupants of the Luther Forest Technology Park.



A view of the City's Industrial Park.

However, not all sites within the industrial park have access to utilities, and the park is no longer located in the Empire Zone. As such, the City will first need to expand the utilities throughout the park, and potentially provide significant tax incentives, before the development of its available industrial space becomes a realistic possibility.

Mechanicville Trade Area Market Demographics



This section analyzes key demographic characteristics of the City of Mechanicville and the City of Mechanicville Retail Trade Area. The trade area represents the region from which the City draws the majority of its retail customers. Based on discussions with local officials, this area was defined as the entire City, combined with portions of the Towns of Stillwater and Schaghticoke. It was the consensus of the local officials that areas to the south and east are predominately served by retail areas in Clifton Park and Halfmoon, while areas to the north and west are primarily served by Malta.

The statistical data presented throughout this section of the report details trends for the City of Mechanicville, the Mechanicville Retail Trade Area, and Saratoga County. Where appropriate, local trends are compared to statewide trends. The data is derived from two reliable sources: the U.S. Census Bureau and Claritas Data Services, a leading national provider of market data which draws on census information, business surveys, and other data to make estimates and projections.

Demographics and Consumer Spending

Changing demographic patterns have a significant impact on consumer spending. “Ten years from now,” writes Michael J. Weiss in the April 2002 issue of *American Demographics*,

the marketplace will be dominated by a population bulging in different places: Baby Boomers on the eve of retirement will no doubt be cranking up their spending on health care, home remodeling and more elegant takeout than burgers and fries. Their children, Generation Y, will be in the mid-20s nesting phase, acquiring cars, buying new homes and furnishing their rooms with lamps and love seats...²

² “Inconspicuous Consumption,” *American Demographics*, April 2002, pp. 30-39.

Conducted annually by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the Consumer Expenditure Survey (CES) consists of two surveys — a quarterly Interview survey and a weekly Diary survey — that provide information on the buying habits, income, and consumer unit (household) characteristics of American consumers. The strength of the survey is that it allows users to analyze the demand for groups of goods and services based on demographic characteristics, such as income, age, and race. Data from the CES indicate, for example, that the typical household headed by a person aged 45-54 spends more, on average, than other households. In fact, in 2000, households headed by someone between the ages of 35 and 54 spent as much as all other age groups combined.

As the above example suggests, population shifts and lifestyle changes have the potential to transform the retail marketplace -- and thus the face of business and commercial districts like those in the City of Mechanicville. Understanding the demographic trends affecting the City, both now and in the not-too-distant future, is therefore critical to developing effective strategies for business development and revitalization. A market-based approach to commercial area revitalization is also more likely to be successful, because it responds to influential demographic and economic forces and consumer spending characteristics.

Population

Market Area Population				
Market Area	1990	2000	2005 (est.)	2010 (proj.)
City of Mechanicville	5,249	5,019	4,986	*
Mechanicville Trade Area*	14,433	14,689	15,030	*
Saratoga County	181,276	200,635	213,983	227,872
New York State	17,990,456	18,976,457	19,282,162	19,591,586
Market Area Population Growth				
Market Area	% Change: 1990 - 2000		% Change: 2000 - 2005	
	Total	Annual Avg	Total	Annual Avg
City of Mechanicville	-4.4%	-0.4%	-0.7%	-0.1%
Mechanicville Trade Area*	1.8%	0.2%	2.3%	0.5%
Saratoga County	10.7%	1.1%	6.7%	1.3%
New York State	5.5%	0.5%	1.6%	0.3%

Source: Claritas Data Services and Camoin Associates

* Accurate projections are not available given the size of the City and Trade Area

The population of the City of Mechanicville has declined in recent years, which is a trend observed in a majority of upstate New York communities. From 1999 to 2000, the City of Mechanicville lost an estimated population of 230 individuals, or 4.4%. In contrast, the population in the trade area increased by 1.8% from 1990 to 2000, while the population of Saratoga County grew by a robust 10.7% during this time period. It should be noted that the strong population growth in Saratoga County is unique among those counties in Upstate New York.

The population in the City of Mechanicville is expected to remain stable in the near future, while the trade area population is expected to increase fairly substantially due to new housing construction. In comparison, population growth within the County is expected to continue at a robust 1.3% per annum.

Households

The number and size of households have a direct impact on the demand for housing in a community. As defined by the Census Bureau, a household included all persons who occupy a housing unit. The occupants may be a single family, one person living alone, two or more persons living together, or any group of related or unrelated individuals who share living arrangements outside of an institution.

