

Albany 2030
The City of Albany Comprehensive Plan
Appendix E: Albany 2030 Data Book



Neighborhood Strategy Area Profiles



South End



Total Population	8,151	
White	2,874	35%
Black	4,470	55%
Other	807	10%
17 & Under	2,521	31%
18 – 64	4,894	60%
65 +	736	9%
Median Age	30	
Housing Units	4,007	
Owner Occupied	993	25%
Renter Occupied	2,441	61%
Vacant	573	14%
Households	3,434	
Median Hh. Income	\$20,879	
Below Poverty	36%	



Southwest



Total Population	16,028	
White	14,246	89%
Black	890	5%
Other	892	6%
17 & Under	2,840	18%
18 – 64	9,796	61%
65 +	3,392	21%
Median Age	41	
Housing Units	7,460	
Owner Occupied	4,926	66%
Renter Occupied	2,320	31%
Vacant	214	3%
Households	7,246	
Median Hh. Income	\$50,687	
Below Poverty	7%	



West Hill



Total Population	9,719	
White	3,074	32%
Black	5,657	58%
Other	988	10%
17 & Under	2,742	28%
18 – 64	6,186	64%
65 +	791	8%
Median Age	28	
Housing Units	4,768	
Owner Occupied	909	19%
Renter Occupied	2,972	62%
Vacant	887	19%
Households	3,881	
Median Hh. Income	\$21,195	
Below Poverty	36%	

Community Conditions

■ The Community Conditions Map on the following page provides a generalized summary of neighborhood conditions based on select social and financial indicators from the US Census:

- Change in population.
- Change in housing vacancy.
- Change in home ownership.
- Change in poverty status.
- Change in median income.
- Change in median housing value.

■ Census Block Groups were assigned a score of -1 (lowest score) to 2 (highest score) based on specific data trends. Scores of each of the indicators were then summarized for a total score per Block Group.

The scoring is categorized as follows:

- Reinvestment - Total score of -8 to 0 and characterized by overall high vacancy rate, high poverty status, low home ownership, and stagnant or decreasing housing values.
- Transition - Total score of 1 to 3 and characterized by overall moderate vacancy rate, moderate poverty status, moderate home ownership, and stagnant housing values.
- Stable - Total score of 4 to 7 and characterized by overall low vacancy rate, low poverty status, good home ownership rates, and stable housing values.

■ Revitalization - Total score of 8 to 11 and characterized by overall minimal vacancy rate and poverty status, higher median incomes, high home ownership, and increased housing value.

■ Neighborhoods that fall into the Reinvestment category are those in which significant investment must be made to reverse the negative trends of declining population, housing vacancy, poverty and low homeownership. Several neighborhood plans have already been completed to begin the reinvestment process, including Arbor Hill, Capitol South, and Park South.

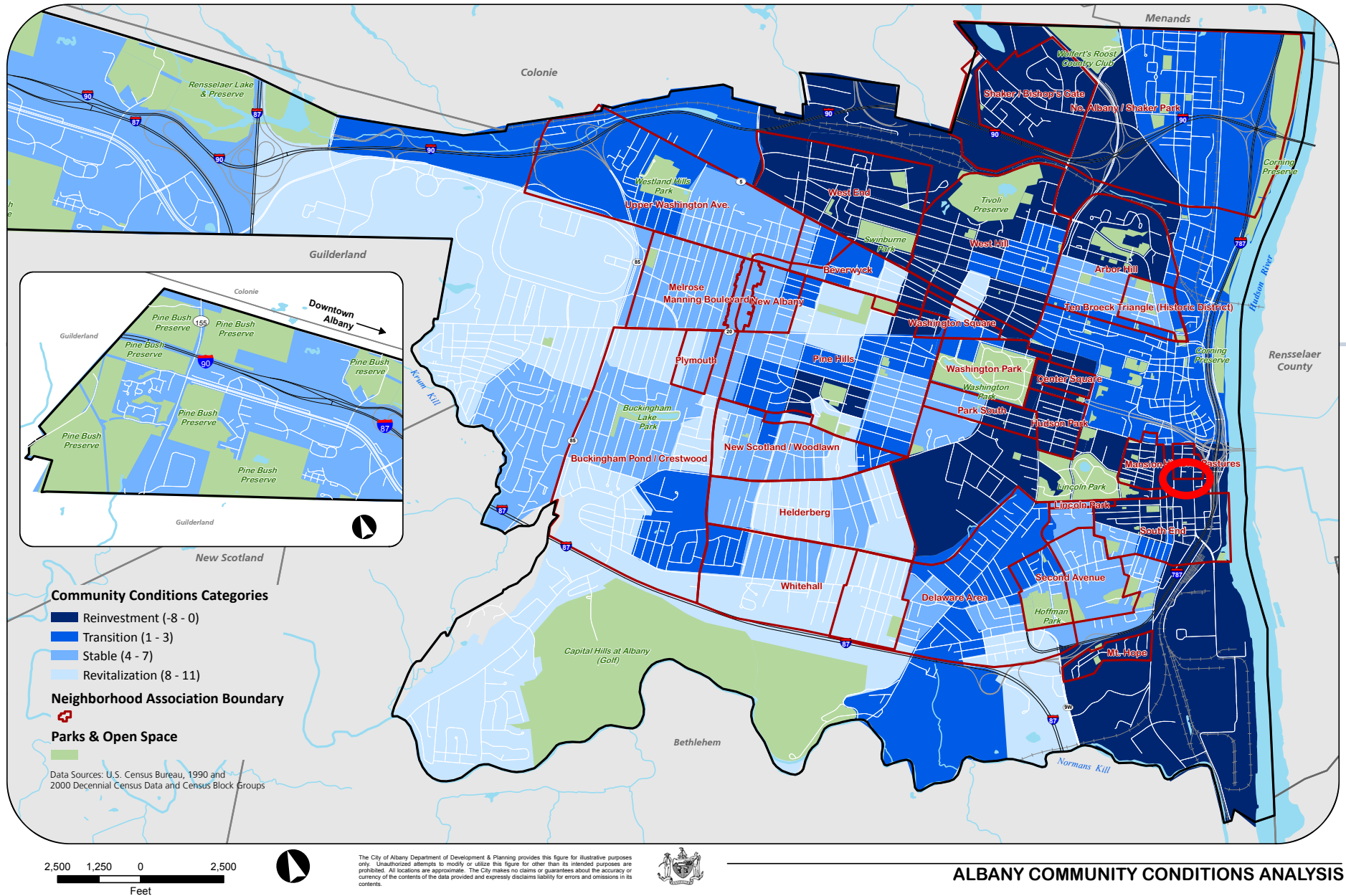
■ Neighborhoods that fall into the Transition category are basically healthy, but have some indicators of negative change. The Midtown Colleges and University Study includes many of these neighborhoods that may be experiencing negative trends due to transitional student housing growth.

