

# I. INTRODUCTION

In response to a perceived economic decline, deterioration of the quality of life, and with widespread community concern over the condition of its Downtown, the Village of Whitney Point decided that a Strategic Plan for the revitalization of the Downtown area was sorely needed.

This document details the issues facing the Downtown today, while providing specific guidance regarding identified and prioritized actions that will affect positive change in the Downtown. This Downtown Strategic Plan can be used as a tool for implementation of specific actions that will achieve specific results. The Plan can be used to better identify current and changing economic conditions, as well as to understand the forces behind such conditions and trends. The preparation of this document served as the impetus for soliciting public input with respect to identifying the needs, development opportunities, and preferences for future growth; to prioritize attainable goals; and, most importantly, to establish a step-by-step process for achieving a healthy, vibrant Downtown that provides basic goods and services to local residents and employees, as well as attracting visitors from outside the area.

The recommendations and benchmarked projects in this document detail prioritized actions needed to bring about positive change. The information provided in the Action Agenda gives community leaders a guide for implementation and resources. This plan should be continually updated as progress is made and issues affecting the downtown change.

To fund the Village of Whitney Point's Downtown Strategic Plan project, a request of \$13,800 in grant funds was made to the Technical Assistance Program of the New York State Governor's Office for Small Cities. These funds were awarded to the Village in the fall of 2006. The Village of Whitney Point provided \$9,200 in Village and in-kind services as match for the grant. Thoma Development Consultants (Thoma) was hired by the Village to assist in the preparation of the plan. Cynthia Bickford Teter, Registered Landscape Architect, served as a sub-consultant.

Work on the Strategic Plan began in the spring of 2007. To formulate the goals and objectives of the Strategic Plan, it was important to convene a committee of local stakeholders to guide the process. This would assure that the Strategic Plan was locally driven. This Steering Committee provided significant assistance in the development of this Plan through participation in work sessions, assisting in surveys, and general guidance based on his or her individual experience with the Village. A downtown inventory and surveys were undertaken to provide background data on the downtown and to allow for additional public input. The full process used to develop the plan is detailed fully in Part II, Process.

## II. PROCESS

### STEERING COMMITTEE

Since there was not an existing entity in the community charged with dealing with downtown issues, it was determined that a local Steering Committee, comprised of persons with diverse backgrounds and expertise, should be established. Persons associated with local businesses, civic organizations, municipal governments, boards, or residents were included in the group. The Steering Committee Members consisted of:

Charlie Aiello  
Sharon Ball  
Pattie Chaffee  
David Downs  
Jim Johnston  
Sherry Scully

Juanita Aleba  
Michael Baxter  
Michael Decker  
Carol Eaton  
Joy Olson  
Gerald Whitehead

This Steering Committee was responsible for guiding the planning process; developing a Position Statement; defining the needs, direction, and goals, of the downtown; and determining actions to meet those goals. Thoma served as facilitator for the Steering Committee. This plan, and the conclusions made in it, are reflective of the views of the members of the Steering Committee based on a thoughtful review and discussion of data and public input. The Committee's knowledge and vested interest in the study area, as detailed following, and the Village were great assets to the project.

### STUDY AREA

The Village of Whitney Point does not have a zoned "Central Business District" that clearly delineates the downtown area. Therefore, the first job of the Steering Committee was to establish boundaries for the study area. It was determined that the study should focus on Main Street and the residential neighborhood to the south. Based on this, the study area was determined to be bounded by the Tioughnioga River to the north and east; Liberty Street and Railroad Street to the south; and westward to the intersection of Main Street, Railroad Street and the railroad. This includes all or part of Academy Street, 119<sup>th</sup> Street, and Collins Street. Map 1 in Appendix 1 shows the boundaries of the Study area, hereinafter referred to as the "downtown".

## STUDY METHODOLOGY

**Downtown Strategic Plan** - The members of the Steering Committee convened at an initial meeting to discuss the project and outline the scope of the study. Following the initial meeting, a series of work sessions were held throughout the summer of 2007 to determine the needs of the downtown and create a vision for its revitalization. Since any successful downtown revitalization effort must be based on a healthy downtown economy, one of the first activities undertaken was the development of a formal Position Statement for the Whitney Point Downtown. A Position Statement describes where the Downtown is, or should be, “positioned” in the market based on market information, community desires, and realistic expectations. It identifies a Downtown specialization or niche based on a primary consumer segment served and/or set of goods and services offered. It includes a synopsis of the Downtown’s major market groups and a description of its opportunities for growth. A Position Statement also distinguishes Downtown’s competitive advantage versus alternative commercial districts. The Village of Whitney Points’ Position Statement is:

*The Village of Whitney Point, a small village located at the confluence of the Tioughnioga and Otsego Rivers, benefits from its location on Interstate 81 and the intersection of several major NYS highways. Whitney Point possesses a quaint, small town character with charming historic architecture. With a number of eating establishments, the downtown draws significant business from thru-traffic on the major highways, particularly those traveling to nearby universities. Many Village residents live within walking distance of the Downtown, including numerous senior citizens. In addition to students, faculty, and parents of the local elementary and high school, these local residents support downtown businesses and shops that supply everyday goods and services. The Downtown also has a number of health and wellness related businesses catering to the surrounding community. The waterfront and nearby recreational parks and trails are valuable resources that draw visitors to the Whitney Point from throughout the region, and serve to support local eateries, health and wellness related services, and convenience businesses.*

This Statement, and the sentiments of the Steering Committee, place great emphasis on maintaining the downtown’s historic character, while creating a diverse economy.

As part of a brainstorming exercise, the Steering Committee identified the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges facing the Whitney Point downtown area today. Possible actions to address identified issues were discussed, as were the causes of past failures. A community-wide meeting was held in June of 2007 to allow for additional citizen input.

Based on the initial priorities discussed, and the results of the surveys detailed below, the goal of the Committee was to prioritize downtown issues and opportunities and then formulate an Action Agenda, consisting of general recommendations and benchmarked projects that would attempt to address the most urgent needs of the Study Area. The process of prioritizing needs was also aided by a review of relevant demographic information.

## SURVEYS

Once the study area was delineated, an on-site inventory of each of the downtown area's buildings was undertaken. Property owners, residents, and business owners were also surveyed. The surveys were used to support or refute information gathered on-site, provide additional information on the building and its tenants, and to identify issues and trends in the downtown. These surveys are detailed below.

**Exterior Visual Survey/Inventory** - In order to quantify the existing uses and conditions of downtown Whitney Point, a comprehensive inventory of the downtown was undertaken in the summer of 2007. The survey had two primary focuses: (1) to identify the current uses of downtown buildings, and (2) to assess the general condition of the structures located within the Study Area. The survey was completed using information gathered from Broome County Real Property Tax records, the Village of Whitney Point Village Clerk, tax maps, and the on-site observations. A written survey report was completed for each tax parcel. Secondary outbuildings (small storage sheds, garages) were not included in the survey. A computer database was developed to track all of the survey results.

**Property Owner Survey** – A survey was mailed to all property owners in the downtown. The purpose of the survey was to identify current uses and occupants of buildings, to gather input on the owner's perceived strengths and weaknesses of the downtown, and to determine income levels of study area residents. Survey respondents were generally in agreement regarding the major strengths and weaknesses of the downtown. A copy of the opinion survey detailed below was also included in the mailing.

**Resident Income Survey** – In order to determine income levels for residents in the target area, an income survey was conducted for all owner-occupied and income property units in the downtown study area. Survey responses were received from 38 owner-occupied units and 5 rental units. This represents 102 people in the neighborhood. Nearly 65% of all of these persons were low-to-moderate in income.

**Business Owner Survey** – A survey was also distributed to individual business in the downtown based upon input from the Steering Committee. The survey format was similar to that used in the Property Owner Survey and, although the response rate was low, resulted in similar responses. A copy of the opinion survey detailed below was also included in the mailing.

**Resident Opinion Survey** – An opinion survey was mailed to a random sampling of Village and Town residents. A total of 100 surveys were distributed to Village residents and 30 to Town residents. Opinion surveys were also included in mailings to downtown business and property owners. 69 surveys were returned. The survey was used to gauge local residents' perception of the downtown and to obtain local input on its future direction.

The survey instruments used in the above surveys are included in Appendix 2.



### III. HISTORY OF WHITNEY POINT

Situated at the confluence of the Tioughnioga and Otselic Rivers, Town of Triangle, Broome County, in the Southern Tier of New York State, the Village of Whitney Point was first settled as a military tract in 1791. During the early settlement years, the Village was centered about the “point” where the two rivers meet. The first postmaster was Thomas Whitney who settled in the area around 1824. His influence as postmaster is reported to be the origin of the community’s name.

The Village was incorporated in 1871. By this time, a self sufficient community had evolved including a commercial Main Street hub. The Village included a passenger train depot and the ability to ship products to and from the Village via rail. The Main Street commercial center was not only supported by the residents of the small village, but also the farms which surrounded Whitney Point as well. Unfortunately, a fire devastated the community in 1897, destroying 54 buildings. The Village residents were diligent, and began to rebuild almost immediately. This is a primary reason that the Village’s Main Street structures are approximately the same vintage. In 1935, a flood devastated the valley. President Theodore Roosevelt toured the area and authorized the construction of a dam over the Otselic River. The dam controlled all future flooding and created a 1,000 acre reservoir, Whitney Point Lake, which provides recreational pursuits right outside of the Village.

Whitney Point Village eventually included grocery, clothing, and hardware stores, a movie theater, hotels, library, banks, service businesses, an Agway, barbershops, and hairdressers. There were and are a number of Main Street residences, primarily on the western side of the street. The strong, idyllic, Small Town America atmosphere would remain into the 1960’s.

The mass production of the automobile changed the face of Upstate New York and the nation. Workers could now travel outside of their communities of residence for employment opportunities. This began a slow and steady decline, particularly in the farming industry. During World Wars I and II, Southern Tier industries were heavily involved in the war effort. Two of the area’s largest industrial employers, Endicott Johnson Shoes and Computing-Tabulation-Recording Company, IBM’s predecessor, provided both shoes and boots for the U.S. Army and time recorders for the military.

Endicott Johnson Shoes and IBM were both located in Endicott, New York, approximately 15 miles from Whitney Point. During both WWI and WWII, Endicott Johnson Shoes employed between 18,000 to 20,000 persons. In 1943, IBM employed over 10,000 persons. These industries not only impacted the economy of the area, but the social fabric as well. The companies were pioneers in creating employee benefit packages, and developed community gathering places for their employees and their families during off work hours. This included parks, country club memberships, and musical entertainment, to name a few. Endicott Johnson Shoes also impacted local farms by providing a market for tanneries that produced the shoe leather.

In the early 1960's, New York State finished the construction of Interstate 81 through the Southern Tier of New York, northward, and beyond. The 1960's also spawned the development of "suburbia": housing tract developments, malls, and supermarket chains. Now families could travel by automobile from their little communities to larger shopping areas. This negatively impacted small USA Main Streets, especially retail enterprises that either closed or fled to malls. In the 1970's, Northeast industries also began a downward spiral as employers had to compete with a global market, including Endicott Johnson Shoes which eventually closed in 1998; the drying up of defense contracts in peaceful times; and an overall greater market competition such as that experienced by IBM. This has had a significant impact on the economic livelihood and spending power of local residents, especially those living in small communities such as the Village of Whitney Point. In testament to this, the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development has calculated that the percentage of persons in the Village living at or below 80% of the area's median income is a significant 43.1%.

The Village of Whitney Point's location is another factor when reviewing its Main Street's economy. Whitney Point is approximately 10 miles north of the City of Binghamton in Broome County and 25 miles south of the City of Cortland in Cortland County, right off Exit 8 of I81. Nearness to these two cities, with access to an interstate highway, has resulted in a lack of retail investment in the Village's Main Street. Most of the community's newer development has occurred closer to the on/off ramp area of I81, facilitating highway travelers.

Today, Main Street Whitney Point is a struggling community center, which includes more service businesses than retail. The Village's major anchor is Aiello's Restaurant, which enjoys both local and regional patronage. Most of the older Main Street buildings are in a state of disrepair and have had inappropriate architectural additions or alterations. The community has joined together to reverse this downward spiral, and hopefully devise a new course of action for infusing new life into Main Street via this strategic planning process.

# IV. INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS

## FIRST IMPRESSIONS

The Village of Whitney Point is located at the confluence of the Tioughnioga and Otselic Rivers, within the Town of Triangle, in northern Broome County. Located approximately 15 miles north of the City of Binghamton, and 21 miles south of the City of Cortland Whitney Point is a juncture for various transportation routes. It is located at exit 8 of Interstate 88, and US 11, and NYS Routes 79 and 206 all cut through the Village.

According to the 2000 Census, the Village has a population of 965, and the surrounding Town of Triangle is home to 3,032 persons. Whitney Point has a large commercial component consisting of convenience stores, restaurants, and service stations that line US Route 11, which accommodates over 11,000 vehicles per day according to the New York State Department of Transportation. This commercialized corridor is distinctly separate from the older compact residential development of the Village, and the Village's historic downtown area.



The Study Area for the Strategic Plan is the clearly defined Village center, bounded by the Tioughnioga River on the north and east, and Liberty and Railroad Streets on the South and West. It includes a mix of historic residential and commercial development, including the traditional downtown commercial district. The “Historic Downtown” area generally includes Main Street from Route 11 on the east and stretches westward to Academy Street. While the balance of Main Street to Railroad Street has a number of commercial establishments, it retains much of its original residential character. A cohesive neighborhood of late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century residences is located south of Main Street.