Market Area Households				
Market Area	1990	2000	2005 (est.)	2010 (proj.)
City of Mechanicville	2,265	2,219	2,239	*
Mechanicville Trade Area*	5,488	5,788	6,013	*
Saratoga County	66,425	78,165	84,997	91,662
New York State	6,639,322	7,056,860	7,186,399	7,309,511
Market Area Household Growth				
Market Area	% Change: 1990 - 2000		% Change: 2000 - 2005	
	Total	Annual Avg	Total	Annual Avg
City of Mechanicville	-2.0%	-0.2%	0.9%	0.2%
Mechanicville Trade Area*	5.5%	0.5%	3.9%	0.8%
Saratoga County	17.7%	1.8%	8.7%	1.7%
New York State	6.3%	0.6%	1.8%	0.4%

Source: Claritas Data Services and Camoin Associates

* Accurate projections are not available given the size of the City and Trade Area

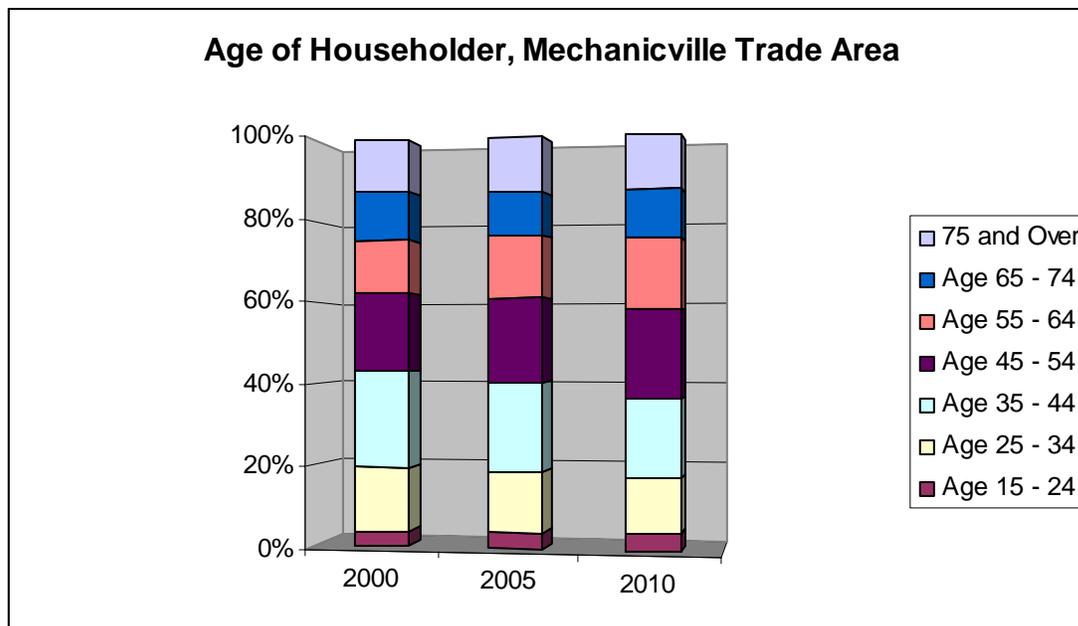
Currently, there are an estimated 2,239 households in Mechanicville. Given the limited room for additional residential development this figure is likely to remain stable in the near future. Similar to population, the household count is expected to increase in the Mechanicville Trade Area. However, a projection for this figure is not available.

Over the last several decades the number of households in the U.S. has increased substantially. This trend is related to population growth, along with an increase in single parent families and a greater number of people living alone.

Householder Age

The chart below shows the trends in the age distribution of householders (heads of household) in the Mechanicville Trade Area from 2000 to 2010. Currently, householders between the ages of 35 and 44 represent the largest age bracket, followed by the 45-54 age group. Claritas Data Services projects that households 45 years and older will become increasingly concentrated in the Mechanicville Trade Area, comprising 63.5% of all households in the trade area in 2010. In 1990, these households comprised just 57.0% of trade area households.

Overall, the data indicates that householders in Mechanicville are becoming more concentrated in the 45-54, 55-65, and 65-74 age brackets. This trend is favorable with respect to consumer demand, because the 45-54 and 55-64 householder ages represent peak income levels.



Household Income

Market Area Median Household Income				
Market Area	1990	2000	2005 (est.)	2010 (proj.)
City of Mechanicville	24,154	34,638	37,326	40,171
Mechanicville Trade Area*	30,990	41,090	45,592	50,268
Saratoga County	36,642	49,474	55,702	62,034
New York State	32,965	43,393	49,027	54,709
Market Area Median Household Income Growth				
Market Area	% Change: 1990 - 2005		% Change: 2005 - 2010 (proj.)	
	Total	Annual Avg	Total	Annual Avg
City of Mechanicville	54.5%	3.6%	7.6%	1.5%
Mechanicville Trade Area*	47.1%	3.1%	10.3%	2.1%
Saratoga County	52.0%	3.5%	11.4%	2.3%
New York State	48.7%	3.2%	11.6%	2.3%