■ Neighborhoods that are categorized as Stable are healthy neighborhoods that have mostly positive trends with few negative trends.

■ Neighborhoods that are categorized as Revitalization are primarily trending in a positive direction with regard to housing value, home ownership, housing occupancy, and median incomes.

■ As indicated on the Community Conditions Map, several neighborhood boundaries contain block groups with different rankings. It is not unusual for defined neighborhoods to contain pockets of stable and unstable areas. The community conditions analysis provides some general guidance as to where to target reinvestment as well as where to focus attention on maintaining stable neighborhoods.

Figure 19: Community Conditions Map



Capital South Plan

Key Issues:

This plan is intended to be holistic, tackling diverse issues and tying them together into a cohesive and realistic set of recommendations. To realize the community's vision of once again becoming a community of choice, the plan identifies three steps toward revitalization:

1. Stabilize the neighborhood, to provide the foundation for market renewal. The estimated timeline for these actions is within the first two years.
2. Energize the neighborhood, while ensuring resident participation and equity in market renewal. The estimated timeline for these actions is from year two to year five.
3. Grow the neighborhood, for the benefit of current and future residents, enhance South End's links with the entire Capital South area and the City as a whole. The estimated timeline for these actions is between years four and ten, overlapping in part with the Energize phase.

Key Recommendations:

1. Physical Planning
 - A. Housing investment
 - B. Historic preservation and rehabilitation
 - C. Homesteading
 - D. New development
 - E. Transportation improvements.
2. Workforce and Business Development:
 - A. Access to jobs
 - B. Transit to employment centers
 - C. Business development.
3. Quality of Life
 - A. Crime prevention
 - B. Alternatives to crime
 - C. Code enforcement
 - D. Cleanliness
 - E. Community amenities.
4. Community Capacity
 - A. Community organizing
 - B. Public/private partnerships
 - C. Citizen/ government task forces.



Commercial, Office, Real Estate Market

- Downtown Albany's private office market is 6.2 million sq. ft. or 21% of the regional total.
- Downtown office performance varies greatly by Class.
- The overall vacancy rate is pushed higher because of the large amount of Class C space in Downtown Albany. Class C space is often considered the least desirable because of its age and amenities.
- Downtown Albany's asking rents for office space are still fairly strong. Downtown Albany Class A

space range from \$18.50-26.00. Whereas, Suburban Class A rents are lower – in the \$12.00-\$24.00 range.

- The suburban office market is 10.8% vacant and suburban Class A rate is even to Downtown Albany. Suburban Class B and C are better than Downtown Albany Class B and C.
- The State of New York is a major driver of office demand – owning and occupying 10 million sq. ft. in the region, compared with 29.3 million sq. ft. of private space.

- Downtown Albany has lost close to 200,000 sq. ft. of occupancy since the end of 2005.
- The suburbs have been slowly gaining from the Downtown Albany's losses since 2006.
- Overall absorption for the region was -180,000 from 2008-09. Suburban markets have absorbed about 400,000 sq. ft. during the same period.