Due to the relocation of Route 11 to the eastern end of the downtown several decades ago, the study area is easily bypassed and overlooked. In many respects, Main Street is now relegated to “side street” status, despite its proximity to Exit 8 of Interstate 81, and Routes 79, 11, 26, and 206. The Route 11/79 corridor is dominated by poorly designed highway commercial development and does not have a “village” atmosphere. It provides a poor introduction to the community and the downtown. While Main Street itself retains a large percentage of its original commercial architecture, poor maintenance, inappropriate alterations, and a lack of landscaping give the commercial center a largely neglected and un-welcoming appearance.

## ECONOMIC CLIMATE

Whitney Point is located in northern Broome County. Broome County, as a whole, has been losing jobs and people. The population of the County has decreased by over 25,000 people between 1990 and 2005. The labor force has reduced by 2,700 people by that time, while the number of people employed increased by 3,200 jobs. The unemployment rate in the County was 3.6% in 2000. That has increased to 4.6% in 2006. That number is down from a high of 5.9% in 2003. Broome County's Median Household Income is only 82% of New York State. When comparing Census data for Whitney Point to the remainder of the County, it is clear that the economic condition of the Village is worse than that of the County.

<u>2000 Census Data</u>	<u>Whitney Point</u>	<u>Broome County</u>
Poverty Percentage	13.2%	12.8%
Median Household Income	\$34,934	\$35,747
Median Housing Value	\$62,400	\$75,747
Mean Commuting Time	28.8 minutes	18.9 minutes

The Chamber of Commerce identifies the 10 largest employers in Broome County as all being in southern Broome County. This appears to be the main work location for Village workers. The 2000 Census showed 28.8 minutes average commute. On a positive aspect the Village had a 2000 Census unemployment rate of under 2%. This may have more to do with the amount of services available to unemployed people in the Village than a strong employment base. There are some positive things that the current economic climate creates for the County and Village. These include low crime rate, low cost of living, ample transportation and when compared to many other areas of the Country a higher worker productivity rate.

## BUSINESSES AND SERVICES

The business community in Downtown Whitney Point has been somewhat stagnate for the past number of years. The lack of public sewer in the Village certainly has stopped most business growth. However, some new business development along Route 11 has occurred during this time. With the first public sewers currently being installed in the Village, new development will likely occur. A hotel is already being proposed for area near the north exit on Route 81.

*Business Mix* - The Downtown area is home to over 35 businesses and services. The businesses are predominately service and retail businesses, with a smaller number of eatery/bars and professional office. A review of the type of businesses allows for an estimate to be made regarding the primary market area for each business. The primary market area for 26% of the businesses is local residents; 62% of the businesses serve both local residents and visitors; and 12% of the businesses serve primarily non-local customers.

Both the residents survey responses and residents participating at the public meetings clearly identified the downtown as only having a fair selection/quality of shops and services. According to the survey responses, 78% of the residents shop in the Downtown area at least once a week. The bank and the Post Office appear to be the biggest draws to the downtown. Residents most often mentioned better selection, more variety of stores, and better prices as the reasons they shop elsewhere. Also, the fact that most workers commute out of the Village to their job likely provides a greater opportunity to shop elsewhere. Respondents to the Business Owners Survey and business owners that attended public meetings expressed a need for new businesses that will attract new shoppers to Main Street. The business community appears to be looking for new businesses that will attract day visitors, such as restaurants and specialty shops. The development of a niche, which typically focuses on one segment of the retail market, would be beneficial to Main Street businesses. A niche could also relate to an historical, cultural, or recreational activity. The recreational activities related to the Reservoir and the river could be the niche.

*Impact of Route 81 on business:* The Village of Whitney Point has two exits off Route 81. One exit to the north of the Village is for cars exiting from Route 81 south, and provides an entrance for cars going on Route 81 north. Conversely, the southern exit, which is off Route 26, allows cars to exit from Route 81 north and enter Route 81 south. For a traveler to continue on Route 81 in the direction they are traveling, they must use Route 11 and Route 26 through the Village. Traffic counts reveal that there is an increase of 6,000 Average Daily Trips (AADT) on Route 26 through the Village when compared to the traffic counts north and south of the Village of Route 26. Also Route 11 has a 10,000 AADT increase when compared to traffic of towns north and south of the Village. This traffic that travels everyday through the intersection at the end of Main Street provides the potential for a significant market to existing and new businesses located in the downtown. If only a small percentage of those cars could be convinced to stop on Main Street, the businesses and services would have a significant increase in customers. The main concern that is created is the lack of parking for travelers in the Village. Aiello's, a prominent restaurant, at the intersection of Main and Route 11, believes it loses a significant number of customers each day when its small parking lot is full. The Village does have some public parking, but it is currently not easily found by travelers. It appears that the majority of travelers that end up getting off Route 81, and stopping for services such as a meal or gas, do so along Route 11 north of the downtown area rather than stopping in the downtown area itself.

## HOUSING

The commercial center of the Downtown is surrounded by residential neighborhoods to the south and west. Together, these constitute the Downtown Study Area. The housing in the area primarily consists of late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century wood framed, two story structures. The majority of homes are single-family, owner-occupied structures, although a significant number have been converted into multi-unit rental properties. These rentals are most prevalent on the western end of Main Street. There are additional rental housing units on upper floors of Downtown commercial buildings.

Much of the rental housing stock is in poor condition while the owner-occupied

housing stock is in somewhat better, although still poor, condition. The area also contains a multi-unit, subsidized senior housing project that is well maintained. Income surveys indicate that the area has a high percentage of lower-income residents.



An exterior building conditions survey was conducted by an experienced building inspector on every residential property in the Study Area. Buildings that were a mixed use of residential and commercial were not included in the residential building conditions survey. The survey was conducted using the definition of substandard provided by the NYS Governor's Office for Small Cities. (The definition is included in *Section VIII*,

*Appendices*). The inspected buildings were categorized as either standard, moderately substandard, severely substandard, or dilapidated. The results are as follows:

Building Conditions	Rental		Owner	
	number	%	number	%
Severely Substandard	15	88	23	44
Moderately Substandard	1	6	17	33
Standard	1	6	12	23
Total	17	100	52	100

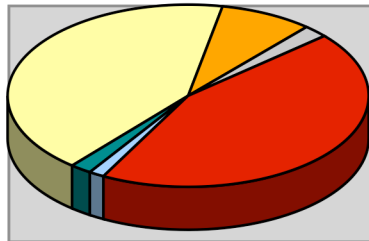
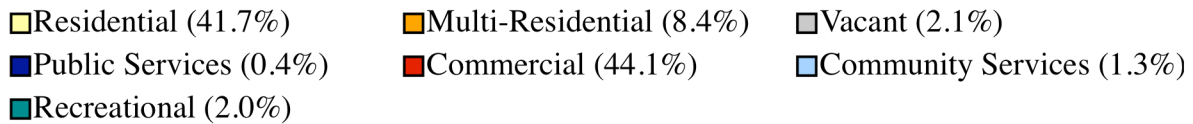
This housing conditions survey confirms the perception of the residents and the Village that the housing stock in the area are is aging, in poor condition, and is in need of attention.

## LAND USE AND ZONING

The Village's 1992 comprehensive plan indicates that the Village contains several distinctive neighborhoods. The older established residential neighborhood adjacent to the core business district is included as a distinctive neighborhood. This area includes the streets of Main, Liberty, Academy, 119<sup>th</sup>, and Collins. The first distinctive commercial district that is listed is the business district along both sides of Main Street from U.S. Route 11 west to Academy Street. The document indicates that Whitney Point serves as a commercial center for the surrounding towns of Triangle, Lisle, Nanticoke, and Barker.

Land use in the downtown area is largely dominated by commercial and residential classifications. Commercial acreage accounts for about 44.1% of all acreage, and residential is slightly lower, accounting for 41.7%. The remaining 14.2% of the acreage is divided amongst the community service, multi-residential, public service, recreational, and vacant classifications. These calculations do not take into consideration the large vacant parcel between the Tioughnioga River and the levee behind the Main Street properties. Nor does the calculation take into consideration the 14-acre commercially classified parcel at the corner of Main Street and the railroad tracks.

### Existing Land Use Classification, Downtown Whitney Point



Downtown Whitney Point is largely in the Village's Commercial zoning district. There is no purpose stated for the intent of any of the districts, but examining the allowed uses for the Commercial zoning district gives the impression that the Village desires the geographic area to be a part of everyday business and commerce, while also accommodating numerous other uses. Allowable uses include retail, services, offices, restaurants, taverns, theaters, bowling alleys, hotels, motels, public buildings, lodges, fraternal organizations, processing or fabricating goods, farm supply sales, building material sales, electrical substations, other public utilities, business services, and railroad stations. Other allowable uses for the Commercial district include all the uses allowable in the Rb1, Ra2, and Ra1 districts. Accessory uses allowable include private garages, garden house, toolhouse, home occupations and residential dwellings when incidental to any principal use.

The dimensional standards for the Commercial zoning district contribute to the erosion of Whitney Point's traditional Main Street form. Front yards are required to be thirty-five feet in depth from the front property line. Some of the more traditional buildings front against the sidewalk on Main Street. Side yards are also required to be ten feet. This would not allow for a traditional commercial, pedestrian friendly Main Street where buildings and storefronts are attached. It is unclear whether or not the last paragraph in Section 604 is intended to be for accessory buildings or for principal buildings. If intended for principal buildings, this would allow any new structure to extend as near the street line as an adjacent structure within 200 feet on either side.

Adjacent to the Commercial zoning district and still within the downtown area is the Rb1, Residential/Service zoning district. This encompasses parts of Liberty, 119<sup>th</sup>, Academy, and Collins Streets, as well as part of US Route 11. Again, no general purpose or vision is stated for this district, and allowed uses include one-family and multi-family dwellings, boarding or rooming houses, churches, schools, parks, funeral homes, tourist homes, cemeteries, nursing or convalescent homes, lodges, professions licensed by the University of the State of New York, and all uses permitted in the Ra2 zoning district. The dimensional standards in terms of setback and yard requirements are exactly the same as they are in the Commercial zoning district.

The Village's form of traditional zoning is not up-to-date, and the standards for the downtown will likely lead to the continued degradation of the traditional main street character. The allowable uses are too broad of a range, despite the benefits of allowing for different types of uses or mixed uses in a downtown environment. Varying uses in a downtown can lead to having people in the area during business hours for business activity, as well as people mingling downtown if there are residential opportunities after the regular work day. The Village should be concerned about losing its older architecture. Reshaping a land use management policy such as the zoning law can help to preserve the older building stock that contributes heavily to the downtown character. Design standards are lacking for any new development or alterations to existing development. Thus proposed changes to existing signs, facades, or other parts of buildings aren't adhering to a consistent theme or pattern.

Newer development on Main Street, including the laundromat and Dollar General, were not required to adhere to policy standards or land use management goals that help to contribute to a more positive community character. Too often new development does not take into consideration the fabric of a community into which they are locating, and a proposed site plan merely meets their individual needs as a business or company. The benefit of having land use management policies is that more consideration and influence of local character will impact the shape and style of new development.

Given the Village Board of Trustees is the legislative body and carries the weight of general local government proceedings, they should give up the administrative practice of site plan review to the local planning board. The planning board is an administrative body that can become familiar with local planning needs, land use management strategies, and carry out the site plan review process and any subsequent policies to achieve the vision of both the downtown and community as a whole.

## **ORGANIZATIONS**

The Village of Whitney Point has two primary entities that are involved, in one manner or another, in downtown activities. These are detailed following:

**Greater Whitney Point Business Association** – This organization consists primarily of business owners in the Village and Town of Whitney Point, as well as neighboring towns. The mission of the organization is, “To have local businesses and property owners and concerned citizens work together with local municipal leaders to improve



and revitalize the Greater Whitney Point community and economy.” Their larger goals include the stabilization of local tax rates; promotion of Whitney Point’s businesses, economy, natural resources, and events; and improving public perception of the community. The organization has an interest in downtown development and revitalization, but is not currently actively involved in revitalization activities focused on downtown. The group is loosely affiliated, collects no dues, and is not formally incorporated.

**Greater Whitney Point Community Planning Committee** – This is a community-wide organization not limited to the business sector. While it was founded by a group of citizens associated with the Whitney Point School District, group members have worked diligently to include all interested parties. The group began as a result of concerns expressed at a school board retreat that Whitney Point was losing some of its identity and traditions which allow persons to be vested in their community. It has the general goal of community building and its mission statement states, “To provide for the future of the residents of Greater Whitney Point and their children, through the building of community and school pride, the formation of a strong economic base, the improvement of communication throughout the area, the celebration of events/history in the area; all of which will contribute to and strengthen the educational experience in the Whitney Point Central School District.” Planning Committee meetings have all been held off school grounds to encourage further participation by all community members. The Community Planning Committee is currently pursuing 501(c)3 non-profit status.

**Other Civic and Membership Organizations** - Other organizations, such as the local Rotary, the Whitney Point Fire Department, the Broome County Fair organizers, the Big Tent Event, and the Shakespeare Club undertake community projects that originate in the downtown area. These are not, however, organizations whose primary missions are the ongoing revitalization of the Whitney Point Downtown.

Such an organization is vital to implement this plan and spearheading revitalization activities.