Source: Claritas Data Services and Camoin Associates

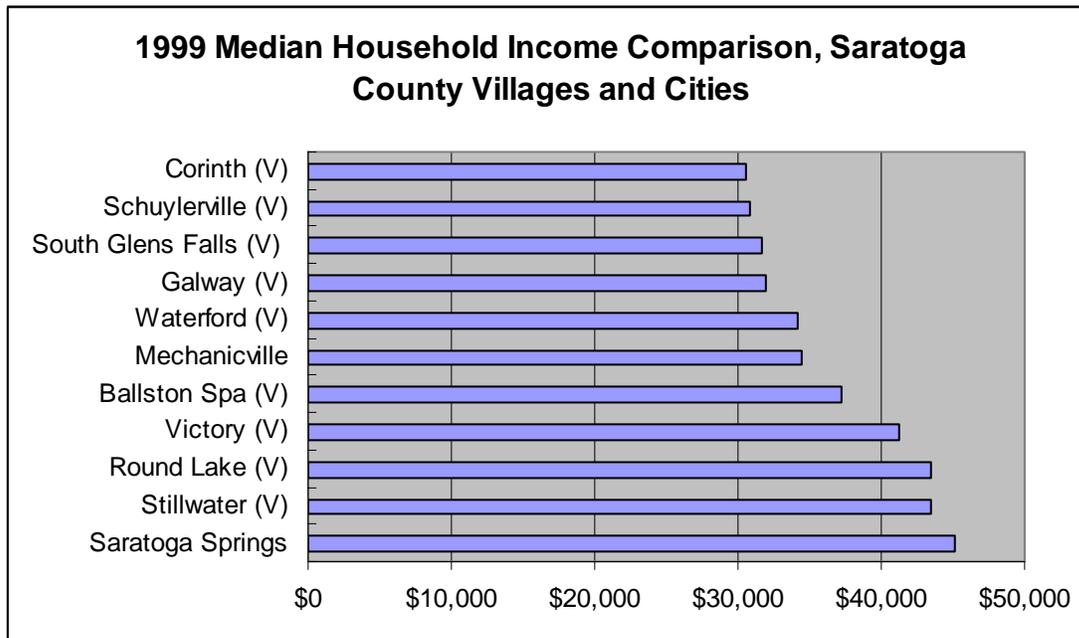
The City of Mechanicville has consistently lagged behind Saratoga County and New York State in terms of household income. As shown in the figure above, median household income in the City of Mechanicville in 2005 was \$37,326, while median household income levels in the comparison areas all exceeded \$45,000.

From 1990 to 2005 median household incomes in the City of Mechanicville grew slightly faster than the comparison areas. However, according to Claritas Data Services this trend

is not expected to continue in the future. From 2005 to 2010, median household incomes in the City of Mechanicville are forecast to grow by 1.5% per annum, as compared to 2.1% in the Mechanicville Trade Area and 2.3% in Saratoga County and New York State.

There are a number of factors influencing the relatively low household income levels in the City of Mechanicville. Among these are:

- A higher than average proportion of rental units. According to the 2000 census, 58% of all occupied housing units in the City of Mechanicville are renter-occupied, as compared to 28% in Saratoga County. Generally speaking, renters have lower income levels than homeowners.
- A higher than average proportion of seniors. According to the 2000 census, 31.3% of all residents of the City of Mechanicville were 65 years of age or older, as compared to 19.0% for Saratoga County. Overall, seniors tend to have relatively low incomes because many seniors have exited the labor force. For this reason, Mechanicville also has a lower labor force participation rate as compared to Saratoga County.
- Limited new development. In contrast with the neighboring Towns of Stillwater, Malta, and Halfmoon, the City of Mechanicville has little land available for the development of residential subdivisions, making it difficult to attract key markets such as dual wage earner households with children.



The income data suggests that local retailers may need to capitalize on markets outside the City of Mechanicville to improve their profitability. On a positive note, the income levels in the City of Mechanicville are comparable to those in other Cities and Villages in Saratoga County.

Retail and Consumer Trends

This section examines retail trends in the Mechanicville Trade Area, identifying potential market opportunities based on current and potential sales, consumer demand, and the “leakage” of consumer dollars outside the local economy.

Retail Sales in Trade Area

The table below profiles the retail sector in the City of Mechanicville and the surrounding trade area based on estimated data from Claritas Data Services. According to Claritas, retailers in the Mechanicville Trade Area generate an estimated \$218.5 million in total retail sales annually. Major components of retail sales in the trade area include food stores, automobile dealers and gas service stations, and home furniture and furnishing.

Retail Sales Profile, Mechanicville Trade Area			
Store Type	Total Retail Sales (millions)	# of Establishments	Average Sales Per Retailer (millions)
Building Materials & Garden Supply	\$4.0	6	\$0.67
General Merchandise Stores	\$2.0	3	\$0.67
Grocery Stores	\$26.5	6	\$4.42
Food other than Groceries	\$2.3	5	\$0.46
Automotive Dealers	\$136.6	18	\$7.59
Gasoline Service Stations	\$6.2	5	\$1.24
Apparel and Accessory Stores	\$0.1	1	\$0.10
Furniture and Kitchen Design Stores	\$17.3	4	\$4.33
Floor Covering Stores	\$3.2	3	\$1.07
Radio, TV and Computer Store	\$2.0	3	\$0.67
Eating and Drinking Places	\$10.1	26	\$0.39
Drug Stores and Proprietary	\$2.2	2	\$1.10
Liquor Stores	\$0.4	2	\$0.20
Sporting Goods, Bicycle and Gun Stores	\$0.4	3	\$0.13
Florists	\$0.6	4	\$0.15
All Other Retail	\$4.6	13	\$0.35
Total Retail Sales	\$218.5	104	\$2.10

On average, most retailers in the trade have retail sales of less than \$1 million per year. There are three notable exceptions, however, including automotive dealers (annual average sales of \$7.59 million), grocery stores (\$4.42 million) and furniture and kitchen design stores (\$4.33 million). Excluding these stores, all other retailers average \$0.55 million in annual retail sales.

Sales Leakage Analysis

The demand for goods and services that is not being met locally is referred to as sales leakage. The leakage occurs because consumers make purchases at establishments outside the area or even outside the state via mail order and internet sales. Purchasing decisions are typically influenced by one or more factors: convenience (e.g. stopping at a store located on the way to or from work), opportunity, quality, price, service, selection, and marketing.

