
Reweaving Troy's Urban Landscape Congress Street and Ferry Street Corridor

Troy, New York

Analysis - Master Plan - Zoning

July 2009



Congress Street and Ferry Street Corridor Master Plan

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Chapter 1

Executive Summary

A new neighborhood will rise in Troy. The community will bring back the urban streetscape and vitality that had existed in the Congress Street and Ferry Street Corridor before urban renewal programs left nearly 15 acres vacant in the heart of the city.

The new vibrant neighborhood offers a rare opportunity for the City of Troy to reweave its urban fabric. When built out, the area will serve as a connector between educational institutions, public parks, downtown shopping and downtown living.

Vibrancy in a city happens at the street level. The master plan seeks to rebalance the pedestrian versus automobile tension in favor of the foot. For the foreseeable future, cars will be an integral part of any downtown, including Troy's. However, the ability to walk... to park and shop in numerous stores... to mix with others... to see people and be seen... these opportunities are uniquely suited to urban situations. In this arena, cities have comparative advantages over the suburbs. This project seeks to maximize Troy's advantage.

Included in the project are high-quality market rate apartments and condominiums. This residential product is rare in Troy, yet it is important to the people who Troy wants to attract – professors, graduate students and members of the creative class. These are the people who will start and staff 21st century enterprises in the Capital Region.

If developed along the general lines described in this master plan, the project is expected to generate a significant tax benefit to the city. A cost/revenue analysis of various development scenarios indicates a positive flow of tax dollars into community coffers. In addition the project will complement Troy's already revitalizing downtown by bringing more people and their money to the area.

A new neighborhood

Reweaving this vacant land into Troy's urban fabric is the ultimate goal of the Congress Street and Ferry Street project. The master plan achieves that goal as well as boosts the fiscal return for the city, provides for the density necessary for a reasonable economic return for the developer, and increases the quality of life for existing Troy residents.

As an urban core, and based on the majority of responses from the community, high density is desired. Within an eight-story building height maximum, it is expected that private development could accommodate some mix of the following:

- > Up to 500 residential units
- > Up to 400 student beds
- > About 30,000 square feet of retail
- > Hotel
- > Restaurants
- > Up to 450,000 square feet of commercial space
- > Movie theater
- > Structured parking

The final master plan is shown on the following page.

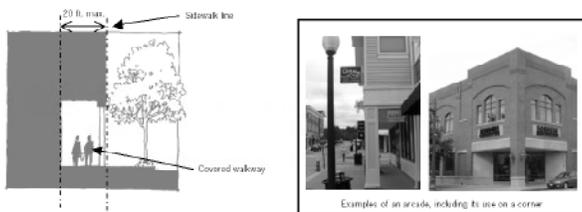
Shaping public space with private buildings

Vitality in a city happens in the public spaces – along the sidewalks and at the storefronts as well as in the nooks and crannies that make up the urban streetscape. Troy is implementing cutting edge land use regulations to shape the public realm.

Form-based code is the mechanism the city will employ to shape these public spaces. In this code, activities within buildings (i.e. the “uses”) are less important than the manner in which those private buildings shape the public spaces. The code regulates each building’s interaction with the public realm, but is much more flexible on uses allowed.

Just as importantly, form-based code is easier for everyone. Through drawings and example photographs, the rules – and the community’s vision expressed in those rules – become clear to developers, builders, city staff, volunteer board members and the general public. With everyone on the same page, it becomes easier for Troy to get the kind of development it wants in downtown.

C. Frontages Allowed
1. Arcade



- Arcade Requirements:
- a. Building shall not be setback more than 20 feet from the sidewalk line.
 - b. No elements of the arcade shall cross the sidewalk line.
 - c. Arcade must be defined by a series of evenly spaced columns.
 - d. Arcade may be used for outdoor seating.
 - e. Arcade may be used along a building or at a building’s corner.

This extract from Troy’s new form-based code illustrates the clarity with which this zoning helps everyone understand how buildings should shape the public realm.

Vibrant Sixth Avenue

Another highlight of the master plan is the effort to bring retail, entertainment and other commercial vibrancy to Sixth Avenue. The entire length of Sixth Avenue was hit hard by government-sponsored urban renewal. However, as a major route through the city from the project site to Hoosick Street, Sixth Avenue has the opportunity to become a major urban boulevard. The southern end, at the project city, is a new extension of Sixth Avenue between Congress and Ferry Street.



Today Sixth Avenue (left) ends at Congress Street. The master plan calls for it to be extended one block south to Ferry Street (right). The block is expected to be the focus of retail and entertainment within the project.

Within the Corridor project, this section of Sixth Avenue is also designed to be the activity hub. This small stretch of street-level retail can offer a different commercial real estate product than currently available on the ground floor of older Troy buildings. As the closest portion of the Corridor to the Central Business District, this portion of Sixth Avenue can add to the growing revitalization of downtown Troy retail businesses.

Insert Master Plan drawing here

Connections to Prospect Park and to History

Currently there is only one official entrance to Prospect Park – via a road at the top of the hill relatively far from downtown. During the master planning process, the stakeholders identified three additional means of access to the park. All are along Ferry Street or Congress Street and provide pedestrian routes to the green space that are closer to downtown. These are through the new Uncle Sam Park (A), up stairs via a pedestrian extension of 8th Avenue (B), and just north of the project area via an old roadbed (C).



One of these new connections, as noted above, is through the new Uncle Sam Foundation Park. (Labelled A on the map.) Sam Wilson lived in a house near the corner of 7th Avenue and Ferry Street. It was taken down in 1971 – razed along with other houses in preparation for a never built highway. The foundation is currently difficult to decipher, but archeological investigation has positively identified it.

Many people in Troy have spoken up that Uncle Sam’s history represents an important potential cultural draw for the city. One component of that will be a park on the site of Uncle Sam’s Troy house. It is not within the scope of this project to design this park. However, there are existing examples that can be used as starting points when the time comes to focus on this project. These are described later in the report.

The park is meant to be a small urban pocket park. It should interpret the history related to the site and be a gateway to Prospect Park. The goal, however, is to keep the boundary of the Uncle Sam Park tightly contained.

Public participation

From the beginning, various stakeholders and the public were involved in vetting preliminary schemes for the Congress Street and Ferry Street Corridor. Saratoga Associates sought to refine the hopes of city residents and distill their thoughts into specific ideas for the master plan. On November 11, 2008, Saratoga Associates conducted an evening workshop attended by over one hundred people.



Residents and business leaders split up into small groups to discuss hopes and concerns for the Corridor project.

Using a visual preference survey, as well as small group moderated discussions, the majority of residents showed a strong preference for continuing the urban form and character found in other parts of the city – for the creation of a dense, vibrant, walkable neighborhood. Troy already has buildings five, six and seven stories in height; not surprisingly the residents reacted positively to the density that such building mass would provide. Also highly desired were buildings that came right up to the sidewalk creating a traditional downtown and urban streetscape. At the same time the participants in the meeting tended to reject a more suburban style of development. The audience looked unfavorably upon one-story buildings surrounded by parking lots. Parking lots next to sidewalks, pole signs and billboards also scored low.



In November 2008, about 125 people packed Troy’s Italian Community Center to help shape the look and feel of the Corridor.

Fiscal Impact to the City of Troy

Saratoga Associates conducted a fiscal impact analysis of a variety of proposed development scenarios. The purpose of this analysis was to estimate the amount that each potential development scheme could possibly generate in additional tax revenue to the City of Troy and to the Troy School District. This number is then compared to the potential costs of each – and the potential economic benefits.

The different scenarios, described below, are variations upon the development program described by the preferred developer chosen by the city. It is important that fiscal efficiency be just one factor in choosing a development program – and should complement local market conditions or community goals of turning the Congress Street and Ferry Street Corridor into a vibrant urban area. Summary chart can be found on the fullbody page.