Table of Commercial, Office, Industrial Vacancies—Square Footage and by location

Market	Total Inventory (SF)	Vacant SF	Vacancy Rate	Net Absorption 2008-2009	Asking Lease Rates (per sq. ft.)
Albany CBD Total	6,172,169	886,581	14.4%	(65,372)	
Class A	2,245,581	146,364	6.5%	4,986	\$18.50 - \$26.00
Class B	3,459,381	569,591	16.5%	(28,223)	\$11.95 - \$24.50
Class C	467,207	170,626	36.5%	(42,135)	\$11.00 - \$18.50
Glens Falls	1,049,935	96,380	9.2%	(1,000)	\$12.00 - \$20.00
Saratoga	636,551	87,184	13.7%	(23,588)	\$8.85 - \$27.00
Schenectady	1,585,698	202,344	12.8%	(109,187)	\$8.00 - \$20.00
Troy	1,258,844	116,148	9.2%	(20,137)	\$10.00 - \$18.00
Suburban Total	18,551,682	2,004,050	10.8%	39,215	
Class A	7,117,414	448,974	6.3%	122,493	\$12.00 - \$24.00
Class B	8,139,632	894,213	11.0%	(92,092)	\$10.00 - \$22.00
Class C	3,294,636	660,863	20.1%	8,814	\$12.00 - \$17.50
Total	29,254,879	3,392,687	11.6%	(180,069)	

Source: CB Richard Ellis "Albany Office Market View" 2009

Table of Office Rents by Location—Albany

Market	Total Inventory (SF)	Vacant SF	Vacancy Rate	Asking Lease Rates (per sq. ft.)
Albany	23,647,987	2,490,282	10.5%	\$2.65 – \$8.00
Rensselaer	2,539,401	58,646	2.3%	\$3.00 – \$7.50
Saratoga	7,934,192	370,452	4.7%	\$2.34 – \$8.50
Schenectady	9,983,177	980,450	9.8%	\$1.75 – \$6.50
Non-core Areas	14,246,762	2,235,080	15.7%	\$2.00 – \$8.50
Total	58,351,519	6,134,910	10.5%	
Core	44,104,757	3,899,830		
Total Albany Share	40.53%	40.59%		
Albany Share of Core	53.62%	63.86%		

Source: CB Richard Ellis "Albany Office Market View" 2009

Glossary of Terms

CDTC - Capital District Transportation Committee	The designated MPO for the Albany-Schenectady-Troy metropolitan area, responsible for coordinating the planning and maintenance of road, transit, and other transportation facilities.	http://www.cdtcmpo.org/whatcdtc.htm
CLG - Certified Local Government	A program administered by the National Park Service and State Historic Preservation Offices to organize and facilitate historic preservation efforts at the local government level. Participating municipalities are required to have an active Historic Preservation Commission, survey and maintain a database of all historic resources, enact and enforce appropriate local and state laws to protect historic resources, and to solicit and encourage public participation in the process. Albany became a Certified Local Government in 2008.	http://www.nps.gov/history/hps/clg/
Cohort	In a study or demographic analysis, a group of individuals or subjects who share the same membership in a group during the same period of time. For example, persons aged 20-24 in the year 1990, or professional workers with a college degree in the year 2000.	
Combined Sewer System	A sewer system which collects sanitary waste, wastewater, and stormwater in the same system. During rain events or other times of heavy runoff, the capacity of these systems can be exceeded, resulting in excess water being discharged into the water supply without treatment. As of 2010, approximately 2/3rds of Albany is on a combined sewer system.	http://www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/48595.html
Commercial Real Estate Classes - Class A, Class B, Class C	Commercial real estate is generally segmented in terms of quality into three classes, Class A, B, and C. Class A commercial real estate refers to the best possible space - excellent condition/upkeep, design, location, and amenities. Class B commercial real estate is average, exhibiting some need for upgrades and/or missing some optimal amenities. Class C commercial real estate is the lowest tier; properties with this classification are often away from business districts, exhibiting a need for significant facilities investment, and have only the basic amenities needed to conduct business.	http://realestate.about.com/od/commercialbizbasics/a/space_classes.htm

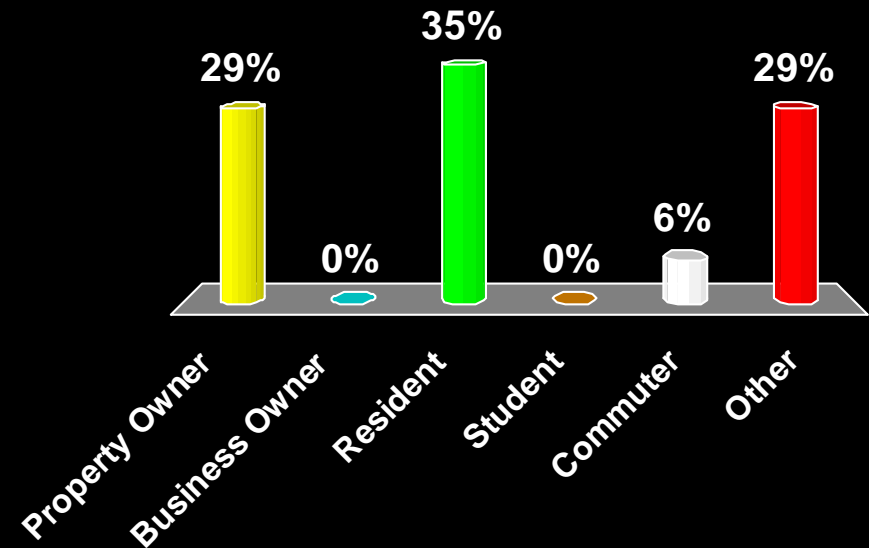
REZONE ALBANY: CAPITAL SOUTH END DESIGN WORKSHOP