Sales leakage is calculated as the difference between the total retail spending of area residents, regardless of where the money is spent, and the total retail purchases made within the trade area. For instance, if trade area residents are spending a total of \$10 million dollars on groceries, but total trade area grocery sales are only \$8 million, it is assumed that \$2 million of grocery sales are “leaking” out of the trade area – i.e. some residents are leaving the trade area to purchase their groceries. This leakage represents an opportunity for local businesses to recapture sales leaving the area. If the total sales are more than resident purchases, there is a sales surplus, meaning non-residents (i.e. visitors and seasonal residents) are coming into the trade area to make purchases.

The following table shows the leakage and surplus sales for various categories of retail in the City of Mechanicville Trade Area.

Sales Leakage Analysis - Mechanicville Trade Area	
Store Type	Estimated Surplus (or Leakage)
Building Materials, Garden Supply and Mobile Homes	(\$6.9)
Lumber and Other Building Materials	(\$5.3)
Paint, Glass and Wallpaper	\$1.2
Hardware Stores	(\$1.4)
Retail Nurseries and Garden	(\$1.2)
Mobile Home Dealers	(\$0.3)
General Merchandise Stores	(\$8.0)
Department Stores	(\$9.3)
Food Stores	\$6.7
Grocery Stores	\$9.8
Food other than Groceries	(\$3.1)
Automobile Dealers and Gas Service Stations	\$117.4
Automotive Dealers (Auto, Boat, Motorcycle)	\$115.7
Auto and Home Supply Stores, Gasoline Service Stations	\$1.7
Apparel and Accessory Stores	(\$4.6)
Home Furniture and Furnishing	\$15.8
Furniture and Kitchen Design Stores	\$14.7
Floor Covering Stores	\$2.1
Miscellaneous Home Furnishing Stores	(\$0.9)
Household Appliance Stores	(\$1.0)
Radio, TV and Computer Store	(\$7.8)
Eating and Drinking Places	(\$8.0)
Miscellaneous Retail	(\$12.2)
Drug Stores and Proprietary	(\$2.4)
Liquor Stores	(\$0.0)
Sporting Goods, Bicycle and Gun Stores	(\$0.2)
Book Stores	(\$0.4)
Jewelry Stores	(\$0.7)
Florists	\$0.2
All Other Retail	(\$8.5)
Net Inflow (Outflow)	\$91.46

The Mechanicville Trade Area realizes a substantial net inflow of sales dollars due to spending by non-residents. However, the total is heavily skewed by two categories: (1)

automobile dealers, and (2) home furniture and furnishing. The sales surplus for these two categories of goods totals \$133.2 million. Excluding these two categories, the trade area would realize a substantial net sales leakage for all other types of consumer goods. In addition to the two categories of retail sales previously detailed, the sales surplus is also high for grocery stores (\$9.8 million).

In the trade area, sales leakage is highest for lumber and other building materials (\$5.3 million), department stores (\$9.3 million), apparel and accessory stores (\$4.6 million), radio, TV, and computer stores (\$7.8 million), and eating and drinking places (\$8.0 million). Recapturing a portion of the sales leakage represents a potential opportunity for additional establishments as well as associated tax revenues in the Mechanicville Trade Area. This is of particular importance to the City of Mechanicville, as certain retail categories that are particularly strong in capturing consumer demand (automotive dealers, grocery stores) are located *outside* the City limits.

Results of Community Visioning Process

As part of the strategic planning process, CA facilitated a series of public sessions designed to stimulate discussion, build consensus, and develop a vision for Mechanicville's future. At the community visioning session, participants were invited to identify, categorize, and rank community strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. The highest-ranked categories are listed below in order of priority, from highest to lowest.

Strengths		Votes
Railroad History		19
River/Riverwalk		13
Community Services Available Downtown (Banks, Post Office, Senior Center)		12
Tallmadge Park		11
School System		8
New Housing Development		6
Nice Old Buildings		6
Low Crime		5
Weakness		Votes
The City Does Not Have a Main Attraction		17
Lack of Shopping in the City's Business District		9
City's Assets are Not Promoted		7
The Old School is Vacant		6
Downtown Lacks a Uniform Look (Varying Colors, Facades)		5
Lack of Incentives to Invest in Property/Buildings		5
Lack of Visibility / Awareness of Community		5
No Theater		5
No Cultural Attractions		5
Opportunities		Votes
Focus on Development of Historic Places		10
The Train Station		10
Waterfront Revitalization Grants		10
Build on the City's History		9
No Place to Shop in Schaghticoke, Stillwater		7
Gateway Improvements		6
Take advantage of Housing Development in Surrounding Communities		5
The City's Ethnic Heritage		5
Threats		Votes
Apathy		10
Lack of County Funding		9
No Marketing Hook		8
Lack of Appearance Standards for Stores		8
No Land for Growth		4
Loss of Historic Buildings		4
Lack of Funding to Improve/Expand Businesses		4

For purposes of the public session, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats were defined as follows:

- Strengths - Resources, assets, and capabilities that can be used as basis for developing a successful downtown revitalization plan (internal)
- Weaknesses - Barriers, limitations, or the absence of certain qualities that prevent the community from achieving its revitalization objectives (internal)
- Opportunities - Favorable situations or resources that could enhance the downtown (external)
- Threats - Potential obstacles faced by the community with respect to downtown revitalization (external)

Strengths and weaknesses are generally thought of as internal to the community, while opportunities and threats generally represent external pressures.