Recognizing the value of this project to Troy and to the Capital District, the city and the state may wish to employ public incentives to aid the area’s redevelopment. These incentives may include, but are not limited to, PILOT agreements, IDA funding, and/or PILOT-backed bonds.

POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENT SCENARIOS					
	Size of development	Average Household Size	Total Population	Workers per sq. ft.	Number of Workers
Scheme A					
Residential Units	400	2.13	852		
Commercial	200,000SF			1/250 SF	800
Retail	90,000SF			2.5/1000 SF	225
Hotel	65,000SF			234	23
Total Workers					1,048
Scheme B					
Residential Units	330	2.13	703		
Commercial	300,000SF			1/250 SF	1,200
Retail	60,000SF			2.5/1000 SF	150
Hotel	65,000SF			234	23
Total Workers					1,373
Scheme C					
Residential Units	320	2.13	682		
Commercial	325,000SF			1/250 SF	1,300
Retail	70,000SF			2.5/1000 SF	175
Hotel	65,000SF			234	23
Total Workers					1,498
Scheme D					
Residential Units	400	2.13	852		
Commercial	200,000SF			1/250 SF	800
Retail	90,000SF			2.5/1000 SF	225
Theater	30,000SF				12
Total Workers					1,037
Scheme E					
Residential Units	320	2.13	682		
Commercial	450,000SF			1/250 SF	1,800
Retail	70,000SF			2.5/1000 SF	175
Total Workers					1,975
Scheme F					
No development	0	2.13	0	0	0

NET FISCAL IMPACT ON TROY SCHOOL DISTRICT

	Scheme A	Scheme B	Scheme C	Scheme D	Scheme E	Scheme F
Total Revenues Produced by Development	\$2,161,723.91	\$1,858,329.73	\$1,827,629.97	\$2,135,379.37	\$1,855,880.58	\$987.07
Total Costs Produced by Development	\$1,704,389.92	\$1,406,121.69	\$1,363,511.94	\$1,704,389.92	\$1,363,511.94	\$0
Net Fiscal Impact	\$457,333.99	\$452,208.05	\$464,118.04	\$430,989.45	\$492,368.64	\$987.07

NET FISCAL IMPACT ON CITY OF TROY

	Scheme A	Scheme B	Scheme C	Scheme D	Scheme E	Scheme F
Total Revenues Produced by Development	\$2,920,858.98	\$2,869,683.67	\$2,938,780.15	\$3,505,439.82	\$3,160,365.26	\$4,929.47
Total Costs Produced by Development	\$1,975,394.21	\$2,161,051.07	\$2,269,680.57	\$1,963,481.22	\$1,963,481.22	\$0
Net Fiscal Impact	\$945,464.77	\$708,632.61	\$669,099.58	\$1,541,958.61	\$1,196,884.04	\$4,929.47

Chapter 2

History of the Congress Street/ Ferry Street Corridor

Nothing has changed the landscape of Troy more than the industrial revolution. The city went from a small farming town of 50 in 1791 to a burgeoning city of 76,813 by 1910. At its peak, Troy had some very wealthy citizens and the architecture they built stands as a memorial to more robust times. Many buildings, such as St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Hart Memorial (Troy Public) Library, Bush Memorial Center and Russell Sage College boast Tiffany windows – prestigious symbols of the city's wealth.

Troy was perfectly positioned for the advent of the industrial revolution. Steep hills that run North-South through the city made it an ideal place to turn waterpower into manufacturing power. Many entrepreneurs built factories up and down the city. Access to the Hudson River and its proximity to trains and the Erie Canal made it a central hub for the movement of goods and services.

As the manufacturing base grew, so did the need for people to work in the factories and supporting services. Homes had to be constructed and the steep incline of streets like Congress and Ferry Street did not deter people from building new neighborhoods.



*Looking up Congress Street from Seventh Avenue
Photo: Courtesy of the Rensselaer County Historical Society*

Originally commissioned by Jacob D. Vanderheyden, the street grid of Troy worked efficiently on flat land. Once the grid reached a slope, modifications were needed to accommodate transportation routes and buildings.

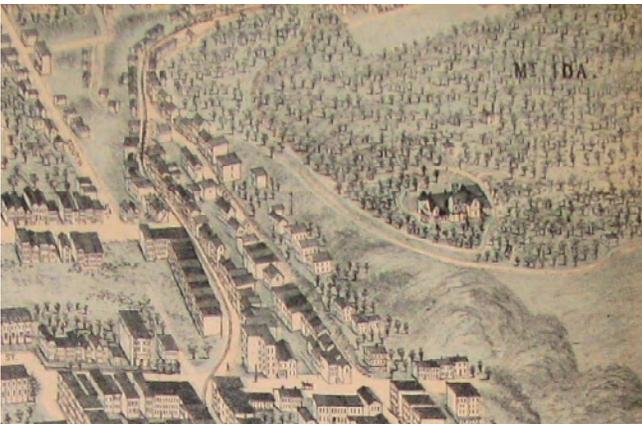
The convergence of Congress Street and Ferry Street was typical of these challenges. At one point, Ferry Street continued straight up the hill and converged with



Congress Street looking east.

Photo: Courtesy of the Rensselaer County Historical Society

Congress Street east of Eighth Street. Congress, on the other hand, followed a less direct path. Going east from downtown, the street turned sharply south for a few hundred feet and then abruptly east to meet with Ferry Street. Samuel Wilson, an important figure in American history who became known as Uncle Sam, owned a home that straddled the challenging terrain at the corner of 7th Street and Ferry Street. The site receives special treatment in this master plan.



Drawing: Courtesy of the Rensselaer County Historical Society

Sitting atop the hill, above the Corridor, is Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. Stephen Van Rensselaer, a wealthy politician and direct descendant of the original Dutch colonist Kiliaen Van Rensselaer, was commissioned by the New York State Legislature to be president of the Central Board of Agriculture. During his reign, Van Rensselaer paid a local lawyer and geologist, Amos Eaton, to compose two volumes on the geology of Rensselaer and Albany.

With a \$300 loan from Stephen Van Rensselaer, Eaton started the first American school dedicated for the sciences. Originally called the Rensselaer School, and later Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (RPI), it started with a building on the corner of Middleburgh Street and River Street. Eventually moving up the hill to a building on 8th street, RPI began a slow and constant growth up the hillside and over the coming decades as an internationally renowned institution.

Nearby is Russell Sage College, part of The Sage Colleges. The institution traces its history back to 1906 when a wealthy businessman, named Russell Sage, passed away. He left his fortune to his wife Margaret Olivia Slocum Sage. With the inheritance, Mrs. Sage started the Russell Sage Foundation and purchased the site of the former Emma Willard School in downtown Troy to convert into a women's college. Calling the school The Russell Sage College, it exists today as an institution on the subject of pedagogy and science.

Another dominant feature of the Corridor is its adjacency to Prospect Park. In the late 1800's and early 1900's, cities throughout the United States were investing in large green spaces within the urban boundaries for people of all incomes and ages to escape the congestion and pollution of the growing cities. It was believed that parks had a sobering and salubrious affect on its citizens.



The views from Prospect Park were such a draw that around 1910 a lookout gazebo was built to heighten the experience of the Hudson Valley. [Photo: Courtesy of the Rensselaer County Historical Society]

Troy was no different. In 1903, the City of Troy purchased the 84-acre property on top of Mount Ida for a park. At the time, the property was inhabited by two homes; one owned by the prominent Warren family and

the other by the Vail family. As the head engineer for the Department of Parks, Garnet Douglass Baltimore was given the responsibility to transform the Warren Estate into an urban refuge.