## **OPEN SPACE, RECREATION, AND THE DOWNTOWN CONNECTION**

The Village of Whitney Point does not have any municipally owned parks within its boundaries. Parks, recreation, and open space issues were not mentioned often in public visioning sessions or among Steering Committee members.

The Village is the home of the Broome County Fair, which as mentioned, sits on some 30 acres in the Village on NYS Route 11. This is directly adjacent to the Whitney Point Middle School site. A small portion of the high school property is located in the Village, with the rest of the high school campus and that of the elementary school located right at the Village’s doorstep, on Route 11. As with many small upstate communities, the school grounds often function as a quasi-park because school districts typically have the types of outdoor facilities that are available to and desired by the community. The Whitney Point School District includes a football field and track, tennis courts, baseball and softball fields, and multipurpose fields for such sports as soccer. A

playground can be found at the elementary school. Those who grew up in the Village mention that before insurance liability was a concern, local children played on the Fairgrounds. The site, now surrounded by fencing, is still available to the community for scheduled recreational events.



Around 1936, the federal government began a dam project on the Otselic River outside the Village in the Town of Triangle. A significant area north of the dam remained as swamp lands until 1964 when the area was developed as a 1,100-acre park, Dorchester Park. Dorchester Park is located minutes from the Village on Route 26 in Triangle. Managed by the Broome County Department of Parks and Recreation, this site is well maintained and offers a wide venue of outdoor

recreational pursuits including boating, fishing, picnicking, and hiking, to name just a few. State and regional events, such as the Crappie Derby and rowing regattas, are often held in the park. It would appear that there has not been a lot of pressure placed on the Village to develop parkland because of the availability of the school, the Fairgrounds, and Dorchester Park.

As previously mentioned, the Otselic and Tioughnioga Rivers converge in the Village, and there is a dam on the Otselic River in Dorchester Park. The Army Corps of Engineers controls the levee and channelization. Although individual property owners may own land up to the river(s), the Army Corps of Engineers has strict regulations regarding any development on or near the riverbanks. The Corps has been very cooperative in working with the County on the continued development of Dorchester Park, and a trail network from the Park to the Whitney Point High School.

As the Tioughnioga River continues southward from Cortland County, it passes through the north side of the Main Street area, converges with the Otselic near the Route 11 bridge, and then continues southward. Approximately 1/3 of the Village's land is located on the east side of the river. It is immediately obvious that there is a weak connection between Main Street and this river asset. While there is a sidewalk on the south side of the bridge and a crosswalk, cross signal, and traffic light on the Route 11 side of the bridge, the traffic does not stop in all directions. This would appear to be one of the reasons why pedestrians do not feel comfortable crossing busy Route 11. There are no trails, park amenities, or built fishing access sites near the river's edge. There are no stairs or handicapped access points. Dirt paths would indicate that there is some pedestrian activity taking place along the river, but primarily the river appears to go "unnoticed" by the Village.

It is noted that historically the property along the riverbanks was privately owned, and that the Tioughnioga River was re-routed through the Village when the dam was built. It has taken many years for land on the west side of the Tioughnioga to be acquired by the Village. The Village was recently outbid on a piece of property that

would have completed its ownership of all land from the bridge southward to the Village boundary. It does, however, still have an easement through the area now that the sewer plant is being completed. This enables the Village to develop plans for a linear park/walking trail.



As mentioned, the Army Corps of Engineers has been supportive of the development of walking trails between Dorchester Park and over to the high school. There are presently no long-range plans to bring a river trail southward (and westward) to the Main Street area, although this has been discussed many times in the past. The Army Corps of Engineers are generally supportive of linear parks and river trails, and would be willing to review proposals for such under their permitting system.

The Village of Whitney Point should be mindful of the economic development benefits to be gained from having a river trail that contributes to the character and ambiance of the community, and brings trail users to the Village. A trail that espouses wellness is also in keeping with the marketing goals of the Village, by which it melds the cultural arts with the physical well being of residents and visitors. This is more fully discussed in the recommendations included in Section V.

## **PROMOTIONS AND EVENTS**

There are a small number of events that are held in the Village of Whitney Point on a predictable basis. The largest and most well known of these is the Broome County Fair, whose origins date back to the late 1800's. It is held each year in late July on fairgrounds property located in the Village on Route 11. The event attracts some 36,000 persons over 5-1/2 days, and includes such activities as a tractor pull, demolition derby, 4-H animal show, horse exhibits, rides, food vendors, and games. During the course of the fair, there is also a Fireman's Parade which starts on Main Street in the Village and proceeds to the fairgrounds. While the parade is not exclusive to firemen, and includes floats and marchers from other entities, it is primarily geared to the local and regional fire departments. Sponsorship of the parade is the Whitney Point Fire Department, the Broome County Fireman's Association, and the Broome County Fair.

In addition to the annual Broome County Fair, the fairgrounds are utilized for other events throughout the year. This includes use by the Whitney Point School District and the local community for athletic events and practices; horse shows; auctions; and tool sales, to name just a few. While some of these entities provide food onsite, some do not, and many attendees prefer to eat at restaurants or fast food entities located within the Village. It is likely that other Village businesses are patronized also.

The Shakespeare Club is a private women's social club, which sponsors the annual Holiday Tree Lighting in the Village. The tree is placed on the corner of Collins Street and Route 26. Afterwards, there is a reception in the Methodist Church, where food and beverages are served and holiday music is played.

The Broome Council for the Arts holds a Big Tent Event in the library on Main Street. This event features live musical performances and is held on the third Sunday of every month. The director of the Arts Council is a Village resident, and recently purchased the former Baptist church on Main Street. Since the church can accommodate more people than the library, it is anticipated that the Big Tent Event will eventually move to the church. Future plans for the site call for renovations to make it a cultural arts building, and a gathering place for entities needing a place of this size.

The Fall Festival is held in the Whitney Point Middle School at the end of October. The event is held on one day and it attracts 800 – 900 persons. The festival combines arts, crafts, music, and culture, and continues to evolve. The Rotary Halloween Parade is held in conjunction with the Fall Festival. Children dressed in Halloween costumes march down Main Street. This year the parade will also include the Shriner's Mini Bike Patrol.

The Fall Festival is sponsored by the community events committee of the Greater Whitney Point Community Planning Committee. Inspired by other surrounding communities that hold fall events such as apple or corn festivals, the Whitney Point school group was interested in establishing an event that would become a local tradition. This is how the Fall Festival came to be. They have other goals for the upcoming year, such as undertaking a "Big Read" based on a national model, which encourages the community to read the same book, and establishing an alumni association. The Community Planning Group is somewhat hampered by a lack of volunteers.

Given the Village's strategic location off I81 and on Route 11, there are also a number of regional events that are drawing motorists through the Village. For example, the Whitney Point Sportsman's Association and Broome County Office of Parks sponsor a Crappie Derby each year in January in Dorchester Park. Thunder Mountain is the site of an annual stock car race in early fall which attracts thousands of participants. To get to Dorchester Park and Thunder Mountain, many patrons drive through the Village of Whitney Point.

In discussing these above events with various persons, it appears that the events, and the different groups that run them, are disjointed from one another. A coordinated promotional effort is not undertaken on a community-wide basis to partner individual events with downtown and its business community. The two exceptions would be the marriage of the Fireman's Parade and the Broome County Fair and the Rotary Parade with the Fall Festival. While not all businesses will benefit from all events, coordinating events circulates people throughout the community, fosters good will, encourages persons to revisit the area, strengthens the perception of downtown as the heart of the community, and maximizes the economic impact of each activity.

The Hess Gas Station and Aiello's are strategically located on Route 11. These two businesses will benefit from most community events, regardless of promotion,

because of the nature of their businesses and the fact they provide easy on/off access to Route 11. The more difficult task at hand is to encourage visitation to the remainder of the Main Street. A commitment by different entities in the community such as downtown businesses, the school, the Fair organizers, etc., for interactive promotion is one of the tools needed to revitalize Whitney Point's downtown.

## TRANSPORTATION

The Village's downtown streets are generally made up of local roadways, and the Village's Main Street is neither a State nor US Route. Often times major routes serve as a Main Street in small upstate communities bringing an abundance of through traffic into the community's core. In total, there are 2.4 miles of New York State routes within the Village. There are also 10.5 miles of locally owned roadways within the Village.

The New York State and U.S. highways in Broome County are a critical component of today's living standards. These are the most utilized routes for people traveling to and from work, as well as for moving and distributing goods that are in demand both locally and regionally. Users of these highways can often be looking to move about a region in a quick, efficient manner. As is the case in Whitney Point, much of the regional traffic is utilizing I-81, U.S. Route 11, and State Routes 26, 79, and 206. Through consultation with the public and steering committee, much has been said about trying to attract a portion of the through-traffic off of the major highways and get them to the Main Street area. Fortunately, the heavy-truck traffic and through traffic is not too disruptive to the local Main Street neighborhood.

*Vehicular Traffic/Safety* - Generally, the street network within downtown is easily navigated by automobile, and pedestrian access is exceptionally noteworthy for the immediate neighborhood. However, the area of greatest concern is the intersection of Routes U.S. Route 11, State Routes 26, 79, 206, and Main Street. This is one of the busiest intersections in the Village, which handles a considerable amount of traffic.

The Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) reported for Whitney Point indicates a very high number of automobiles passing near Main Street. The segment of U.S. Route 11 between the on-ramp for I-81 northbound and the Main Street intersection with Route 11 is 11,555. This number of vehicles includes the total traffic volume in both directions. There are a total of 8,926 vehicles traveling in both directions on Route 11 between the Main Street intersection and the intersection where Route 26 turns southwest toward the southbound on-ramp for I-81. These figures are reported by the New York State Department of Transportation as of 2004.

*Pedestrian Traffic/Safety* - Main Street Whitney Point is pedestrian friendly, however, there is room for improvement. The scale and location of the older buildings near the main intersection provide a level of comfort for those who walk Main Street. The older buildings front on the sidewalk and are geared toward servicing those on foot. Where newer development has occurred, just outside the target area on Route 11, pedestrian safety has been compromised. Building design and placement has catered to the automobile, making easy access for travelers on Route 11. This is the case with the Mobil/McDonald's area, Subway, other gas stations, car dealers, and ice cream

vending. These are destinations that provide exclusive access for vehicles on their sole site, even though they also allow for pedestrian access. The exclusive access to individual businesses and buildings requires more curb cuts that allow a greater number of vehicles to cross the pedestrian path. Main Street contrasts this newer development by relying on curbside, on-street parking or a common parking area to service automobiles, thereby reducing the number of locations along the sidewalk whereby automobiles cross the pedestrian path.

Clearly marked crosswalks are needed to meet the needs of pedestrians. There are few places along Main Street and intersecting streets and driveways where marked crosswalks are provided. The Village must consider utilizing marked crosswalks at the intersection of Main Street and U.S. Route 11. The waterfront area is a prime asset for downtown Whitney Point, and capitalizing on utilizing it as a community resource should be important. In order to connect Main Street with the waterfront, safety considerations such as installing textured and colored crosswalks will prove to be valuable. Drivers will have a visual cue to see if there is the possibility of pedestrians crossing their path. Such crosswalks help pedestrians feel safe and comfortable about where they should be crossing the street.

The condition of sidewalks along the Main Street Corridor varies from place to place. Generally, sidewalks in the area are in fair to good condition. There are inconsistencies in width and elevation of some sidewalk blocks. Some inconsistencies can be a tripping hazard, so these conditions should be fixed. Drastic and sudden elevation changes are also hazards for those using wheelchairs and strollers.

Sidewalks and pedestrian pathways need to be free and clear of obstacles and tripping hazards, such as uneven and cracked sidewalks. Good quality pedestrian environments that encompass a variety of features geared toward a pedestrian are essential in strong, walkable communities.

*Parking* – Free, on-street parking is available on Main Street. It appears the amount of on street parking is sufficient for the types and amount of services that are available along Main Street. However, it isn't clear where and when someone can park on street, unless someone is a member of the local community who is in the know. Visitors to the community may have difficulty determining where and when they can park on street. It is also unclear as to where other alternative public parking areas exist. The off-street public areas look to be in poor condition and are unwelcoming to visitors. Community residents may be satisfied with conditions of off-street parking areas, but greater effort should be given toward beautification and appropriate signage for identifying parking options.

*Railroad* – The New York, Susquehanna and Western Railway operates more than 400 miles of railroad in New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania. The company generally transports such commodities as lumber, building materials, feed, chemicals, plastics, paper, and vehicles. Whitney Point is on the rail route between Syracuse and Binghamton, which eventually connects to New York City.

The railroad tracks in the Village offer a unique opportunity for creating a future project. There is no passenger service that makes a stop in the Village, but a train-stop



adjacent to downtown or Main Street would be a unique opportunity for the community. Passenger service along the railroad is available for special events and regional festivities, such as Marathon's Maple Festival. Whitney Point may be able to provide a train stop for passengers during major community events, such as the Broome County Fair.

*Public Transportation* – The Broome County public transportation system and busses serve the urbanized core of Broome County. Therefore, no service is provided to, from, or within the Village of Whitney Point. If public transit becomes a possibility within the Village, the location of the transit stop should be close to or within the Main Street area. This will allow users to get off a bus and move about a pedestrian friendly Main Street and the neighboring residential neighborhoods. Locating a transit stop immediately off of the Interstate highway system limits the ability of users to walk to a variety of services or homes, and defeats the purpose of using public transportation.