Welcome Back!

What best describes your primary interest in the South End area?

1. Property Owner
2. Business Owner
3. Resident
4. Student
5. Commuter
6. Other



ONE WORD that comes to mind about the
South End ... **NOW**

A word cloud of terms associated with the South End neighborhood. The words are arranged in a dense, overlapping manner. The most prominent word is 'abandoned' in large red font. Other words include 'shelters' (green), 'broken' (blue), 'dirty' (green), 'improvement' (blue), 'disinvestment' (red), 'hostage' (green), 'dead' (blue), 'home' (green), 'tired' (blue), 'sad' (green), 'old' (red), 'needy' (red), 'homes' (blue), 'empty' (blue), 'quaint' (red), and 'buildings' (red).

avoidsheltersbroken
abandoneddirty
quaint
empty
buildingsimprovement
homesneedyolddisinvestment
sad
tiredhome
hostage
dead

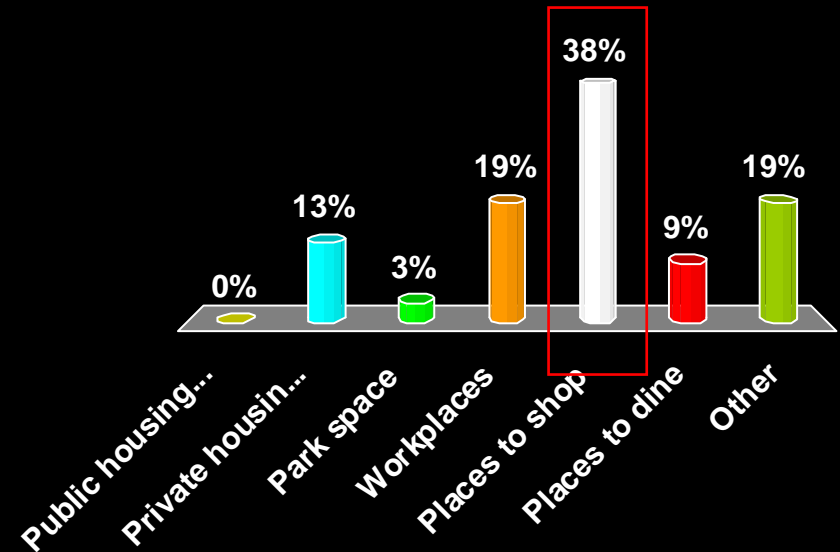
ONE WORD that comes to mind about the
South End ... IN THE FUTURE

A word cloud featuring various terms in different colors and sizes. The most prominent word is 'home' in large red font. Other significant words include 'rejuvenated' in green, 'reinvestment' in blue, 'complete' in red, 'vibrant' in blue, 'showcase' in blue, 'livable' in green, 'alive' in blue, 'riverside destination' in green, 'owners buildings' in blue, 'mixed-use' in red, 'mixed' in red, 'invested' in red, 'consider' in red, 'connectable' in green, 'rehabbed' in blue, 'homeowners' in blue, 'businesses' in blue, 'infill' in red, 'fabulous' in blue, and 'mixed-owners' in red.

home
rejuvenated
reinvestment
complete
vibrant
showcase
livable
alive
riverside destination
owners buildings
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businesses
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mixed-owners

Which amenities are most lacking in the South End?

1. Public housing
2. Private housing
3. Park space
4. Workplaces
5. Places to shop
6. Places to dine
7. Other



What are your top 2 priorities for the South End?