The son of a gregarious barber, Baltimore went to the Troy academy and in 1881 was the first African-American to graduate from RPI. With his civil engineering degree he immediately went to work as an engineer in the railroad industry and eventually became an engineer for the state department of public works. Returning to Troy in 1891, Baltimore was hired as assistant engineer for the City of Troy's Public Improvement Commission. Eventually rising to head engineer for the Department of Parks, he designed several cemeteries and parks. The City of Troy recently changed the name of Eight Street between Federal Street and Ferry Congress Street to the Garnet Douglass Baltimore Street. The house, in which he was born, lived and eventually died, on sat on this section of road.



Photo: Courtesy of the Rensselaer County Historical Society

By 1854, Troy had built Union Station on Sixth Avenue between Broadway and Fulton Street. The train station handled both freight and passenger rail, all of it traveling

through Troy. At the time, the train line ran down the center of city streets and Sixth Avenue was dedicated to train use. South of the stations, a tunnel was built to let the train pass underground beneath Congress Street and Ferry Street. Lack of investment in passenger rail eventually meant the demise of train service in Troy. Union station was demolished on November 20th, 1958. The tunnel under Congress Street and Ferry Street remains buried to this day, now half-full of debris.

Eventually cars, trucks and busses allowed people and materials to move even further from the downtown core. Home and commercial design in the suburbs that accommodated cars rather than pedestrians. Facing increasing urban disinvestment and blight, the federal government responded by implementing an urban design model based on the movement of cars – and Troy did not escape that fate.



This urban renewal master plan for highways did not come to fruition in Troy. Map: Courtesy of the Rensselaer County Historical Society

A freeway that would connect Troy to Albany was planned along the existing rail line on 6th Avenue. Following the urban renewal plans about 120 families were displaced on Sixth Avenue from Hoosick Street to Ferry Street. The freeway was to run under the major roads including Congress and Ferry Street. The sunken freeway might have moved cars faster, but it would also have created a greater division between the downtown Troy and the neighborhoods and institutions to the east, particularly Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute.

The freeway was never built (it was built across the river in Watervliet instead), but housing projects were constructed on the now vacant land in the early 1970's.

The four 7-story lower income apartment buildings were located between Congress and Ferry Street and 5th Street and 8th Avenue. The Ahern Apartments, as they were named, quickly fell into disrepair and were abandoned in the late 1980's. Several developers proposed to reuse the buildings or construct a grocery store on the site but none of the plans materialized. In 1999, the buildings were demolished and site has remained empty since.

Chapter 3

Site Analysis

Nestled between the pastoral Prospect Park, the prestigious Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (RPI) and the dense urban fabric of downtown, the Congress Street/Ferry Street Corridor (Corridor) is an ideal place to create a new thriving urban neighborhood in Troy. The past several years have seen new investment and vitality in Troy's downtown. Developers and artists have taken interest in expanding into areas outside of the central core. RPI has just completed a 220,000-square foot experimental media center adjacent to the Corridor. Despite challenges, including terrain and access, all of these positive aspects culminate into a site that is ideal for development.

The site, at the intersection of Congress and Ferry Street, is mostly comprised of grass fields. The swath of land between 6th Avenue and 8th Street and Congress Street and Ferry Street is mostly mowed grass and a few trees. It is not designed for any activity in particular. The study site is 15.8 acres in size, although the area slated for rezoning as described later in this report is 21.3 acres.

The area south of Ferry Street, between 6th Avenue and 8th Street, has manicured grass in some locations while other areas were allowed to grow. The part of the site that touches the park is steep in grade and is sometimes inhabited by people living in temporary outdoor quarters. The site encompasses a parking lot to the north of Congress Street, which is now used by Rensselaer County employees.

The rebirth of downtown Troy

Downtown Troy is experiencing a rebirth with developers, large and small, buying buildings and fixing them up. Both entrepreneurs and artists are attracted by Troy's proximity to Boston, New York City, and Montreal; all are about three hours away. In addition, land costs are relatively inexpensive. The rebirth is benefiting from the increased popularity of city living – the result of changing lifestyle desires, aging populations and rising gas prices.

The Corridor project is just one of the major redevelopment efforts underway. To the north of downtown, a vacant car dealership is expected to become a thriving urban center called The Hedley

District. Plans call for the large parcel of waterfront land to be filled with a hotel and other commercial buildings as well as a parking garage and riverside boardwalk. Another hotel is already under construction on Hoosick Street. In downtown Troy, several large, vacant commercial and warehouse buildings have been filled with high-end residential units.



Urban life is returning to downtown Troy, which is adjacent to the Ferry Street and Congress Street Corridor. The project hopes to build upon and enhance the city's many past revitalization successes.

In addition, the city is in the early planning efforts to replace its existing 1960s, bunker-style city hall with a mixed-use complex that offers better access to the waterfront and provides parking. The city will move, for at least five years, to 1776 Sixth Avenue. This is just two blocks from the Congress and Ferry site and in close proximity to other city and county buildings.

The physical opportunities and constraints are summarized on the map on the following page and described for the rest of the chapter.

The Terrain in the Corridor

The existence of steep slopes and waterfalls in and around the Troy area may have been advantageous for manufacturing, but it is much less practical for neighborhood connectivity. The escarpment between RPI and downtown Troy creates a physical and mental barrier for students and local residents. The route with the least amount of grade and, subsequently, the best option for pedestrian connections, is the Congress Street and Ferry Street Corridor. It is the closet route to downtown Troy and the best connector to and from Prospect Park.

While steep slopes can deter vehicular and pedestrian circulation, it can also provide for nice views. During the public meetings, a number of Troy residents shared

their sense of delight as one travels down Congress Street and takes in the panoramic view of downtown. Troy's many church steeples and magnificent buildings come into focus around 8th Street. In addition, the views from Prospect Park are appreciated now, as they were when the park was originally created. From below, RPI provides a stately backdrop to streets like Federal, Broadway, and State. The ivy covered brick buildings step down the hill to create a sense of prominence. Prospect Park is also prominent with full foliage of leafy trees in the summer that turns to a colorful display in the fall.

Steep slopes impact construction costs as well. Building on a slope is more expensive than on a flat surface. At times, the cost of excavating earth and bedrock to create a buildable site can become prohibitive. At the same time, slopes can be an opportunity for savings. Multi-level parking garages, for example, can save the expense of building ramps by using natural slopes as ways to access various floors.

The slopes present an important challenge in terms of transportation as well. The east-west grade along Congress Street is 10.28 percent and that along Ferry Street 9.14 percent. Both are outside of the desired maximum of eight percent. In addition, the steep north-south grade along Eighth Street and up into Prospect Park will present challenges to builders.

Circulation in and around the Corridor

As a major connector between Albany and Interstate 787, the Corridor is plagued with a lot of car traffic. The wide road, with few visual clues to slowdown such as trees or buildings, has become a speedway.

As a large swath of vacant land surrounded by speeding cars and heavy, few pedestrians visit the site. Busy streets are nothing new to cities but the badly designed streetscape makes the place feel inhospitable. In addition, the sloped site causes a potential danger for cars, trucks and buses in the winter's ice and snow. Traffic calming techniques are paramount to safety and enjoyment of the urban experience.

challenges and opportunities map

The site's single dilapidated building and unkempt nature do not give the impression of a safe and hospitable place. In addition, homeless people live outside under the tree canopy on the hillside along Prospect Park. The combination of the lack of activity and unkempt properties has given the site a stigma for being dangerous.



Slopes present challenges and opportunities. Looking east up Ferry Street (top left), the grade exceeds nine percent. Heading up Congress Street (above), the slope tops ten percent. Challenges exist to the north as well. The picture to the left illustrates the grade going up Eighth Street.