*State Route 206 Bridge Replacement* - The New York State Department of Transportation is in the early stages of planning a bridge replacement for the bridge (BIN: 1018600) that spans the Tioughnioga River, opposite Main Street. DOT's project identification number for this project is 9014.39. Initial scoping for the design of the bridge and placement of the bridge began in summer 2007. It is anticipated that a draft design will be complete by 2010; however the project won't be commenced until 2013. The Department of Transportation intends on conducting public outreach during the design of the project, and this is an opportune time for the Downtown Strategic Plan to weigh in on the potential impacts of the State's bridge replacement project.



There are two potential locations that are considerations for the new bridge. One option is to simply replace the existing bridge with a new structure in the same location, perhaps with minor alterations to the angle at which the bridge intersects with US Route 11. Minor realignment directly opposite Main Street could also be considered. The second alternative is to locate the bridge downstream, to the south, at the intersection of US Route 11 and New York State Route 26. Placement of the bridge at the option B scenario would allow possible public greenspace development opposite Main Street and along the river.

## V. ACTION AGENDA

Via the process detailed previously, the Steering Committee, in tandem with Thoma Development Consultants, developed strategies for revitalizing Downtown Whitney Point, and identified specific actions that, if undertaken, will implement those strategies and bring about positive change. The six revitalization strategies are detailed below, as are a series of general recommendations intended to further the revitalization effort. The recommendations are not provided in a prioritized manner but, as a whole, provide guidance for accomplishing the community's goals. The recommendations with the highest priority are benchmarked.. Each benchmarked project describes the issue to be addressed, the basic tasks needed to implement the project, the indicator to measure success, the project leader, project partners, and potential resources. An identified resource may be a potential funding source for the project, or may be an entity that can provide technical assistance regarding project development. Project specific designs are included in Section VI.

The six strategies for revitalizing the Whitney Point Downtown are:

STRATEGY 1: Establish the Downtown as a center for arts and culture in northern Broome County.

STRATEGY 2: Leverage the Downtown's location on major transportation routes to capture day and overnight visitors, including travelers to nearby colleges and universities.

STRATEGY 3: Capitalize on the area's natural resources, including the Tioughnioga River and Dorchester Park, to attract visitors to the area and to promote health and wellness among the local population.

STRATEGY 4: Promote and develop healthy, diverse, neighborhoods surrounding the Downtown including quality housing.

STRATEGY 5: Enhance the "walkability" of the Downtown and community to support easy pedestrian access and to link community assets.

STRATEGY 6: Preserve and enhance the historic "small-town" character of the Downtown including its historic architecture and cultural heritage.

### IMPLEMENTATION

In order for the goals of this Plan to be fully realized and for the Benchmarked projects to be implemented, the Village will need to continue its commitment to the Downtown. There is currently no clear non-governmental organization or entity to spearhead implementation projects. Although a Downtown Organization is proposed to be developed, it may take a number of years before such a group will have the capacity



to effect real change. Even then, the long term involvement and commitment of the Village government will be vital to long-term revitalization and future success. The Village may want to consider appointing a task force of Village staff, officials, and stakeholders to ensure a continued, consistent, and organized focus on such efforts and to track progress.

The end of this Section includes benchmarked priority projects. These are guidelines, and may be (and should be) adjusted based on real or perceived needs in response to new developments, and in response to potential funding opportunities. Perceived opportunities, however, must be weighed against the overall goals of this plan.

At the outset, it is important to concentrate on activities that will: (1) increase capacity to implement and coordinate projects; (2) be relatively easy to accomplish; and (3) have high visibility. Early successes are important in creating excitement for revitalization activities, maintaining momentum, and for combating apathy among businesses, property owners, and residents. The “clustering” of various individual projects can exponentially increase their impact. For example, combining the planting of street trees with the repaving of streets, and perhaps façade renovations, will multiply the impact of each individual project. As progress is made, every success, no matter how small, should be celebrated publicly. Attempts should be made to highlight a success or a milestone on a regular basis.

In the early stages of the revitalization effort, it is important that efforts do not get bogged down with difficult to implement projects. If progress is not being made on a particular issue, it may need to be set aside for the time being in order to accomplish other tasks. Failures should be assessed to identify what did not work, and to identify what can be done to better address the issue in the future. As needs change, and new opportunities arise, the community should be flexible and open to new projects, concepts, and ideas that are consistent with the vision of the Downtown. Lastly, it should be understood that revitalization efforts are ongoing and incremental, and are not completed in a few years. Despite past problems, the desire for the revitalization of the Downtown seems to be experiencing a groundswell of support and enthusiasm, and this bodes well for future revitalization efforts. It is important that this momentum not be lost.

## **REVITALIZATION RECOMMENDATIONS**

**1. Renovate Building Facades:** The commercial structures in the Village are primarily late 19<sup>th</sup> century buildings. For the most part, upper floors remain intact while many first floor storefronts have undergone inappropriate alterations. The Village should work to secure funding to provide financial incentives to property owners to renovate building facades. Since the rear facades of buildings on the north side of Main Street are visible from Route 11, these should be included in any program(s) developed.

Façade improvement programs should act as an incentive to entice property owners to improve their buildings and invest their own funds. Full project funding should only be provided for the smallest projects. Linking façade renovation financing with assistance programs to renovate building interiors is recommended.

Façade renovations should include needed repairs such as masonry repointing, wood repair, etc., in addition to aesthetic improvements such as painting, awnings, lighting, and signage. Renovations should restore or enhance original building elements and characteristics, rather than creating more modern designs. The provision of handicapped accessibility should also be included wherever physically and financially possible.

**2. Renovate Vacant Interior Space:** Many downtown commercial buildings are wholly or partially vacant on the upper floors. It is difficult to maintain older commercial structures with only a limited portion of the building generating income. Buildings need to be renovated to accommodate full occupancy, and the Village should work to secure incentive funding to assist property owners in undertaking interior renovations.



Recommended upper floor uses include rental and owner occupied housing, housing for artists, artist lofts, and artist live/work spaces. Efforts should be made to achieve income diversity in downtown housing, including affordable and market rate housing options. In support of the Village's identified strategy to leverage the arts to improve the local economy, efforts should be made to create spaces to accommodate them. This may include work/studio spaces, and live/work spaces.

The benefit of creating studio spaces is that the investment and level of work needed will likely be less than other uses. Although diverse housing options and space to develop and support a strong arts community are preferred uses for upper floor space, commercial offices are another option. This is particularly important if they allow existing non-retail businesses to move from first floor storefronts to upper floors, thus opening up lower level storefronts for desired retail-oriented businesses.

**3. Construction of a River Trail** - There is a disconnect between the Village of Whitney Point's Main Street area and the Tioughnioga River. The River can and should be a wonderful community asset in terms of economic development, heritage rediscovery, recreational pursuits, health benefits, scenic beauty, preservation of flora and fauna, and tourism, to name just a few. A river trail will soon connect Dorchester Park and the high school. This is part of an overall \$7M facelift for the reservoir area slated for construction over the next two years.

Over the years, there have been a number of discussions about extending the trail southward from the Park/high school to the Village's southern boundary. Because of the existence of the reservoir, dam, and flood control channel in Dorchester Park and the Village, any development in or near the River requires a permit from the Army Corps of Engineers, as it is the entity that controls the levee area. During the preparation of this Strategic Plan, the Corps noted its willingness to work with the Village on a proposed trail. The County stated it would also be supportive of such an initiative. The Village, therefore, needs to complete the construction of the walking/bike trail along the rivers to

its southern boundary with a westward spur on the top of the levee north of Main Street businesses. The trail should include interpretive signage/elements on the Village/waterfront history and ecology. The spur will connect with the railroad and railroad street at the western end. Consideration should also be given to including exercise facilities along the trail length, particularly the section nearest the downtown. This action adds a new dimension to the Main Street area, that is, the aforementioned benefits of a riverside location and the ability of the Village to diversify its economic base. It is hoped that river trail users will not only enjoy the river's assets, but stop and patronize Main Street businesses as well. A map with a proposed river trail is included herein in Appendix 3.

4. Acquisition of Land and Linear Park – The Village should acquire land between the new Sewage Treatment Plant and the Route 206 bridge on the western bank of the Tioughnioga River to develop a naturalistic linear park and cartop boat launch (detailed elsewhere) As mentioned, the construction of the dam in the 1930's necessitated re-routing the Tioughnioga River to the east. Route 11 was subsequently constructed on land that was formerly occupied by the river. The roadway construction resulted in a number of individual properties being split by Route 11, with property owners owning land on both sides of the highway. The land to the east of Route 11 (west of the Tioughnioga) has very little value, as its development is strictly controlled by the Army Corps of Engineers. The amount of acreage is quite small in some areas, especially near the Route 206 bridge. The Village already owns a number of these parcels but not all. As part of the Village's recently completed sewage treatment plant construction (see location on enclosed map), the Village was required to obtain easements along the west side of the river from the Route 206 Bridge southward to the plant. At the very least, these easements afford the Village the ability to construct a pedestrian trail along the river. Large permanent structures will very likely not be allowed, but a waterfront trail, interpretive signage, naturalistic plantings, etc. may be possible. To the greatest extent possible, the facilities should be designed so they are physically accessible by all. The trail should connect to public sidewalks at the Route 11/Main Street intersection near the Route 206 bridge to strengthen the connection between downtown and the River. Consultation with the Army Corps of Engineers in the earliest stages of project design is strongly recommended because of flood control issues in the Village.

The Village can access acquisition funding sources such as the Environmental Protection Fund through the State Office of Parks and Recreation to acquire waterfront parcels.

5. Rehabilitate Substandard Housing: The Study Area has a high incidence of both substandard owner-occupied and rental housing. The condition of the housing stock appears to be declining. The poor housing impacts not only the residents who live there, but the character of the downtown area as a whole. To reverse this trend, the Village should embark on a course of rehabilitating both existing owner-occupied housing and encouraging the creation of homeownership programs to increase the level of owner-occupied housing.

Tenants also deserve to live in standard, affordable housing units, and the Village should promote the rehabilitation of the rental market, particularly those units occupied

by lower income households. Rehabilitation efforts should preserve and enhance the rich architectural detailing that gives the area its character. Financial incentives should be considered to assist tenants to become homeowners. This action would make the dream of homeownership a reality and help to reverse the lack of pride which is evident on some of the area's streets. New housing programs should recognize that energy efficient housing features, and other housing quality and safety features, not only protect the environment, they increase housing affordability and safety on the individual household level. As the population ages, and special needs persons are identified, housing units should be developed or modified so they can be enjoyed by all.

The Village should explore ways to infuse more market rate housing in the area so that there is more economic diversity, particularly on the western end of Main Street. The high quality of the architecture may be appealing to many potential homeowners and non-low income renters if the properties are appropriately rehabilitated.

While the Village can be the catalyst for procuring funding for housing efforts, local property owners, particularly rental property owners, need to understand their responsibility for providing safe and decent housing. The Village should review its local codes and ordinances to ensure they can adequately enforce a high level of property maintenance, strictly enforce these codes, and have appropriate penalties for non-compliance.

**7. Interpret the Community's History:** Whitney Point has a long and interesting history. This history, in tandem with its varied and interesting historic architecture, can complement revitalization efforts and enhance the downtown visitation experience. This history should be interpreted throughout the downtown and riverfront. Rather than simply supply a series of signs or a brochure, the community's history should be integral



to the area's built environment. For example, the succession of bridges across the river can be interpreted with photos and signage built into walls near the planned new bridge. The former location of the river (prior to the dam construction) could be marked into pavement throughout the downtown. The local arts community should be leveraged to develop creative interpretive methods to enliven the downtown, while providing the visitor with a better understanding of the community.

**8. Street Trees:** The first block of Main Street is devoid of trees or other landscaping. Street trees are important in providing character to the downtown, creating a sense of

place, providing shade, and giving the streetscape a sense of unity. Studies have also shown that trees increase property values. Street trees should be planted anywhere that can reasonably accommodate them, and the largest species that can be accommodated should be planted. Selecting the appropriate tree species for the proposed location is important. Consideration must also be given to overhead and underground utilities, ability to withstand high salt conditions, mature size and shape, and other characteristics. Professional assistance in selecting tree species and properly planting them in an urban setting is strongly recommended.

Main Street should be measured to verify the widths of the travel lane and parking lane. The driving lane should be no more than 12 feet wide and the parking lane approximately 10 feet wide. It appears that the north side of Main Street may have additional space that could allow the curb to be moved out toward the street, therefore providing a narrow strip of sidewalk that could be planted with street trees. The sidewalk surrounding these trees could be constructed of stamped brick to match the downtown buildings and the proposed crosswalk scheme for the Main Street/Route 11 intersection.

**9. Institute Pedestrian Improvements:** While much of the downtown area is relatively pedestrian friendly, the Route 11/Main Street intersection and Route 11 itself is not. The Route 11 Corridor outside the downtown is difficult, if not dangerous, for pedestrian use. Improving pedestrian access is important to ensure the safety of the many pedestrians in the area (including school children), in strengthening the connection between the downtown and the waterfront, and in giving the Route 11 Corridor a more “village” character.

The Route 11/Main Street intersection should have crosswalks at all four corners. Even though no sidewalks currently exist on the southeast corner, future plans for enhanced water access at this location would require one. Alternate materials, such as real or simulated stone or brick, are recommended, although alternate color striping should be used as a minimum. Traffic control devices should stop traffic in all directions to provide safe crossing of the street, since the nearby bridges limit visibility. Such improvements may be incorporated into future replacement of the Route 206 bridge.