The greatest strength identified by the community is its railroad history. The City currently houses a train station, but the building is not owned by the City and is currently in a state of disrepair. Additionally, the City is currently in the process of rehabilitating the XO Tower, located across the street from the train station. The XO Tower is a railroad control building from the early 20th century. Upon full restoration, the City plans to utilize the building to foster the development of its railroad history. A number of individuals also identified the Hudson River and the canoe launch/dock as the City's greatest strength.



The former train station, a central element of the City's revitalization goals.

When asked to identify weaknesses, the voting results were clear: most residents felt the City is currently suffering because it does not have a main attraction. Although the train station and XO Tower were identified as strengths, these properties need to be redeveloped to increase tourism and benefit the City. Further, the Hudson River is another significant strength, but access to the river is somewhat limited.

Concurrent with this weakness of "no main attraction", residents identified restoration of its historic places, and restoration of the train station and XO Tower, as its greatest opportunities. Although different voting categories, these two opportunities represent similar sentiments. Additionally, a number of residents voted along similar lines, with "built on the City's history" receiving 9 votes and "The City's Ethnic Heritage" receiving 5 votes.



The renovation of the XO Tower is underway and the City is seeking additional funding to complete the project.

When asked to identify potential threats, residents identified “apathy” as the single greatest threat to the City’s future. During discussion, apathy was defined broadly to apply to City residents, City staff, and the Mechanicville Chamber of Commerce. In addition to apathy, many residents noted that Saratoga County does not provide sufficient funds to the City, and the City lacks a marketing “hook” and appearance standards for stores.

After meeting participants had brainstormed and voted on strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, CA led a visioning exercise to help develop a draft vision statement for the City. This draft vision statement was presented at the third public session and participants were asked to provide comments. After accounting for these comments, the following vision statement was developed for the City of Mechanicville.

Mechanicville is a charming small City nestled on the Hudson River with a family friendly, hometown atmosphere and strong sense of community. At the heart of the City is a railroad museum that displays its rich history and attracts visitors to its thriving commercial district. Mechanicville serves as “the downtown/center” for many residents located nearby in Stillwater, Halfmoon, and Schaghticoke, who frequently attend community events held in Mechanicville. The City is known for its great location, affordable housing and strong churches.

During the third public session, residents were asked to prioritize opportunities for the City of Mechanicville. Residents were given a total of 6 potential votes for projects they most supported, along with 2 votes for those projects they least supported. These negative votes were designed to further clarify those projects most supported by residents, and to specifically identify any revitalization strategies that may be controversial (i.e. projects that receive significant numbers of positive and negative votes).

The voting results are listed below in rank order by the number of “net” votes each strategy received, or the number of positive votes less the number of negative votes.

Note that grant funding opportunities were intentionally not included to avoid skewing the results.

Positive Votes	Negative Votes	Net Votes	Strategy
22	0	22	Create redevelopment plan for Railroad Street and Vial Avenue area as a historic railway site Including complete restoration of XO tower, rail car exhibits, rail and local history museum, and renovated train station
13	0	13	Create shovel ready industrial park
13	1	12	Develop and implement streetscape improvement plan (signage, trees, landscaping, American flags) incorporating the historic rail theme
12	0	12	Mayor and CD Director to meet with commercial real estate developers to consider public/private partnership for redevelopment of industrial park
11	0	11	Establish a major annual event associated with the river (canoe race, triathlon, etc)
11	1	10	Open access and improve visibility of the River, Anthony Kill
10	0	10	Evaluate the quality of the equipment in City parks and replace as needed. Investment in equipment for young children will help attract trade area families into the City. Consider improvements in keeping with the historic railway theme
10	0	10	Attract residents of surrounding communities through events targeted to trade area demographics (i.e. younger families residing in surrounding communities)
9	0	9	Establish a new vision for the City that residents can rally behind (i.e. site of historic railway museum)
8	0	8	Develop program to foster private investment in comprehensive downtown commercial space and housing improvements
8	0	8	Streamline development approval process where possible
7	0	7	Hire a market research consultant to assist the City with developing a new image based on its newly established vision Incorporate into signage, logos, streetscape, community events, banners, etc Develop significant community event surrounding the City's new direction and vision
7	0	7	Sidewalk replacement program – City match should be increased for the downtown business district and program should be aggressively advertised
7	0	7	Addition of amenities to canoe launch/dock, including addition of public bathroom, boat tie-offs, food and beverage stand, picnic area
5	0	5	Annual community clean-up day
4	0	4	Expand Victorian lighting throughout the downtown
4	0	4	Improve signage directing visitors to the river
4	0	4	Work with Planning Board, ZBA, and City Justices to insure penalties are pursued and code violations enforced
4	0	4	Work with local business community to market to trade area residents that have greater consumer spending capacity