Existing zoning

Currently four different zoning districts intersect the boundaries of the project area. These zoning districts and their approximate size within the study area are:

- > B-4 Central Commercial (6.2 acres)
- > B-5 Highway Commercial (9.5 acres)
- > Con – Conservation (1.8 acres)
- > Inst – Institutional (3.8 acres)



- B-4 - Central Commercial
- B-5 - Highway Commercial
- Con - Conservation
- Inst - Institutional

Four existing zoning districts cross into the area (outlined in blue) that will encompass the new zoning district.

B-4 Central Commercial is the zoning that predominates in downtown Troy. It is designed to encourage a wide-variety of mixed land uses. All uses allowed in the B-3, B-2 and B-1 zones are also allowed in this zone. These uses include, for example, restaurants, theaters, professional offices, clothing and associated shops, grocery stores among others. In addition, the B-4 zone specifically allows hotels and motels, financial institutions (banks are also allowed in the B-2 zone) and residential uses allowed in the R-5 zone. (The R-5 zone allows multifamily medium and high rise residential buildings.) In the B-4 zone, banquet facilities, churches and car washes, among other uses, are allowed with special permit.

In terms of lot characteristics:

- > Minimum lot area: None
- > Minimum lot width: None
- > Minimum setbacks: Front – None, Rear – 20 feet unless interior loading is provided, Sides – None.
- > Maximum lot coverage: 80% unless interior load is provided, then 100%.
- > Maximum density: 120 units per acre for high-rise residential, 80 units per acre for medium-rise residential
- > Maximum building height: 150 feet for high-rise residential, 80 feet for other uses.

No off-street parking is required.

B-5 Highway Commercial is the zoning that occupies the most area in the Corridor. It is designed to accommodate a heavy concentration of retail/wholesale trade, warehousing, and assemblage. The results of this zoning would be suburban style growth with large parking lots. Indeed, within this area, the minimum parking requirements combined with a low maximum building height would limit growth and make this zone an economically inefficient use of urban land.

As in B-4, all uses allowed in the B-3, B-2 and B-1 zones are also allowed in this zone. In addition, the B-5 zone specifically allows hotels and motels, wholesale sales, membership clubs, light manufacturing and research facilities. No residential uses are permitted except for fraternities and sororities, which have different area requirements than are set out below.

In terms of lot characteristics:

- > Minimum lot area: 15,000 square feet
- > Minimum lot width: 100 feet
- > Minimum building length: 80 feet
- > Minimum setbacks: Front – 10 feet, Rear – 40 feet, Sides – 10 feet.
- > Maximum lot coverage: 60%
- > Maximum density: Not applicable
- > Maximum building height: 35 feet
- > Minimum green space: 15% shall be maintained as green space.

Parking requirements for this district are found in §285-91. The long list of zoning requirements is of a suburban standard and incompatible with the efficient use of land in a city.

Con - Conservation barely crosses into the study area at the southeastern corner of the district. This district, which is designed to conserve natural resources, is appropriate for the neighboring park, but severely limits the density of development in this small piece of the study area.

The only structures allowed in this district must be related to parks or cemeteries, two of the permitted uses.

In terms of lot characteristics:

- > Minimum lot area: None
- > Minimum lot width: None
- > Minimum setbacks: Front – 30 feet, Rear – 30 feet, Sides – 15 feet.
- > Maximum lot coverage: 25%
- > Maximum density, structures: None
- > Maximum building height: 30 feet
- > Building height telecommunications towers: 60 feet.

No off street parking is required, except in the case of expanding non-conforming uses.

Inst - Institutional is designed to ensure the orderly continued development of health-related, education and community services agencies.

Allowed uses include health-related facilities intensive and nonintensive, colleges and universities, non public schools and libraries. Residential uses allowed in the R-4 zone including most single-family and multifamily buildings. Professional office buildings require a special permit.

In terms of lot characteristics if backing up to a residential district:

- > Minimum lot area: 8,000 square feet
- > Minimum lot width: 70 feet
- > Minimum setbacks: Front – 30 feet, Rear – 90 feet, Sides – 10 feet.
- > Maximum lot coverage: 50%
- > Maximum density: None
- > Maximum building height: 50 feet

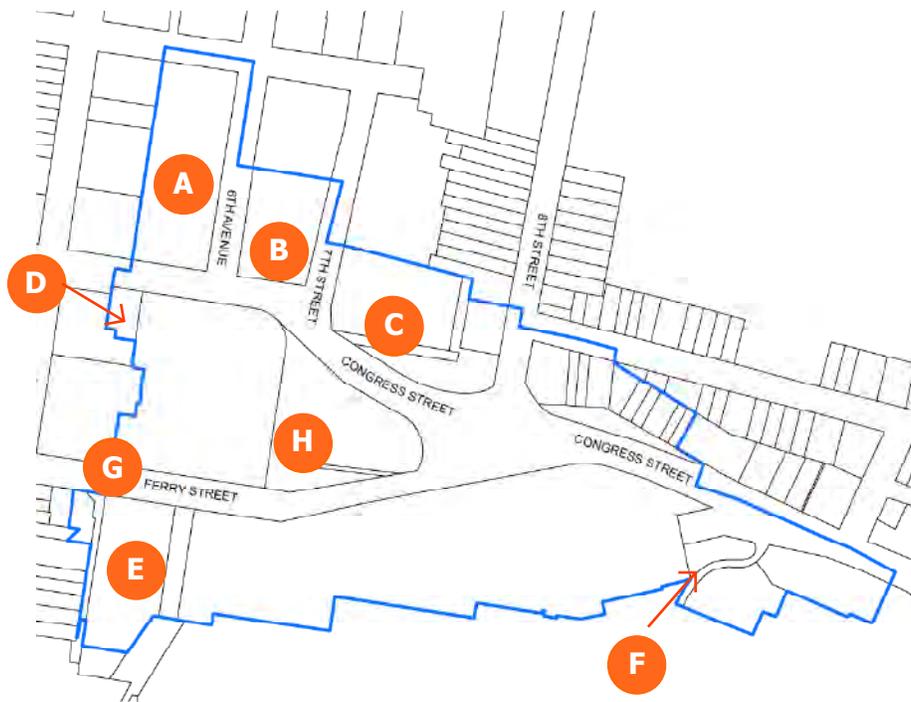
(Lot characteristics vary greatly depending upon surrounding uses.)

Parking requirements for this district are found in

§285-91. The long list of zoning requirements is of a suburban standard and incompatible with the efficient use of land in a city.

Existing land uses

The project site and the larger district to be rezoned are, by and large, completely grass covered. Except as noted in the accompanying map, the land is vacant.



- A** Educational training center housed in a former car dealership building
 - B** Active parking lot
 - C** Active parking lot
 - D** Active parking lot
 - E** Abandoned car wash structure
 - F** Private residential building
- G** Active parking lot
 - H** Inactive parking lot

Chapter 4

Public Participation

From the beginning, various stakeholders were involved in vetting preliminary schemes for the Congress Street and Ferry Street Corridor (Corridor). This group consisted of representatives from the City of Troy, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Rensselaer County and the Troy Housing Authority. United/Hedley, the preferred developer, chosen by the city for the project, conducted a handful of public meetings based upon stakeholder concepts for the Corridor. These reviews of ideas and feedback sessions were held at various locations in the neighborhood of the project site. Attendance at the sessions varied, but, at each, Troy residents offered comments, which were noted and taken into account by the development team.

Saratoga Associates, for the current planning process, sought to refine the hopes of city residents and distill their thoughts into specific ideas for the master plan. On November 11, 2008, Saratoga Associates conducted an evening workshop attended by over one hundred people. The event consisted of two exercises.



In November 2008, about 125 people packed Troy's Italian American Center to help shape the look and feel of the Corridor.

