
The conversion of the former Masonic Lodge on North Main Street to a multipurpose Community Center would give the Main Street business district a strong northern anchor.

The 15,000 square foot Masonic Lodge would make an excellent Community Center because of its size, facilities, and location. The building has been offered as a donation to the Village, but the building requires \$385,000 in renovations to function effectively as a Community Center.

With no Community Center of any size or kind, the Village has a desperate need for such a multipurpose facility, and this project has repeatedly been given the highest priority by citizens, the youth, and community organizations.

Total estimated cost: \$385,000

f. *Parking Improvements*

Both public and private parking conditions in the Central Business District are very poor. As noted in the Needs section, the expanded County Office complex lot on North Washington Street is filled to capacity, and other lots in the Village have problems related to poor conditions, blight, poor layout, inadequate signage, and poor connection to business destinations. A comprehensive parking study is needed to develop the most effective long term solutions to complicated problems. For purposes of this *Strategic Plan*, the following basic projects are important to the Village and CBD:

- Increased parking in the area of the County Office Building complex through the construction of a deck, a new “long term” lot, or development of a shared parking arrangement with private owners such as the nearby Elks.
- Improvement of public parking areas with signage and landscaping.
- Improvement of private parking areas to remove blight.

The issue of removing parking meters must be considered in the development of a comprehensive improvement plan. Meters can have a negative effect on businesses, but they do produce important revenues that would need to be replaced. It

is critical that prime parking areas that serve the businesses be controlled as short term spaces. Long term spaces for downtown workers should be identified for locations more distant than the business sites themselves.

3. Housing

a. *Housing Rehabilitation in Targeted Neighborhoods*

A housing condition survey indicates over 40 percent of the housing units in the Village that are located in 1-4 unit structures are substandard. The survey documented over 700 substandard structures and almost 850 substandard housing units in the Village. Approximately 300 units are severely substandard.

Based on need and interest determined by the survey, the *Strategic Plan* recommends that targeted housing rehabilitation programs be undertaken in the North Washington and King Street neighborhoods over the next five years. These programs must address the needs of low income homeowners and investor owners who provide housing for low income renters. Longer range targeted programs should be developed in the Bellinger Avenue and Mohawk Street neighborhoods.

Total estimated cost: \$3,000,000 total
\$400,000 per project

b. *Non-targeted Housing Rehabilitation*

Except for the more recently developed northwest quadrant of the Village, areas outside the above mentioned targeted neighborhoods have the need for spot housing rehabilitation. Of the over 1,100 units surveyed outside the above neighborhoods, almost 25 percent were deemed substandard.

A multi-year, non-targeted, Village-wide housing rehabilitation program is proposed to address the needs of low income, owner occupied households outside targeted neighborhoods. These needs are generally more moderate in terms of the rehabilitation required to bring units up to a standard condition.

Total estimated cost: \$1,000,000

c. Homeownership Assistance Program

The Village's Homeownership Assistance Program should be continued as long as the market and demand justifies the program. This program will help stabilize neighborhoods, and increase the number of owner occupied housing units in the Village. It will also encourage and enable young families to settle in the Village, and make housing affordable to low income, first time homebuyers.

Total estimated cost: \$1,000,000

d. Senior Citizen Housing Development

With an aging population and only 99 assisted senior citizen housing units available through the Housing Authority, the Village needs additional specialized housing for senior citizens who can no longer afford to maintain their single-family homes. Such housing will enable seniors to remain close to their friends, relatives, and support services.

A senior citizen project has been proposed for development on East Steele Street in the extreme southeast portion of the Village, and this *Strategic Plan* endorses the implementation of this project and others as may be developed.

Total estimated cost: \$4,000,000

e. Public Housing Modernization/Improvements

The Herkimer Housing Authority has identified the following improvement projects at the Mid-Town Apartments, Eastern Gardens, and Creekside Court complexes:

Mid-Town Apartments	—	Landscaping Fencing Flooring
Eastern Gardens	—	Tree removal/landscaping Sidewalk replacement Entrance improvements Fencing Apartment remodeling Security improvements

Creekside Court

— Entrance improvements
Landscaping
Parking
Security improvements
Fencing
Apartment remodeling
Access/egress improvements

These projects, and others that may be added in future years, are important to the Village and the low income residents of these complexes, and are incorporated into this *Strategic Plan*.

Total estimated cost: \$500,000

f. Code Enforcement

Improved property maintenance and attention to dangerous health and safety conditions are important to maintaining the Village housing stock over the long term. Active and effective code enforcement is critical to maintaining a safe and attractive housing environment, and will contribute significantly to neighborhood revitalization.

Systematic inspections of rental properties and strong enforcement and strengthening of property maintenance codes where necessary should be considered in future years.

Total estimated cost: Minimal

4. Recreation and Open Space

a. *Basloe Field Recreation Site Improvements and Expansion*

This major recreation site includes a ball field, basketball court, tennis court, play equipment, and the municipal pool. All facilities require upgrading and renovation. This site has excellent expansion potential if the DPW facility is relocated and the vacant heavy commercial property acquired. Additional baseball and all purpose fields and basketball and tennis courts could be on the expanded site. Further expansion could include lands of the underutilized industrial building north of the park site.

*Total estimated cost: Improvements - \$300,000
Expansion - \$1,000,000*

b. *Myers Park Enhancements*

Although this park is presently in good condition, proper maintenance of the park is critical. Additional landscaping, gazebo improvements, and replacement lighting should be considered in the years ahead to enhance the park.

Total estimated cost: \$100,000

c. *Brookwood Park Improvements*

Erosion control and culvert improvements to the Bellinger Brook channel are needed and recommended. Improvements to the access road, picnic facilities, and trails are also recommended.

Total estimated cost: \$200,000

d. *Mohawk River Fishing Access Site Improvements*

The access road, parking area, and picnic pavilion at the Mohawk River fishing access site are all in need of refurbishment.

Total estimated cost: \$25,000

e. Waterfront Trail Development

With an extensive but largely inaccessible waterfront, the opportunity exists within the Village to develop a recreational trail system along the Mohawk River and West Canada Creek. These trails could be linked to the Canalway Trail as well as any linear park/trail ultimately developed on the right-of-way of the Hydraulic Canal (this project is discussed below).

There is a concept plan to extend a multipurpose trail between the Village and the Village of Middleville along the West Canada Creek on an abandoned rail line. Local trails could link this trail with the Canalway Trail.

Total estimated cost: \$500,000 - \$1,000,000

f. Skateboard Facility Development

A new Skateboard Park facility is needed and is perhaps best suited for development at Marginal Road Park.

Total estimated cost: \$100,000

5. Economic Development

In addition to the Central Business District projects identified above, the Village should support appropriate industrial growth, promote the adaptive reuse of antiquated industrial buildings, and undertake and support projects that foster heritage tourism.

a. "Gems Along the Mohawk" Project

This project involves the private development of lands along the Erie Canal owned by the NYS Canal Corporation as a tourism, information, and retail center. First phase development will approach \$2 million. The second phase involves development of a Transportation/Mohawk Valley Interpretive Center at a cost of just under \$3 million. Public funding is needed to maximize development, and accelerate the full implementation of both phases of the project.

Total estimated cost: \$5,000,000

b. Industrial Site Redevelopment

Older, multistory industrial properties on East and West German Street should be examined to determine possible future uses. Although the buildings are not well-suited for large modern industries, the buildings might be adaptable to smaller businesses or even conversion to housing or other non-industrial use. The Hale building on West German Street is currently for sale, and the Village should consider working with and assisting any interested buyer of this property.

Total estimated cost: To be determined

c. Interpretive Signage/Heritage Tourism

The Mohawk Valley has the potential to capitalize on its rich history, and make heritage tourism a more significant component of the local economy. The Village's "Historic Four Corners" area and the new "Gems Along the Mohawk" Project can foster and increase heritage tourism in the area.

Interpretive signage would contribute to the public understanding of local history and the historic sites remaining in the Village. A comprehensive signage program in nearby Little Falls is helping to expand heritage tourism in that City.

Total estimated cost: \$50,000

6. Blight Removal

It is important to address blight problems in all areas of a community. Blight contributes to disinvestment and inhibits new investment. It also minimizes the positive effects of improvement projects.

In the Village, virtually every older neighborhood has dilapidated housing structures and outbuildings that should be condemned and demolished. The Hydraulic Canal is a major blight and should be filled and redeveloped. The substandard fencing and medians in the Route 5/Albany Street corridor cast major blight in the commercial area of the Village, as does poor streetscape and facade conditions.

Blight removal should be considered a part of housing, neighborhood, and commercial revitalization projects and programs.