While both sides of the Route 11 bridge have sidewalks, these sidewalks extend northward on the western side of the roadway past the school and fairgrounds. A worn pathway on the eastern side shows pedestrian use on that side of the roadway as well. The existing sidewalk is located at or near the road edge close to heavy traffic. It is recommended that sidewalks should be installed on both sides of the roadway. These should be five to six foot wide sidewalks, be set back six feet from the curb line and include a landscaped median between the sidewalk and curb. Land ownership, space constraints, and topography may limit the ability to attain these setback goals. In such cases, the sidewalks should be set back as far as practicable. Any new development or major redevelopment projects should be required to include sidewalks with the setbacks and sizes detailed above.

**10. Route 206 Bridge Replacement and Intersection Improvements:** The existing Route 206 bridge is in poor condition and is slated for replacement or major reconstruction within the next five to ten years. The design and placement of the new



bridge will significantly impact the downtown and community. The Village must be proactive in working with the NYS DOT to ensure a design that enhances the community, improves traffic safety, and ensures pedestrian access and safety. It is strongly recommended that the bridge remain at its current location so that the Route 206/Route 11/Main Street intersection remains the heart of the community. The design should include sidewalks, overlooks, historical interpretation, enhanced access to the river, lighting, and signage to create a grand entrance to the community. The location may also act as a site for interpreting the natural and built environment.



The photographs above show bridge projects in other communities that have included such amenities. Additional photos are included under Recommendation 19. Reconstruction of the intersection should include traffic calming elements, alternate material crosswalks, landscaping, and other design elements to create a visually appealing “village” character to this area and develop it as a gateway to the downtown. The Village may want to consider hiring a design consultant to review DOT plans and work on the Village’s behalf to ensure the best possible designs. Conceptual design concepts included in Appendix 4 can be used as a basis for working with DOT to ensure a successful project. A similar approach should be used for any future replacement of the Route 11 Bridge.

**11. Streetscape Design for Route 11:** As a major entrance to the community and the downtown, the Village Board needs to develop and adopt a more comprehensive site plan review policy for highway commercial areas as part of their zoning local law. The generalized framework of the existing site plan review policy does not adequately perform for creating or maintaining a quality environment, nor does it set a solid foundation for making an attractive entranceway to the Village. The existing language does not give a developer guidance on what desired characteristics the Village wants in its built environment. Therefore, a common theme, or consistency in development from site to site will not be achieved.

Most franchises have their own unique design that may appear attractive on a single site. However, when there are multiple businesses and services located in a corridor, there often is little consistency in building design, placement, landscaping, sidewalks, parking layout, lighting, and signage. A new site plan policy should strive to build upon Whitney Point’s assets while contributing to an overall vision for the Route 11

corridor, which connects to downtown Whitney Point. One way to achieve a cohesive built environment is to incorporate design standards into the site plan review policy. These standards need to include visual graphics that indicate expectations for building design, placement, materials to be used, landscaping features, pedestrian access needs and other themes on appropriate and inappropriate development.

For example, the Village might want to require that all new buildings have gabled roofs, or brick or stonework in their construction. Possible area regulations could require similar setbacks from the street that only allow parking on the sides and rear of buildings. Consistent landscape themes should be a standard, which include specific species of trees along the streetline and other elements of consistency from site to site

**12. Signage Regulations:** The character of the downtown and the Route 11 corridor is degraded by poorly designed signage that is inappropriate or out of scale with their respective buildings or areas. Conversely, well-designed, interesting signs can breathe life and vitality into a community, as well as improve the image of individual businesses. The Village should develop and adopt progressive sign ordinances for both the downtown/Main Street area and the Route 11 corridor (and other highway commercial areas in the Village). While older sign ordinances usually focused on regulation (maximum sizes, etc.), newer ordinances should be more progressive, and focus on what a community *wants* rather than what they *don't* want. These ordinances are often accompanied by sketches and drawings, providing a visual representation desired sign design and placement. All advertising and promotional signs that do not conform to regulations should be removed – i.e. gas station cigarette, beer & soda ads.

Signage in the downtown should be of a size, configuration, scale, and placement that matches the signboards of the historic building's architecture. These are typically long, horizontal signs placed above the first floor storefronts. Internally lit or plastic signs should be prohibited, while creative, colorful, interesting signs of wood or metal should be encouraged, particularly since the arts are seen as a future economic force in the downtown. Blade signs that project perpendicularly from the building can be acceptable if appropriately designed. Window signs should be limited to simple, painted signage that covers only a small percentage of the windows.

Signage along the Route 11 corridor will have very different characteristics than signage in the downtown and will likely include signage on buildings as well as roadfront signage. Internally lit plastic signs should be prohibited in either location and replaced with externally lit signs. Tall signs designed to lure traffic off of interstate 81 should also be prohibited. It is recommended that road-front signage be limited to "monument" style signs that are lower and wider, as opposed to tall signs on posts. To develop a unique character to the area, and to provide some visual unity, these monument signs should incorporate, to some extent, natural or man made stone elements. Signs should be no more than six to eight feet in height. Building signage should be tasteful and in scale with the building and surrounding area. The Village should consider, as part of their signage ordinance updates, instituting an amortization schedule whereby existing non-conforming signs would need to be replaced. This schedule may be as short as three years, or as long as ten years.

**13. Land Use Management in Downtown:** The Village Board needs to develop and adopt a more comprehensive site plan review policy as part of their zoning local law. The generalized framework of the existing site plan review policy does not perform adequately for creating or maintaining a quality environment, nor does it identify those elements of the built environment that are significant in downtown Whitney Point. The existing language does not capitalize on the strengths of the Village's environment. A new site plan policy should strive to build upon Whitney Point's assets, including architecturally significant buildings, traditional building and site layout, and a human/pedestrian scaled environment.

All of these elements need to be tailored to the integrity of the traditional Main Street environment. Site plans should not be necessarily required when a building's *use* is changed, but should be required when the *building or site* is altered. For instance, when an existing site or building will be modified in such a way where the building footprint is changed, when parking and traffic flow patterns are changed, when landscaping or lighting is changed or installed, site plan review should be undertaken.

Any new construction or alterations in the downtown area should be required to meet design standards as part of the site plan review process. Standards should require that building mass and scale be consistent with traditional downtown design including façade appearances, signage, as well as ingress and egress to the building or site. Signs that require illumination should be lit using exterior lighting sources only.

The Village should create a new zoning district for a narrow segment of downtown. A "Central Business" zoning district would help to tailor new and revised development plans in a way that builds on and protects the integrity and human-scaled atmosphere on Main Street. Allowable uses should be specified to allow use for all floors of downtown buildings including a mix of business and residential uses. Dimensional regulations should also be tailored to require buildings to front along sidewalks (no front setback), and minimal or no on-site parking requirements. If parking is located on site, it should be located at the rear or side of the building.

The Village should also designate the Village Planning Board as the reviewing body for all site plan review applications. Planning boards are required to receive annual training, and such training often relates to land use management including site plan review practices.

**14. Downtown Organization:** In order for positive and proactive change to occur, and for the strategies and recommendations of this and other plans to be implemented, an organizational framework for implementation must be established. Currently, no organization has, as its sole mission, a focus on the downtown area, although both the Community Planning Group and the Greater Whitney Point Business Association have some involvement.

There are a number of organizational models that could be utilized for organizing the downtown, ranging from a loose affiliation or network of existing groups or organizations to a highly structured, incorporated, non-profit organization. Due to the small nature of the downtown, it may be unlikely that a highly structured Main Street



program can be developed. Some type of organization, however, is vital to the success of the downtown and its businesses, and the Main Street Four-Point Approach should be followed regardless of the size or formality of the organization. Due to the relatively small number of businesses and property owners in the downtown, a rather informal organizational structure is recommended as a starting point. As the organization gains successes, its organizational structure can become more formalized. It may be desirable to open the organization membership to any Village business and to include the Route 11 Corridor in the service area in any organization, with the understanding that the needs of the two areas differ and that downtown needs particular focus. At the least, this organization of business and property owners should meet once a month to discuss issues of mutual concern. This organization should work to organize one or two small events per year, and should tackle other downtown projects, such a coordinated hours of operation, business mentoring, and other needed initiatives.

At some point, a more formal “Main Street” program would greatly benefit the downtown. The National Trust for Historic Preservation created the Main Street model and it has been successfully used to revitalize downtowns throughout the nation. The program outlines four broad areas important to downtown revitalization including Organization, Design, Promotion, and Economic Restructuring. It also stresses that revitalization efforts must be undertaken in partnership with the various downtown stakeholders, and that efforts must be incremental in nature. A formal Main Street Program usually has a paid staff person, a Main Street Manager, who runs the program. Whitney Point is likely not large enough to sustain a Main Street program of its own, but the organizational framework is still valuable.

15. Develop Community Events Focused on the Waterfront: As the Village of Whitney Point continues to concentrate its efforts on the development of access and linkages to the riverfront, it needs to develop community events that celebrate the Tioughnioga River and/or are held on the riverfront. Through the permitting process, the Army Corps of Engineers is open to discuss events that may take place along the water. One of the recommended places is the section of the riverfront located to the north of Main Street businesses. This flat stretch of land, although privately owned, is suitable as a community festival area for a variety of events from community health walks, to picnics and barbeques, music events, to canoeing and kayaking races (dependant on water levels). Since the construction of permanent structures in this area will present a large challenge to event promoters, activities such as those mentioned, that are easily set up and taken down, are recommended. Current events and activities, in addition to new events, should always consider using the waterfront location when possible. Events should be as creative, fun, and unique as possible. While riverside events can promote good will throughout the Village, these activities should always have the primary focus of spurring economic development efforts in the study area.

If a downtown business is not directly involved in a riverfront community event, it must recognize that an event that promotes the downtown is good for ALL businesses. The philosophy being that if a positive experience is had at one event, there will be a reason for someone to revisit the area again and possibly patronize a different downtown business. Businesses not directly involved with a particular event can show support through sponsorships or paid advertisements. They can also develop a complementary, non-competing event at the same time. For example, offering goods, food, or services along the sidewalk while a community barbeque is taking place near

the riverfront. This keeps event-goers circulating through the community and enjoying all that it has to offer.

In this day and age of scarce financial resources, and with people's volunteer time at a premium, it is better to develop a single quality event as opposed to a number of smaller events. Once a single event has been successfully launched, the Whitney Point community can assess its monetary and volunteer capital to determine if another quality river event can be added.

Another area that is ideal for providing an increased enjoyment of the river is south of the Route 206 Bridge. This riverbank area can be the site of kayaking, canoeing, fundraising walks, picnics, historical re-enactments, etc. Because this area lies east of busy Route 11, the pedestrian improvements recommended elsewhere in this Plan are critical to integrating this part of the river with the Village's downtown economic redevelopment efforts. Without pedestrian-friendly access between the river and the downtown, activities on the waterfront will either be totally removed from the downtown experience or will be perceived as dangerous with relation to pedestrian safety. If the development of a linear park precedes the development of improved pedestrian access across Route 11, the Village must be diligent in working with the County Sheriff's Department and the NYS DOT in slowing traffic in this area, thus allowing people to cross safely.

Although not in the Village, Dorchester Park routinely hosts various events and competitions. The Village should look for opportunities to piggy-back on these events and draw visitors to the park into the downtown area.

**16. Develop a Sound Downtown/Community Marketing Effort:** Whitney Point is fortunate to be located at the intersection of several state highways, and on an exit of an interstate highway. The community must entice those traveling through the community to stop for goods and services, or come back to the Village at a later date. Recommended physical improvements, including streetscape enhancements and façade improvements, will assist in this effort, but additional actions are recommended.

Lighted programmable signs could be installed at each I-81 exit, most likely on Route 11 opposite the "T" intersections of each exit. These signs must be very well designed, and should be framed with stone, and/wood and surrounded by landscaping. The programmable signs provide the Village with the opportunity to tailor messages for certain audiences or events, such as incoming Cornell students, recreation events at Dorchester Park, the County Fair, etc. The goal of the signage/message is 1) provide visitors with a positive, welcoming first impression of the community and 2) entice visitors to stop in the downtown during current or at a future date.

**17. Institute an Event Focused on Arts, Local Goods, and Crafts:** As part of the strategic planning process, the Whitney Point advisory committee examined its strengths and weaknesses with respect to developing an overall future business focus. Subsequently, it developed the Position Statement detailed previously. Given the nature of existing businesses and local interests, the nearness to the untapped resources afforded by the Tioughnioga and Otsego Rivers, and the small successes it has already achieved, the Village of Whitney Point decided its future redevelopment efforts should be

tied to an appreciation of the arts and artisans, and a concentration on health and fitness. In summary, a theme based on the “mind, body, and soul”.

There are a number of community events, such as the Fall Festival and the Big Tent Event that feature locally made crafts and/or provide a venue for local musicians and thespians to perform. This theme could be expanded upon. An annual event primarily located in the downtown area and focusing on local arts should be developed. If the event is community-wide, much consideration should be given to how attendees will navigate the community, either by foot or other transportation. At all costs, the Main Street business community must make sure that events are scheduled and located properly so that the downtown is considered the focus of activities.

**18. Develop Artists’ Live/Work Spaces:** Vacant space on upper floors of commercial buildings provides opportunities for new uses in the downtown area. As Whitney Point seeks to draw artists from the southern reaches of the county as part of its economic revitalization efforts, conversion of vacant spaces should be undertaken for artists’ lofts and live/work spaces. A variety of sizes and uses should be developed, from small studio spaces for writers or painters, to more expansive units with living facilities. Rehabilitating vacant spaces for artist work spaces can be a significantly less expensive undertaking than renovating for housing or commercial office space, and can be an interim step to more comprehensive renovation and reuse projects.

The Village should work to provide incentives for creating artists’ live/work spaces. Commercial and/or housing rehabilitation programs instituted by the Village should provide a priority for projects that support cultural and artistic facilities such as detailed above.

**19. Relocate or Visually Improve the Hess Station and Intersection:** The Hess gas station on the corner of Route 11 and Main Street offers a number of issues that impact the appearance and character of historic downtown Whitney Point. The gas station is located on an extremely visible property at the immediate entrance to the downtown. The two buildings that flank the gas station are large, historical, architecturally important buildings that now house Aiello’s Restaurant and the Oakland Hotel. The architectural incompatibility of the gas station buildings, and the prominent location of the gas station at the entrance to downtown, have a significant impact on the visual resources as well as the image of the downtown area – and does not necessarily support the historical quaintness and character that is the targeted sense of place for the downtown. Furthermore, the existing station is crowded, has few pumps, and can be difficult to enter and exit safely.

Despite the negative visual impact, the Hess Station does offer a small convenience store that supports the needs of the immediate neighborhood, generates tax revenues for the community, and provides other economic benefits. Although it attracts users from Route 11, it has been noted that these users do not venture into the downtown – they simply return to Route 11 and continue on.

A serious lack of parking at this end of Main Street has also been noted. The Oakland Hotel requires parking for its patrons as does Aiello’s restaurant. The Hess

Station property offers a potentially convenient location for additional parking for these two businesses.

The intersection of Route 11 and Main Street is seriously lacking in green space or street trees, as is most of the downtown corridor. The Hess property and the adjacent Route 11 ROW also offers an opportunity to provide an attractive entrance to the downtown area by incorporating street trees and other plantings, attractive signage, pavement, decorative street lights and furniture, which would help to establish and strengthen the character of the downtown area and would serve to attract visitors. The photos below show designs from other communities that would be appropriate for Whitney Point.



There are many variables to addressing the current situation with the station, particularly the needs of desires of station owners. It is important, however, that some action is taken to improve the current situation. A win-win approach should be undertaken so that the site can be improved for the community, while enhancing the business opportunities of the station owners.

Three potential solutions for resolving some or all of these issues are as follows:

**A. Complete architectural and aesthetic renovations to the Hess Station and pump canopy.** The buildings and site should be enhanced to more attractive and architecturally compatible with the historic downtown. This option would significantly enhance the appearance of the site while not requiring the costly and potentially difficult relocation/reconstruction of the buildings on the property or to another location within the Village. Removing the bright green accent colors and providing brick accents with white trim, a cupola, historical railings and other detailing on both the Express Mart and the canopy over the pumps would significantly improve the appearance. In addition to these improvements, a new sign to replace the pole sign – displaying a low profile, exterior lit, wooden sign. No interior lit signs should remain on the property. Green space can be reclaimed at the corner intersection and planted with trees, shrubs, groundcovers and an attractive sign inviting visitors to historic downtown Whitney Point. Shared parking with the Oakland Hotel or for river trail users could be considered for the rear of the property. Properly defined driveways, green strips, and street trees would add significantly to the improved appearance and the corner area could still support an enhanced street crossing and community entranceway design. This option would not provide an

opportunity for an increased number of pumps or additional parking to support other downtown uses.

**B. Rebuild and reconfigure the Hess Station upon the existing lot.** This solution would require the participation of several downtown property owners in order to be successful. The Oakland Hotel could offer the rear portion of its property to allow for construction of the new Hess Station building. The owners of the parking area behind Citizens Communications would have to be willing to allow patrons of the Oakland Hotel to park there overnight. Lastly, the Hess Station would need to be willing to share the parking area with the other businesses.

This option routes traffic exiting the Hess Station into the downtown area by exiting onto Collins Street. This mutually cooperative arrangement could benefit the Hess Station by providing an increase in the number of pumps available and would provide a new building which is architecturally compatible with the downtown. Routing customers onto the street adjacent to the Oakland Hotel would bring visibility and visitors into the downtown area. A small area of greenspace with trees and enhanced street crossings as well as an improved entrance to downtown could be provided at the corner. Parking for 18 cars would support the gas station users and serve as overflow parking for Aiello's and the Oakland Hotel. Additional parking could be accommodated within the parking lot behind Citizens Communications. This solution provides an area for tree plantings and landscaping as well as an attractive welcoming sign and enhancement of the crosswalks at the intersection. (See Conceptual Site Plan.)

**C. Relocate the Hess station to another parcel along Route 11 and redevelop site.** This would allow for expansion of the gas station facility – where there is little opportunity on the present site. This option would allow the property to be used exclusively for green space and parking and might support a small business that does not have the vehicular circulation needs that the gas station must support. This option would provide parking spaces for use by the Oakland Hotel, Aiello's Restaurant, other nearby downtown businesses. Incorporating green space with street trees would enhance the lot, which could also function as a node for the future river trail. Street crossings could be enhanced, and a more attractive entrance to the downtown would be provided. This option assumes that the Hess Station wants to increase the current number of pumps available as well as the size of the convenience store. Relocation to another larger parcel along Route 11 could provide this. The under-utilized property on the east side of Route 11 on the north side of the Route 11 bridge may be an appropriate location for an expanded facility. This would keep the station in easy walking distance to the downtown. Removal of the gas station from the downtown area may negatively impact the downtown by removing the convenience store, but this would likely be outweighed by the benefits.

**20. Encourage Development of a Train Stop and Use of Railroad:** On a regional basis, there has been much discussion about revitalizing the railroad for passenger use. Some communities throughout the State have worked to utilize rail for tourism purposes such as "leaf peeping", Murder Mystery tours, and for special events such as Christmas train rides. Whitney Point most recently offered rides to the Marathon Maple Festival which is held in nearby Cortland County.

While the revitalization of passenger train service in Whitney Point was not a high priority item, the Village should be mindful of regional efforts to increase use of the railroad and be part of the discussion. The fact that the railroad is on the western side of the community and forces visitors to walk down Main Street to access the rest of the community holds potential for the future. Those events that concentrate on bringing people into the community should be a top priority for Whitney Point. The Village presently has the opportunity to consider passenger service for the Broome County Fair. As the downtown area evolves, it can consider this service for other community events that have regional appeal. As passenger train service is reintegrated into the community, it is extremely important to have such things as an information kiosk and wayfinder signs readily available to visitors as they make their way to downtown businesses, the river, and connecting trails.

**21. Install New Parking Signs:** The existing public parking signs are either non-existent or difficult to see. New signage should be installed at all public parking areas in the downtown, including directional signage. The signs should be a very high quality in terms of design and construction, and should complement the historic character of the Downtown. Enlisting the aid of local artists in developing creative, interesting signs is encouraged. While each sign does not need to be identical, they should be easily recognized as public parking signs, either through consistent size, shape, or color. The designs should coordinate with other public designs in the downtown.



**22. Reorganize and Improve Public Parking Lots:** There are a number of simple improvements that could improve the appearance of the parking areas as well as the downtown area by planting trees wherever possible. Alternative parking schemes should be explored in order to increase the efficiency and capacity of all available lots. (See Overall Sketch Plan) The parking lots targeted are as follows:

- a. **Aiello's Restaurant** - add attractive signage to direct patrons to the parking lot off Collins Street, which would likely have less parking in the evening hours when the restaurant would be serving a higher number of patrons. The parking lot behind the restaurant can provide space for approximately 25 cars.
- b. **Oakland Hotel** – Future overnight guests could use the parking area off Collins Street for evening parking. Parking signage at the street, indicating patron use should be provided at the entrances to the parking area. The redevelopment of the Hess Station as detailed under Recommendation 20 could provide additional parking.
- c. **The large parking lot off Collins Street** is located on a number of private properties belonging to Main Street businesses as well as a portion which lies

on land owned by PSD Associates. The existing dimensions of the lot should be carefully verified, because a double loaded parking area in the center may be possible if the aisles were reduced to 20' wide and used as one-way in and out. Simple improvements such as signage, decorative lighting, and trees would improve the visual appearance of the parking lot – not just for users, but for travelers on Route 11 who see the rear of the buildings as their only image of Main Street. Trees would have to be planted on private property, due to the fact that they would not be allowed on any portion of the levee property, however, large shrubs could be planted to help screen and buffer the large area of asphalt. In addition, the rear facades of the Main Street buildings in this area could use appropriate historic improvements and signage – which would provide a mechanism to draw users from Route 11 into the downtown area.

- d. **Dollar General** – The parking lot serving this business could be improved with the addition of defined driveways, green strips and trees. The opportunity to design a cooperative parking arrangement with the Art Center should be explored to the mutual benefit of both.
- e. **Knapps** – A defined driveway with tree plantings in curbed medians on each side would significantly add to the appearance of this lot and would contribute greatly to the streetscape by providing badly needed street trees.

Conceptual plans for improving parking areas are included in Appendix 4.

**23. Complete a Cultural Resources Survey:** Downtown Whitney Point, and the surrounding neighborhoods have a rich architectural heritage. The architecture of the area, however, is largely undocumented. There are no local, State or federally designated buildings or districts in the neighborhood. The fact that the area has no *designated* historic structures does not, however, mean that there are no structures of historic importance. The neighborhood's historic structures, although largely undocumented, include many buildings that are historically important, despite the fact that many are in a state of disrepair and neglect. The preservation of historic assets should be a major consideration as the downtown and surrounding neighborhood is revitalized.

A thorough Cultural Resource Survey is an important first step in documenting the neighborhood's buildings and structures. A Cultural Resource Survey would investigate the history of individual properties, and document and describe their architecture. Ultimately, the Survey will provide a foundation for interpreting the history of the area and serve to protect its architecture. It is also the first step in a nomination to the State and National Registers of Historic Places, should the Village decide to pursue such listings.

**24. Support Redevelopment of Existing Buildings and Appropriate New Buildings:** The Village of Whitney Point is blessed with an interesting and varied collection of buildings, many of which possess significant historical character. Unfortunately, two of the most important buildings in the downtown are under-utilized, and/or in need of



improvements. These are the Oakland Hotel and Aiello's Restaurant. Both buildings provide enormous potential for redevelopment and both owners have preliminary plans to redevelop their buildings. Support should be provided to both owners to ensure the appropriate development of the downtown landmarks. This may include technical assistance, or the sponsoring and/or supporting of funding applications.

As in most historic downtowns buildings have been lost in Whitney Point. Replacement buildings quite often do not possess the historic character of the previous ones. The Village has a glaring example of this with the Laundromat building. Currently the owner of a vacant site located between two multistory buildings has development plans for a new structure. The owner's desire is to complete an infill development project that is multistory and a similar scale to neighboring buildings. However, the economics of the project will generate some feasibility concerns. The Village of Whitney Point should work closely with the developers of this and similar development projects and support appropriate development efforts. This can be done by working to streamline permitting and approval processes and by sponsoring and supporting funding applications.

There are a number of potential funding opportunities that could support such redevelopment effort, dependant on the ultimate use of the property. In some cases, funding applications will need to be sponsored directly by the Village, while others can be accessed by a private developer but will need local support. Several of these are:

- *Small Cities Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)* – The CDBG program provides funds for economic development projects that are creating jobs as well as housing units. The redevelopment of Main Street is a funding priority of the program. The program is administered by the New York State Office for Small Cities, and is the same program that funded the development of this Strategic Plan. The Village can either grant or loan the CDBG funds to the developer. Due to prevailing wage requirements, it is often most suitable to utilize CDBG funds for purchase of equipment and furnishings, rather than construction costs. CDBG funds have been used for similar projects in the past. There may be other ways to utilize CDBG funds to assist the project, and these should be investigated when a potential project is proposed.
- *Historic Preservation Tax Credit* – For rehabilitation projects the tax credit is available to private developers undertaking renovation projects on federally designated historic structures. The renovation must be in keeping with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation of Historic Buildings and all planned work must be approved by the New York State Historic Preservation Officer. This may alter the type of work that is proposed and add costs to the project. The renovation cost must exceed 50% of the basis value of the building. The developer is eligible for a tax credit with a value of up to 20% of the renovation cost of the structure. This tax credit can be used directly by the developer, or syndicated and sold to raise capital.
- *Low/Mod Housing Programs* – Redeveloping the buildings or the vacant site for housing, particularly housing for low to moderate income households, is not being proposed by the developers as reuse option. Nevertheless, there are a number of State and federal programs that could provide substantial financing for such a project. If a developer cannot be located for other redevelopment



options the Village should strongly consider supporting applications to fund such a use, particularly if only the upper floors will be developed into housing with the main floor remaining commercial.

- *New York State Housing Trust Fund Corporation/New York Main Street Program* – This program can provide 50/50 matching funds for façade and building renovation projects in downtown areas. The program also has a *Downtown Anchor* component that can provide up to \$100,000 per building, but not exceeding 25% of project cost, to help establish or expand cultural or business anchors that are identified in a local plan as key to a revitalization effort. The renovation of the either building would be an ideal match for this program.
- *RESTORE-NY* – This NYS program is an ideal program for any of the redevelopment efforts or the reconstruction efforts. Unfortunately during the current round of RestoreNY funding the projects did not meet certain program requirements. Hopefully changes in the program will be forth coming that will suit these projects for round three of the funding.
- *Legislative Member Items* – Member Items received through State and federal representatives are available on a case-by-case basis for locally important projects. Local leaders would need to work directly with State elected representatives at the time a project is proposed to determine what type and amounts of assistance may be available.
- *Broome County* – The County and related quasi-public entities may also be able to provide assistance for a potential project. These may be in the form of industrial revenue bonds, or other smaller programs available to new, job-creating developments. The County's economic development resources should be brought in as a full partner with the Village in supporting the redevelopment effort.

## BENCHMARKED PROJECTS

<b>BENCHMARK #1</b>
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### PROBLEM/OPPORTUNITY 1 – Housing

A large percentage of residential housing units in the Downtown neighborhood are in a substandard condition. This includes both single-family homes as well as rental properties. There are an estimated 876 housing units in the area and

To reverse this trend, the Village should embark on a course of rehabilitating the existing owner-occupied and rental housing market segment and encouraging homeownership programs to increase the level of owner-occupied housing. This includes strictly residential properties and residential units on upper floors of commercial buildings.

Rehabilitation efforts should preserve and enhance the rich architectural detailing that gives the neighborhood its character. New housing programs should recognize that energy efficient housing features, and other housing quality and safety features, not only protect the environment, they increase housing affordability and safety on the individual household level. Housing units should be developed or modified so they can be enjoyed by all persons, especially those with physical and mental challenges. The Village should be aware that as the population ages the number of elderly in communities will be unprecedented. This population will need special housing accommodations, and/or will desire greater choice in housing options. The Village should also be exploring ways to infuse more market rate housing in the downtown, as well as housing for artists, so that there is more economic and social diversity.

### PROJECT 1.1

**Create a housing rehabilitation program for owner occupied and income property units in the Downtown neighborhood** – According the to a definition of substandard provided by the Office for Small Cities, 77% of owner-occupied housing structures in the Downtown Neighborhood are moderately to severely substandard as are 88% of income properties. This results in a poor first impression of the Downtown, a decrease in property values, a lack of further positive investment, unsafe housing conditions, and a lack of community pride and enjoyment. The Village should seek funding to establish both owner-occupied and rental property rehabilitation programs to upgrade the housing stock of the neighborhood.

**INDICATOR** – # of housing units rehabilitated to standard condition

## TASKS

- Seek funding from various State and federal programs for the rehabilitation of the existing housing stock. Hire a consultant to administer the program(s).
- Develop guidelines for the creation of a housing rehabilitation program in the Downtown Neighborhood for owner occupied housing, particularly for lower income homeowners. Financial incentives must be contingent upon homeowners living in the property for a specified time period after the rehabilitation work is completed.
- Develop guidelines for the development of an income property rehabilitation program, particularly for properties where the majority of units are tenanted by households which are lower income. Financial incentives must include provisions for rents to remain affordable to lower income tenants and for the properties to be maintained, meet code, and provide a safe living environment subsequent to rehabilitation. This program should include mixed-use commercial/residential properties.

## PROJECT LEADER

Village of Whitney Point

## POTENTIAL PARTNERS

Local Property Owners  
Village Code Enforcement Office

## RESOURCES

Village of Whitney Point  
Office for Small Cities: Community Development Block Grant Program  
NYS Division of Housing and Community Renewal: HOME Program  
NYS Housing Trust Fund  
NYS Affordable Housing Corporation  
RESTORE Program  
Weatherization Program  
Low Income Housing Tax Credits  
Historic Preservation Tax Credits

## PROJECT 1.2

**Limit the conversion of existing owner occupied housing to income properties and encourage the conversion of income properties to owner occupied housing by developing homeownership programs** – There has been a slow and steady conversion of the existing housing stock in the South End from owner occupied to income property. In order to both stem the tide of further conversions and to reverse the trend, financial incentives must be provided to maintain the housing units that are currently owner occupied while, at the same time, converting income property units back to owner occupied. Because of the overall deteriorated condition of housing in the area, housing units will, in all likelihood, need repairs upon purchase, financial incentives must

not only be given for down payment and closing cost assistance, but for housing rehabilitation subsequent to purchase.

**INDICATOR** – Increase in the number and percentage of owner occupied housing units

### **TASKS**

- Apply for funding from appropriate sources to finance a homeownership assistance program.
- Establish a first time homeownership program for both single and multi-family housing structures in the Downtown Neighborhood. Financial incentives in the form of down payment and closing cost assistance and rehabilitation will be the cornerstones of this program. Priority will be given to lower income households to assist in achieving the dream of homeownership. In the multi-family homeownership program, priority will be given to income-eligible, existing tenants.

### **PROJECT LEADER**

Village of Whitney Point

### **POTENTIAL PARTNERS**

Neighborhood property owners  
Local lending institutions  
Board of Realtors  
Housing and credit counseling agencies  
Not-for-profit housing providers' clients/tenants

### **RESOURCES**

Office for Small Cities: Community Development Block Grant Program  
NYS Division of Housing and Community Renewal: HOME Program  
NYS Affordable Housing Corporation  
U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

## **PROJECT 1.3**

**Promote energy saving, safety, and special needs housing features so that living units remain affordable and can be enjoyed by all** – In order for housing to remain affordable for individual households, housing rehabilitation improvements must consider energy saving features such as those put forth in Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED), the Energy Star Program, etc. Rehabilitation must also take into account the needs of individual household members regarding features that allow the elderly to “age in place” and allow those with physical disabilities to fully enjoy their place of residence. Lastly, safety issues such as addressing lead based paint and asbestos, the installation of smoke and carbon monoxide detectors, etc., will serve to protect neighborhood households.

**INDICATOR** – Increase in the number of homes that are rehabilitated utilizing green energy features; increase in the number of homes made accessible or adaptable for special needs populations; increase in the number of homes where lead paint and/or asbestos has been addressed and/or safety appliances such as smoke and carbon monoxide detectors have been installed.

## **TASKS**

- Develop rehabilitation programs with a goal of reducing energy consumption. This can include, but not be limited to, energy efficient windows and doors, sufficient insulation, using “green” materials, and installing energy efficient appliances, and utilizing emerging technologies.
- Work with local utilities on undertaking community informational meetings on ways to cut energy costs.
- Identify households with persons who have special needs and rehabilitate homes to meet these needs. Encourage landlords to make units accessible or adaptable for those with special needs.

## **PROJECT LEADER**

Village of Whitney Point

## **POTENTIAL PARTNERS**

Village Code Enforcement Officer  
Private property owners  
NYSERDA

## **RESOURCES**

Office for Small Cities: Community Development Block Grant Program  
NYS Division of Housing and Community Renewal: Access to Home Program  
U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development  
NYSEG  
National Grid  
Broome County Health Department  
Assistance to Firefighters Grant

## **BENCHMARK #2**

### **PROBLEM/OPPORTUNITY 2 - Organization**

In order for positive and proactive change to occur, and for the strategies and recommendations of this and other plans to be implemented, a framework for implementation must be established. Currently, no organization has, as its sole mission, a focus on the Whitney Point downtown area. There are a number of organizational models that could be utilized, ranging from a loose affiliation or network of existing groups or organizations to a highly structured, incorporated, non-profit organization. One such model is the National Trust for Historic Preservation's Four-Point Main Street<sup>™</sup> Approach. Due to the small nature of the downtown, it is unlikely that a highly structured Main Street program can be developed. Some type of organization, however, is vital to the success of the downtown, and downtown businesses.

### **PROJECT 2.1**

**Develop a downtown business organization** - Due to the relatively small number of businesses and property owners in the Downtown/Village, it may be difficult to establish a formal downtown revitalization organization with paid staff. An organizational framework is, however, vital to achieving lasting success in the Downtown. At a minimum, an organization of business and property owners should meet once a month to discuss mutual issues of concern. This organization should work to organize one or two small events per year, and should tackle other downtown projects, such as uniform hours, street cleaning, business mentoring, and similar initiatives.

At some point, a more formal "Main Street" program would greatly benefit the downtown. The Community Planning Group would be an appropriate existing entity to reorganize around the National Main Street Center's four-point approach. The National Trust for Historic Preservation created the Main Street model and it has been successfully used to revitalize downtowns throughout the nation. The program outlines four broad areas important to downtown revitalization including Organization, Design, Promotion, and Economic Restructuring. It also stresses that revitalization efforts undertaken in partnership with the various downtown stakeholders, and that efforts must be incremental in nature. A formal Main Street Program usually has a paid staff person, a Main Street Manager, who runs the program. Whitney Point is likely not large enough to sustain a Main Street program of its own, but could partner with other nearby communities to share a Main Street Manager. Even if a manager is not feasible, following the comprehensive Main Street Approach would enhance the likelihood of successful revitalization efforts.

**INDICATOR** – Downtown organization formed

## **TASKS**

- Identify a core group of individuals to act as a base for the organization/work with the existing Community Planning Group.
- The organization should organize itself into four standing committees: organization, design, promotion, and economic restructuring.
- Core members, or representative thereof, should attend available Main Street/downtown revitalization training workshops, such as the New York Conference of Mayor's Main Street Conference.
- Core members should develop a plan of action for initial activities
- Bring together all business and property owners, as well as government and interested individuals at an initial meeting.
- A strong community-wide volunteer base should be developed
- Implement revitalization activities, focusing on small, easily accomplished, highly visible projects first.

## **PROJECT LEADER**

Local Interested business owners, property owners

## **POTENTIAL PARTNERS**

Downtown Business Owners  
Downtown Property Owners  
Interested Residents

## **RESOURCES**

National Main Street Center  
New York Main Street Alliance  
Thoma Development Consultants

## **BENCHMARK # 3**

### **PROBLEM/OPPORTUNITY 3 – Condition of Downtown Buildings**

The Village of Whitney Point downtown is blessed with a varied collection of 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> Century structures, many of which are historic commercial blocks. They are primarily two story brick structures and highly intact examples of traditional downtown buildings. Unfortunately, many of the buildings are poorly maintained, in varying states of disrepair, and/or have had inappropriate alterations to their storefronts. Facades are in need of paint, new signs, awnings, and other repairs. A decayed downtown reflects poorly on the entire community, and it is vital that the Village strive to maintain its commercial structures while preserving and restoring their historic integrity.

#### **PROJECT 3.1**

**Develop a micro-grant program to assist in signage replacement** – Signs that are deteriorated, unsightly, or incompatible with the historic character give the downtown a disjointed and neglected appearance. Plastic and internally lit signs are inappropriate in the downtown. In addition, poor signage often does not adequately reflect the quality of the businesses they advertise. Replacement of existing business signs with new, higher quality signs that are in keeping with the downtown's desired character and architecture can have a profound impact on the area for a minimal cost. It will also directly benefit individual businesses by improving their single most important piece of advertising. The Village should establish a micro-grants program that could include up to \$500 to \$750 in matching funds per business to replace and upgrade their business signs. An initial fund of \$4,000 to \$5,000 should be sufficient. All new signs should be in compliance with an updated sign ordinance detailed elsewhere.

**INDICATOR** – Number of signs replaced

#### **TASKS**

- Locate sources of funds to seed program
- Establish a simple application process with appropriate design review
- Implement program

#### **PROJECT LEADER**

Village of Whitney Point

#### **POTENTIAL PARTNERS**

Local business owners  
Local property owners



## **RESOURCES**

Village of Whitney Point  
State Elected Officials

## **PROJECT 3.2**

**Develop a Downtown Façade Program** – A number buildings in the downtown suffer from neglect and deferred maintenance, or are incompatible with the character of the downtown. Heavy property tax burdens and the limited ability of downtown property owners to garner sufficient rents can limit the funds available for building maintenance. The Village should consider supporting an application to the Small Cities Community Development Block Grant Program or New York Main Street Program through the Division of Housing and Community Renewal. It should be noted that, currently, the New York Main Street Program is limited to non-profit organizations, so the Village cannot be the lead applicant. The Village can, however, assist an appropriate non-profit in applying for and administering a program. There is discussion regarding the future potential of allowing municipalities to apply directly for funding, and the Village should do so if funding allows.

**INDICATOR** – Number of facades improved

## **TASKS**

- Identify and apply for funding from appropriate sources
- Determine design review process
- Establish program guidelines and a simple application process
- Market program
- Implement program

## **PROJECT LEADER**

Village of Whitney Point

## **POTENTIAL PARTNERS**

Local Property owners

## **RESOURCES**

Village of Whitney Point  
NYS Division of Housing and Community Renewal  
Office for Small Cities

## **PROJECT 3.3**

**Develop a Downtown Building Improvement Program** – A number buildings in the downtown have vacant and/or underutilized space that should be renovated to active use. Heavy property tax burdens and the limited ability of downtown property owners to garner sufficient rents can limit the funds available for building maintenance and renovation. The Village should consider sponsoring or supporting an application to the Small Cities Community Development Block Grant Program or New York Main Street Program through the Division of Housing and Community Renewal to establish a grant/loan program to renovate vacant and underutilized space for residential and commercial use. It should be noted that the New York Main Street Program is limited to non-profit organizations, so the Village cannot be the lead applicant. It can, however, assist an appropriate non-profit in applying for and administering a program. Renovations should encourage a diverse mix of housing options, including artist housing and live/work spaces, and first and upper floor commercial uses.

**INDICATOR** – Number of buildings renovated

### **TASKS**

- Identify and apply for funding from appropriate sources
- Determine Design Review Process
- Establish a simple application process
- Market program
- Implement program

### **PROJECT LEADER**

Village of Whitney Point

### **POTENTIAL PARTNERS**

Local Property owners

### **RESOURCES**

Village of Whitney Point  
NYS Division of Housing and Community Renewal  
Office for Small Cities

## **BENCHMARK # 4**

### **PROBLEM/OPPORTUNITY 4 – Downtown Business Environment**

The foundation of a successful downtown is the small, locally owned businesses operating there. Whitney Point is fortunate to have a number of such businesses, although the retail sector is weak. Supporting locally owned businesses is an important component of a successful revitalization effort. Generally, business recruitment efforts have a very low success rate. The Village should, rather, concentrate efforts on creating local market conditions that are conducive to attracting new businesses. These efforts are detailed elsewhere. It is recommended, however, that the Village establish assistance programs to bolster existing small businesses and support new businesses in establishing themselves in the downtown.

#### **PROJECT 4.1**

**Microenterprise Program** – A microenterprise is typically defined as any small business with five or fewer employees. These are the types of businesses often found in downtown areas. A microenterprise program often provides financial support with technical assistance and training, for new business development and to assist existing businesses to grow. Whitney Point should establish a program that would be available to microenterprises in its downtown, and perhaps other areas of the community. Such a program would support the creation of new businesses in the downtown, fill vacant storefronts, and offer more diversity in its businesses and services.

#### **INDICATORS**

Number of new business  
Number of businesses/persons assisted.

#### **TASKS**

- Apply for funding to seed a microenterprise program
- Support and encourage the development of a microenterprise program.
- Market availability of the program throughout the community to ensure participations of local businesses in the program

#### **PROJECT LEADER**

Village of Whitney Point

#### **POTENTIAL PARTNERS**

Downtown Business Owners  
Local lenders  
Small Business Development Center  
SCORE  
Appropriate Broome County Agencies

## **RESOURCES**

Office for Small Cities: Community Development Block Grant  
County Economic Development Office  
Small Business Development Center  
Empire State Development

## **BENCHMARK #5**

### **PROBLEM/OPPORTUNITY 5 – Development of the Downtown Waterfront**

The Village of Whitney Point has set as one of its priorities reconnecting the Downtown with the Tioughnioga and Otselic Rivers' waterfront areas. This includes improvements to the built environment including such amenities as a walking/exercise trail and projects that will allow more access and enjoyment of the River such as a car top boat launch, fishing access, interpretive signage, and information related to the history of the downtown and river. This activity serves a variety of purposes: it moves people in and around the downtown, increasing economic vitality; promotes a healthy lifestyle; encourages the enjoyment of natural resources; instills an appreciation of all the Village has to offer; rediscovery of the Tioughnioga and Otselic Rivers; linkages between important Village entities such as schools, the railroad, businesses, residences, etc.; offers an alternative mode of transportation; and conservation of energy resources; to name just a few.

While the Village can be the catalyst for obtaining funding for waterfront development, this must truly be a community effort. In addition to the funding that can be sought after and procured by the Village, the community must look at creative ways to engage volunteer, educational, and not-for-profit organizations, in addition to County and regional agencies, to assist with these projects, both from a planning perspective and from the perspective of providing some of the labor/expertise needed to undertake needed waterfront projects.

#### **PROJECT 5.1**

**Secure title of the properties that front the west bank of the Tioughnioga River, from the Route 206 Bridge southward to the Sewage Treatment Plant and Construct a Car Top Boat Launch.** – The Village has secured most of the properties along the riverbank. It should continue in this endeavor so that a linear park can be established in this area. Since the Village has an easement on all these properties, regardless of ownership, the creation of a linear trail is still possible and should be pursued even though all properties may not be under the control of the Village. In order to provide access to the water, a car top boat launch should be constructed on land already owned by the Village. This will allow canoeists and kayakers a designated place to enter the water. This can also be designed as an access for fishing. Wherever possible, the Village should strive to make the facilities accessible by all.

**INDICATOR** – Number of properties owned by the Village; construction of car top boat launch

## **TASKS**

- Negotiate with property owners on securing title to/purchasing subject properties.
- Seek funding from various State and federal programs for the acquisition of these parcels for designation as municipal parkland.

## **PROJECT LEADER**

Village of Whitney Point

## **POTENTIAL PARTNERS**

Private Property Owners  
Army Corps of Engineers  
NYS DEC  
Broome County Office of Parks  
New Whitney Point Business Organization  
Whitney Point Historian  
Whitney Point School District

## **RESOURCES**

Village of Whitney Point  
NYS Office of Parks: Environmental Protection Fund/Land and Water  
Conservation Fund - Acquisition, Parks Development  
NYS Department of State: Local Waterfront Revitalization Program  
NYS Department of Environmental Conservation  
Legislative Member Item(s)

## **PROJECT 5.2**

**Develop a multi-use trail along the River and levee area** - As mentioned, the Army Corps of Engineers, in tandem with the Broome County Parks Department, will be undertaking a major facelift of Dorchester Park and the reservoir area. This includes the completion of a walking trail from the Park to a general area near the Whitney Point High School. In order to encourage patronage of the Whitney Point downtown and the enjoyment of all the other benefits afforded by a riverfront location as detailed above, the Village should work with a number of entities to complete a multi-use trail to the southern boundary of the Village, with a spur to the west.

**INDICATOR** – Completion of a river trail

## **TASKS**

- Hire an engineering/landscape architect firm to develop conceptual plans and costs estimates for the construction of a river trail.
- Initiate a discussion with the Army Corps of Engineers and the Broome County Office of Parks to make known the Village's intentions for the future of the

waterfront. The Army Corps of Engineers will better detail the permitting process for future development of the built environment and any limitations. The County and Village can partner in seeking funds on behalf of the Village. In 2007, the County pursued Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP) funds. If awarded, the County will use these funds to undertake a planning process and prepare a document to serve as a blueprint for managing the Tioughnioga River Corridor. LWRP designation has the potential to open up a significant funding stream for the County and its riverfront communities.

- Work with the Village and County Historian to develop a historic interpretation of the river area. This can include signage, markers, etc.
- Develop exercise amenities along the trail such as bicycle racks, benches, mileage markers for runners, a dog park, etc. Include a kiosk or signage that encourages trail users to visit Downtown Whitney Point.

## **PROJECT LEADER**

Village of Whitney Point  
Broome County Office of Parks

## **POTENTIAL PARTNERS**

Army Corps of Engineers  
NYS DEC  
Broome County Office of Parks  
New Whitney Point Business Organization  
Whitney Point Historian  
Whitney Point School District  
Local kayaking, canoeing, running, etc. clubs  
Boy and Girl Scout Associations  
Environmental Groups  
Other interested non-for-profit organizations

## **RESOURCES**

Village of Whitney Point  
NYS Office of Parks: Environmental Protection Fund/Land and Water  
Conservation Fund - Acquisition, Parks Development  
NYS Department of State: Local Waterfront Revitalization Program  
NYS Department of Environmental Conservation  
Legislative Member Item

## **BENCHMARK # 6**

### **PROBLEM/OPPORTUNITY 6 – U.S. Route 11 Streetscape**

The Route 11 corridor within the Village lacks a sense of place. Most development in this corridor does not reflect a coordinated effort in public investment or land use policy. The Village needs to coordinate improvement actions, provide guidance to land owners and developers, and plan for transportation improvements in order to create a positive impression of the community. Although this area is not in the traditional “downtown” there is a close physical connection with it, and an overall improvement in the communities commercial areas will support downtown revitalization activities.

#### **PROJECT 6.1**

**Coordinate public infrastructure investment** – Recognize needed improvements to existing transportation infrastructure, public utilities, and open spaces to bring about the desired level of service and desired pattern of development. Prioritize the need for pedestrian accessibility, bicycle friendliness, and vehicular access strategies to individual commercial sites.

Sidewalks serving parallel to Route 11 should be separated by a minimum of four to five foot green median from the curb of the road. Street trees should be planted within the green median. These features will enhance the safety of pedestrians along Route 11, while also improving aesthetics.

Curb cuts along Route 11 into individual sites should be better managed. Rather than providing one parcel-wide vehicular access to a site, a well defined access point should be installed. Additionally, maintaining a limited number of curb cuts and allowing traffic to flow from site to site internally, off Route 11, will help reduce the number of potential vehicle conflict points. New development and redevelopment of existing sites should have a common access point from Route 11. The administrative body authorized to review site plans should implement this policy.

#### **TASKS**

- Create a uniform design plan for the Route 11 corridor utilizing skills from a professional engineer, planner, or landscape architect.
- Revise zoning and site plan requirements as needed
- Relay to the New York State Department of Transportation the ideas of the strategic plan and vision, so they incorporate such planning into their road reconstruction and maintenance project.

**INDICATOR** – Local government working to change streetscape safety and aesthetics, the presence of safe pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, and limited ingress and egress points for commercial development in the corridor.



## **PROJECT LEADER**

Village of Whitney Point

## **POTENTIAL PARTNERS**

Private Property Owners

NYS DOT

Whitney Point School District

## **RESOURCES**

Village of Whitney Point

NYS DOT Safe Routes to School Program

NYS Department of State: Local Waterfront Revitalization Program

Legislative Member Item

## **PROJECT 6.2**

**Revise Site Plan Review policy and Zoning Local Law** – The Village should establish design guidelines for buildings and grounds located along the Route 11 corridor. Projects within this area should undergo a thorough site plan review, including adherence to guidelines with concept images and standards to help mold future physical changes. Projects should adhere to valued community images depicted in this plan and community valued concepts. Design guidelines should give direction toward new and altered signage, building facades, and landscaping where appropriate. These guidelines will also compliment the site plan review process when such review is required.

**INDICATOR** – Adopted amendments and revisions to the Zoning Local Law

## **TASKS**

- Issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) soliciting a consultant for land use regulation amendments.
- Secure a qualified planning consultant to create design standards for future development in the corridor. Create design standards for new developments that require site plan submission, and for alterations of existing development. Standards should included elements including overall site design, use of plant materials, building orientation and form, signage, parking, lighting, fencing/screening, and public spaces.

## **PROJECT LEADER**

Village of Whitney Point

## **POTENTIAL PARTNERS**

Village Planning Board (establish board)

Village Zoning Board of Appeals

## **RESOURCES**

Broome County Planning Department  
New York State Division of Local Government Services  
Southern Tier-East Regional Planning and Development Board  
New York Planning Federation  
Planning and Community Development Consultant

## **BENCHMARK # 7**

### **PROBLEM/OPPORTUNITY 7 – Central Business District Zoning Classification**

The Village's existing zoning classification and regulations for downtown are not positively contributing to the historic and physical integrity of the existing built environment. The current "Commercial" zoning classification is generally too broad of a classification to preserve the integrity of an historic downtown. Allowable uses should be uniquely tailored for the Main Street area, and the district boundary for a new central business district should encompass the general geographic area of the historic downtown.

#### **PROJECT 7.1**

**Create a Central Business or Downtown Zoning District** – In order to protect and enhance the integrity of the existing downtown character, a new district classification or overlay zoning district should be created as part of the zoning local law. An overlay district would be superimposed on top of a portion of the underlying Commercial zoning district that would apply additional standards addressing a special purpose, such as historic preservation or maintaining the downtown feel of Main Street. Otherwise, a new district should be created that focuses on specific Main Street characteristics.

**INDICATOR** – Adopted amendments to existing zoning district classifications or adoption of new zoning regulations.

#### **TASKS**

- Specify geographic area for the downtown or central business zoning classification or overlay district. This area should include Main Street from the intersection of U.S. Route 11 and Main Street, to Academy Street.
- Create new district language, or overlay district language, including allowable uses, and associated regulations to be included in the zoning local law. There should be no building setback requirements for this area. Buildings should be located at the sidewalk along Main Street. Validate the purpose of such district or overlay to protect and enhance the integrity of historic features in downtown, and to create a walkable, pedestrian friendly neighborhood for business and commercial uses.
- Uses to consider for a new zoning district classification include retail trades, public and private services, which should all be defined in the Village's definitions.

## **PROJECT LEADER**

Village of Whitney Point

## **POTENTIAL PARTNERS**

Broome County Planning Department  
New York Main Street Alliance

## **RESOURCES**

Village of Whitney Point  
New York Planning Federation  
NYS DOS Division of Local Government Services  
New York Main Street Alliance

## **PROJECT 7.2**

**Re-tool the site plan review component of the zoning local law** – The development needs of Main Street are different than other commercial areas in the village. The site plan review policy should accommodate for the different needs of both the Main Street area and the Route 11 corridor. There should be minimal or no off-street parking requirements for businesses on Main Street. Buildings should front on the sidewalk. These are requirements that should be imposed by the new zoning district or overlay district, but reinforced with the site plan review policy.

**INDICATOR** – Amended site plan review policy

## **TASKS**

- Better define when site plan review is required. A more productive way of requiring a site plan review is for when the physical attributes of a parcel of land will change, or when vehicular or pedestrian traffic, site ingress or egress is changed.
- Create review standards that reflect the need for a site plan proposal to fit into the context of the existing community or to fit in with the context of the community's vision.

## **PROJECT LEADER**

Village of Whitney Point

## **POTENTIAL PARTNERS**

Broome County Planning Department

## **RESOURCES**

Village of Whitney Point  
New York Planning Federation  
NYS DOS Division of Local Government Services  
New York Main Street Alliance