Continued on Next Page

4	0	4	Begin lobbying state officials for improvements related to Route 67. In the future, this corridor will become more important for the City
3	0	3	Require Board member training to increase public official knowledge
3	0	3	Develop a local mentoring/training initiative to recruit and train the City's future leaders
2	0	2	Assign person to meet with owners of unkempt properties to request their cooperation
2	0	2	Review zoning ordinances and violation procedures to identify needed revisions
2	0	2	Create notification procedures for all Planning Board and ZAB issues to keep City Council, Mayor, CDA informed
2	0	2	List available commercial & industrial properties with commercial realtors
2	0	2	Identify & advertise the City's top 10 commercial & industrial properties through ESD and City website
1	0	1	Review of existing ordinances related to trash, junk cars, etc.
1	0	1	Explore feasibility for pedestrian pathways, commercial development, public access, etc
1	0	1	City officials to sponsor a PR event with state economic development officials, developers, commercial realtors, etc
			Present plan and vision for the future
			Market available development sites
			Present efforts underway to improve City
3	3	0	Recruit home improvement/furniture businesses, complimentary to Di Siena, in an attempt to make Mechanicville the regional center for improvement businesses
1	11	-10	Chirping bird signals at crosswalks

As with the community SWOT session, development of the City's railroad history (**22 votes**), by a relatively large margin, is the revitalization strategy most strongly supported by the community. In addition, a number of complimentary revitalization strategies were highly rated by City residents, including: development of a streetscape improvement plan incorporating the historic rail theme (**13 votes**), establishing a new vision for the City (**9 votes**), and hiring a market research consultant to assist the City in developing this vision (**7 votes**).

A number of other strategies received a high level of support from the community, including development of the City's industrial parks. Two separate voting categories related to this received a high level of support, including:

- (**13 votes**) - Create a shovel ready industrial park
- (**12 votes**) - Mayor and CD Director to meet with commercial real estate developers to consider public/private partnership for redevelopment of industrial park.

The next priority for residents is related to the Hudson River and Anthony Kill stream. The following revitalization strategies received high numbers of votes:

- (**11 votes**) - Establish a major annual event associated with the river (canoe race, triathlon, etc).
- (**10 votes**) - Open access and improve visibility of the Hudson River and Anthony Kill (10 votes).

- **(7 votes)** - Addition of amenities to canoe launch/dock, including addition of public bathroom, boat tie-offs, food and beverage stand, picnic area

An additional number of high priority items were related to trade area demographics. Residents recognized the need to make their downtown more attractive to trade area residents, as evidenced by their voting on the following strategies:

- **(10 votes)** - Evaluate the quality of the equipment in City parks and replace as needed. Investment in equipment for young children will help attract trade area families into the City. Consider improvements in keeping with the historic railway theme.
- **(10 votes)** - Attract residents of surrounding communities through events targeted to trade area demographics (i.e. younger families residing in surrounding communities)
- **(4 votes)** - Work with local business community to market to trade area residents that have greater consumer spending capacity.

Through the resident and business surveys, as well as the public sessions, CA learned that residents highly support projects related to overall beautification and cleanliness of the City. This support is shown in several strategies detailed above, such as the streetscape improvement plan and improving access to the Hudson River. In addition to these strategies, a number of other issues related to cleanliness and beautification were voted upon by City residents. These included:

- **(7 votes)** – Sidewalk replacement program wherein the City match is increased for the downtown business district and the program is aggressively advertised.
- **(5 votes)** – Annual community clean-up day.
- **(4 votes)** – Expand Victorian lighting throughout the downtown.
- **(4 votes)** – Work with Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, and City Justices to ensure penalties are pursued and code violations are enforced.
- **(2 votes)** – Assign person to meet with owners of unkempt properties to request their cooperation.
- **(2 votes)** – Review zoning ordinances and violation procedures to identify needed revisions.
- **(1 vote)** – Review of existing ordinances related to trash, junk cars, etc.

Although none of these revitalization strategies received high numbers of votes, they are all related to the same general theme. Because residents identified *so many* potential strategies related to this theme the voting results may *appear* skewed because no individual strategy received more than 7 votes. In reality, this broad category of revitalization strategies is strongly supported by residents.

The Revitalization Plan

The revitalization goals listed below were established with input from the Revitalization Committee as well as the participants in the public sessions. These goals are designed to provide direction to the City Board in establishing priorities and assist the community in achieving its desired vision of the future.

Goal 1: Create and implement a redevelopment plan for Railroad Street and Vial Avenue as a historic railway site.

Through the surveys and community SWOT analysis, the lack of a major attraction was identified as one of the City’s greatest challenges. During the visioning session, residents identified the City’s railroad history as its greatest asset. Residents noted that the existing railroad depot building, which is currently unoccupied and dilapidated, continually attracts tourists interested in the history of the building and the railroad in Mechanicville.

Further, the XO Tower, which is currently under renovation, had significant development potential. Recently, the former rail station was donated to the newly formed Mechanicville Heritage Society. The City now has the ability to work with this organization to restore the building. This goal of developing the railroad would serve to increase the number of individuals entering the City of Mechanicville, which would positively impact retail businesses. Overall, residents rallied around their vision to re-invent Mechanicville based on its past.

Potential Actions

<u>Recommended Action</u>	<u>Time Frame</u>	<u>Responsibility</u>
1.1: Restore the XO Tower and former train station to serve as a railroad museum, local history museum, or other tourist attraction.	3 Years	Mechanicville Heritage Society, Community Development Agency, Chamber of Commerce
1.2: Develop a site, streetscape and rail plan as a visitor attraction. The plan would identify parking, pedestrian, and rail improvements.	2 Years	Mechanicville Heritage Society, Community Development Agency, Chamber of Commerce

Goal 2: Develop a marketing and branding strategy for the City.