The first exercise, a visual preference survey, asked people to rate the appropriateness for the Corridor of particular buildings and development patterns flashed upon a screen. This visioning tool serves two purposes. The exercise provides a description of community-desired characteristics as reported by the residents. Also, a facilitated review of the survey, allows the community members to learn about and discuss different design options. Highly rated images contain elements that people would like to see in the Corridor. Poorly rated images illustrate development patterns that the community deems inappropriate.

The highest rated images showed a strong preference for continuing the urban form and character found in other

parts of the city – for the creation of a dense, vibrant, walkable neighborhood. Troy already has buildings five, six and seven stories in height; not surprisingly the residents reacted positively to the density that such building mass would provide. Also highly rated were buildings that came right up to the sidewalk creating a traditional downtown and urban streetscape.

Lower rated images tended to show a more suburban style of development. The audience did not like one-story buildings surrounded by parking lots. Parking lots next to sidewalks, pole signs and billboards also scored low.



One of the highest scoring images in the visual preference survey depicts a dense neighborhood with many amenities of interest to pedestrians.



Images, such as this one, that had a suburban look and feel, did not score very highly.

Following the visual preference survey, the assembly was divided into four smaller working groups. Each group, facilitated by a Saratoga Associates planner, generated a list of hopes and concerns for the Corridor. Important topics from the community’s perspective included:

- > Maintaining and enhancing Prospect Park
- > Creating a memorial to Uncle Sam at the location of his house
- > Providing a variety of higher end housing for families, grad students
- > Providing a high quality option in Troy for commercial / office space
- > Making the space an example of urban life in Troy
- > Increasing density and providing for a mix of uses
- > Connecting RPI with downtown
- > Re-engaging the park with a downtown entrance
- > Slowing traffic
- > Creating an upscale neighborhood
- > Not competing with downtown businesses
- > Creating a positive impression of Troy at this gateway
- > Bringing service businesses (e.g. grocery store) back into downtown
- > Taking advantage of community diversity (Italian markets, bistros, cafes)
- > Providing for parking, but not turning the area into a strip mall
- > Varying building heights from two to seven stories
- > Providing for day life and night life



Residents and business leaders split up into small groups to discuss hopes and concerns for the Corridor project.

Chapter 5

Exploring the options

Road realignment

The first question that had to be tackled in the Congress Street and Ferry Street Corridor focused on transportation. Even before the current project began, the stakeholders met to discuss options for rerouting traffic in a way that would increase safety on the steep slope and maximize the buildable areas that could be woven into the urban grid. In the end, the option chosen was a modification of the current street layout that resulted in easier slopes for cars and a traffic light at the corner of Eighth Street.

Creighton-Manning Engineering, LLP of Albany, New York, undertook the final road realignment design and the creation of construction documents. Their work included designing new wide sidewalks, street lighting and tree placement. The construction is slated to begin in the summer of 2009.



The final road realignment shifted the road slightly to ease the grade and fashion a better approach to the new stop light at the end of 8th Street.



Before the current project began, the stakeholders explored various options for realigning the road. One scheme (left) sought to ease the road's slope for traffic. Another scheme (middle) found ways to maximize building area by reusing the old Ferry Street roadbed. The third scheme (right) simply modifies the existing roadbed to make it safer for traffic. This scheme was the preferred alternative.

Chapter 6

Master plan options

With the new road realignment designs complete, Saratoga Associates undertook the master planning project. Working with various public and private stakeholders, we crafted a series of scenarios – all of which involved significant density, increased walkability and the use of buildings to shape public spaces.

In all of the scenarios, the old Ferry Street roadbed was re-activated as a way to open more land for development and create a quieter neighborhood experience. Another common feature is the additional access to Prospect Park.

In addition, the three scenarios attempted to identify different places as the new neighborhood's potential center of activity. It is envisioned that in this place the initial shops, restaurants and entertainment venues would emerge. Such activity is not restricted to or required in this place. However, it is viewed that in the short-term the city could not support too many additional venues without detracting from the existing downtown core.

One scheme, illustrated below, focused activity in the point defined by the confluence of Ferry and Congress streets. This very large public space was envisioned



to be multi-use – with areas for performances and outdoor seating. Unfortunately, fast roads surround the open space. With no buildings to define and enclose the area or provide programming, we expect over half of it would go largely unused. In addition, the lack of buildings to frame the space meant a lack of economic activity that would attract people to the space.



Another scheme, above, sought to create the vibrant center along the southern, park side of the project area. This would seek to place activity along Ferry Street as well as along the newly re-activated Ferry Street roadbed. The significant advantage to this concept is its ability to give people an interesting walk through up the hill in the easterly direction. It also allows the ability for commercial activity to take place at the base of the park, especially along the new connections up into Prospect Park along Eighth Street and through the pocket park at Uncle Sam’s foundation.

However, the width of the street possible along the old Ferry Street bed does not allow for the sidewalks that would be conducive to promoting activity along with automobile traffic. In addition, it is the part of the project area that is furthest from downtown – where other activity happens.

The final scheme, shown below, concentrated urban activity on the new portion of Sixth Avenue. There it imagined three mixed-use buildings along the road’s extension would define a comfortable pedestrian space



and give opportunities for establishments that would encourage street life. The two buildings on the east side of the street would frame an alley of stairs and provide for creative multi-levelled plazas that would create opportunities for additional pedestrian economic activity. As with the previously described scenario, this scheme visually and physically caps Sixth Avenue with a landmark structure.

In the end, the final scheme, with its activity focused on the extension of Sixth Avenue, offered the best option to revitalize the vacant land. The final master plan is discussed in the following section.

Building Height

The two-dimensional illustration above, while informative, fails to convey the challenging three-dimensional nature of the topography or of building heights required to achieve the desired urban density. In regards to this, the project team sought in its design to achieve the following goals, which are based upon public, client and developer comments.

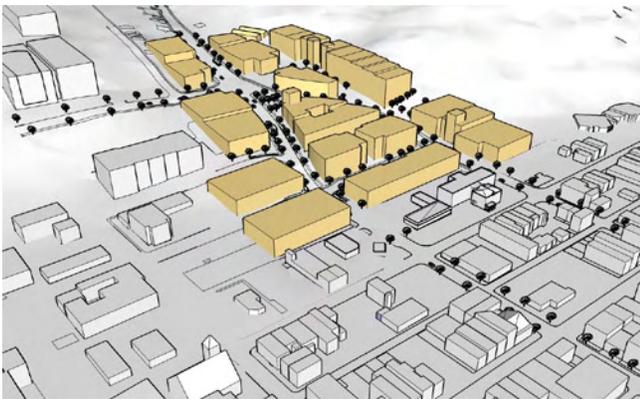
- > Ease of transition from the three- to four- story building heights in the surrounding neighborhoods.
- > Recognition of the importance of Prospect Park and the EMPAC building as visual landmarks and part of the urban viewshed.
- > Maximum density given the region’s economic realities.
- > Minimization of winter sidewalk shadows
- > Peaking design interest along this important city gateway.

The design team undertook 3-D modeling of the master plans at various stages of their development to understand how each would translate into the real world. In addition, the models helped stakeholders determine whether the economically desirable heights (up to eight stories) would work in the Corridor.

In order to accomplish this, the design team digitized approximations of the building surrounding the Corridor site. The team also created simulations of the existing topography particularly the steep slope upwards heading east and the rugged terrain heading south into Prospect Park.



Looking up Ferry Street from the bottom of the hill. This eye-level perspective shows the gradual rise in building height due to the hill and taller structures.



The maximum height for buildings in the project area will range from six stories at the bottom of the hill to eight stories along the edge of Prospect Park. Project buildings are shaded tan.



The view down Sixth Avenue and its new extension will terminate in a landmark building, which uses Prospect Park as a backdrop.