1. Improve access & enhance the waterfront

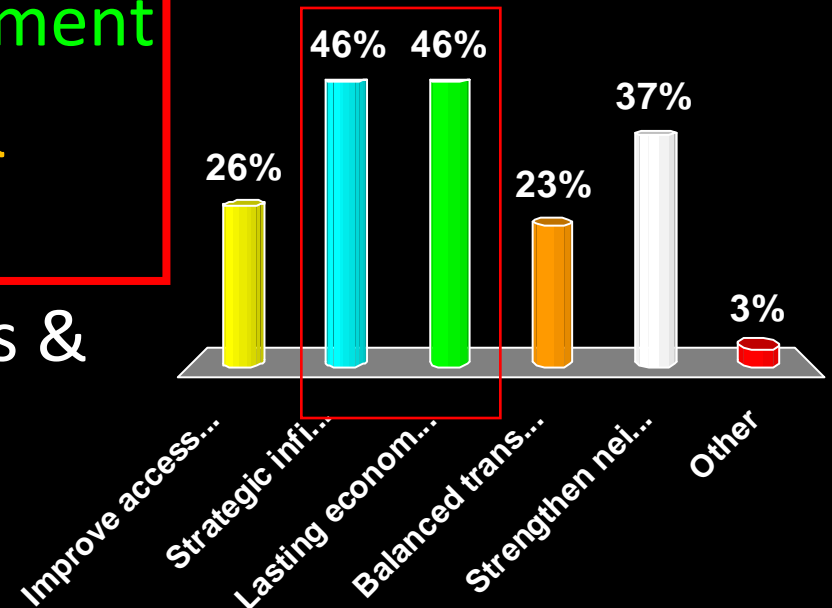
2. Strategic infill & redevelopment

3. Lasting economic development

4. Balanced transportation & better connectivity

5. Strengthen neighborhoods & create “gateways”

6. Other



Capital South Plan: *SEGway to the Future*

Albany, NY



July 2007

Prepared for:

The City of Albany

and the

South End Action Committee

Prepared by:

Phillips Preiss Shapiro Associates, Inc.

with FXFOWLE Architects, PC and the AIA Eastern New York AIA 150 Committee

Physically, the South End is a checkerboard of historic homes, vacant lots, neighborhood institutions, and abandoned property. A vast number of older vacant residential buildings and vacant lots, eroded commercial corridors, a declining population, and an increasing concentration of poverty have plagued the South End for years. This comprehensive community plan recognizes that there are serious challenges to revitalizing the South End, and that the community will rise or fall based on the effectiveness of its stakeholders to implement a concerted revitalization effort. Existing efforts in this regard are extremely positive and point to the dedication of the South End's residents, businesses and representatives, and the full support of the City, including the Mayor, City agencies and the Common Council.

These groups have indeed collaborated several times on past efforts, but the past twelve months have been the most exciting, with the blossoming of the South End Action Committee (SEAC) as the key advisor and future implementation leader of this plan, and the realization of some major steps toward redevelopment and revitalization.

SEAC led an inclusionary planning process. From the outset, a key goal has been to provide opportunities for current residents to remain in, and thrive in, the South End while recognizing that new growth—from new residents of higher incomes and from new businesses—will be required to sustain the improvements proposed by this plan.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE CAPITAL SOUTH PLAN

Past planning efforts have been incredibly successful at building a constructive dialogue and dedicated group of stakeholders interested in the future of the South End. What is now needed is a plan that both presents an exciting vision and implementable actions that generate short- and long-term success.

This plan is intended to be holistic, tackling diverse issues and tying them together into a cohesive and realistic set of recommendations. To realize the community's vision of once again becoming a community of choice, the plan identifies three steps toward revitalization:

1. **Stabilize** the neighborhood, to provide the foundation for market renewal. The estimated timeline for these actions is within the first two years.
2. **Energize** the neighborhood, while ensuring resident participation and equity in market renewal. The estimated timeline for these actions is from year two to year five.
3. **Grow** the neighborhood, for the benefit of current and future residents, enhance South End's links with the entire Capital South area and the City as a whole. The estimated

timeline for these actions is between years four and ten, overlapping in part with the Energize phase.

The first “layer” of revitalization, **Stabilize**, is detailed in Chapter 3 and contains short-term actions intended to stabilize the neighborhood and reassure its current residents that their investments and efforts will be rewarded. These include anti-crime measures, homeownership programs and other initiatives. It addresses the need to provide immediate employment opportunities in jobs that are within reach of many of the lower-skilled residents. It makes recommendations that will lay the foundation for market renewal and an increase in property values, but also provides current residents with the reason and opportunity to remain in the South End. The Stabilize phase is intended to focus on *initiatives that are currently taking place, and recommendations that are achievable within the next two years*. It recognizes the need to create disposition plans for key blocks of the neighborhood, particularly those around new development, and the need to protect and enhance resources like historic buildings, community facilities, and green spaces. And finally, recommendations are made to increase community capacity through the establishment of watch groups, neighborhood associations, and a broader Capital South coalition, in order to take charge of the implementation process and participate in the community’s renewal.

It cannot be overstated that stabilization is required before long term renewal can begin, and before any of the broader recommendations in this plan can succeed. Ultimately, the success of this plan should be judged not by large physical projects, but by the increasing safety and desirability of the neighborhood and its everyday quality of life.