Based on public input received through surveying and public meetings, individuals living within the trade area do not view Mechanicville in a positive light. Due to this, the City has to develop a broad strategy to market its new vision to trade area residents.

Potential Actions

Recommended Action	Time Frame	Responsibility
2.1: Hire a market research consultant to assist the City with developing a new image based on its newly established vision.	2 Years	Community Development Agency, Chamber of Commerce, Mayor
2.2: Consider adding park and playground equipment related to the railroad theme.	2 Years	Department of Public Works
2.3 Work with the local business community to market City attractions to trade area residents that have greater consumer spending capacity.	3 Years	Chamber of Commerce, Local Business Owners

Goal 3: Develop and implement a streetscape improvement plan for the downtown.

Both residents and business owners whom responded to surveys noted there was a need to clean and beautify the City. Many individuals noted the streets are largely devoid of plantings and there are few signs to direct visitors to the City's historical assets. This has a significant negative impact on the community's image, detracting from the City's efforts to promote itself as a desirable place to live and work. This goal will also serve to promote the "walkability" of the City, and maintaining the "small town atmosphere" of the City was identified as a high priority for residents.

Potential Actions

Recommended Action	Time Frame	Responsibility
3.1: Implement a tree planting and maintenance program.	2 Years	Department of Public Works
3.2: Develop a plan to expand Victorian or railroad themed lighting throughout the City's downtown and near the XO Tower.	2 Years	Department of Public Works, Community Development Agency
3.3: Place new signage on heavily traveled roadways throughout the City directing visitors to the river, rail museum and other sites. The signage should be modeled after the City's vision of developing its railroad history.	2 Years	Department of Public Works, Community Development Agency
3.4: Create and implement a streetscape plan to improve aesthetics and pedestrian movement in the downtown.	2 Years	Department of Public Works, Community Development Agency

Goal 4: Improve the condition of visible infrastructure in the City.

As identified through the economic and demographic analysis, City residents are lower income than other individuals living in the nearby areas. As a result of their higher incomes, these individuals have higher spending profiles. If the City can fill a consumer market niche and advertise itself to these trade area residents, its retailers can capture trade area spending. In order to do this, the City needs to improve its image. An important step in this process is improving the condition of visible infrastructure within the City.

Potential Actions

Recommended Action	Time Frame	Responsibility
4.1: Designate a target area where sidewalk improvements are most needed and desired. Upon development of the target area, increase the City match for sidewalk replacement and heavily advertise the program.	1 Year	Department of Public Works, Mayor
4.2: Evaluate the quality of equipment in City parks and replace and improve as needed to attract trade area residents who are seeking recreational opportunities with their children.	2 Years	Department of Public Works, Mayor

Goal 5: Improve access and visibility of the Hudson River and Tenandaho Creek

The resident survey identified the Hudson River as the City's greatest asset. Further, more access to the riverfront was identified as a high priority by residents during the public sessions. The Hudson River represents a major marketing opportunity for the City, and river focused events could serve to supplement events associated with the railroad.

Potential Actions

Recommended Action	Time Frame	Responsibility
5.1: As detailed in goal #3, signage directing visitors to the Hudson River canoe launch and public dock should be improved.	2 Years	Community Development Agency
5.2: Establish a major annual event with the Hudson River and/or Tenandaho Creek, such as the "anything that floats" canoe race, which in the past had attracted large numbers of visitors to the City.	2 Years	Chamber of Commerce
5.3: Explore the feasibility for pedestrian pathways, commercial development, and public access to the River through the purchase of easements from landowners.	2 Years	Community Development Agency
5.4: Add amenities to the canoe launch/boat dock, including a public bathroom, food and beverage stand, and picnic area.	3 Years	Community Development Agency

Goal 6: Improve the appearance and public image of the City's downtown.

Beautification improvements are vital to improving the City's reputation and public image. A number of these recommendations are detailed in item #2, listed above. However, in addition to the streetscape improvement plan, other initiatives can serve to improve the appearance and image of the City.

Potential Actions

Recommended Action	Time Frame	Responsibility
6.1: Implement an annual community clean-up day and assign organizational responsibilities to an individual, or group of individuals, approved by City leaders.	1 Year	Chamber of Commerce, Community Development Agency, Department of Public Works
6.2: Work with the Planning and Zoning Boards, as well as City Justices, to ensure code violations are enforced and penalties are pursued.	1 Year	Code Enforcement Officer, Mayor, Community Development Agency, Planning & Zoning Boards
6.3: Ensure the City's code officer meets with owners of unkempt properties and issues citations wherever appropriate.	1 Year	Code Enforcement Officer, Mayor, Community Development Agency, Planning Board
6.4: Review the City's ordinances related to trash, junk cars, etc. and revise where needed.	1 Year	Code Enforcement Officer, Mayor, Community Development Agency
6.5: Create notification procedures to ensure the Mayor and Community Development officials remain informed when issues are presented to Planning and Zoning Boards.	1 Year	Mayor, Community Development Agency, Planning & Zoning Boards

Goal 7: Develop the existing commercial & industrial parcels within the City and decrease the vacancy rate.

Several realtors and commercial developers identified opportunities for the City of Mechanicville. However, they also noted there was a lack of advertising of the City’s assets and future plans, and they were uninformed with regards to commercial development opportunities within the City. As such, a number of recommendations were presented to the public regarding actions to rectify this situation.

Potential Actions

Recommended Action	Time Frame	Responsibility
7.1: Create a shovel ready industrial park by expediting the remediation process to the extent possible.	2 Years	Community Development Agency, Department of Public Works
7.2: The Mayor, Community Development Agency, City business leaders, and other City officials should sponsor a PR event with state economic development officials, commercial realtors, and developers to present the City’s vision for the future and initiatives currently underway, market the available properties within the City, and improve the City’s reputation.	1 Year	Mayor, Community Development Agency, City Council, Local Business Leaders
7.3: The Mayor and Community Development Agency to meet with real estate developers to explore a public/private partnership to redevelop the industrial park.	1 Year	Community Development Agency, Mayor
7.4 List available commercial and industrial properties with a commercial realtor, on Empire State Development Site Finder and on the City’s website.	1 Year	Community Development Agency
7.5: Lobby NYS representatives to obtain Empire Zone status for the undeveloped portions of the industrial park, should the Empire Zones program undergo future revisions.	Ongoing	Mayor, Community Development Agency, City Council

Goal 8: Pursue grant funding initiatives to improve the City's appearance, reputation, and infrastructure.

Throughout the course of the project CA identified a number of grant funding opportunities that would benefit the City of Mechanicville. These opportunities are presented below, in order of usefulness, as determined by CA.

Grant Funding Priorities

- 8.1 2007 GOSC Comprehensive Grant (Annual Competitive Round) (**\$650,000**). CA identified the following needs in the City of Mechanicville: commercial building improvements, public facilities improvements, and streetscape improvements. All three needs can be met through a Small Cities Comprehensive Grant program.
- 8.2 DHCR Main Street Program (**\$200,000**). Similar to a comprehensive grant, Main Street funds can be used to finance façade renovation, building renovation, downtown anchor buildings, streetscape enhancement (which will only be provided in combination with one of the other activities), tree planting, street furniture, kiosks, public informational signage, and other ancillary enhancements. However, Main Street funds cannot be used to finance public facilities (i.e. infrastructure) improvements. Additionally, Main Street grants do not provide funding for administration. As such, administration of this grant would require a City investment. Based on CA's previous experience, this amount would total approximately **\$10,000**.
- 8.3 Empire State Development Wireless Communities Grant (**\$200,000**). Wireless communities grants can be used to cover design and installation expenses for wireless broadband telecommunications infrastructure within a community's "targeted commercial area." Although the benefit to existing businesses in the downtown would likely be minimal, the addition of wireless service to the downtown would help to improve the image of the City as a technologically advanced community.
- 8.4 Brownfields Opportunity Areas (**\$50,000 for Phase I**) – Brownfields Opportunity Areas (BOA) grants are for a number of activities: economic development strategic planning, community assessment, inventorying, market analysis/reuse studies, environmental testing. Additionally, BOA grants can be used to implement a wide range of possible end-projects, including items identified in the community assessment that are not necessarily brownfield-specific, such as mitigating a utility deficiency or zoning problem. Additionally, problems identified through the BOA process are given "priority status" for EPA funding.
- 8.5 NYS Department of State Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP). An LWRP would serve as a comprehensive plan for the City's waterfront property. Although the majority of this property is currently privately owned, an LWRP would help to identify potential opportunities for increased public access, easements acquisitions and property redevelopment that may be available in the future.
- 8.6 NYS Department of State Shared Municipal Services Incentive Grant Program (**\$100,000**). Although not discussed during the revitalization strategy, the potential of Mechanicville sharing municipal services with neighboring municipalities was examined during the Comprehensive Planning process in 1999. Recently, the Department of State began providing grant funding, requiring a 10% local cash match, wherein municipalities can examine shared municipal services in detail.
- 8.7 Quality Communities (**no minimum or maximum award**) – The Quality Communities program, funded through the New York State Environmental Protection Fund, is a potential funding source

for economic development activities within the City of Mechanicville. Through the “community center” program, this funding source could be utilized to develop a detailed implementation strategy for the “railroad vision” of the community.

- 8.8 Preserve New York Grant Program (**\$3,000 - \$10,000**) - The program provides funding to municipalities and not-for-profit organizations, and supports three types of projects only: historic structure reports, historic landscape reports and cultural resource surveys. Through the program, the Preservation League, a statewide, not-for-profit organization, and the Council, the state’s arts funding agency, seek to support efforts to plan for the preservation, restoration and rehabilitation of historic buildings and landscapes throughout the state. The Preservation League especially encourages projects that link preservation to smart growth land use planning; neighborhood and “Main Street” revitalization; preservation initiatives along rural roads and other historic transportation corridors; and projects that involve the continued use of historic municipal buildings and historic bridges. This grant represents a potential funding source that can be used to plan for reuse of the train station.
- 8.9 New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation - The New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation has announced funding available under Title 9 of the Environmental Protection Act of 1993 for the acquisition, development and improvement of parks, historic properties and heritage areas. In addition, municipalities may apply for funds under the Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund for the acquisition and development of outdoor recreation facilities.