Chapter 7

Final Master Plan

Reweaving this vacant land into Troy's urban fabric is the ultimate goal of the Congress Street and Ferry Street project. The master plan achieves that goal as well as boosts the fiscal return for the city, provides for the density necessary for a reasonable economic return for the developer, and increases the quality of life for existing Troy residents.

As an urban core, and based on the majority of responses from the community, high density is desired. Within an eight-story building height maximum, it is expected that private development could accommodate some mix of the following:

- > Up to 500 residential units
- > Up to 400 student beds
- > About 30,000 square feet of retail
- > Hotel
- > Restaurants
- > Up to 450,000 square feet of commercial space
- > Movie theater
- > Structured parking

Fiscal Impact Analysis

Saratoga Associates conducted a fiscal impact analysis of a variety of proposed development scenarios. The purpose of this analysis was to estimate the amount that each potential development scheme could generate in additional tax revenue to the City of Troy and to the Troy School District. This number is then compared to the potential costs of each – and the net fiscal impact realized. The full report, including methodology and assumptions, can be found in Appendix 2.

The different scenarios, described below, are variations upon the development program described by the preferred developer chosen by the city. It is important that fiscal efficiency be just one factor in choosing a program – and should complement conditions or community goals of turning the Congress Street and Ferry Street Corridor into a vibrant urban area.

Recognizing the value of this project to Troy and to the Capital District, the city and the state may wish to employ public incentives to aid the area’s redevelopment. These incentives may include, but are not limited to, PILOT agreements, IDA funding, and/or PILOT-backed bonds.

POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENT SCENARIOS					
	Size of development	Average Household Size	Total Population	Workers per sq. ft.	Number of Workers
Scheme A					
Residential Units	400	2.13	852		
Commercial	200,000SF			1/250 SF	800
Retail	90,000SF			2.5/1000 SF	225
Hotel	65,000SF			234	23
Total Workers					1,048
Scheme B					
Residential Units	330	2.13	703		
Commercial	300,000SF			1/250 SF	1,200
Retail	60,000SF			2.5/1000 SF	150
Hotel	65,000SF			234	23
Total Workers					1,373
Scheme C					
Residential Units	320	2.13	682		
Commercial	325,000SF			1/250 SF	1,300
Retail	70,000SF			2.5/1000 SF	175
Hotel	65,000SF			234	23
Total Workers					1,498
Scheme D					
Residential Units	400	2.13	852		
Commercial	200,000SF			1/250 SF	800
Retail	90,000SF			2.5/1000 SF	225
Theater	30,000SF				12
Total Workers					1,037
Scheme E					
Residential Units	320	2.13	682		
Commercial	450,000SF			1/250 SF	1,800
Retail	70,000SF			2.5/1000 SF	175
Total Workers					1,975
Scheme F					
No development	0	2.13	0	0	0

NET FISCAL IMPACT ON CITY OF TROY						
	Scheme A	Scheme B	Scheme C	Scheme D	Scheme E	Scheme F
Total Revenues Produced by Development	\$2,920,858.98	\$2,869,683.67	\$2,938,780.15	\$3,505,439.82	\$3,160,365.26	\$4,929.47
Total Costs Produced by Development	\$1,975,394.21	\$2,161,051.07	\$2,269,680.57	\$1,963,481.22	\$1,963,481.22	\$0
Net Fiscal Impact	\$945,464.77	\$708,632.61	\$669,099.58	\$1,541,958.61	\$1,196,884.04	\$4,929.47

NET FISCAL IMPACT ON TROY SCHOOL DISTRICT						
	Scheme A	Scheme B	Scheme C	Scheme D	Scheme E	Scheme F
Total Revenues Produced by Development	\$2,161,723.91	\$1,858,329.73	\$1,827,629.97	\$2,135,379.37	\$1,855,880.58	\$987.07
Total Costs Produced by Development	\$1,704,389.92	\$1,406,121.69	\$1,363,511.94	\$1,704,389.92	\$1,363,511.94	\$0
Net Fiscal Impact	\$457,333.99	\$452,208.05	\$464,118.04	\$430,989.45	\$492,368.64	\$987.07

Sixth Avenue Sub-district

At one point in Troy’s history, Sixth Avenue was a train passage. Converted to automobile use, the road ends abruptly at Congress Street. The master plan calls for Sixth Avenue to be extended across the existing vacant lot and end at Ferry Street. This change will provide opportunities for additional street frontage – opening a large area for development in a manner more consistent with the desired density and vibrancy envisioned for the Corridor.

The extension of Sixth Avenue also allows the creation of a new urban destination along a major road that cuts north to south through downtown Troy. The creation and design of this portion of Sixth Avenue as a vibrant boulevard can set the tone for the redesign and revitalization of the entire road from Hoosick Street – infilling this major road with the density and vibrancy lost during urban renewal.

Within the Corridor project, this section of Sixth Avenue is also designed to be the activity hub. This small stretch of street-level retail can offer a different



Sixth Avenue (before at left) will be extended one block south across the vacant lot to end at Ferry Street (right).

commercial real estate product than currently available on the ground floor of older Troy buildings, which were built when retail operations had different size and visibility requirements than stores do today. As the closest portion of the Corridor to the Central Business District, this portion of Sixth Avenue can add to the growing revitalization of downtown Troy retail businesses.

Bringing Back Old Ferry Street

Walking around the project area, you can easily see a wide flat way indicating the former route of Ferry Street. The road was moved north to facilitate moving traffic through the site – an ignominious goal in an urban setting.



However, the old path provides an opportunity to open up street frontage along the large swatch of land at the southern edge of the site. This portion of the Corridor has enormous potential for lodging or residential uses as it sits along the edge of Prospect Park.



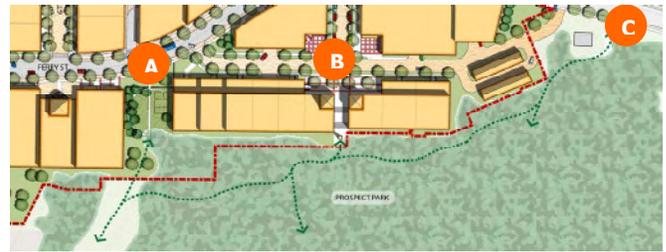
Reusing the Old Ferry Street roadbed (shown above looking west) will open up land along the southern portion of the Corridor to dense development.

Such a strategy not only benefits the master plan, but it also aids in the reactivation of the park. Adding activity

along Old Ferry Street, with new connections up and into the park, make this edge of the green space less foreboding. The new connections into the park are discussed in the following section.

Parks and public places

Currently there is only one official entrance to Prospect Park – via a road at the top of the hill relatively far from downtown. During the master planning process, the stakeholders identified three additional means of access to the park. All are along Ferry Street or Congress Street and provide pedestrian routes to the green space closer to downtown.



- A** Uncle Sam Foundation Park. Buried in this space is the foundation to Uncle Sam’s house. The park, discussed more in the next section, offers an opportunity for pedestrian access to the park that is close to downtown.
- B** This is an extension of 8th Avenue with a pedestrian way from the newly reactivated Old Ferry Street continuing the public way between buildings with a stairway into the park.
- C** Just north of the project area is an old roadbed that offers another potential access to the park. This could be a third pedestrian trailhead that offers access to a new set of trails envisioned for the north end of the park.

As part of the master planning process, the citizen group advocating for the park was consulted. The group’s president, Peter Grimm, in an informal meeting, expressed enthusiasm for the Corridor project and hope that whatever happened along the park’s edge would make allowances for expanded use of and access to this side of Prospect Park.