The second stage, **Energize**, is detailed in Chapter 5 and describes medium-term actions intended to attract new investment, and make the South End a “community of choice”. These include housing development and revitalization, rebuilding or replacing aged public housing, and building a community center. This is also the time to capitalize on and “connect the dots” between the significant public and private investments that are now occurring, including the new development at the Jared Holt Wax Factory site, the Morton Avenue apartments, Habitat for Humanity’s development, the renovations to Howe Library and Giffen School, and the expansion plans of the Capital City Rescue Mission. This stage also sees the planning process for the redevelopment of Lincoln Square, the Morton/South Pearl intersection and DMV site, and lower South Pearl Street and the South End Guild take shape and bear fruit. It promotes further education and workforce development, better access to employment centers, and more quality of life improvements, including planning for a community center, upgrading parks, and improving the neighborhood’s overall image, and hence, desirability. Finally, it recommends continued community capacity improvements, including development of a citywide community develop-

The Plan’s details were developed in a series of brainstorming and work sessions with neighborhood, citywide and regional entities capable of participating in implementation, and through public meetings, noted below:

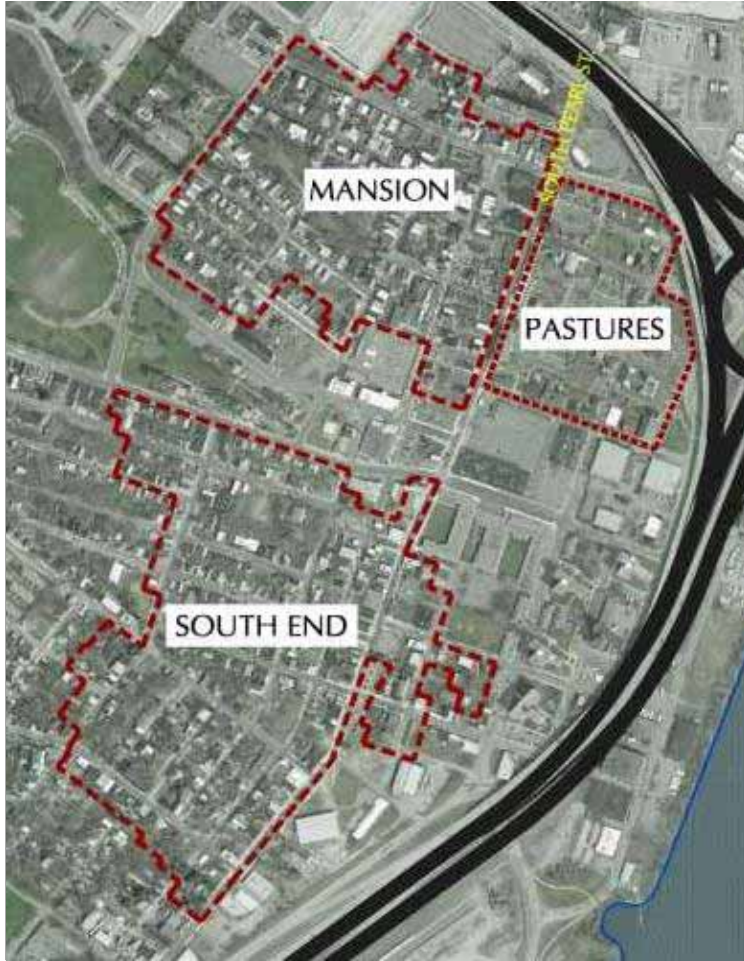
Action / Meeting	Month / Year
Preceding planning efforts (HOPE VI, SERP, etc.)	2001-2003
Planning for AHA projects at Jared Holt	2003-2006
Visual preference survey	December 2005
Initial SEAC meeting	January 2006
SEAC subcommittees (Physical Planning, Workforce and Business Development, Quality of Life) begin to meet	2006, and ongoing
Guiding Principles for Development are established	February 2006
AIA 150 Committee selects South End project	March 2006
U. Albany intern survey work	June – August 2006
RFP for consultants issued	June 2006
Consultant team (PPSA and FXFOWLE) selected	August 2006
Low income housing tax credits awarded to Jared Holt project	August 2006
Stakeholder meetings, focus groups, neighborhood tour	September 2006
Stakeholder interviews and data analysis	October 2006
Two-day public workshop	December 2006
Development of Capital South Plan	January-March 2007
Refinement of plan with SEAC and subcommittees	March-April 2007
Plan is posted for public review and comment	May 2007
Public Meeting: Presentation of Capital South Plan and comments from the public	May 16, 2007
Plan is finalized and adopted	July 2007

PLAN GOALS

From the beginning, the unifying goal of the planning effort has been for the South End to once again be a community of choice. One aspect of this goal is to provide opportunities for current residents to remain in, and thrive in, the South End, and be able to benefit from their hard work over the long term. And this plan also recognizes that new growth—from a diversity of new residents and new businesses—will be required to sustain the improvements made under the guidance of this plan.



Councilwoman Carolyn McLaughlin speaks at the December community charrette.



Map 4: Historic District Boundaries

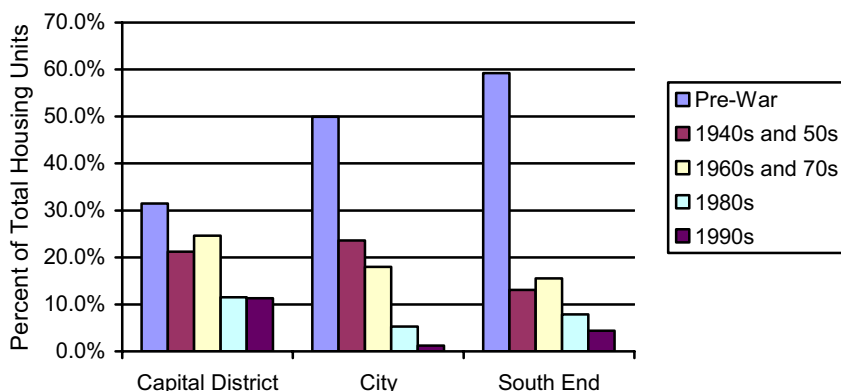
The same might be said of the neighborhood's social infrastructure: **a significant cadre of residents, businesses, and institutions that have remained in the area represent a dedicated and tight-knit group of stakeholders** who have, for at least the last decade, made it their priority to reposition the South End to once more become a community of choice.

The balance of this chapter describes key findings regarding the South End's demographics, economics, and housing, and the neighborhood's trends in relation to the region as a whole.

2.2 DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

Like the whole of Upstate New York, almost the entire Capital region has been witnessing population decline since at least the 1960s. People have been moving to more favorable climates and to areas where employment opportunities abound. Jobs have been shifting to lower-cost areas and where growing populations provide plenty of workers. In the 1990s, the Capital District (Albany, Rensselaer, Saratoga, and Schenectady counties) grew only two percent,

Figure 10: Housing Units by Year Built, 2000



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000, and Claritas, Inc., 2006

The prevailing low housing value and median rent data, as with the high vacancy rate, points to a weak housing market in the South End. While the housing stock is older and has intrinsic historic value, years of disinvestment have contributed to deterioration and high vacancy rates, driving values far below the region. (The lower value, if buttressed with community amenities and safety, may attract a new market population; indeed, some local and downtown landlords report rental demand is getting stronger, particularly among young college graduates.)

Compared to the City and the Capital District, the median value of an owner-occupied housing unit was fully 28 percent and 37 percent lower, respectively. In 2000, the median value of all owner-occupied housing units in the South End was only \$71,000 (compared to \$112,000 in the Capital District and \$98,000 in the city). Also in 2000, 90 percent of the owner-occupied homes in the South End were valued under \$100,000 (compared to 40 percent in the Capital District and 53 percent in the City). Median rent in the South end was \$390 (compared to \$610 for the Capital District and \$570 for the City). These low values and low rents point to low demand, low return on housing investment, and generally reflect the fact that newer suburban homes in good repair have attracted the bulk of the region’s housing market.

3 STABILIZE THE SOUTH END

Realizing the Capital South Plan will require grappling with a key issue that cannot be overemphasized: the housing market is very weak, and attracts little outside investment. Thus there is an immediate need to give the population base of the neighborhood confidence that the neighborhood can turn the tide of disinvestment. Correcting basic problems of abandonment will lay the foundation for more confident investment and a market where values rise, not fall. Correspondingly, the very basics of jobs and crimes need to be addressed.

3.1 PHYSICAL PLANNING

3.1.1 Stemming Abandonment and Rewarding Investment

The single most critical issue facing the South End is a cycle of decay and abandonment.

Albany, like many urban areas, experiences a host of quality of life issues like property disinvestment and crime. For at least the past 50 years, households have moved out of cities like Albany and into the suburbs, resulting in a period of decline, disinvestment, and abandonment. A 2006 survey by the City of Albany Department of Fire, Emergency and Building Services, identified over 950 vacant and abandoned buildings citywide. Over one-third of the properties lie in one of Albany's historic districts, and a high proportion of these are in the South End.

Abandoned buildings and vacant lots signal distress and an undesirable place to live. This image can contribute to a cycle of decline and can cause a domino effect in a city's quality of life. This negatively affects a community's image and its ability to draw residents and employers. Furthermore, abandoned buildings consume tax dollars and drain already scarce city funds. Non-payment of taxes, reduced property values, increased crime, and money spent securing buildings and cleaning vacant lots all siphon significantly more funds than they contribute to the tax coffers.



Abandoned buildings and vacant lots plague the South End.



A comprehensive strategy for abandoned properties must be developed and must accomplish the following three things: prevent abandonment, manage abandonment, and reuse abandoned buildings. **This strategy must build on the simple observation that abandonment is almost always an economic decision made by the building owner. In a depressed housing market as exists in the South End, there is little incentive to keep a building up to code—it costs more to maintain the property than the owner could realize at sale. In this case, incentives are critical.**



Currently, foreclosed properties are managed and auctioned by the County and outstanding taxes are reimbursed to the City in full, so that the City's short term tax collections are not negatively affected by these structures. However beneficial this is to the City in the short term, the current policy does little to prevent abandonment and encourage stabilization. This short-term outlook hurts the long term financial health of the City as well as the properties themselves and their surrounding neighborhoods.