Uncle Sam Foundation Park

The War of 1812 might not have changed the county’s boundaries, but it did produce some significant personalities. One in particular is the character of Uncle Sam. Born Samuel Wilson in what is now known as

Arlington, Massachusetts, Wilson and his brother moved to New Hampshire and eventually to Troy. Once in Troy, the two brothers created a brick making business followed by a butcher shop. The butcher shop grew to a slaughterhouse that employed a hundred men and could butcher a 1,000 head of cattle in one week. Sam Wilson and his wife, Aunt Betsy, were known to be kind and amicable. Sam Wilson eventually received the moniker ‘Uncle Sam’.



Uncle Sam’s house at the corner of 7th Avenue and Ferry Street. (Photo: Rensselaer County Historical Society)

When the war of 1812 started, the United States established military camps around the northeast including one in East Greenbush not far from Troy. Sam Wilson received the contract to deliver meat to the soldiers. A common practice of the military is to stamp the initials U.S. on shipments

intended for military use. When shipments from Sam Wilson came to the camp, it was assumed that the initials of the United States were actually that of Uncle Sam. Soon the acronym caught on and the name Uncle Sam became synonymous with the United States. The character eventually grew to depict a feisty middle-aged patriot ready to jump into action at a moment’s notice.

Wilson lived in a house near the corner of 7th avenue and Ferry Street. The three-story wood framed home had little to no decoration. Either the first floor or basement of the structure appeared to be built into the hillside with the next two floors and attic on top of the outcropping. Although the foundation is currently difficult to decipher, the building site is undeveloped and centrally located within the Congress and Ferry Corridor planning boundary.

Many people in Troy have spoken up that Uncle Sam’s history represents an important potential cultural draw for the city. One component of that will be a park on the site of Uncle Sam’s Troy house. It is not within the scope of this project to design this park. However, there are existing examples that can be used as starting points when the time comes to focus on this project.

The park is meant to be a small urban pocket park. It should interpret the history related to the site and be a gateway to Prospect Park. The goal, however, is to keep the boundary of the Uncle Sam Park tightly contained.



There are numerous ways that house sites, such as Uncle Sam’s foundation, have been interpreted as a cultural asset within a pocket park. A simple stone and chain fence marks the walls of Henry David Thoreau’s house at Walden Pond in Massachusetts (top left). In Philadelphia, Ben Franklin’s house has been “resurrected” as a simple frame structure that shows the scale of the building. Interesting pieces of the foundation are viewable under glass (top right). George Washington’s house in Philadelphia is temporarily marked by a wood rail of wood along the ground with nearby signs explaining the site’s significance (bottom left). Working with a local architect, a Troy resident hopes to squeeze a grander interpretive center on the site (bottom right).

Designing the Point

The narrow, triangular piece of land at the confluence of Congress Street and Ferry Street represents an intriguing design challenge. It is unlikely that a triangle building, so typical in Troy's past, would be built in today's economic environment. Though if a developer offered such a structure, it would be welcome.

Instead, for the purposes of this master plan, we imagined a park inhabiting the 50 to 75 feet from the point down the hill. Such a concept has its own challenges. Vehicles on Ferry Street going up the hill will stop and start at the traffic light causing noise and pollution. On the northern side moving down the hill, cars and trucks will likely pass fairly quickly, despite our efforts to visually narrow the traffic corridor with trees and buildings.

To solve those challenges, the design might use the slope to depress the park. Sitting a few feet below the traffic might visually isolate park users from cars. A water feature with a constant gurgle may help to escape traffic noise. To the southern, downslope, side of the triangle park, a neighboring business could use the public space as a courtyard or food area.



The triangle formed by the new street alignment offers an interesting design challenge.



A potential rendering of Point Park seeks ways to give park users a respite from the urban excitement around them.

Chapter 8

Form-based Code

In order to realize the vision of this master plan, it was decided that standard Euclidean zoning would be insufficient. Such standard zoning ordinances focus on separating uses; places where people live are separate from where they work or where they shop. This is exactly the opposite of a vibrant downtown.

In a vibrant downtown, a mix of uses is required. Residential units provide the customers who can walk to shop, dine and drink in the evenings. During the day office workers circulate around restaurants at lunch and shop before heading home. The different audiences provide the 24/7 street life that makes urban living attractive and starts to bring people back to downtowns.

Vibrancy in a downtown area is shaped by the physical relation of buildings to the public space rather than the uses within those buildings. Some of the most important tenets include:

- > Building walls should shape walkable spaces, especially sidewalks and pocket parks
- > Pedestrian facades should be engaging. Window-shopping generates interest; blank walls and parking lots kill vibrancy.
- > Rebalance pedestrian / car equation – people in vibrant downtowns walk.
- > Streetscape requirements must create safe pedestrian envelopes. Sidewalks on busy roads must be buffered with on-street parking and a planting strip.
- > Prohibit un-urban uses. Traditional gas stations, big box stores... things that make walking difficult should be prohibited... unless they reshape their physical form to fit into the urban core.



In a downtown, building walls, such as the fronts of these buildings on River Street, shape the sidewalk space. The large retail windows make a walk interesting.

Form-based code achieves this goal. Ordinances written this way stress the built environment – the way that the private buildings shape the public realm. The code uses graphics and example pictures to illustrate the community’s vision and to make sure that developers, elected/appointed officials, staff and citizens all understand.

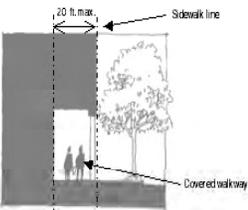
Uses are not ignored; instead they are just not the primary focus. Also, the goal is to specify broad categories of allowed or prohibited uses. For example, industrial uses are not allowed anywhere in this district. Retail, as a broad category, is allowed, but there is no more specific subcategory rules that might, for example, allow barbershops, but not pet grooming.

The new zoning district for the Congress Street and Ferry Street Corridor – designated T-5 Urban Core District* – encompasses 21.3 acres. It includes a sub-district that fronts the new extension of Sixth Avenue of 3.1 acres. This area has the same rules as the greater district, but encourages more ground floor retail to spark 24/7 activity.

The actual language of the form-based code has been drafted as part of this project and resides in the Appendix and the plan. It is expected that this is a first step to revamping the city’s entire code to make it easier for the private sector to give the community what it wants.

C. Frontages Allowed

1. Arcade

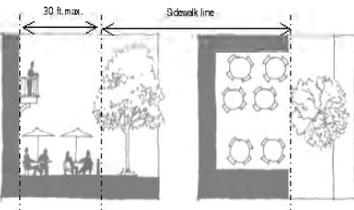



Examples of an arcade, including its use on a corner

Arcade Requirements

- Building shall not be setback more than 20 feet from the sidewalk line.
- No elements of the arcade shall cross the sidewalk line.
- Arcade must be defined by a series of evenly spaced columns.
- Arcade may be used for outdoor seating.
- Arcade may be used abing a building or at a building’s corner.

2. Outdoor Café




Examples of fencing used to define an outdoor café.

Outdoor Café Requirements

- Café shall be on the front of the building.
- Building shall not be setback more than 30 feet from the sidewalk line.
- No elements of the café shall cross the sidewalk line.
- Café may be defined by a fence no higher than 30 inches.
- Café may be abing a building or at a building’s corner.



The new T-5 Urban Core zoning district, outlined in blue, encompasses the entire Corridor project area plus a little extra that is owned by the preferred developer or the city. The orange area represents the Sixth Avenue Subdistrict, in which the focus is hoped to be first floor retail, restaurants and entertainment along the extension of Sixth Avenue to Ferry Street.

This page from the T-5 Urban Core form-based code shows how drawings and example photos illustrate a community’s vision. This graphical format is more successful at achieving that vision than typical legal zoning language.

* The T-5 Urban Core designation of the district is an effort to get away from the idea that some districts (e.g. B-4 Central Commercial) are primarily business/commercial based while others are residential. Urban Core describes the district’s locality and function.

Chapter 9

Parking in the Congress / Ferry Street Corridor

Certainly as Troy seeks to support any moves downtown by retailers and residents, the master plan must find ways to accommodate the automobile. This is particularly important in the Capital District, which has an efficient and growing, but far from comprehensive public transit system. People still need to drive and provisions must be made for storing the cars of residents, office workers and shoppers.

However, in an urban environment we must be careful not to over compensate. Too often cities, including in Troy, require parking for too many automobiles. Compounding this problem are the zoning rules that allow cars to be parked in front of buildings instead of behind, on the side of, or underneath structures. Such rules cause create vast empty parking lots, so typical in suburbs and so toxic when seeking to create vitality. Nothing kills the ability of a pedestrian to walk safely or enjoyably than a large parking lot or big, blank garage wall.

The vision for the Congress Street and Ferry Street Corridor is for a vibrant, mixed-use district. To realize that, the parking strategy must balance automobile needs with those of the pedestrian. This section outlines the ways in which parking requirements and the design of the parking place – lots and garages – must change.

As described below, this chapter calls for the implementation of the following strategies.

- > Change zoning so that there is no minimum parking requirement in the Corridor.
- > Change zoning so that parking is not the dominant feature in the landscape. As much parking as possible should be in garages, behind or under buildings or on-street.
- > Enact design standards in the zoning that helps any standalone garages or parking lots become part of the pedestrian experience instead of detracting from it.

Change zoning so that there is no minimum parking requirement in the Corridor.

Parking standards in Troy presume that every most people for every use will need a car. In an urban setting, this is wrong.

Public transit will play an important role in making sure people get from place to place. And, people will walk. The attraction of living downtown, for those who choose it, is the ability to walk to relax, shop or even to work. Others, visitors to a vibrant urban fore, will drive, find a place to park, and if the area is designed properly, get out and walk between stores, restaurants and other amenities.

Each store does not require a full complement of parking; instead it is shared across the neighborhood. Yet the zoning code in Troy, as in many cities, requires too many parking spaces. Two exceptions are the Central Commercial zoning district, which has no parking requirement, and the Hoosick Street Overlay District, which has reduced requirements. Otherwise the entire city uses suburban style standards. At the rate required by the code, land in the Corridor would be quickly chewed up for parking instead of going to good economic uses as a residential, retail or office.

Imagine that someone wanted to build a small office building – let’s say five-stories at 10,000 square feet per floor. This 50,000-square foot office building would, by code, require 150 parking spots. Each space, including aisles, would average 300 square feet for a total of over an acre of parking. Or, what if the developer wanted to put in 250 residential units? Under the current parking requirements, 500 spaces would be needed – almost three and a half acres of land would have to be consumed for parking.

On a project of only 15 acres, this represents a large percentage of the total land devoted to storing automobiles. With so much parking, the planning area would quickly become populated with parking lots, which would rob this downtown land of the pedestrian vitality so crucial for success. Instead this land could be put to better use for the developer, city and community.

Too often communities ask if there is enough parking. This is the wrong question. Relationships are between people and we need to make sure that all modes of moving people are accommodated. In a downtown, parking requirements depend upon time, not on use. The first uses into the project area will require a certain amount – not as much as mandated by code – but certainly some. However each subsequent use should be allowed to share that parking rather than building

all of its own. In addition, as buildings fill in and the pedestrian experience becomes more engaging, people will be inclined to walk longer distances. Studies indicate that most people, in a downtown setting, will walk up to 2000 or so feet comfortably – more than enough to cover all of the Corridor as well as many surrounding areas. Eventually, as in Troy’s downtown, the required number of spaces for each new project becomes zero. Business picks up because enough spaces have been provided by the city or the market to cover needs and the density is such that people want to walk.

Across the Corridor, it is estimated that 800 to 1000 parking spaces will be required at buildout. These spaces can be in standalone parking garages, on-street, under buildings, or in surrounding areas. In terms of the zoning ordinance, the parking strategy calls for no parking requirement in the Corridor. Instead the following guide should help developers and city officials calculate an appropriate amount. If followed religiously for every use in the Corridor, this guide would quickly call for too much parking. However it is a starting point for discussions, research and calculations. As more and more development occurs in the Corridor, builders and city officials must think about parking within the area as a whole and not worrying about spaces for individual uses.

PARKING GUIDANCE	
The applicant and the planning board may use the following parking ratios as guidance in determining whether there are a sufficient number of spaces. These are not parking minimums. In many case, fewer parking spaces should be built. Earlier buildings will require more spaces. Thanks to shared and public parking, later buildings will require less parking.	
Residential (including student housing)	0.75 space per dwelling unit
Retail	0.75 space per 500 square feet
Office	0.75 space per 750 square feet
Lodging	0.75 space per rented room

Change zoning so that parking is not the dominant feature in the landscape. As much parking as possible should be in garages, behind or under buildings or on the street.

The Corridor is part of a city. Here, unlike at suburban malls, the welcoming vista should not be a sea of cars or, worse, a vast empty asphalt lot. Buildings and the public realm they shape should be the dominant image.

In a city, relationships are between people and people – not cars and people. The front doors of buildings should address the street for pedestrians to use. Cars, the secondary mode of transit in a working, vibrant city, should be conveniently tucked behind, under or inside buildings.

A parking garage will be needed to make sure the Corridor functions. In our regional economic market, the private sector will not be able to charge enough in rent or the sales price to cover the cost of all needed parking, especially parking that is inside or under buildings. The developer, the city or a public/private partnership, should build one or more garages in the Corridor. Office workers and shoppers could use the public garage(s), which should carry an appropriate, though not extravagant parking fee. It might even be metered during the daytime and free after 6pm or 8pm. Residents could use the space at night.

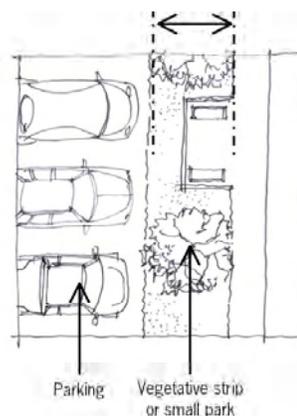
Finally, we must not rule out on-street parking. Such spaces, provided for in the master plan and road realignment for the Corridor, should be a main source of short-term parking during the day. Spaces should be metered with limits ranging from 15 minutes to two hours.

Enact design standards in the zoning that help any standalone garages or parking lots become part of the pedestrian experience instead of detracting from it.

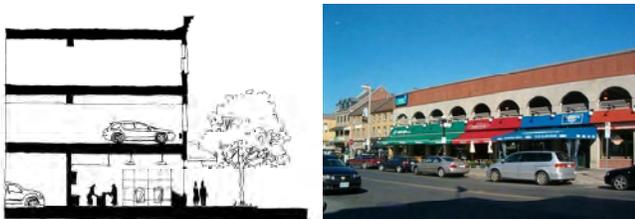
It would be nice if all spaces were in, under or behind buildings. That, however, especially in the short-term, is unrealistic. It will be necessary for parking garages and parking lots to be constructed.

It is vital that when garages are constructed, that the appearance of the structures does not detract from the urban qualities of the Corridor. This means putting them back behind liner functional liner buildings on main roads, allowing no blank walls on other public ways, and making their design appropriate for the district.

Parking lots are harder to urbanize. Those that must border sidewalks should be set back at least 20 to 25 feet. The space between the sidewalk and the parking lot should not contain a buffer that might include trees, shrubs, benches, tables and urban fences.



Example of how a parking lot can present a pleasant face to the pedestrian way.



Example of how parking garages can be tucked behind or above active parts of the cityscape.