Gaining control of abandoned properties. Cost-benefit studies have shown that up-front costs for property rehabilitation produce a significant net fiscal gain to a city, and help to prevent demolition or substandard conditions, which are a drain on property values and to a city's fiscal health.⁴

Some reforms have been made recently. Notably, instead of auctioning all properties, the County has been transferring some properties to the City or housing development organizations, including the Albany Housing Authority, in an effort to piece together developable assemblages of land and transfer site control to the City and its redevelopment agencies. These efforts should continue. In particular, organizations like Capital City Housing Development Fund Company (CCH or Cap City), which assist the city in the efficient and effective use of community development funds, and which utilize a wide variety of public and private funds to leverage its resources, should be directly involved in the foreclosure, acquisition, transfer, and redevelopment process.

In addition, existing efforts to create a **Strategic Properties Acquisition Fund** should be fully supported by all stakeholders. Such a fund would enable targeted intervention by the City to support existing development efforts.

⁴ See, for example, "Pay Now or Pay More Later: St. Paul's Experience in Rehabilitating Vacant Housing" and other articles from the National Vacant Properties Campaign. www.vacantproperties.org/index.html accessed April 2007.

vice throughout the week and into the night, mindful that many jobs in health and retail involve weekend and night-time work.

21. Better connect the South End to the employment centers that matter to local residents. While it cannot be determined with precision where these South End commuters are traveling to, data does show that the City and the County are employment centers where daytime population is significantly higher than the residential population. In fact, the daytime population for the City is nearly 60 percent greater than its residential population (162,400 daytime versus 95,600 residents). All the same, most transit operates on a spoke-and-hub basis, bringing riders to a downtown. Current and prospective South End residents are as or more likely to work in suburban malls, the Port of Albany, or Albany Hospital. Routes should be revisited with this more dispersed (and admittedly less efficient) pattern in mind.



CDTA provides transit service connecting the South End with all points of the City.

3.3 QUALITY OF LIFE

3.3.1 Reducing Crime through Community Policing

Like so many urban neighborhoods, the South End suffers from abandonment and crime, in all of its forms. These related issues were major topic of nearly every interview and workshop. Until these issues are dealt with, the South End cannot realize its potential. If quality of life concerns like crime, safety, cleanliness, etc., are not addressed, the buildings will remain havens for strife.

The Albany Police Department has made important strides in combating crime in the South End. The Police Department is well on its way toward implementing a new community policing approach that places more officers on the street and targets even petty crimes in order to push criminal elements out of the neighborhood. The Police Department also provides free training and technical assistance for all of the Neighborhood Watch groups in the city. Albany Police statistics show that violent crime in the South End has declined in the last two years (down by 6 percent), just as it has declined in the City overall (down by 10 percent). All the same, crime occurs at a higher per capita rate in the South End than in the City as a whole.



UNIVERSITY
AT ALBANY
State University of New York

Rezoning Albany: A Pilot Assessment of the South End Neighborhood

Fall 2012 Planning Studio
Department of Geography and Planning
University at Albany, SUNY
December 2012



Composite Zoning

Composite zoning is a type of zoning that regulates through a series of discrete modules: 1. Use, 2. Site 3. Architectural form. These modules can be arranged in different combinations to create unique zoning districts. The ‘use’ module dictates land uses much like with traditional Euclidian zoning, the ‘architectural’ module contains many architectural standards found in form-based codes, and the ‘site’ module regulates concerns related to setbacks, density, parking, and height. Composite zoning also has the ability to utilize FAR to allow for more accurate calculations of density, as well as a more diverse range of site configurations. The use of FAR would also help facilitate a Transfer of Development Rights program. TDR can help encourage mixed-use and high density development, but at the same time encourage lower density development and community green spaces (specific areas are chosen as “sending” and “receiving” sites, depending on specific conditions determined by the municipality).

Form Based Codes

A form based code primarily regulates form, with *use* being subordinate to site and architectural requirements. This type of code would make the aesthetics of new development predictable and could promote an environment that conforms to diverse architectural typologies and urban fabric. However, the requirements inherent in a form based code are often seen as too strict and inflexible to adequately promote investment and economic development. Form-based codes are typically best suited for central business districts, historic districts and high-income residential areas. The process for adopting form based codes is also very costly and time-consuming due to its intensely prescriptive nature.

Additionally, form based codes do not utilize floor area ratio (FAR), which makes it difficult for cities to target specific areas for investment based on density. Density bonuses, transfer of development rights (TDR) programs, or other programs that rely on density calculations are not consistent with form based codes.

2. Rezoning Process Case Studies

Neighborhoods of a similar character to Albany’s South End were considered in the development of a rezoning proposal. Neighborhoods were assessed primarily on the degree to which these Neighborhoods contained similar architectural elements, economic factors and land uses (both in terms of actual development and that which was prescribed in the zoning code before rezoning).

The following neighborhoods have been considered in the Studio’s assessment. Please see the Appendix 1B for a complete selection of these neighborhood rezoning case studies.

The following is a description of neighborhood rezoning processes that were considered and why: