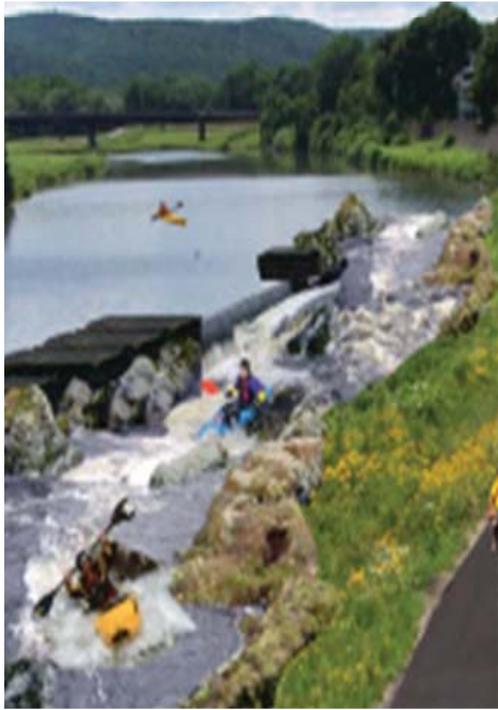


CITY OF ELMIRA  
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN  
2016 - 2026



with:  
Ingalls Planning & Design  
Fagan Engineers & Land Surveyors, PC  
Asterhill, Inc.

sustainable  
& bright



## *To the Residents of the City of Elmira, and surrounding towns and villages,*

*Good things are happening here. This new Comprehensive Plan is the roadmap for positive change. The adoption of this document is especially timely with announcements that New York State will be committing millions of funding to the City of Elmira through the Upstate Revitalization Initiative, Downtown Revitalization Initiative, and the Empire State Poverty Reduction Initiative. These sources of funding should help drive the implementation of priorities within the Plan.*

*New York State charged the Elmira City government with the task of developing a sustainable vision for the city. New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) granted the funding; a dynamic team of architects, engineers, urban and community health planners was hired. Elmira City officials selected our Steering Committee to oversee and help direct the progress of the plan. They invited a diverse group of men and women - representing industry, finance, education, and the arts. Among us were downtown merchants, residents, mothers, and fathers.*

*We began the process in June of 2015. The Steering Committee and City met with our design team several times to review and critique and there were spirited conversations. Public meetings for*

*awareness and input were attended by hundreds of concerned citizens. Everyone was invited to offer opinions and ideas, which were combined into the narrative.*

*By July of 2016, we agreed on this final draft of the plan to be presented to you and to be approved by the Elmira City Council. We are excited by the outcome and the vision for the future we have charted.*

*We address Elmira residents and the citizens in the surrounding communities, because Elmira is the heart of the locale and the Seat of Chemung County. Elmira's revitalization is key to our region's prosperity.*

*Thank you very much to all who participated in the community meetings and workshops. Your contributions made a significant difference.*

*Now, the challenging work begins. Please step up and join a project group or the "Community Congress." It is up to all of us to lead our city into the bright future!*

## *The Steering Committee*

---

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

While not able to acknowledge all of the community effort that went into the development of this Plan, special thanks is offered to the following individuals that offered time, expertise and creativity!

### **ADVISORY COMMITTEE:**

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### **CITY OF ELMIRA:**

Dan Mandell, Mayor  
Brent Stermer, Councilmember  
P. Michael Collins, City Manager  
Kim Middaugh, Former City Manager  
Jennifer Miller, Community Development

### **SPECIAL COMMUNITY SUPPORT:**

The Clemens Center  
Community Arts of Elmira, Inc.  
Elmira College  
Elmira Savings Bank  
Ernie Davis Community Center  
Frontline Community Center  
Hilliard Corporation  
Southside Community Center  
Steele Memorial Library

*This City of Elmira Comprehensive Plan was supported by the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority’s (NYSERDA) Cleaner, Greener Communities program.*

*Plan unanimously adopted by The City of Elmira on November 28, 2016.*

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## CHAPTER I: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Background: Timely & Urgent

The City of Elmira’s previous Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 1998 and no longer reflected the community’s vision and goals, nor did it include principles of smart growth, walkability, or climate change mitigation strategies. The City of Elmira has prepared this Comprehensive Plan as a sustainability-based blueprint for efficient land use regulation and neighborhood revitalization.

The Comprehensive Plan will help City leaders to make rational financial decisions about economic development, neighborhoods, transportation, and infrastructure in a manner intended to make efficient use of all resources.

### Sense of Urgency and Optimism!

The City of Elmira’s fiscal position, declining population, aging population and economic stagnation is cause for concern – and demands an acute sense of urgency.

At the same time, regional economic initiatives, a National trend towards urban living/employment centers, new leadership and the potential for capitalizing on the community’s higher education/medical industries offer clear reason for optimism.

---

It is both the urgency, and the optimism that  
must fuel action to implement this  
Comprehensive Plan.

---

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



## Elmira Today: Leverage Existing Assets to Stem the Tide of Decline

Critical to planning for where you want to go, is having a good understanding of where you are today. Elmira's Comprehensive Plan considers and responds to the following conditions, among others:

- Current Demographics;
- Today's Economy;
- Land Use & Zoning;
- The State of its Neighborhoods;
- Housing;
- Infrastructure;
- The Public Realm;
- Cultural Resources;
- Natural Resources; and
- Existing Plans.

## Critical Conditions & Implications

Based on a review of existing conditions and with input from the community, the following critical conditions were identified as opportunities for Elmira to address through this Comprehensive Plan.

**Declining Population & Jobs:** Stem the decline with amenities that attract a young and millennial population and prepare a ready workforce; similar amenities and workforce development should result in business location, start-ups and growth.

**Aged Housing Stock:** Build new products for a targeted, young, millennial and empty-nester market; focus on revitalizing the urban core; streamline processes and identify gap funding.

**Challenged Identity & Brand:** Build a new sense-of-pride around culture, downtown and the environment.

**Leadership:** Utilize collaboration, partnerships and grass roots efforts to improve both grass roots and top-down leadership.

**Aging and Outdated Infrastructure:** Re-envision the auto-centric transportation network, create complete streets, re-think parking strategies and utilize green infrastructure.

**Un-leveraged Assets:** Re-connect with the River, save historic buildings/structures, preserve/enhance intact neighborhoods.

**Existing Plans:** Don't start over; implement good recommendations from the 1998 Comprehensive Plan, the Southside Rising Plan and the Chemung River Trail Master Plan.

**Vision for the Future: 10 years from now Elmira will be...** healthy & safe, sustainable, vibrant, culturally rich, diverse, with energized human capital and a brand that distinguishes the City from its peers.



---

### **Healthy & Safe**

- With no concerning drug problems
- Safe streets to live, play and walk on
- Healthy people eating right and exercising
- Access to health care for all residents

### **Sustainable**

- Economically – for both the City and its residents
- Socially – with equity and fairness
- Environmentally – with green practices

### **Vibrant**

- People working downtown and in neighborhoods
- Downtown as a bustling urban neighborhood
- Neighborhoods thriving with investment
- Activities through-out the City 24/7/365

### **Culturally Rich and Diverse**

- College and higher education as staples of the community
- Theater and arts thriving in great locations
- Sports & entertainment abundantly available

### **With Energized Human Capital**

- Home for entrepreneurship
- Leaders evolving at all levels
- Caring and philanthropic citizens
- Self-reliant culture
- Proud Elmirans

### **Be known by a Differentiated Brand**

- A College-town
  - A “Hip” and Cool History – remembering Mark Twain
  - An Iconic Riverfront with Special Bridges
  - Great Downtown Design
  - Preserved Architecture
-

## Guiding Principles

The following Guiding Principles for the City of Elmira are supported within this Comprehensive Plan with strategies, transformational planning ideas and project examples.

### **A. Strategically Stem Population & Job Loss**

...by attracting millennials, elevating Elmira’s brand, working regionally, leveraging higher education and medical institutions and developing the City’s workforce.

### **B. Improve the Economic Health of City Residents**

...by creating and retaining jobs, reducing taxes, capturing resident spending and tightening controls on social programs.

### **C. Provide Improved Neighborhood & Housing Alternatives**

...by offering new appropriate mix of housing stock, creating density in neighborhoods, reducing the impact of vacant properties and utilizing foreclosure controls.

### **D. Act Environmentally Responsible & Sustainable**

...by growing smart, utilizing green infrastructure, building green and eating local.

### **E. Improve the Financial Sustainability of City Government**

...by utilizing shared services, increasing the tax base and leveraging assistance.

### **F. Boast of Healthy & Safe Residents**

...by encouraging activity, supporting great health care, reducing poverty, investing in public safety and participating in National programs.

### **G. Provide Strong Leadership**

...within the City, County, Region, State business, agencies and neighborhoods

### **H. Create a Vibrant & Culturally Rich Downtown**

...with complete streets, fully utilized buildings, new parks and plazas, an emphasis on the City’s culture and by celebrating the Chemung River.

### **I. Leverage the City’s Successful Higher Education and Medical Industries**

...by integrating local institutions into the urban fabric, with new programming and facilities, with new student and faculty life, and by encouraging coordinated investment.

## Plan for Growth: Five Strategies...and Fourteen Transformational Planning Ideas for the City of Elmira!

Five Strategies consisting of Fourteen Transformational Planning Ideas for the City of Elmira are identified in the 'Plan for Growth' Chapter of the Comprehensive Plan. The following summary lists those strategies and provides supporting planning approaches that could be transformational for the City.

### **Strategy 1: Be Market Driven**

The City of Elmira must understand its market context in order to grow and adapt in a manner that satisfies that market. The City's market includes its residents (both current and potential), its businesses (both existing and potential) and its visitors. Elmira can work to strengthen its current brand, and obtain a marketable and refreshed, desired brand. The City should work within its County-wide and regional context to enhance and develop that desired brand – and to market it locally, regionally and nationally. The City must leverage its quality of life assets to become the cultural center of the I86 Innovation Corridor. Critical to enhancing the brand will be implementing land use, infrastructure, and public realm recommendations (the product) found in this Comprehensive Plan.

Transformational Planning Ideas:

- Develop a Strategic Identity & Brand
- Adopt the Strategies of the Southern Tier Regional Economic Development Council and I-86 Innovation Corridor Plan

### **Strategy 2: A New Vision for Land Use & Regulation**

Nationally, land use planning and regulation is evolving rapidly from focusing on the regulation of the use of a property, to a focus on regulating the design of properties. In large part, this includes a shift from being vehicular oriented to pedestrian and bicycle friendly. Elmira can better achieve its vision as a vibrant urban place by following this trend. Neighborhoods can be empowered to play a heightened role in the planning and implementation of appropriately scaled projects and programs. Downtown Elmira needs to be absolutely confirmed as the Civic Heart of Chemung County, with focused housing, retail, education, entertainment, sports, culture, government service, and work places. The growing higher education and medical presence within Elmira's downtown must be facilitated and celebrated.

Transformational Planning Ideas:

- Implement a Contemporary Mixed-Use & Design-Based Land Use Strategy
- Create Neighborhood-Based Identities, Planning & Implementation
- Promote Downtown as the Civic, Entertainment, Living, Learning & Working Core – with Density & Focus
- Expand the Presence & Participation of Higher Education & Workforce Development within the Community

### **Strategy 3: Provide the Infrastructure Necessary for Success**

The City of Elmira will continue to play a critical role in “setting the table” for the private sector to help the City thrive. This public infrastructure goes beyond the traditional provisions of sewer, water, power and roads. In order to compete with other places to live, learn and grow a business, the City must now be a partner in assuring good and varied housing stock, as well as high quality and accessible internet service. Traditional street infrastructure must function as more than just vehicular circulation. The City’s right of ways must function as an important element of the public realm – supporting many alternative modes of transportation, acting as a front porch to houses and businesses, and creating/connecting great spaces.

Transformational Planning Ideas:

- Undertake a Strategic Housing Initiative
- Improve Elmira’s Walkability and Quality-of-Life through Development of Complete Streets
- Insure the Maintenance, Availability & Efficiency of Infrastructure

### **Strategy 4: Offer a High & Equitable Quality of Life**

Of primary importance to the community, is their safety, health and a positive quality of life. Embodied in almost every recommendation in this Comprehensive Plan, should be considerations that support healthy lifestyles, outdoor enjoyment, safety, and environmental sustainability. Elmira’s creative and historic culture should be celebrated, and its great assets - particularly its architecture, notable personalities and the Chemung River – should be leveraged.

Transformational Planning Ideas:

- Promote Healthy & Safe Living
- Encourage City-Wide Sustainability Efforts
- Leverage Elmira’s Culture
- Celebrate the Chemung River

### **Strategy 5: Succeed with Inspiring & Dedicated Leadership**

Strong Leadership from the City of Elmira is going to come in the form of strong relationship building with Chemung County, Regional and State governments, business and not-for-profits. The City must pro-actively support local and grass roots leadership within its neighborhoods.

Transformational Planning Idea:

- Utilize Top-Down & Bottom-Up Leadership

## Making it Happen

Implementation of the City of Elmira’s Comprehensive Plan will require strong leadership at many levels.

**City of Elmira:** The City of Elmira must provide leadership beginning with the Mayor, City Council and the City Manager, then continuing to Boards, Commissions, heads of departments, and with buy-in from City staff. Towards this end, the Executive Summary of this Plan should be shared, understood and championed at each of these levels.

**Chemung County:** The City of Elmira and Chemung County are recognizing increased opportunity to collaborate, share and consolidate functions. The two municipalities share common interests and location. Southern Tier Economic Growth (STEG) is a County-wide economic development organization, but has strong interest and activity within the City of Elmira, and with significant employers within the City. Similarly, the Chemung County Chamber of Commerce is a County-wide organization, but has significant City business participation. The City must continue to positively work with Chemung County, STEG and the Chamber of Commerce on projects of shared interest – and must communicate this City Comprehensive Plan to the leadership of the County and those organizations.

**Local Leadership:** Local leadership will help drive the implementation of the Plan through the actions of local business, institutions, not-for-profits, Elmira Downtown Development, individuals and neighborhood organizations. Similarly, the Executive Summary of this Plan should be shared, understood and championed with, and by, these stakeholders.

Local leadership must be developed, or strengthened, at the neighborhood level. The formation of Neighborhood associations should be encouraged, and facilitated by the City, when possible.

A coordinating body, a ‘Community Congress’, is recommended to be formed as a forum for communication and coordination of local and neighborhood organizations.

**New York State & the Southern Tier Regional Council:** New York State is increasingly utilizing a regional strategy to Upstate New York revitalization. The Southern Tier Regional Economic Development Council is providing leadership in this initiative, with both human and financial resources from the State. The City of Elmira must continue to be aggressively involved in this Regional planning initiative in order to best leverage New York State support.

## Project Examples

The following summary provides examples of projects that support each of the 5 planning Strategies.

### **Strategy 1: Be Market Driven**

- ★ Brand Identification & Promotion Initiative
  - Center for Technology Infusion
  - Center for Cultural Entrepreneurship

### **Strategy 2: A New Vision for Land Use & Regulation**

- ★ Zoning Code Update
- ★ Targeted Downtown Revitalization Program
  - Elmira College, LECOM & Corning Community College Campus Development

### **Strategy 3: Provide the Infrastructure Necessary for Success**

- ★ Neighborhood Repair & Land Bank
- ★ Complete Streets Initiative (Policy & Priority Implementation)
  - GAP Financing Program for Adaptive Re-use & Infill
  - Strategic Infrastructure Upgrades
  - Clemens Parkway Complete Street Project
  - Consolidated & Centralized Public Safety Facility
  - Downtown Public Wi-Fi
  - New Public Parking Rate Program & Marketing Plan
  - City-Wide Broadband

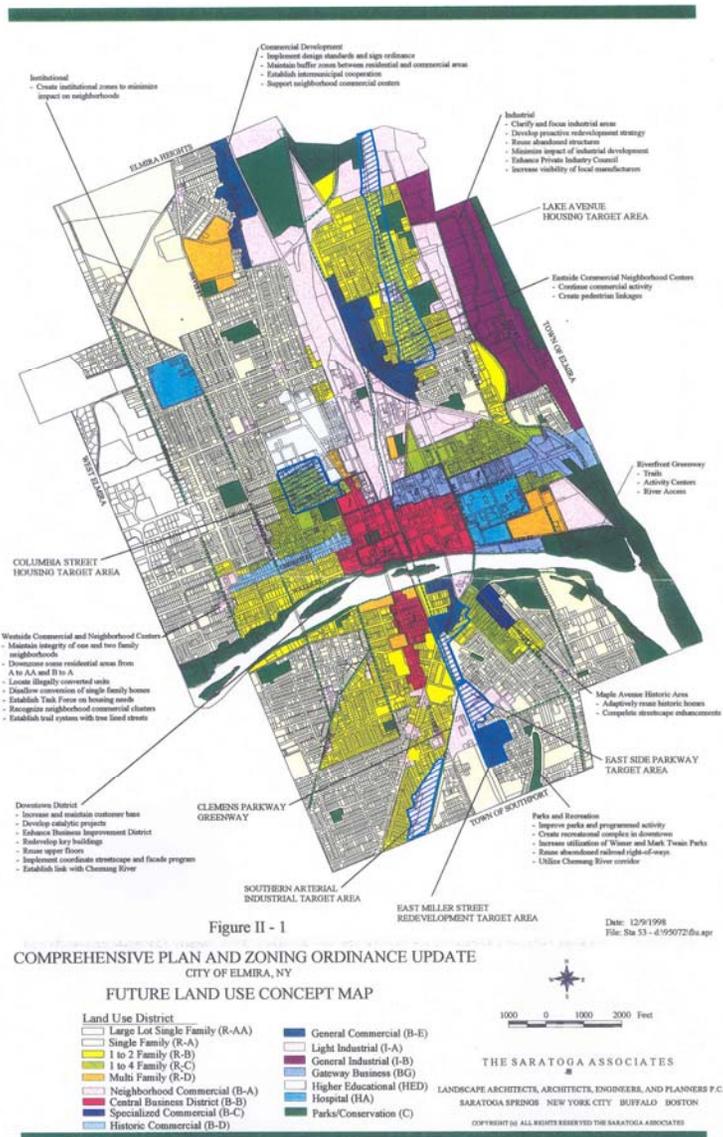
### **Strategy 4: Offer a High & Equitable Quality of Life**

- ★ Riverfront Park Implementation
  - Public Art Program
  - Wisner Park Improvements/Connection
  - Culture & History Signage & Interpretive Plan
  - Healthy People 2020 Plan Participation

### **Strategy 5: Succeed with Inspiring & Dedicated Leadership**

- ★ Comprehensive Plan Adoption, Stewardship & Implementation
- ★ Neighborhood Identity, Organization & Congress
  - Participation in Regional Economic Development Council Activities

★ THE STAR REPRESENTS HIGHEST PRIORITIES!



1998 Comprehensive Plan  
 + 18 years  
 - population  
 + millennial & senior demographics  
 + sustainability movement  
 + regional economic strategies  
 - housing quality  
 + new leadership  
 = a new plan

## CHAPTER II: PROJECT BACKGROUND & APPROACH

The City of Elmira's previous Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 1998 and no longer reflected the community's vision and goals, nor did it include principles of smart growth, walkability, or climate change mitigation strategies. The City of Elmira has prepared this new Comprehensive Plan as a sustainability-based blueprint for efficient land use regulation and neighborhood revitalization. The Comprehensive Plan advances several goals of the Cleaner, Greener Communities Southern Tier Regional Sustainability Plan (2013) and reinforces the tenets of the United States Green Building Council's (USGBC) Technical Guidance Manual for Sustainable Neighborhoods and LEED for Neighborhood Development rating system.

The Comprehensive Plan will help City leaders to make rational financial decisions about economic development, neighborhoods, transportation, and infrastructure in a manner intended to make efficient use of land and natural resources - and decrease greenhouse gas emissions.

# BACKGROUND & APPROACH

## Planning Objectives

The City of Elmira established the following four objectives at the outset of the planning process. This Plan reflects the results of the effort.

- Develop a new Comprehensive Master Plan to reflect the City's current vision;
- Utilize an extensive outreach process;
- Base decisions on market driven analysis of the downtown and commercial districts;
- Prepare a Final Plan encompassing recommendations from participation and research conducted.

## Intended Sustainability Outcomes

The following outcomes reflect sustainability goals as sought by New York State and the Southern Tier Region – and endorsed by the City of Elmira. To achieve these proposed outcomes, the Plan transcends traditional planning approaches and incorporates current national planning and design trends.

- A more resilient, sustainable community;
- Save energy and reduce greenhouse gas emissions;
- Promote smart growth principles;
- Strengthen environmental justice;
- Stimulate environmentally sustainable economic growth consistent with Regional Sustainability Plans and Regional Economic Development Council Strategic Plans;
- Protect and preserve New York State's natural resources; and
- Support development of environmentally-friendly public and private transportation.

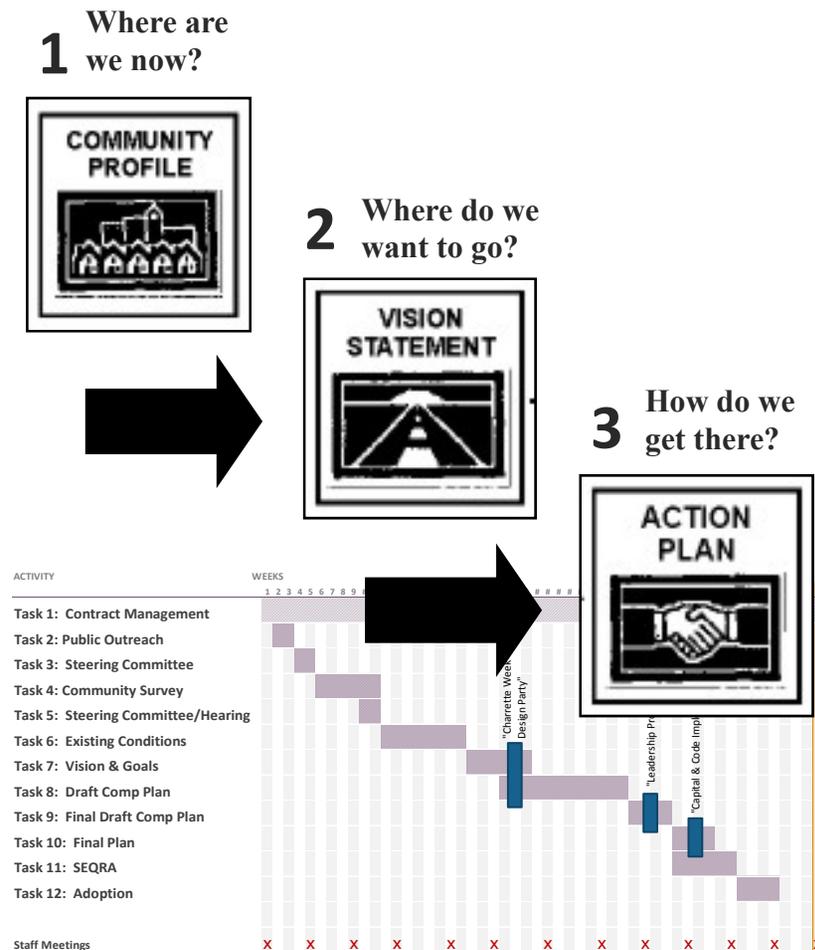
## Planning & Design Goals

As a result of this planning and public participation process, the following land use, transportation and program investment goals were adopted. Strategies to achieve these Goals are outlined in Chapter IV of this Plan.

- Strategically Stem Population & Job Loss;
- Improve the Economic Health of City Residents;
- Provide Better Neighborhood & Housing Alternatives;
- Be Environmentally Responsible & Sustainable;
- Improve the Financial Sustainability of City Government;
- Boast of Healthy & Safe Residents;
- Have Strong Leadership;
- Enjoy a Vibrant & Culturally Rich Downtown; and
- Leverage the City's Successful Higher Education and Medical Industries.

## Planning Process

The Elmira Comprehensive Plan was developed over a 12 month period utilizing a simple, yet inclusive planning process. The City, together with a Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee and a consulting team, helped the Elmira public understand where Elmira is today, what their collective vision for the City is in the future, and identified strategies to help achieve that vision.



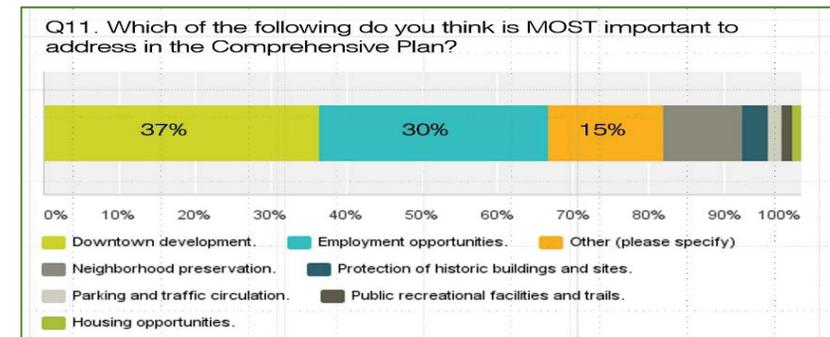
A participatory planning process was used to insure community and stakeholder involvement in the development of the Plan. The following tools were used to insure communication and outreach.

**Steering Committee:** A broad-based Steering Committee was formed to advise the City and the Consulting Team on all matters of the Plan and planning process. The Steering Committee was used to assist in communicating planning progress and recommendations to the community and their constituency. A Media Sub-Group of the Steering Committee was formed to act as a liaison between the City, the consulting team and the media.

**Web Site:** A project web site was built to communicate the purpose, process, activities and preliminary findings of the Comprehensive Plan.

**Social Media:** Social media was utilized to communicate events, activities, progress and points of interest to potential followers. A new project specific web site was developed and existing sites leveraged.

**Community Survey:** An On-Line Survey of community residents, workers, students and visitors was undertaken, the results of which are contained in Document B of this Plan.



**Charrette Week:** A three-day community planning event was held to invite public participation and offer community education. The Charrette included:

- Open Public Workshops;
- Educational Video Event;
- Stakeholder Roundtables; and a
- Design “Storefront” with community calling hours.



**Public Meetings:** Several formal public meetings were held, focusing on the following agendas.

- Kick-off, Existing Conditions & Visioning Public Meeting
- Presentation of Draft Plan
- Final Public Hearing

**Stakeholder Meetings/Focus Groups:** Stakeholder meetings and phone conferences, were conducted to address the comprehensive voices of the community, business, government, academia, health, environment, culture, housing and others.



## Philosophy

Entering the planning process, some general philosophical planning tenants were agreed to, in order to help assess alternative solutions. The following planning ideas served as a jumping off point for discussion.

**Local Leadership... Local Ownership:** A successful Comprehensive Plan includes both large undertakings that require a top-down leadership in order to drive funding and implementation, but as importantly, a successful Plan includes small projects that can have a cumulative effect even larger than most large projects. These smaller projects are more often driven by local neighborhoods, organizations or individuals.

**Sustainability:** Not just a trendy buzzword, but a meaningful approach to environmental responsibility, social justice and financial well being.

**Today's "Comprehensive":** Traditional Comprehensive Plans focused on land use and infrastructure. Today's Plans recognize the interrelated planning needs for community health, education and economic development, among other areas of public involvement.



**Context Driven Conclusions:** The City of Elmira municipal boundaries represent a jurisdictional and financial extant, but do not represent a planning context for the greater impacts that the economy, demographic shifts, infrastructure, natural systems and lifestyle choices have on the City.

**Good Urbanism:** The Millennial generation and empty nesting baby-boomers have fueled a National and global movement back to urban living. They demand good design, walkability, human scaled places and a healthy mix of housing, employment, retail and entertainment uses.

## Sense of Urgency and Optimism!

The City of Elmira's fiscal position, declining population, aging population and economic stagnation is cause for concern – and demands an acute sense of urgency.

At the same time, regional economic initiatives, a National trend towards urban living/employment centers, new leadership and the potential for capitalizing on the community's higher education/medical industries offer clear reason for optimism.

---

It is both the urgency, and the optimism that must fuel action to implement this Comprehensive Plan.

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## CHAPTER III: ELMIRA TODAY

Critical to planning for where you want to go, is having a good understanding of where you are today. This Chapter outlines findings relative to:

- Demographics;
- The Economy;
- Land Use & Zoning;
- Neighborhoods;
- Housing;
- Infrastructure;
- The Public Realm;
- Cultural Resources;
- Natural Resources;
- Existing Plans; and
- Critical Issues & Implications.

ELMIRA  
TODAY

## Demographic Profile

### Population

The population of City of Elmira is 29,176. According to the U.S. Census (2013) the population has declined by 5.7% since 2000.

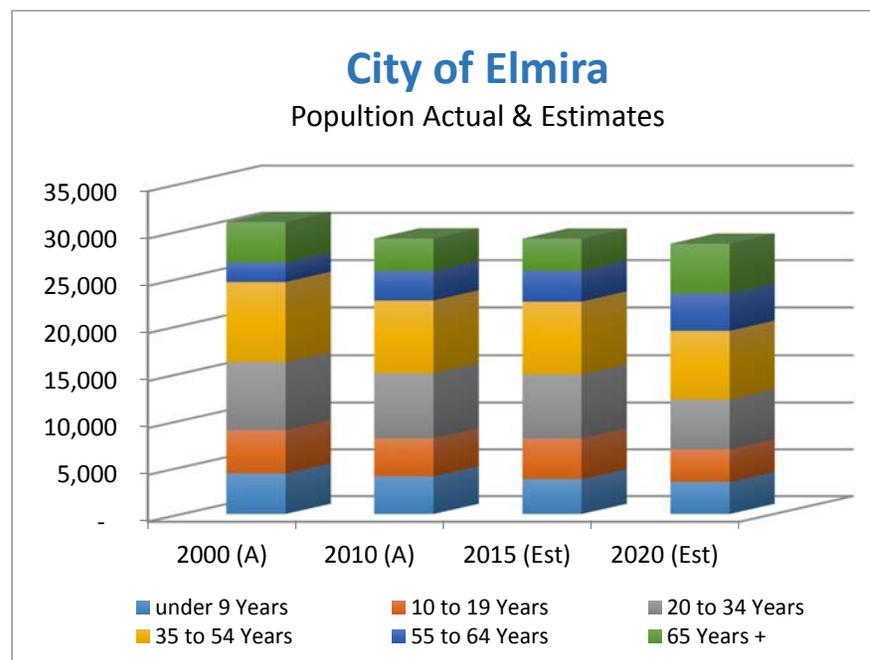
Approximately 37% is under 25 years of age and 11.5% is 65 years old and older. The population is projected to decline by 1.82% through 2020. The age segments under 25 years of age are projected to decline by 20% and age segments over 65 years and older are projected to grow by 53% by 2020

### Households

The total number of housing units in the City of Elmira has declined by 5.5% since 2000. In 2013, 48.1% of all occupied housing units were owner-occupied and 51.9% were renter-occupied. 1095 units were reported unoccupied in 2013 representing a decline of 22.9% from 2000. Vacancy rates for owner-occupied units dropped to 1.4% and rent-occupied units to 4.4%.

### Education

Enrollment in school has declined by 9% since 2000. The number of 9th-12<sup>th</sup> graders has grown by 4.8% and the number of students going on to college has increased by 4.7% over the same period. The number of students graduating from high school has increased by 5.4%.

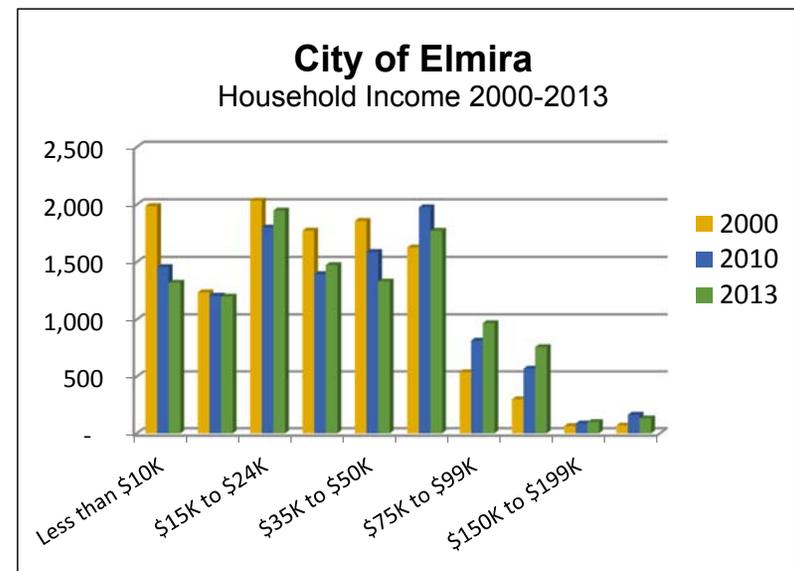
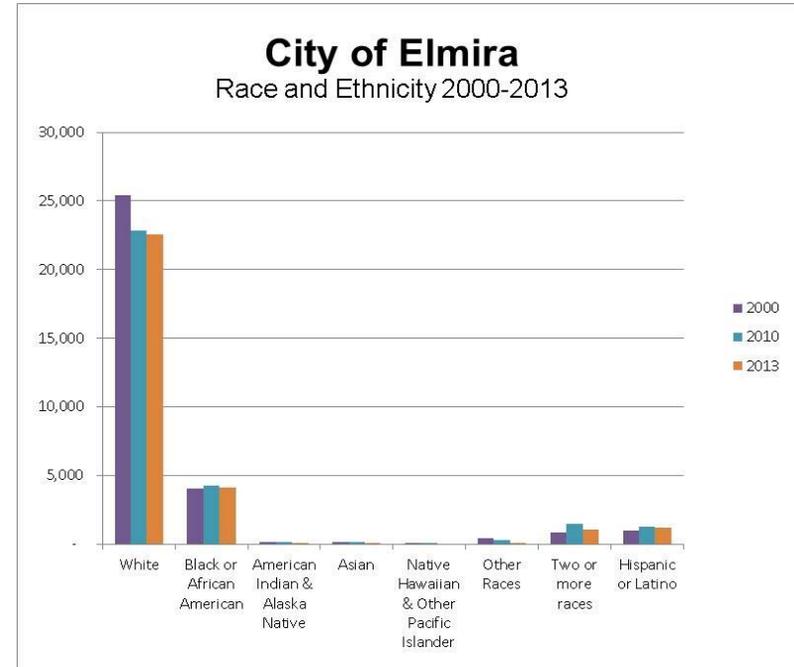


### Race and Ethnicity

The race and ethnicity of the City of Elmira is changing. The population of Black and African American residents has grown by 2.3% and Hispanic or Latino residents have grown by 25.4% since 2000.

### Income

In 2015, the HUD median income grew to \$64,300. In the City of Elmira incomes equal to and greater than \$50,000 grew by 40% or more since 2000, while income with less than \$50,000 declined by 17%. Poverty in the City of Elmira has grown from 23% in 2000 to 36% in 2013. This means the gap between low income households and high income households widened.



## The Economy

### Overview

The City of Elmira's economy generates approximately \$1.5 billion dollars annually (excluding government sectors), with over \$485 million dollars spent on payrolls. Manufacturing and all industry (including wholesale trade) represents 11.5% of all businesses in the City of Elmira and generates over 37% of all gross revenues. Retail, restaurant and residential service business makeup 68% of all businesses in the City of Elmira, and generates about 25% of gross revenues. Since 2000, despite a declining population, the number of employees has increased by 4.8% with respective payrolls growing by 56%. More employees reside outside the City of Elmira in 2013 than did in 2000.

Three factors impact the City of Elmira's economic future:

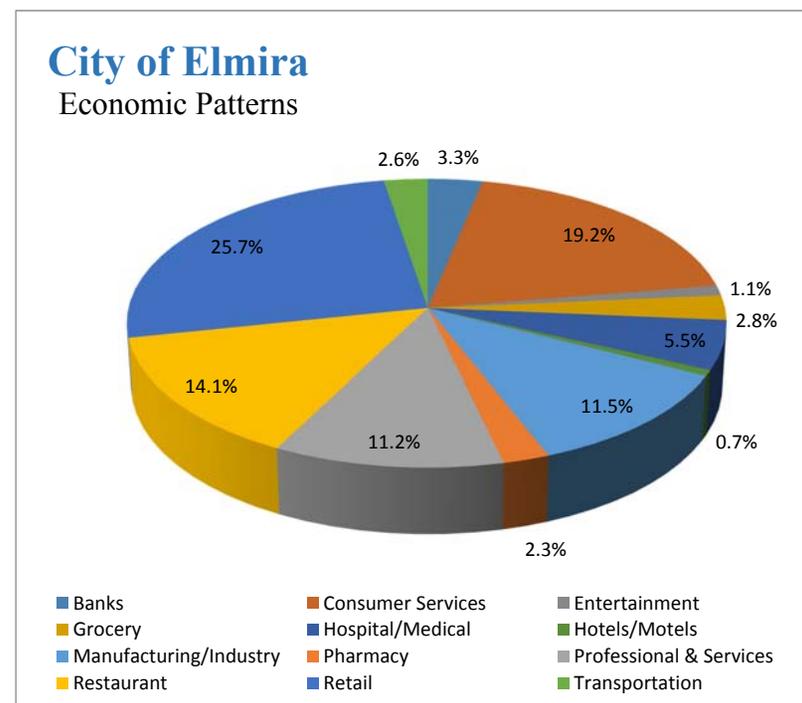
- **Population**
- **Employment**
- **Tourism**

A healthy economy serves its residents, provides sustainable employment and income, and promotes its assets and resources through tourism.

### Employment and Income

Employing city residents is good for the economy. However, the growth in the number of employees in the City of Elmira's businesses exceeds the labor force in the City of Elmira. This can be interpreted that businesses have looked outside the city residents for qualified employees.

The unemployment rate in June 2015 was 5.9%, down from 6.1% in June 2014. The workforce in Elmira has declined by 10% since 2000, while poverty has grown to 36% in 2013.



## Tourism

Chemung County generates over \$92 million dollars in travel and tourism annually according to the Chemung County Chamber of Commerce. It is estimated that less than 25% of these tourism dollars are spent in the City of Elmira.

## Business Patterns

In the City of Elmira six retail centers were identified (identified as A-F), with Areas B and C located on Main Street beginning at 3<sup>rd</sup> Street to Water Street, continuing south of the Chemung River on South Main Street to Pennsylvania Avenue. The retail center is located in Area A on Water Street starting at Columbia Avenue, continuing west to Madison Avenue. The last three retail centers, D, E and F, are located in neighborhoods and are well organized with the businesses clustered together.

There are 11 small retail clusters scattered throughout the city with seven located north of the river and four on the south side of the river (identified as SR-1 thru SR-11). Each of these small business clusters is characterized by two to four businesses near or at an intersection. In some cases they are not adjacent. However they do serve a neighborhood population.

## Business and Consumer Spending

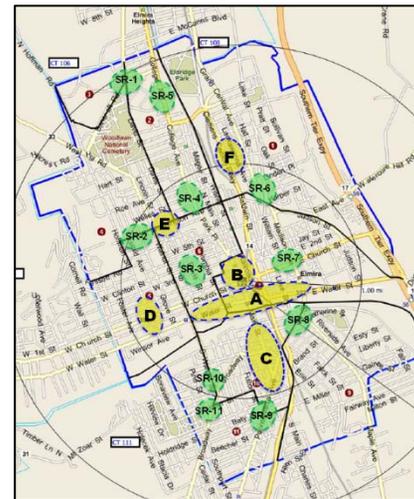
According to the 2012 Economic Census, all business in the City of Elmira generated gross revenues in excess of \$1.5 billion, spending \$485 million on payroll with 12,185 employees. The average hourly wage paid was \$19.91. Compared to 2002, the total number of

businesses has declined by 7%, but gross revenues increased by 39%, payroll increased by 56%, and employees increased by 4.8%.

Consumer spending in the City of Elmira has expanded by 18.6% between 2000 and 2013, despite a decline in the number of consumer units (households) by 6.2%. With a mean income of \$45,646 (2013), consumers spent approximately 72.5% of their gross income on food, housing, transportation, healthcare and other daily living expenses. Housing and food were the major expenditures, accounting for 63.6% of all expenditures, down 3.7% from 2000.

## Buying/Purchasing Power

Elmira's Buying/Purchasing Power (2013) was more than \$400 million dollars. The retail leakage was \$82 million dollars. This represents the consumer spending lost to outside markets for goods and services residents did not purchase from city businesses.



## Land Use & Zoning

### Land Use Analysis

Elmira has a traditional urban development pattern with diverse land uses. The City includes a street grid pattern and is divided into quadrants: north to south by the Chemung River and east to west by the railroad. The downtown or central business district is located near the center of the City, just north of the River, and includes commercial, office, and community service uses. It is the region's civic and cultural hub. Other areas with concentrated commercial uses are located along the Clemens Center Parkway north of downtown and along South Main Street south of the River.

The most common land use is a combination of single-family and multi-family residential, which encompasses nearly 45% of the City. Residential is most prominent in the northwest and southwest quadrants. Vacant land is the next highest land use at approximately 15% followed by Community Services at 12%. For a more detailed discussion regarding existing land use breakdown see the Existing Conditions Report.

### Areas in Transition

In the context of existing land use, there are several things that should be considered. First, Elmira like many cities in Upstate and Western New York has experienced significant population loss over the course of the last 20 years or more. However, its footprint has remained constant, as has the infrastructure to serve that footprint. Shrinking cities like Elmira struggle with maintaining infrastructure and providing services for a city much larger geographically than the population to support it. An emerging concept some cities are using to address this issue is to transition areas that have faced continued

disinvestment and dysfunction in the market place to land uses that require less infrastructure and services. These areas typically have a high number of vacant and abandoned properties and are not anticipated to see investment in the foreseeable future. This concept allows the city to adjust its development footprint to better align with the needs of its current and future population levels. The process requires thorough data collection and analysis and often faces many social, political, and economic challenges. However, cities able to face and overcome these challenges are often rewarded with stability.

There are areas in Elmira with a high number of vacant properties, deteriorating infrastructure, and sub-standard buildings stock. Many are pockets of residential uses with some industrial and commercial uses. They also have high rates of poverty and a relatively low number of owner-occupied housing units. The City should further evaluate these areas to determine if it makes sense to continue the existing uses, which will likely require significant public investment, or look to transition them to a use that requires fewer services and would allow for existing infrastructure to be downgraded or eliminated.

### The Making of a College Town

There are two colleges located in the City of Elmira. Corning Community College has a satellite campus on Madison Avenue in the downtown and Elmira College is located in the northwest quadrant approximately 3/4 of a mile from downtown. Although these colleges have always been an important economic and cultural attraction neither can be described as being an integral part of the

City. However, recent discussions with the Elmira College leadership and city officials indicate that this should change. Although Elmira is currently not considered a college town, some believe that it can become one.

For Elmira to be recognized as an urban college town there are things that must happen to better integrate the College and its students with the City. Both Elmira College and the City of Elmira play a role. Elmira College has, in many ways, physically isolated itself from the City. The campus faces inward with most buildings oriented away from city streets and parking at the edges. In addition, students are required to live on campus where most of their day-to-day needs are provided. These decisions do not encourage students to go off campus or residents to be part of campus. In addition, the City has done little to encourage mixed-use development near campus or ensure that the design of new development is consistent with a walkable and bikeable urban environment, both of which are key ingredients in urban college towns. Students have few reasons to go off campus and when they do they have very few entertainment and retail options within walking or biking distance. If they are forced to get in a car, the mall is a short drive.

To truly develop an urban college town, the City and Elmira College must work together. It will take more than calling Elmira a college town. It will take more than marketing. It will take a commitment

from both sides to put the land use and design policies in place to make it happen. Opportunities to do this include but are not limited to:

- Encourage mixed-use development near campus and make a stronger physical connection to downtown. The Elmira College campus is less than ¼ of a mile from downtown. North Main Street and Park Place are natural opportunities for streetscape improvements and pedestrian oriented mixed-use development that actively engages the street.
- Elmira College must strengthen the relationship of the campus to surrounding city streets. Future buildings should engage the street as much as possible. Parking areas should be buffered and/or screened to limit the impact on the walkability of city streets.

#### **Other Key Components to a Future Land Use Strategy**

- Continue to recognize downtown as the central business district for the region.
- Strengthen the edges of the Chemung River with water-dependent and water-enhanced uses.
- Encourage mixed-use development throughout the downtown and in existing neighborhood commercial nodes.
- Reconcile existing land uses with a future land use concept and make recommendations for how zoning should address it.



## Neighborhoods

Neighborhoods have existed for as long as cities. They create and form communities. They are places where residents share things in common like housing, a school, or local businesses and jobs. Neighborhoods often create the background story of people's lives and are meaningful to those that live there. They often have rich histories for families and businesses tracing back generations. They leave lasting impressions on residents for what life was like and the social interactions they had. Historically, neighborhoods have an identity that people can relate to. Sometimes it is based on the people that settled the neighborhood and other times it is a characteristic that defines it. That is how we got names like SoHo in New York City or Squirrel Hill in Pittsburgh. Neighborhood identity connects people to place and with it comes community pride. This often leads to social and economic ownership and investment, which are important components to strong neighborhoods.

Elmira once had identifiable neighborhoods with names like "The Patch", Prospect Hill", and "Frog Hollow." Like most cities, Elmira's neighborhoods were settled by immigrants and were often named to reflect that heritage. Sometimes names were based on some other characteristic that people identified with, such as "Pigeon Point" which was named for the thousands of pigeons that lived in the area of Lake and Oak Streets. Over the years many of these neighborhoods have lost that identify: some for good reasons and some for not good reasons. Ask someone today to identify where in the City they live and they will likely respond with a vague directional reference like, "the East Side."

The City of Elmira also had numerous strong neighborhoods. They were mixed-income and had a healthy balance of owner-occupied

and renter-occupied units. People took pride in their homes and maintained them, which in turn provided a stable tax base for the City. However, over the last few decades Elmira, as with many cities, have struggled with the loss of middle-income residents and owner-occupied housing units in many of its neighborhoods. This has led to disinvestment, decreased property values, and concentrated poverty. What tends to happen is support goes to the struggling neighborhoods because there are programs to help. When the focus is only on fixing distressed neighborhoods rather than strengthening stable ones, the result is a city where stable neighborhoods begin to slide and then it has a hard time competing for the strong households that are needed.

Elmira currently doesn't have a neighborhood revitalization initiative but it should. A first step with such an initiative should start with this comprehensive plan. It must begin the process of building neighborhood pride and it starts with identification. Neighborhood names can be new, historic, or a combination of both. The critical thing is that they should not be contrived. They should stem from something that people identify with whether it is historic or current or social or physical the names cannot be artificial or unrealistic.

For Elmira to again have healthy neighborhoods, revitalization requires both a physical and a mental transformation. It requires strategies aimed at making the neighborhood a more desirable place to live and invest. It takes community pride and social capital. The people that live in Elmira's neighborhoods are the most powerful agents for change but they need support. They need leadership and organization. It will take identifying who the leaders are and mobilizing them.

If the solutions for problems facing urban neighborhood were clear-cut they would be resolved by now and our cities would not have struggling neighborhoods. Unfortunately solutions are not clear-cut and it takes research, analysis, and often some serious “head scratching” to find solutions. And at times when it seems like a strategy is working the market changes or people move out or new people move in, all of which can impact the strategy. Neighborhoods change and it is important to recognize it and manage it and adapt the strategy.

There are numerous neighborhood revitalization initiatives and models for Elmira to consider. Some of these are right here in Western and Upstate New York including Buffalo, Rochester, and Geneva. However, it would be wise to look beyond New York State and identify best practices from across the Country to help inform Elmira’s approach. Regardless of the details of the strategy there are some fundamental components that are included in successful initiatives. These include but are not limited to:

- Engaging local residents and identifying local leaders.
- Developing partnerships with local and national organizations and programs.
- Utilizing data to drive strategies and evaluate results.
- Targeting financial and human resources to get results.

Elmira’s neighborhood revitalization strategy must not only include support and focus on struggling neighborhoods. It must also include strengthening stable ones.

*There are many neighborhood revitalization models available including Habitat International’s Neighborhood Revitalization Initiative. This initiative envisions revived neighborhoods through the hard work of engaged citizens, partnerships with civic and business groups, and a renewed community spirit.*



## Housing

### Overview

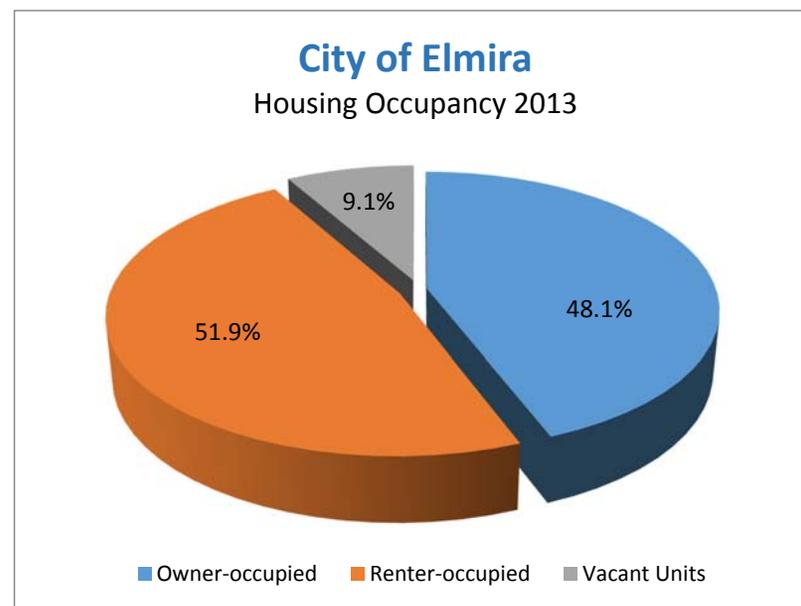
The City of Elmira's housing has more than 12,000 housing units with approximately 52% occupied by renters and 48% by owners. More than 96% of the housing was built prior to 1980, with 68% of housing units constructed prior to 1940. The age of the housing stock is significant. Since 2000, the occupied housing stock has declined by 6.2%. It is important to note that renter-occupied housing stock declined by 4.6% and vacant housing stock has declined by 22.9%.

The value of the housing stock was varied by census tract and data sources. The values varied from \$67,400 to \$100,000, suggesting an upward trend in valuation exists.

The cost of new construction for a single family homes (SFH) compared to existing home values showed a significant gap. New construction of SFH ranged from \$126 to \$144 per square foot inclusive of all costs except closing costs. The square foot cost of existing properties ranged from \$36 to \$56 per square foot inclusive of all costs except closing costs. The gap ranged from \$70 to \$108 per square foot at market rate pricing. One mitigating factor not examined would be renovation or remodeling costs added to existing properties. When such a factor is considered the gap would be reduced but not eliminated.

There is an unmet demand for both renter-occupied and owner-occupied housing units.

The challenge faced by Elmira is an aging housing stock and the lack of any new housing units to replace the most stressed units. Additionally, the population has declined by 5.7% between 2000 and 2013<sup>5</sup>. Two factors appear to be driving this population decline. First is a decline in the population of age segments 5 years to 20 years old and 25 years to 44 years. Second is the lack of new housing stock to meet the unmet need by students, seniors and families. It is suspected that the insufficient supply of housing stock in Elmira was a factor in households looking to other markets to meet their housing needs.



### Owner & Renter Occupied Households

Owner-occupied households make up 48.1% and renter-occupied make up 51.9% of all households in the City of Elmira. In 2000, 5,546 household units were owner-occupied. By 2013, the number of owner-occupied households declined 4.6% to 5,290, and renter-occupied units declined 3.7% to 5,711.

While the overall owner-occupied population has declined by 4.6% since 2000, there have been significant shifts within the age segments of the population. Ages 55 to 64 has grown over 51% since 2000 to 2013. However, ages 65 and over has declined by 18% over the same period.

### Age of Housing Stock

Over 89% of all housing was built prior to 1970<sup>5</sup>, with 1% of the housing stock built from 2000. In the County of Chemung about 74% of all housing units were built prior to 1970, with approximately 3.6% constructed after 1999. The aging housing stock is significant.

### Building Activity

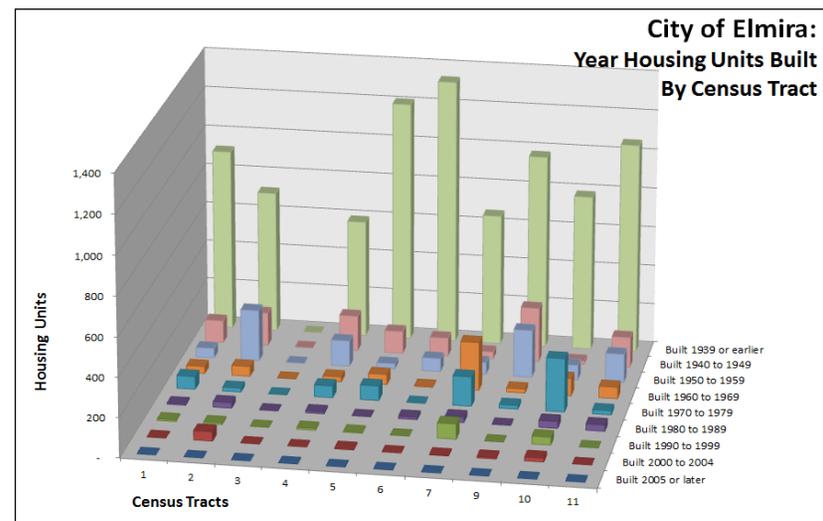
Between 2005 and 2007, it was reported that 17 single family structures were built in the City of Elmira, compared to 615 in the County of Chemung. The average reported cost of construction per dwelling was \$128,642 in Elmira and \$207,658 in the County of Chemung. There were no reported multi-family structure permits issued between 2004 and 2014. In the County, 305 multi-family units were constructed in 44 buildings, \$ 22,601,334 in construction costs, with an average unit cost of \$74,103.

### Vacancies

In 2000, approximately 46% of all households were rental units, with vacancy rates reaching 10.9%. The number of vacant housing units was 1,420 (11% of all housing). In 2013, the overall number of rental households has grown to 51.6% of all housing units in the City. It was estimated 1,085 households are vacant. Many of the vacant housing units reported are substandard or unlivable properties not maintained by owners, under construction or renovation, seasonal properties, or abandoned all together.

### Monthly Cost Burdens

Approximately 25% of all owner-occupied and 54% of renter occupied households are overburdened. While the issues that define affordability are often complex and diverse, it is affected by demographics, economics, and climate. A healthy, single person or couple may be able to spend 30 to 48% of his or her income on housing and still be able to afford the other necessities of life.



## Demand for Housing

Overall, the forecast for the population in the City is stable. The City population is expected to decline by 1.8% through 2020. According to the 2013 U.S. Census, 48% of the City households are owner-occupied and 52% are renter-occupied. Approximately 60% of all renter-occupied households are between 25 and 44 years old. Seniors who rent their homes represent about 16% of all households and about half of seniors own their homes. Among all seniors, many are choosing to age in their own homes, or in rental units. They are making their homes more livable and adaptable to their growing needs.

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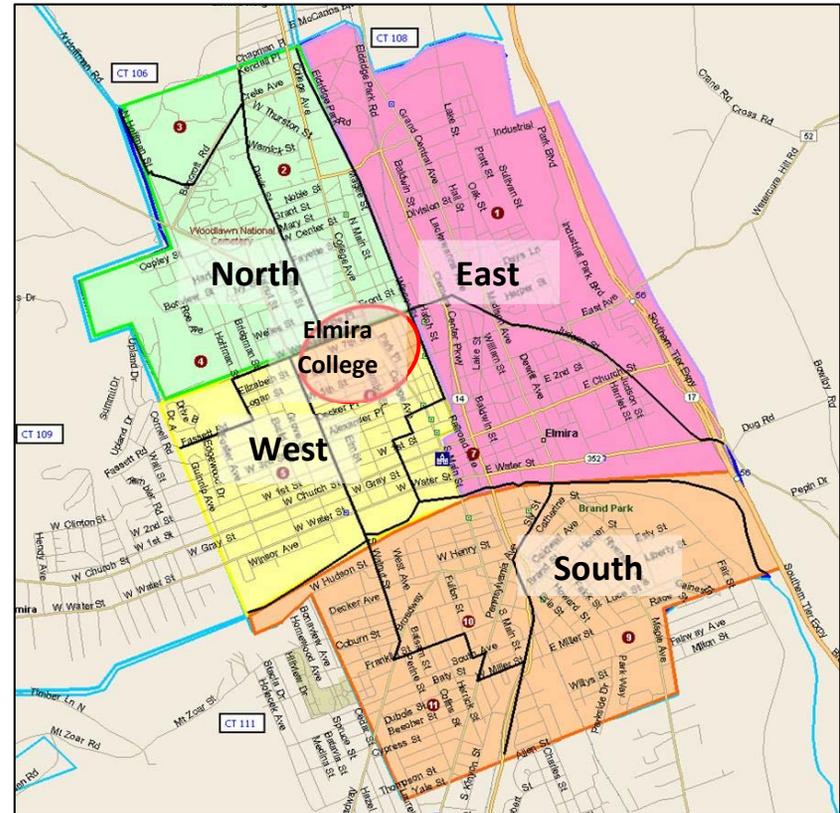
There exists an unmet demand for owner-occupied and rental-occupied housing units for seniors, families and students.

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## Quadrants

The West Side of Elmira is defined by neighborhoods with housing dating back to the late 1800's. The area has many well maintained and renovated homes. Houses vary in architectural styles, sizes and conditions. Single family homes are the predominant building type with a mixture of multi-family and mix use properties. Census tract five has about 53% owner-occupied properties compared with 75% renter-occupied properties in census tract six.

The Elmira College area can be defined as contiguous set parcels bounded by Washington Avenue to the north, Davis Street to the west, West 5<sup>th</sup> Street to the south and North Main Street to the East. Many of the single family and multi-family properties are well maintained. Elmira College main campus is located in Census tract five.



North Side is a mix of single family homes and multi-family properties including 144 family apartments in Hoffman Plaza Housing Project operated by the Elmira Housing Authority. These multi-family projects are pre-World War II housing built for manufacturing workers, with the original intention to be demolished after the war ended. These units continue in use. Census tract four has about 80% owner-occupied properties compared with 60% owner-occupied properties in census tract two.

The East Side is a mix of single family homes and multi-family properties. Census tract one and seven comprise this area. Housing is disbursed among a mix commercial, manufacturing and industrial use. These neighborhoods have some of the highest poverty rates in the city. It is common to find well maintained residential property next to distressed properties. The East Side has about 75%. The downtown business core is located in census tract seven.

The South Side is a mix of single family homes and multi-family properties. Census tract nine, ten and eleven comprise this area. Housing is dominant land use with a commercial area between South Main Street and Route 14, extending south from the Chemung River to the intersection of Pennsylvania Ave., and South Main Street. About 56% of all occupied units are owner-occupied.



## Infrastructure

### Public Water

The City of Elmira is served by the Elmira Water Board (EWB). In 1859 the State Legislature approved "An Act to Incorporate the Elmira Water Company". The company was privately held with a start-up capital of \$50,000. Seeley Creek and Hoffman Creek were the two water sources chosen to feed the then Village. In October of 1868, the assets of the Elmira Water Company were purchased by George M. Diven and a new company named "Elmira Water Works Company" was established. The estimated value of the supply was \$56,000.

The first consideration of a public purchase of the water system was in 1886. The Council debated a proposal to buy the Elmira Water Works Company from the Diven family for an estimated \$400,000. This however, did not happen and the Diven family remained in control until 1892 when its stock was purchased by the Elmira Improvement Company, which also owned the Elmira Heights Water Company.

Following the severe outbreak of typhoid fever in 1896, the Reservoir Street Filtration Plant was built in 1897. In November 1904, all of the utilities in the Elmira area were consolidated into the Elmira Water, Light, & Railroad Company (EWL&R). Consumers in the City were not satisfied with the pace of improvements made by the EWL&R and the City's Common Council and State of New York passed an Act in 1913 which established the Elmira Water Board.

It took until 1915 to reach an agreement to purchase the property of the EWL&R for \$1,500,000. The water system became a public function on May 1, 1915. This purchase was funded with bonds issued by the City of Elmira. These bonds were paid off completely

by the rate payers of the Elmira Water Board. In 1945, the last of these bonds were satisfied.

Established by Chapter 660 of the Laws of 1913, the Elmira Water Board became a Department of the City of Elmira. The Charter governing the Board became law May 23, 1913, with the approval of the Governor and passed, three-fifths being present. In 1928, the first amendment to the 1913 Charter was passed by the New York Senate and Assembly. The Charter was again amended in 1950.

The Elmira Water Board maintains more than 225 miles of watermains delivering more than 7 million gallons of water every day to the City of Elmira, the Village of Elmira Heights, and portions of the Towns of Elmira, Horseheads and Southport. More than 2.5 billion gallons of water a year are pumped through various iron, copper, cement, and plastic pipes to more than 65,000 people. The Elmira Water Board, with treatment and distribution facilities throughout Chemung County, also services 1,251 fire hydrants. The EWB typically replaces approximately 6,000 lf of cast iron watermain each year utilizing EWB Forces. The following table is provided in the 2014 EWB Annual Report:

EWB Statistics	
Average Daily System Use	6.2 Million Gallons
Total Water Produced	2.26 Billion Gallons
Population Served - approximate	65 Thousand
Unaccounted For Water	21.7%
Accounts	17,468
Average Annual Residential Use	50,904
Average Annual Residential Bill	\$336.06
Miles Of Water Main	225 Miles
Number Of Hydrants	1,251

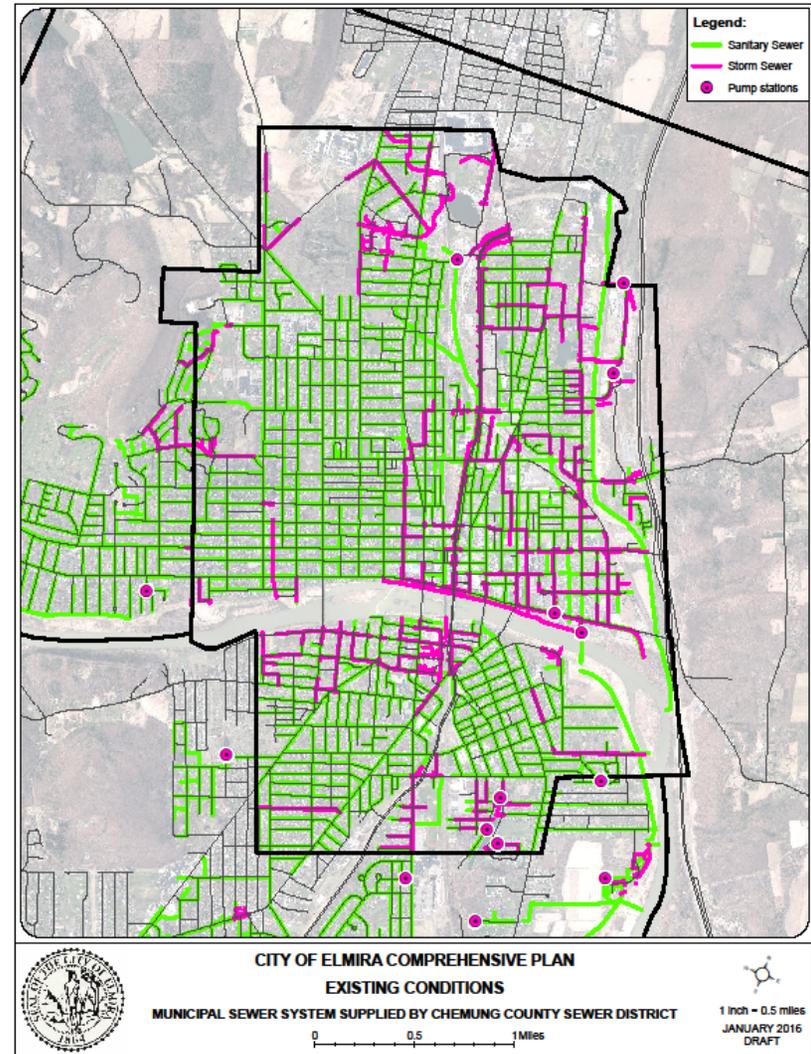
### Sanitary and Storm Sewer

The Chemung County Elmira Sewer District (CCESD) serves the City of Elmira, the Town of Elmira and portions of the Town of Southport. The Milton Street wastewater treatment plant (WWTP) serves the entire City and went on-line in 1987. This WWTP utilizes a trickling filter/solid contact treatment technology. The entire collection network encompasses some 4,300 acres and services approximately 45,000 people. The majority of the collection system within the City is defined as a combined sewer system, which means that the sanitary sewage and storm drainage systems are interconnected.

The collection system consists of 116.3 miles of gravity sanitary sewer mains which includes large portions of combined sewers. The separate storm sewer system consists of 35.1 miles of gravity storm sewers. There are approximately 2,960 sanitary sewer manholes and over 4,000 storm catch basins. The CCESD operates and maintains nine sanitary sewer pump stations as well as a siphon crossing at the Chemung River east of the Madison Avenue bridge.

### Electric and Natural Gas

New York State Electric and Gas (NYSEG) provides electric and natural gas service to the City of Elmira. NYSEG was organized in 1852 and the company is now a subsidiary of Avangrid (formerly known as Iberdrola USA). NYSEG is regulated by the NYS Public Service Commission (PSC) and provides regulated energy services to more than 40% of upstate New York. The utility serves 872,000 electricity customers and about 256,000 natural gas customers in an 18,000 square mile area of central, eastern, and western New York. NYSEG operates more than 37,000 miles of power transmission and distribution lines and more than 440 substations; its transmission assets are overseen by the New York ISO. It owns 7,800 miles of gas distribution pipeline. The company also owns several hydroelectric power generation facilities.



Due to worries about capacity in the electrical system, the City of Elmira partnered with NYSEG, Chemung County Environmental Management Council (EMC), Chemung County Executive’s Advisory Commission on Natural Energy Solutions, The Hilliard Corporation, Booz Allen Hamilton, Power Analytics, and Siemens USA to receive a NYSERDA NY Prize Stage 1 Grant. NY Prize is a three-stage competition. During Stage 1, competitively selected communities receive funding to conduct engineering assessments that evaluate the feasibility of installing and operating a community microgrid. The Stage 1 Grant was awarded on July 18, 2015.

### Traffic and Transportation

The City of Elmira, together with Chemung County, maintains 125 miles of streets, arterials and collectors within the corporate boundaries.

The only highway within City limits that is not maintained by the City is I-86, a regional east-west highway, which borders the eastern edge of the City. I-86 is the primary east-west route through the Southern Tier of New York State, and is maintained by NYSDOT.

The primary arterials through the City are Clemens Center Parkway (north-south) and NYS Route 352 (east-west) which consists of Church Street in the westbound direction and Water Street for eastbound traffic. Church and Water Streets terminate at a share interchange at Exit 56.

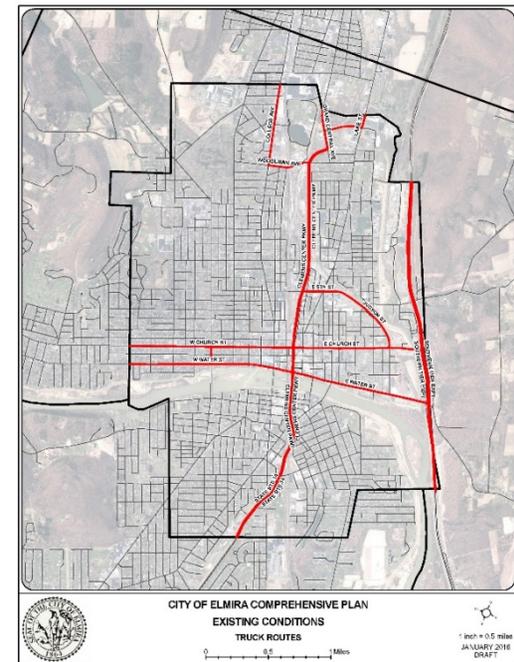
The Chemung River flows easterly bisecting the City, with Church Street, Water Street and most of the core downtown business district located on the “northside”. The “southside” is predominantly residential with a few pockets of commercial and industrial uses. Five bridges cross the river - Madison Avenue, Lake Street, Clemens Center Parkway, Main Street and Walnut Street, providing adequate

access between northside and southside. The Lake Street bridge is currently not usable due to structural deterioration.

Clemens Center Parkway is a four lane north-south arterial that bisects the City from the Town of Southport to the Village of Elmira Heights. Clemens Center Parkway (also known as NYS Route 14) is maintained by NYSDOT with a speed limit of 40 mph.

### Truck Routes

A truck ordinance was adopted by City Council after the 1998 Comprehensive Master Plan Update. The primary reason for the truck ordinance was to deal with deficiencies with the previously designated truck route system so that it could serve key areas of demand within the City. Consequently, truck traffic was removed from residential areas. The map below depicts the truck routes within the City.



### Arterials/Collectors

As previously stated, the major arterials through the City are Clemens Center Parkway (north-south) and NYS Route 352 (Church and Water Streets, east-west). I-86 is the regional east-west highway and is the primary access to and from Elmira.

North-south regional access is via the following collectors:

- NYS Route 14 which travels through the Elmira urbanized area,
- NYS Route 328 extending southwest from Elmira eventually connecting US Route 15 in Pennsylvania,
- NYS Route 13 extending northeast to Ithaca.

Within the City, primary north-south collector streets include:

- NYS Route 14 is the Clemens Center Parkway.
- Lake Road/Lake Street is another north connector similar to NYS Route 14. There is significant retail along this road in the Towns of Elmira and Horseheads and it is a convenient link to NYS Route 13. Lake Street south terminus is the Chemung River.
- Broadway/Walnut Street/Davis Street runs primarily through residential areas along the western section of “northside” and “southside”.
- Hoffman Street is a northside street running along the west edge of the City, also primarily through residential areas.
- Maple Avenue is a street running along the east edge of the City’s southside.

- Madison Avenue runs along the east edge of the center-city. It provides a direct connection to southside via the Madison Avenue bridge, which is more heavily travelled since the closure of the Lake Street Bridge.

Primary east-west collectors include:

- Hudson Street, an east-west street on the southside connects Walnut to Pennsylvania Avenue just south of the river.
- Washington Avenue, an east-west street in the middle of the City’s northside adjacent to Elmira College, traverses across the entire City from Hoffman Street to Sullivan Street.
- Woodlawn Avenue, a secondary east-west street at the north end of the City connects NYS Route 14 (College Avenue) to Clemens Center Parkway near the northern terminus of the Parkway.
- NYS Route 352 (Church Street and Water Street), connects Elmira to Corning

## The Public Realm

The Public Realm is a critical element in making cities work for the health and well-being of their citizens. Parks, plazas, and open spaces are necessary components of the urban environment. The public realm can provide many economic, social, and environmental benefits to a community.

### Streets

Streets comprise the majority of the city's public realm. They are a vital part of livable, attractive communities. The transportation network is also a vital community investment in economic development and sustainability. According to Smart Growth America, great communities are comprised of streets that are designed for all users and all modes of transportation. These are commonly known as Complete Streets. Complete Streets can offer many benefits in communities, regardless of size or location. A complete street is one that accommodates all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, transit users and persons with disabilities.

A 2015 Smart Growth America study of completed projects, *Safer Streets, Stronger Economies*, found that "Complete Streets projects tended to improve safety for everyone, increased biking and walking, and showed a mix of increases and decreased in automobile traffic, depending on the project goal."

In Elmira, many of the city streets have been designed with only the motorist in mind. There are few streets that have street trees and comfortable walking environments. There is a lack of bike lanes and pedestrian crossings throughout the city. Sidewalk conditions are poor, with cracks and unlevel walking surfaces. Overall, the quality of the streetscape can be improved by promoting sidewalk improvements, bike lanes, replanting trees and lawn maintenance.

### Transportation Barriers

Today, there are multiple transportation barriers that ultimately divide the city in two and create safety hazards for pedestrians and bicyclists. The Clemens Center Parkway and railroad run north to south through the middle of Elmira, dividing the east from the west. Due to very limited public access, another major barrier is the Chemung River. The waterway divides the north side of the city from the south side, with limited access across or into the river. This makes it more difficult for pedestrians and bicyclists to have safe, comfortable, and convenient access to community destinations and public places.

These barriers also create a disjointed downtown core that ultimately limits economic growth opportunities and development.

To modify these barriers, the City of Elmira should work closely with NYSDOT to adapt a Complete Streets program as part of the public realm.

*Reference: Smart Growth America, 2015*



## **Trails**

Trails and greenways can provide many benefits to communities, including public health, economic and transportation benefits, and even affect community pride and identity. They make our communities more livable and create connections between neighborhoods, schools and parks. They can work as low cost infrastructure for economic development through urban revitalization, recreational tourism and small business opportunities.

In the City of Elmira, there is limited connectivity due to a lack of trail systems. The main trail that exists is the Lackawanna Rail Trail. The trail extends from Eldridge Park to the waterfront, paralleling Clemens Center Parkway before turning east to follow Newtown Creek. A 5-mile extension to the existing trail will eventually be built, ultimately linking Elmira with Lowman along Interstate 86 and the Chemung River.

There are also a number of local and regional trail corridors that are proposed in existing plans. These include the Chemung River Trail and the Mark Twain Riverfront Park and Portage Trail. By linking these trail systems, the City of Elmira can establish a network of walkable and bikeable routes that will increase public health, economic and transportation opportunities for Elmira residents.

## **Chemung River**

Rivers, streams and waterways can provide communities with fresh drinking water, recreation, fishing, economic and transportation benefits. During colonial times, The Chemung River was a very important trade route through Chemung County. Today it is paralleled by floodwalls on either side, limiting public access. The Chemung River has the potential to be a major component of the public realm for Elmira. The Mark Twain Riverfront Park redesign by HAAS Landscape Architects and the Chemung River Trail

Assessment and Comprehensive Master Plan are two planning efforts that share a common vision in encouraging development along the river. Both plans describe goals and objectives for improving connections and access to the water. These documents should be a source of reference when developing additional ways to reconnect with the Chemung River.

## **Parks & Recreation**

Along with trail systems, parks and recreation also contribute to building healthy, vibrant communities.

Parks have the ability to:

- Strengthen Community Image and Sense of Place
- Create Strong and Safe Communities
- Provide Economic Development
- Increase Physical and Mental Health
- Increase Social Interaction
- Provide Environmental Sustainability

It is important for the City of Elmira to maintain and update city parks as they age and become outdated. Unkempt lawn and open space should also be priority areas of focus.

A strong network of public open space is important both in terms of human use, but also in terms of protecting ecological systems and processes. Open space in Elmira consists of parks, recreation, trails, and vacant land. The aim for the City of Elmira should be to create a linked network of diverse public spaces including both green spaces, and more urban public spaces such as squares and pedestrian streets or trails.

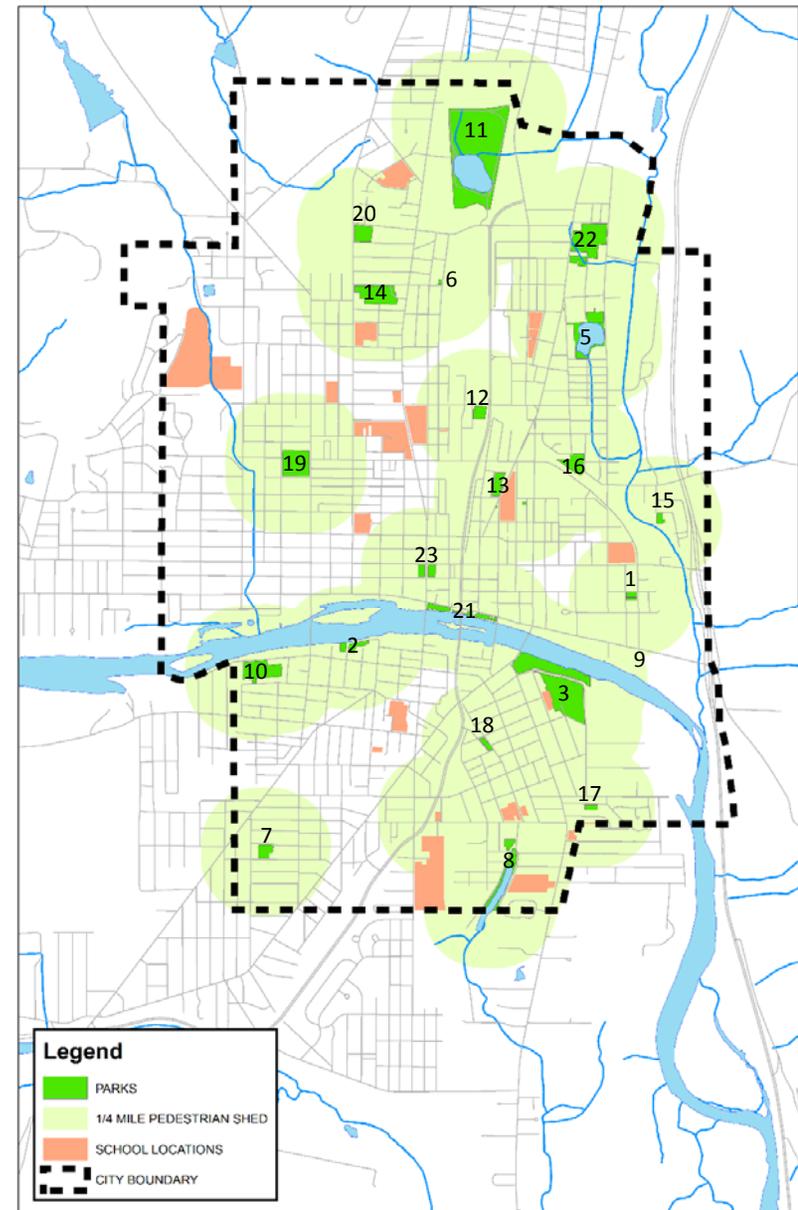
There are a total of 23 parks within the City boundary shown in the adjacent figure.

**Existing City Parks**

1. Blandford Park	2. Katy Leary Park
3. Brand Park	4. Lackawanna Rail Trail
5. Brick Park	6. Magee Street Park
7. Cypress Street Park	8. Millers Pond
9. East Water Street Park	10. Jim Nelson Park
11. Eldridge Park	12. Patch Park
13. Ernie Davis Park	14. Pulaski Park
15. Frank A. Rohde Park	16. Quatrano Park
17. Gaines Street Park	18. Sly Street Park
19. Grove Park	20. Hathorn Park
21. Mark Twain Riverfront Park	22. McKinnon Park
23. Wisner Park	

**Walkability to Park Locations**

The adjacent figure also displays ¼ mile walking sheds around each city park. It is evident that there are gaps where portions of the city do not have walkable access to a park. The map shows that many of these gaps are served by local schools and colleges that offer fields and play equipment to students.



## Cultural Resources

The City of Elmira contains numerous historic and cultural resources that provide links to the City's history, influence community character, chronicle change, and mark growth. The City of Elmira should emphasize and celebrate its prominent historic and cultural assets.

### Arts, Culture, & History

Chemung County was named after the Native American village, meaning "Place of the big horn" where Native Americans discovered large mammoth tusks. Because of its strategic location at the southern end of the Finger Lakes Region, Chemung County is known as the "Gateway to the Finger Lakes." Elmira, the county seat, is known as the "Soaring Capital of America", due to the fact that nearby Harris Hill has been hosting national soaring (sailplane) competitions since 1930. Many also refer to the area as "Mark Twain Country" because of the many years the author lived and wrote in Elmira.

The city should leverage these assets as opportunities for growth and identity. Elmira residents should have a sense of pride around the cultural and historic past of the city. Elmira's culture, arts, heritage and future should be celebrated.

### Historic Districts

There are many historic districts located in the City of Elmira. In 1990 the historic preservation ordinance was approved by a local vote and established the City's Historic Preservation Commission. The Commission is responsible for identifying and designating structures or resources as local landmarks and historic districts; increasing public awareness of historic, cultural and architectural resources; reviewing all requests for Certificates of Appropriateness and making

recommendations concerning the utilization of State, Federal or private funds to promote preservation of landmarks and historic districts within the city.

By establishing the preservation commission and designating historic districts and landmarks, the City of Elmira is able to guide growth and take advantage of the benefits of historic preservation. Historic preservation is a powerful tool for economic development and community revitalization.

*The Near Westside Historic District* is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and at the time of designation (1970's) it was the largest residential historic district in the country. It roughly spans North of Chemung River, from College Ave to Hoffman Street, reaching as high as West 2<sup>nd</sup> Street in some locations. The district is predominately residential and includes a full range of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century architectural styled homes. It has some minor commercial buildings and several churches dispersed throughout. Occupying 25-30 blocks it holds the largest concentration of Victorian homes in the county and the largest concentrations of turn-of-the-century homes in New York State.

*Maple Avenue Historic District* contains a collection of turn-of-the-twentieth century residences along Maple Avenue in the Southeastern section of Elmira. The earliest residents on Maple Avenue built their houses in the 1860s-1880s and were prominent and wealthy business and political leaders, including several mayors of Elmira, as well as New York State Governor Lucius Robinson. Relatively remote from the commercial and business center of the city, only those wealthy enough to afford to maintain their own carriage for transportation could afford to build their house on Maple Avenue. As a result, the earliest houses built on the street are large,

high-style mansions. After inheriting his father's estate in the area, Col. David C. Robinson played a key role in spurring the development of this area. Col. Robinsons Maple Avenue Railroad and related street improvements opened up Maple Avenue to upper and upper-middle class residents. While some houses were constructed in the 1860s and 1870s, the vast majority of properties were built in a relatively short period of time between the 1890s and the 1920s. The Maple Avenue Historic District was added to the National Register in August 2013.

*Elmira Civic Historic District* is most significant because of the cohesiveness of a wide variety of design styles and high degree of design integrity. All of the major styles of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century architecture are represented. It is located in an organic patch just west of Baldwin Street and up Lake Street towards Church Street. The majority of Elmira's Civic buildings are located here, including the County Clerks Complex, City Hall, and Historical Museum.

*Clinton-Columbia Historic District* was recently listed on the National Register of Historic Places in June 2015. The district contains homes in the area between College Avenue, West Clinton Street, Columbia Street, West 4th Street and Davis Street.

*North Main & West Water Street Historic District* was approved by the NY State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) in December 2015 and is now listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

*Reference: VisitNewYorkState.net – Chemung County, 2015*

## **Celebrated Residents**

Throughout its history, the Chemung River Valley has been host to many famous residents. These include:

- Mark Twain – American author Samuel L. Clemens, better known by his pen name, Mark Twain, married Elmira native Olivia Langdon. Twain and his family spent many summers at Quarry Farm in Elmira, where he wrote many of his famous novels including *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer (1876)* and *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn (1885)*. Twain is buried in Woodlawn Cemetery in Elmira.
- Ernie Davis – Ernest “Ernie” Davis was an American football halfback and the first African-American athlete to win the Heisman Trophy. He attended the Elmira Free Academy, where he earned two All-American honors. After high school Davis went on to play football at Syracuse University and later was the number-one pick in the 1962 NFL Draft. The following year Davis died of leukemia in May 1963.
- Tommy Hilfiger – American Fashion designer, Thomas Jacob “Tommy” Hilfiger, was born and raised in Elmira, NY. He opened his first store in 1971 called People’s Place in downtown Elmira in what is now the site of the First Arena.
- Eileen Collins – Eileen Marie Collins is a retired NASA astronaut and a retired United States Air Force Colonel. Collins was the first female pilot and first female commander of a Space Shuttle. She was born in Elmira, NY and graduated from Elmira Free Academy in 1974.

- Hal Roach – Was an American film and television producer, director, and actor from the 1920's to the 1990's. He is best known today for producing *Laurel and Hardy* and *Our Gang* (later known as *The Little Rascals*) film comedy series. He died two months short of his 101<sup>st</sup> birthday and is buried in Woodlawn Cemetery in Elmira.
- Geoff Bodine – Bodine is an American motorsport driver who was born in Elmira. He is the oldest of three Bodine brothers who are all NASCAR drivers. Geoff's father and grandfather built Chemung Speedrome just a year after he was born, where Bodine began learning his racing skills at a young age.
- John W. Jones – John W. Jones is one of Elmira's most beloved and important historical figures because of his critical role in the success of the Underground Railroad, and for his significant contribution to record keeping for Woodlawn Cemetery



## Natural Resources

The City of Elmira has many natural resources that contribute to the overall quality of life in the City. These resources include wildlife, the Chemung River, streams, views, and scenic corridors.

### Wildlife

Wildlife has many ecological, aesthetic, recreational and economical benefits. According to the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC), Region 8 in Avon, NY, there are no wildlife management areas or rare species of plants or animals in the City of Elmira. This should not mean that wildlife should be overlooked during economic development plans or strategies. It is important for the City of Elmira to maintain biodiversity to ensure a livable and thriving community.

### Wetlands

According to the National Wetlands Inventory, provided by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the City of Elmira has Freshwater Emergent Wetlands and Freshwater Forested/Shrub Wetlands within its boundary. Wetlands provide many benefits to communities including wildlife habitat, recreation, ground water recharge and discharge, erosion control, and education among others.

### River, Streams, and Floodplains

Within the City boundaries, there are two creeks and one river: The Chemung River, Hoffman Creek, and Newtown Creek. The River is Elmira's primary waterway and runs west to east through the city. Hoffman Creek runs from the Elmira Reservoir and Newtown Creek runs north/south between Sullivan Street and I-86, both eventually emptying into the Chemung River.

The Chemung River is an important natural resource that flows through the center of the City of Elmira. The River originates from the Cohocton, Canisteo, Cowanesque, and Tioga



Rivers and is part of the Chemung Basin Watershed that includes more than two thousand acres. The River flows down into Pennsylvania and is a western tributary of the Susquehanna River and eventually joins the Chesapeake Bay.

The NYSDEC classifies the portion of the Chemung River which flows through Elmira to be a Class C water body. The assessments are based on data and information collected through the 2006 NYSDEC sampling season. A summary of assessment of overall water quality in the Chemung River Basin was completed in May 2007 and reflects conditions at the time of collection. As defined in 6NYCRR Part 701.8, the best usage of Class C waters is for fishing. These waters are suitable for fish, shellfish and wildlife propagation and survival. The water quality is also suitable for primary and secondary contact recreation.

The NYSDEC classifies nearby locations of the Chemung River, mainly outside of the city boundaries, to be a Class A water body. Class A water bodies are a source of water supply for drinking, culinary or food processing purposes; primary and secondary contact recreation and fishing. The waters are also suitable for fish propagation and survival. As a result of the classification, any work in the bed or banks of the Chemung River will require a NYSDEC Article 15 Protection of Waters Permit. The Chemung River is also considered a "Water of the

United States” under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, and is therefore under the jurisdiction of the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) regulatory branch.

According to the NYSDEC 2007 report, the Chemung River provides about 69% of the raw water distributed to 65,000 residents of Elmira, Horseheads, and surrounding communities by the Elmira Water Board. The daily average of water used at that time was 6.1 million gallons per day.

*Flooding:* The Chemung River has had periodic heavy flooding throughout its history. In June 1972, Elmira experienced a devastating flood caused by tropical storm Agnes. A levee built along the Chemung River after a 1935 flood had no effect on the storm and left much of Elmira and surrounding areas underwater, equaling millions of dollars’ worth of damages. In the years following Agnes, state and federal governments built flood levees and dams across New York and Pennsylvania to control the floodplain and future floods. As a result, the 100 year floodplain limit is the levee. There is, however, still a 500 year floodplain that extends beyond the levee and into the City. The flood zone areas are provided by the National Flood Insurance Program and a flood map for the City is shown on FEMA’s webpage.

*Floodwall:* The floodwall exists for the safety and welfare of the inhabitants of the City of Elmira and must be maintained and protected. It is regularly maintained and monitored by the NYSDEC and any design impacts to the wall receive needed scrutiny by both the NYSDEC and Army Corps of Engineers. Over time, public access along the Chemung River has been restricted by the presence of flood protection levees and walls. Recent initiatives by the City of Elmira and the Friends of the Chemung River Watershed have been undertaken to enhance access and promote the river as a viable

economic and recreational resource. One initiative is the levee and Riverside Trail, proposed to follow the north and south shores of the Chemung River through the heart of Elmira. A white water bypass, also serving as a fish ladder, is suggested for the north shore near the Main Street Bridge.

### **Visual Resources**

Some of the main visual resources within the City of Elmira include the Chemung River Valley and historic architectural buildings. Visual connections are important as they project the image of Elmira upon visitors, tourists, and even current residents. The floodwall along the Chemung River reduces the physical and visual connection and has resulted in the loss of appreciation and contact with the River.

Elmira should look at the suggestions set forth in the existing Riverfront Plan and propose new access to the Chemung River.



## Existing Plans

The City of Elmira should implement recommendations from previous plans and policies. The Comprehensive Plan adopts and prioritizes many of the recommendations from Existing Plans discussed below.

### **City of Elmira Comprehensive Master Plan (December 1998)**

The City of Elmira Comprehensive Master Plan was published in December 1998 and addressed many of the issues seen at that time. Recommendations were made to Land Use and Zoning, Economic, Environmental, Cultural, and Fiscal concerns. Today, many of these same issues and concerns remain unchanged. The City of Elmira's new Comprehensive Plan has built upon these remaining issues and suggests previous recommendations for implementation.

### **Chemung River Trail Assessment and Comprehensive Master Plan (2008)**

The Chemung River Trail Assessment and Master Plan is primarily a feasibility and resource document for the City, towns and County with a focus on developing a primary network of trails, programs, and specific enhancements. The regional trail system will help to ensure good consistent trail design and management standards. This document fine tunes a common vision and encourages a regional

effort toward river development. The development of a continuous, 10-12' wide asphalt multi-use trail along the river in Chemung County is one of the key recommendations of this master plan. On-road bikeways and bicycling conditions on all roads are another important element of the plan.

### **Mark Twain Riverfront Park and Portage Trail (HAAS Landscape Architects)**

The City of Elmira Commissioned HAAS Landscape Architects and their team of local professionals in the summer of 2010 to explore the development potential of a portage trail around Elmira Water Board's Chase-Hibbard Dam and to explore redesign options for the underutilized and poorly maintained Mark Twain Riverfront Park. The design team prepared final design and construction drawings for bidding of the canoe portage and preliminary design and schematic drawings for the Mark Twain Riverfront Park redesign.

The Mark Twain Riverfront Park redesign creates a stronger connection with the Chemung River and provides usable, open greenspace. The primary trail system meanders through the east end of the park and continues along the floodwall, traveling by an elevated walkway.



*Mark Twain Riverfront Park Master Plan, HAAS Landscape Architects*

**Elmira-Chemung: Bicycle Pedestrian Trail 2035 Plan (March 2015)**

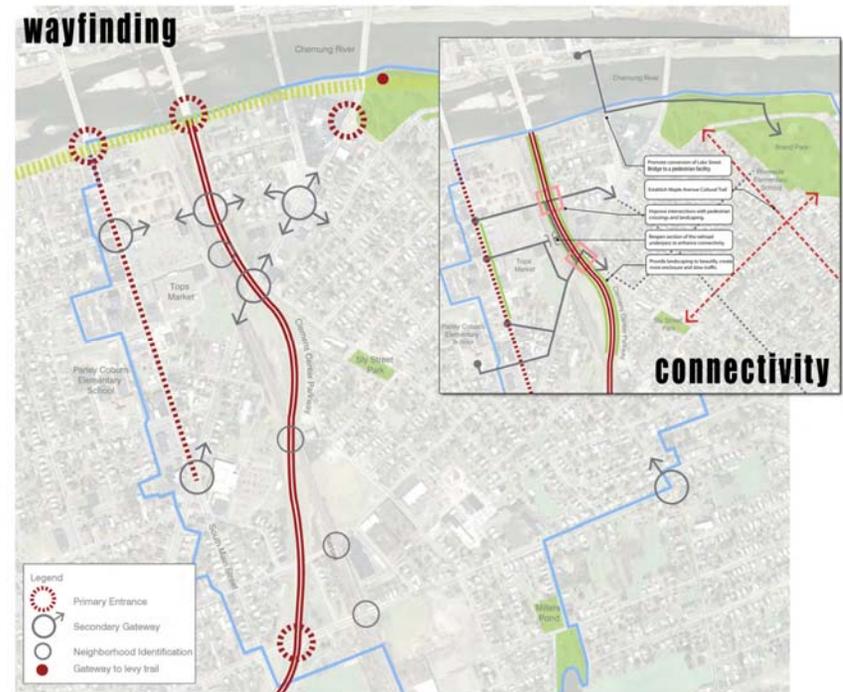
The community has shown increasing interest in efforts to develop a safe, more complete, and attractive network of sidewalks, bicycle infrastructure, and trails. This Plan documents those recent efforts and interest, describes more fully the needs, and recommends the steps to achieve that safer, more complete, and attractive network.

This plan describes the goals and objectives for the next twenty years for improving the way in which bicyclists and pedestrians are accommodated on streets, sidewalks, and trails. These goals address how infrastructure investments will be prioritized to improve safety, promote connectivity, and ensure the integration of transportation and land use planning.

**Southside Rising Revitalization Strategy (September 2014)**

Through the NYSDOS Brownfield Opportunity Areas (BOA) Program, the City of Elmira developed the Southside Rising Revitalization Strategy, which is a bottom-up approach to community revitalization directed by the community with the support and assistance of the City of Elmira and the New York State Department of State.

The consultant team developed two master plans for the location (0-8 year Master Plan, and Long Term Development Vision). Recommendations were made for South Main Street, local parks, recreation, riverfront, connectivity, wayfinding, gateways, vacant sites, and economic development.



*Southside Rising Master Plan, Wayfinding & Connectivity*

### **Southern Tier Regional Economic Development Council: Upstate Revitalization Initiative Plan (October 2015)**

The Southern Tier Regional Economic Development Council was named an Upstate Revitalization Initiative (URI) Best Plan Awardee for its new strategic plan in December 2015. This means the region will receive \$500 million over the next five years for innovative projects that create jobs. By the end of the five years, more than 10,200 jobs are expected to be created and \$3.4 billion is expected to be generated back into the Southern Tier economy. The Southern Tier Region's URI plan consists of four main pillars that will act as the core drivers of job and output growth. These include building the Greater Binghamton innovation system, investing in the advanced manufacturing industry, transforming the food and agriculture industry, and promoting the Southern Tier's innovation culture. Main goals of the plan include:

- Revitalize distressed communities
- Become a region of innovation
- Attract foreign investment and increase exports
- Leverage our natural resources
- Strengthen our industries ranging from advanced manufacturing to agriculture to tourism
- Changing our image

### **I-86 Innovation Corridor – Strategic Action Plan (July 2015)**

This Strategic Action Plan for the I-86 Innovation Corridor is designed to accelerate public/private investment, create job opportunities, advance regional competitiveness, and create the magnetism to draw and keep young, skilled workforce participants. The Plan exploits, connects, and leverages the region's strengths and resources, including key physical and innovation assets, which have been identified in a set of foundational studies and analyses. In addition,

the Plan includes specific strategies to fill voids in the region's innovation infrastructure, and projects to embody the strategies.

The implementation of this I-86 Innovation Corridor Strategic Action Plan is a multi-year process, only achieved after a decade or more of consistent effort and investments. Ideally, the implementation will be assisted by significant New York State funds secured via the Upstate Revitalization Initiative and the Consolidated Funding Application rounds.



## Critical Conditions & Implications

Based on a review of existing conditions and with input from the community, the following critical conditions were identified as opportunities for Elmira to address through the Comprehensive Plan.

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**Declining Population & Jobs:** Stem the decline with amenities that attract a young and millennial population and prepare a ready workforce; similar amenities and workforce development should result in business location, start-ups and growth

**Aged Housing Stock:** Build new products for a targeted, young, millennial and empty-nester market; Focus on revitalizing the urban core; streamline processes and identify gap funding

**Challenged Identity & Brand:** Build a new sense of pride around culture, downtown and the environment

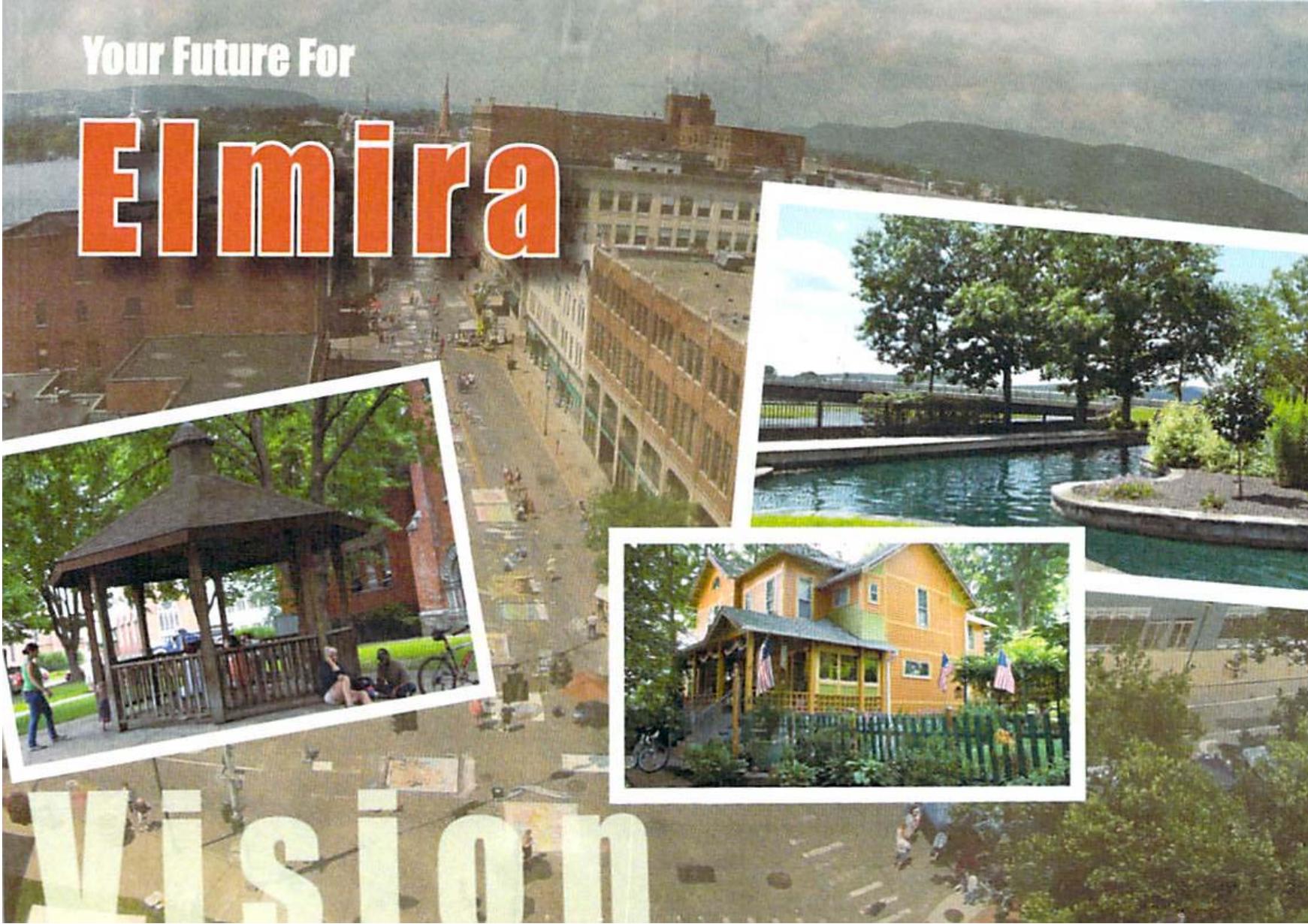
**Leadership:** Utilize collaboration, partnerships and grass roots efforts to improve both grass roots and top-down leadership

**Aging and Outdated Infrastructure:** Re-envision the auto-centric transportation network, create complete streets, re-think parking strategies and utilize green infrastructure

**Un-leveraged Assets:** Re-connect with the River, save historic buildings/structures, preserve/enhance intact neighborhoods

**Existing Plans:** Don't start over; Implement good recommendations from the 1998 Comprehensive Plan, the Southside Rising Plan and the Chemung River Trail Master Plan

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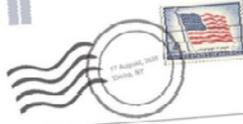


## CHAPTER IV: VISION FOR TOMORROW

It is impossible for the detailed recommendations of a Comprehensive Plan to predict all that can happen and change over the life span of the document (5-10 years or more). What is more important, is that decisions are made on a daily basis that are consistent with a consensus driven Vision for the future. The following Vision for the future of Elmira is a product of Stakeholder Meetings, Public Meetings, and a 3-day Planning Charrette.

# VISION FOR TOMORROW

# share your vision



Dear Aunt Sally,

Remarkable how steeped in culture our City is! Elmira College and Corning Community College have become so much a part of the community! They really complement the Clemens Center, Community Arts, Arnot Art Museum, and the Chemung Valley History Museum. Everywhere we turn, I can point our kids towards some interesting historical fact or piece of public art. On the way to the baseball game, we saw people lining up for hockey, renting kayaks, performing street music and restaurants doing cooking demonstrations! The City has a multi-generational melting pot of diversity! Makes me want to get the ball back together!

City of Elmira **Comprehensive Plan**

# share your vision

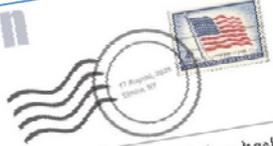


Dear Aunt Sally,

At last night's Council of Non-Profits over 60 people showed up! It was awards night and our neighborhood took home the top prize for our garden scape project. The seven neighborhood associations got together and were awarded a national Endowment for the Arts grant! The Mayor and County Executive were there to congratulate us for our efforts. They have been so supportive of our work to restore the City's historic structures and parks. Folks from the Southern Tier Regional Council and the Department of State even stepped by! Six local businesses, of which 3 are new start-ups, were recognized for their efforts in bringing jobs downtown. You would be proud of our City and the extraordinary effort that our community is making to teach and learn! You should move back here!!! Now!

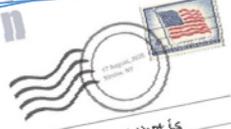
City of Elmira **Comprehensive Plan**

# share your vision



changed. You should see it today! I feel invigorated being back so safe and well lit. My neighbors watch out for us and the police are remember are full of young families now! All of our friends are talking about how convenient, friendly and affordable the hospitals and clinics are. That's been our experience, as well. Gotta go now, I'm being quilted into going for a run by seeing healthy people on their bikes!

# share your vision

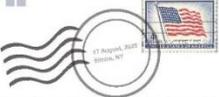


Dear Aunt Sally,

Elmira has really changed. I wish you all could be here to enjoy all that is happening downtown! Five new business just moved into the Cultural District and a cool condo project is going up on the Riverfront promenade in the South Main neighborhood. It looks out over all of the runners and kayakers that are enjoying the waterfront today. This afternoon we are heading up to the Eastside Festival, a new hip streetfest with great music celebrating our region's natural heritage. Last year over 10,000 showed up! From the Old Town are going to be hockey game and show later this

City of Elmira **Comprehensive Plan**

# share your vision



Dear Aunt Sally,

I used to think that Elmira was a tired City. We never gave up on its potential, though. We are so glad we stayed and raised our family here! Now you all know what a great place we live in because of the NY Times article! Elmira has been named the best place to raise a family, its Cultural District is a top destination for tourists plying the I-86 corridor, and folks from NYC are now investing in our growing downtown! Did you see the piece on Good Morning America regarding our active riverfront? What a great college-town we live in! Thank you, Mark Twain!

City of Elmira **Comprehensive Plan**

# share your vision



Dear Aunt Sally,

Wow, Elmira has really bought into the green movement lately! Not only is the greener than I remember it, but they also have resolved flood issues through al means and are building and developing in really smart ways. Our taxes one down over the past years due to energy savings and focused investment. y's leadership is really listening to us and our neighbors, and our rhood association recently won a grant to plant more street trees! I can't ill the next Council! for Non-Profits meeting! They are having a speaker on hborhoods can incorporate triple-bottom-line sustainability.

City of Elmira **Comprehensive Plan**

**Vision Statement: 10 years from now Elmira will be...**  
healthy & safe, sustainable, vibrant, culturally rich, diverse, with energized human capital and a brand that distinguishes the City from its peers.



---

### **Healthy & Safe**

- With no concerning drug problems
- Safe streets to live, play and walk on
- Healthy people eating right and exercising
- Access to health care for all residents

### **Sustainable**

- Economically – for both the City and its residents
- Socially – with equity and fairness
- Environmentally – with green practices

### **Vibrant**

- People working downtown and in neighborhoods
- Downtown as a bustling urban neighborhood
- Neighborhoods thriving with investment
- Activities through-out the City 24/7/365

### **Culturally Rich and Diverse**

- College and higher education as staple of the community
- Theater & arts thriving in great locations
- Sports and entertainment abundantly available

### **With Energized Human Capital**

- Home for entrepreneurship
- Leaders evolving at all levels
- Caring and philanthropic citizens
- Self-reliant culture
- Proud Elmirans

### **Be known by a Differentiated Brand**

- A College-town
  - A “Hip” and Cool History – remembering Mark Twain
  - An Iconic Riverfront with Special Bridges
  - Great Downtown Design
  - Preserved Architecture
-

## Guiding Principles

In order to realize the City of Elmira's Vision the following Guiding Principles are proposed.

### A. Strategically Stem Population & Job Loss

- Create amenity, infrastructure & housing to attract millennials and young professionals;
- Create a new elevated brand for Elmira;
- Work strategically with Chemung County and STREDC on business recruitment & innovation;
- Leverage higher education & medical industries; and
- Provide workforce development.

### B. Improve the Economic Health of City Residents

- Create & Retain jobs;
- Reduce taxes by increasing tax base;
- Capture more resident spending;
- Tighten controls on subsidy & welfare.

### C. Provide Improved Neighborhood & Housing Alternatives

- Undertakes new downtown & neighborhood center housing initiatives;
- Develop appropriate density in neighborhoods (infill and/or reduction);
- Reduce the number and impact of vacant and deteriorated housing;
- Seek local and owner-occupied property owners over absentee landlords;
- Establish land bank and foreclosure controls;
- Establish an urban homesteading program;
- Undertake a senior housing initiative; and
- Facilitate affordable, market rate & mixed-income housing initiatives and reconstruction projects.

### D. Act Environmentally Responsible & Sustainable

- Grow 'smart' with density, mixed uses & alternative access/transportation;
- Incorporate 'green' infrastructure;
- Promote 'green' buildings; and
- Support local agriculture.

### E. Improve the Financial Sustainability of City Government

- Encourage shared services;
- Increase the tax base; and
- Leverage NYS and Federal assistance & grant programs.

### F. Boast of Healthy & Safe Residents

- Adopt Healthy People 2020;
- Create a walkable and bike-able City;
- Provide great physical & financial access to health care;
- Reduce poverty;
- Reduce & absolutely minimize drug activity; and
- Enhance pro-active public safety.

### G. Provide Strong Leadership

- Hold City leadership true to the vision and intent of the Comprehensive Plan;
- Establish visible cooperation between City, County, Regional and neighborhood leaders; and
- Facilitate new neighborhood leadership and a coordinating body.

#### H. Create a Vibrant & Culturally Rich Downtown

- Develop a full network of Complete Streets;
- Transform the downtown portion of the Clemens Parkway;
- Strategically re-invent historic and underutilized buildings and build dense, mixed-use infill development;
- Strengthen the public realm with plazas and parks;
- Create a Cultural Corridor program that knits together Elmira's prominent historic and cultural assets; and
- Celebrate the Chemung River!

#### I. Leverage the City's Successful Higher Education and Medical Industries

- Integrate Elmira College, Corning Community College, Elmira Business Institute and The Arnot Health System into the urban fabric;
- Market city & downtown living to residents, students and employees;
- Re-imagine the Elmira Business Institute and building neighbors as an anchor within the urban fabric; and
- Encourage investment, cooperation and programming synergies between institutions and with regional initiatives.





## CHAPTER V: A PLAN FOR GROWTH

Elmira's 'Plan for Growth' represents a response to the City's Existing Conditions, its Vision for Tomorrow and its Guiding Principles. The Plan is based on five overarching Strategies, each Strategy being supported by Transformational Planning Ideas.

**Strategy 1: Be Market Driven**

**Strategy 2: Establish a New Vision for Land Use & Regulation**

**Strategy 3: Provide the Infrastructure Necessary for Success**

**Strategy 4: Offer a High & Equitable Quality of Life**

**Strategy 5: Succeed with Inspiring & Dedicated Leadership**

A PLAN FOR  
GROWTH



# Strategy 1: Be Market Driven



The City of Elmira must understand its market context in order to grow and adapt in a manner that satisfies that market. The City's market includes its residents (both current and potential), its businesses (both existing and potential) and its visitors. Elmira can work to strengthen its current brand, and obtain a marketable and refreshed, desired brand. The City should work within its County-wide and regional context to enhance and develop that desired brand – and to market it locally, regionally and nationally. Critical to enhancing the brand will be implementing land use policy, infrastructure, and public realm recommendations (the product) found in this Comprehensive Plan.

Two Transformational Planning Ideas highlight an approach to being market driven and are outlined on the following pages.

- Develop a Strategic Identity & Brand
- Adopt the Strategies of the Southern Tier Regional Economic Development Council and I-86 Innovation Corridor Plan

## Strategy 1: Be Market Driven

### Develop a strategic identity and brand.

#### The Importance of Branding

A critical element of community revitalization is perception. Rather than allowing themselves to be defined by others, community residents can choose to take greater ownership and control over how their community is perceived. A favorable community image can be created through focused efforts on branding.

Branding is a deliberate process a community uses to change, refine, or improve what people are saying. A brand is often communicated through a consistently used logo and slogan. However, logos, slogans and ads are not the brand; they are marketing messages used to support and promote the brand. The brand is what people think – their perceptions. It is what people expect they will see and experience in a community – both good and bad.<sup>1</sup> Branding is about eliciting an emotional reaction.

Branding can be used to focus people on the positive differentiator in a community, which can help it stand out relative to the competition. A differentiator does not have to be a huge, visible asset like endless retail or incredible skiing, but when a community's



interesting characteristics are presented in a unique and memorable way, the brand can set a community apart.

Community branding has economic development benefits as well as other less tangible benefits associated with building community pride and general image development. Communities, states and regions compete for investment, job creation, entrepreneurial talent and tourism. Marketing efforts, such as branding, can proactively draw attention to community appeal and local economic development opportunities, such as priority redevelopment sites.

#### Components of a Brand

“The idea of community branding is deceptively simple: use a community's greatest strength to create a consistent, memorable identity that will help propel the city to its preferred future. However, the process of branding is much more complex. The best identities



<sup>1</sup> Roger Brooks International website. (2011). *10 Things You Need to Know About Branding*. <http://www.rogerbrooksinternational.com>



are grounded in reality but aspirational in vision. They bridge the past and the present with an eye towards the future. They are uncovered and brought to life through a process that unites rather than divides. And they serve the interests of diverse groups within the community with different agendas.”<sup>2</sup>



At the most basic level, marketing efforts include the consistent use of a community logo and slogan to develop and maintain an appealing community brand. However, branding can also include:

- Communication concepts, such as positioning lines, ads, public relations and websites;
- Expanding logo use for identification signage on public buildings, banners, elevated water towers and gateway signage at major community entrances; and
- Strategic initiatives, such as civic awards, architectural guidelines for redevelopment and wayfinding systems.

When used consistently, all of these elements can help support and promote the brand.

When a marketing strategy is used by multiple sources, the core message and the branding must be consistent. The brand needs to be consistently communicated by all partners who promote the community and its attributes. Marketing efforts have more impact

<sup>2</sup> North Star Brand Strategies website. (2016). *Processes*. <http://www.northstarideas.com/processes>

when consistent core messages are used. Branding efforts of various groups, although well executed, can often work against each other with counter messages if they are not coordinated.

In addition, a community branding effort needs to be positive and optimistic, but must build on authentic community attributes. Communities are encouraged to recreate and reinvent themselves, but should avoid being drawn to an arbitrary image and identity that is something they are not. Effective branding must build on core strengths and authenticity.

### The Branding Process

Branding is not about compromise or even consensus. It is about determining the strong singular message that will define a community, which involves creativity and a certain amount of risk. The branding process requires strong leadership to avoid an impasse in committee. Input should be solicited from a variety of people, but actual decision-making should be by the few.

Building a brand can be approached in a number of ways, but one process involves four key steps<sup>3</sup>:

1. **Understanding** – research physical attributes, stakeholder opinions, and consumer perceptions and demographics
2. **Insight** – translate facts into emotional sparks that bring the brand to life, differentiate from the competition
3. **Imagination** – create tangible creative products that embody the brand using insights the process has revealed
4. **Evaluation** – make sure the brand is working, track the perception of the brand and whether objectives have been met

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<sup>3</sup> McEachern, Don. *Putting Communities at the Center of Branding*. (June 2006). ICMA Publications, PM Magazine, Volume 88, Number 5.

Marketing and branding can be done very successfully with the help of professionals. However, if a community does not have the resources for such an undertaking, they can still take an introspective and thoughtful look at themselves and consider how they communicate local opportunity, desirability, and appeal to others.

### Preliminary Branding Concepts for Elmira

The following is a list of initial concepts and ideas generated by the Steering Committee and the public:

- Dynamic college community with vibrant neighborhoods and business innovation
- Healthy and safe
- Sustainable
- Vibrant
- Culturally rich and diverse
- A College Town
- Energized human capital
- A “hip” Mark Twain, cool history
- An iconic riverfront with special bridges
- Great downtown design

“If a slogan can be applied to virtually any community, it is too generic and doesn’t make you stand out from the competition.”<sup>4</sup> With that in mind, some of the descriptions of Elmira are too generic to be a brand, but they are a good place to begin the creative process. What sets Elmira apart from other communities nearby?

<sup>4</sup> Roger Brooks International website. (2011). *10 Things You Need to Know About Branding*. <http://www.rogerbrooksinternational.com>

It is recommended that the City of Elmira assemble a strong and diverse local team to work through a professionally led process to identify a desired brand, positioning statement, brand graphics and promotions strategy.

*“SUSTAINABLE & BRIGHT!”*

*A Dynamic College Community  
with Vibrant Neighborhoods &  
Business Innovation!*

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Through this planning process, the community has suggested a desired brand for the City of Elmira may include:

- Southern Tier Innovation (as defined by the I-86 Plan);
- The Civic & Cultural Heart of the County & Region;
- A College-town;
- A Workforce Development Hub;
- The Health Care & Higher Education Industry
- The Place for City & Neighborhood Living - within an Accessible Mountain Setting (Green and Walkable); and
- Environmental Sustainability

## Strategy 1: Be Market Driven

# Adopt the Strategies of the Southern Tier Regional Economic Development Council and I-86 Innovation Corridor Plan

In 2013 New York State adopted a new means of allocating grant funds and of supporting economic initiatives. Two major components of this initiative included 1) a common grant application form (CFA) and application deadline for the majority of state agency funding programs, and 2) dividing the State into 10 economic regions and organized them to compete for additional funding. The Southern Tier Economic Development Council was born of this initiative, and has developed a comprehensive and focused strategy for revitalizing the Southern Tier.

Subsequently, a more focused economic strategy was developed to capitalize on the accessibility and transportation connection afforded this region by Interstate 86. Elmira should embrace its position as the cultural center of the I-86 Corridor!

These two regional strategies address economic development in a comprehensive and contextual manner that the City of Elmira would not be able to do on its own. The City should continue to support, involve themselves and adopt these regional activities.



Position Elmira as a leader within New York's Southern Tier

- Southern Tier Regional Economic Development Council Participation & Support
- Leverage Southern Tier Upstate Revitalization Initiative (URI) Funding
- Annually Position the City of Elmira for CFA Funding

Be a Partner and Leader in implementing the I-86 Innovation Corridor Plan

- Southern Tier Innovation is defined here
- A Leadership Structure is outlined
- Human capital is highlighted as critical – including Workforce Development
- Work on improving the Region's identity & brand is prioritized

Continue to Strengthen a Working Relationship with Chemung County

- Cooperation & communication in governance
- Shared operations & facilities
- Combined economic development function/STEG
- Shared infrastructure programs (Public Works)
- Jointly addressing tax exempt property issues
- Maintaining Regional services & amenities within the City

Strengthen the Relationship with Relevant NYS Agencies

- NYS Department of Transportation (roads & bridges)
- NYS Department of Environmental Conservations (Flood Control & Chemung River management)
- NYS Department of State (waterfront development and government efficiency)
- Empire State Development (economic development)
- NYS Main Street Program
- NYS Parks



### Summary of Major Regional Economic Development Projects

- **“I-86 Innovation Corridor Implementation Leadership”**: Create a leadership organization whose mission will be two-fold: (a) drive and guide the implementation of the I-86 plan, and (b) continuously update the plan to keep it relevant.
- **Regionalization of Water/Wastewater**: A cooperative water/wastewater agency that the City of Elmira would participate in.
- **Regional Workforce Development Center at CCC-Elmira**: Establish an organizational structure or mechanism to support, integrate and advance existing and new workforce development efforts throughout the region, that would be responsible for coordinating shared strategic direction among workforce development, economic development, and education and training providers; Lobby for a location at Corning Community College’s Elmira Campus.
- **Center for Technology Infusion**: A center to develop advanced technologies for the transportation equipment manufacturing sector in the Southern Tier; lobby for a location within the City of Elmira proximate to industry & jobs.
- **“Commercial Kitchen and Food Hub”** – Create an innovative commercial kitchen within a food hub and incubator where small agricultural and other businesses can undertake food processing or other value-added operations; determine if there is a potential Elmira location
- **Model Design Guidelines for Land Use”** – Develop a comprehensive set of design guidelines and landscape standards for the Corridor.
- **“Southern Tier Trail Network”** – Develop a network of regional trails to support tourism and improve quality of life for citizens.
- **“Powering for the Future”** – Build micro-grids for renewable efficient power, process heat and power for these sites.

- **“Muni-Wifi”** – Provide open access to the Internet in downtowns, retail centers and the airport to enable residents, students and visitors to be connected.
- **“Access Elmira 2020 – I Can Drive 55”** – Design and build a continuation of the Clemens Center Parkway with a new interchange to I-86 between Elmira and Elmira Heights.
- **“Readiness of Developable Land”** – Undertake investments (land purchase, demolition, infrastructure) in the priority developable sites that can accommodate industry expansion or attraction in strategic sectors.
- **“I-86 Ultra High Speed Research Network”** – Create an ultra-high speed (10 gigabyte) network to enable research collaboration between and among major universities and corporations.
- **Council of Non-Profits**: A network of neighborhood, social, cultural and educational organizations



Figure from Susan Payne's work on Elmira URI Strategy



# Strategy 2: A New Vision for Land Use & Regulation



Nationally, land use planning and regulation is evolving rapidly from focusing on the regulation of the use of a property, to a focus on regulating the design of properties. In large part, this includes a shift from being vehicular oriented to pedestrian and bicycle friendly. Elmira can better achieve its vision as a vibrant urban place by following this trend. Neighborhoods can be empowered to play a heightened role in the planning and implementation of appropriately scaled projects and programs. Downtown Elmira needs to be absolutely confirmed as the Civic Heart of Chemung County, with focused housing, retail, education, entertainment, sports, culture, government service, and work places. The growing higher education and medical presence within Elmira's downtown must be facilitated and celebrated.

Four Transformational Planning Ideas highlight an approach to a new vision for land use and regulation, and are outlined on the following pages.

- Implement a Contemporary Mixed-Use & Design-Based Land Use Strategy
- Create Neighborhood-Based Identities, Planning & Implementation
- Develop Downtown as the Civic, Entertainment, Living, Learning & Working Core – with Density & Focus
- Expand Presence & Participation of Higher Education within the Community

## Strategy 2: A New Vision for Land Use & Regulation

### Implement a contemporary mixed-use and design-based land use strategy.

#### Future Land Use Framework

One of the primary roles of a comprehensive plan is to inform future land use decisions for the municipality. The tool used to help accomplish this is the Future Land Use Map, which is intended to be a generalized vision for the City's land use for the next decade or more. It is intended to guide changes in Elmira's land use by functioning as a guide for decision making related to growth and development in the City. It should be used to help inform zoning changes and updates. However, unlike the City's Zoning Map, the Future Land Use Map does not represent clear regulatory boundaries. It is more descriptive than prescriptive. The map consists of eight use categories as described below.

It should be noted that the future land use map is based upon the existing and future needs assessment, the work of the Steering Committee, public input and fundamental urban planning and design principles. Mixed-use development, sustainability / LEED ND concepts, and emphasizing the waterfront with water-dependent and water-enhanced uses are also important features. It should be understood that the exact location and size of the land use

#### Congress for the New Urbanism Philosophy for Human Habitats:

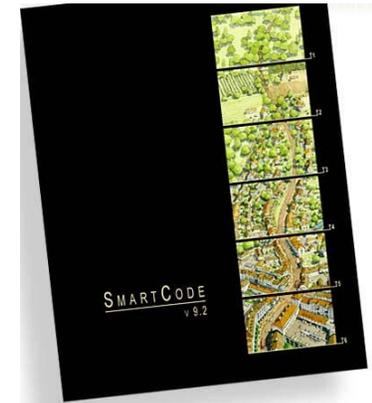
- Livable streets arranged in compact, walkable blocks.
- A range of housing choices to serve people of diverse ages and income levels.
- Schools, stores and other nearby destinations reachable by walking, bicycling or transit service.
- An affirming, human-scaled public realm where appropriately designed buildings define and enliven streets and other public spaces.

areas may change over time while remaining consistent with the overall intent of this plan as long as this overall fundamental framework is not compromised.

#### Mixed-Use and LEED-ND

Five of the future land use types will promote the development of mixed-uses. Mixed-use development should be encouraged throughout the City with the exception of the single-family residential areas. This

type of development offers many advantages over single-use buildings or districts, especially in urban areas where densities are typically high and land is scarce and often expensive. A vertical mixing of uses results in multi-story structures that are made possible by the larger revenue streams associated with maximizing a particular site or parcel. By comparison, the horizontal mixing of land uses combines single-use buildings within a defined area.



Both vertical and horizontal mixed-use developments are appropriate in Elmira and will achieve many of the objectives of this Plan. More specifically, this type of urban development promotes the following LEED-ND goals and planning actions:

- Ensure appropriate locations for redevelopment and new development;
- Promote diverse land uses;
- Encourage compact development;
- Promote building at a pedestrian friendly scale; and
- Construct building frontage that encourages walking.

### Water-Dependent and Water-Enhanced Uses

The City of Elmira has a mixed relationship with the Chemung River. Although the river once bolstered the City’s economy, past flooding events appear to have left a physical and perceived boundary between public access to the water and the walkable downtown.

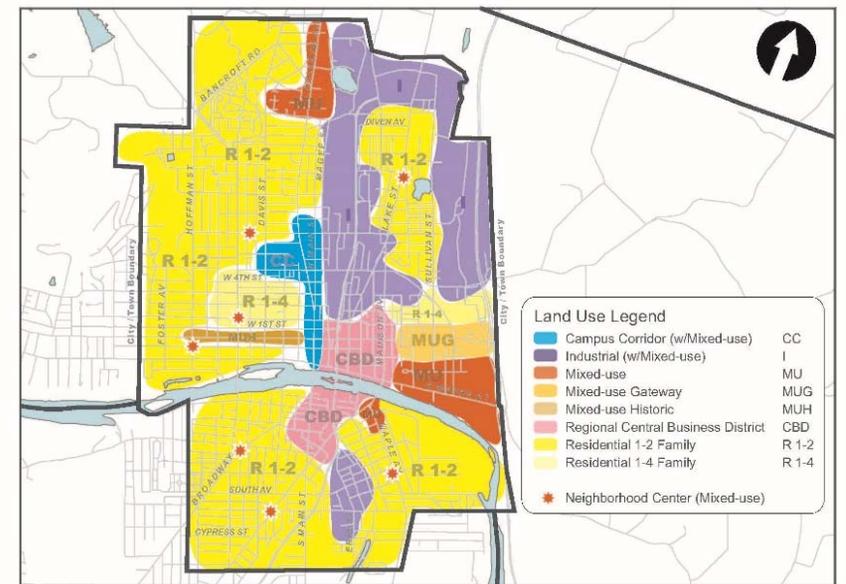
Four of the future land use types include water-dependent and water-enhanced uses. A water-dependent use is an activity requiring direct access to the water, such as a boat launch. Water-enhanced uses are those that benefit from a waterfront location, such as a restaurant overlooking the water. Both types are needed in Elmira. They will help to better integrate the waterfront, as a recognized community asset, with the downtown and to bring vibrancy and value added development.

### Future Land Use Categories

The City of Elmira will foster changes in land uses throughout the community that are consistent with the following land use categories and Future Land Use Map.

### 1. Mixed-use

The Mixed-use category includes corridors and nodes with a combination of community service, commercial, and residential uses. These areas are located separately along College Avenue, East Water Street, and around the intersection of Maple and Madison Avenues. They provide an opportunity to regain the traditional neighborhood characteristics once abundant in Elmira. The future land uses in the Mixed-use area along East Water Street should include water-dependent or water-enhanced uses.



Future Land Use Concept

## 2. Campus Corridor - Mixed-use

The Campus Corridor area is located along North Main Street between downtown and Elmira College. It includes the areas on both sides of North Main Street as well as areas adjacent to the College and downtown. The goal to create a place of exchange between the campus and City communities and strengthen Elmira's desire to be recognized as a college town. It should encourage mixed-use development with retail, service and commercial uses on the ground floors with residential and office uses above. These land uses will bolster the desirability of both the college and City and promote the area as a thriving destination. A mix of uses combined with quality urban design must be pedestrian-oriented and form a cohesive street wall.

## 3. Industrial - Mixed-use

The Industrial area is an expansive district primarily located in the northeast quadrant of the City. The area forms a horseshoe shape connecting much of the area along the central railroad corridor with the NYS Route 17 / I-86 expressway corridor. The area also includes land along Erie Street on the south side of the Chemung River. A goal with this category is to increase land utilization and reduce the prevalence of vacant properties. The Industrial area should continue to accommodate industrial and commercial uses but, in addition, should encourage mixed-use development. The development of mixed commercial and industrial developments, such as a combination of retail and food processing, commercial, service, and high-density residential uses should be allowed. The future land uses will reflect from their connection to active transportation and recreation through protection and development of new trails and sidewalks. Future land uses should engage Eldridge Park and the Lackawanna Trail by providing stronger pedestrian and bicycle connections to these areas.

## 4. Mixed-use Gateway

The Mixed-use Gateway category includes the corridor along East Church Street located east of the Regional Central Business District. For travelers using the NYS Route 17 / I-86 expressway corridor, the Mixed-use Gateway has the opportunity to provide a stronger sense of arrival. The presence of major institutions in the area will continue to anchor the area and future development. The Corning Community College Elmira Campus and St. Josephs Hospital are major employment centers.

## 5. Mixed-use Historic

The Mixed-use Historic area is located along the West Church Street corridor between College Avenue and Hoffman Street. The area includes part of the Near Westside Historic District. Like the Mixed-use Gateway area, the Mixed-use Historic area should provide a strong sense of arrival and a unique character. The future land uses in the Mixed-use Historic area will include retail with apartments above. Historic preservation should be maintained by the future land use and zoning code.

## 6. Regional Central Business District

The Regional Central Business District is the geographical and symbolic core of the City and Region. As the cultural hub of the regional population center, the area will celebrate the best of the past while embracing the opportunity of 21<sup>st</sup> century Elmira. The area will continue to include a diverse mix of uses including commercial, community services and parks and recreation. Future land uses will continue the emerging trend of increasing mixed-use development. The zoning code and incentives will encourage redevelopment of existing buildings from vacant office uses to a mix of commercial and residential. The zoning code will support a variety of creative arrangements of mixed-use, although it will uphold traditional urban

design principles befitting a pedestrian-oriented environment. This category extends across the River and includes the commercial areas along South Main Street and Pennsylvania Avenue.

### 7. Residential 1-2 Family

The 1-2 Residential category makes up the largest land area of the City. It encompasses an overwhelming portion of all City neighborhoods except the northeast quadrant and downtown. These areas will maintain a quiet residential character and continue to feature community service, recreation, and limited commercial uses in key locations, which are designated on the Map as “neighborhood center.” The future zoning should discourage the conversion of existing 1-2 family residential units into higher densities.

### 8. Residential 1-4 Family

The 1-4 Family Residential area includes two areas on the east and west sides of the City. In addition to the uses in the 1-2 Residential category, 1-4 will support high-density multi-family developments along with traditional urban design features. The area will maintain its quiet residential character and include some community service and commercial activity in key locations.

## Re-imagine transitional neighborhoods and land uses.

### Shrinking Cities

Elmira, like many cities in Upstate and Western New York, has experienced population decline since the 1960’s. However, the footprint of the urban area has remained constant, along with the infrastructure to serve that footprint. Shrinking cities struggle to maintain their infrastructure and provide associated municipal services for a city that is much larger geographically than is required by the remaining population.

When the built environment of a city once accommodated thousands more people than it does today, the result is a huge oversupply of housing units. This oversupply can cause high citywide vacancy rates that are far beyond what can be absorbed by a healthy, balanced housing market. This market imbalance can lead to more vacant properties, as well as blight and crime. The community also has to bear the high cost of serving (through fire, police, water and code enforcement resources) and maintaining housing units for which there is no demand.

### Areas in Transition

Many cities are rethinking their approach to growth in an era of sustained population loss. These shrinking cities are seizing the opportunity to transition areas that have faced continued disinvestment and dysfunction in the marketplace to land uses that require less infrastructure and services. These areas typically have a high number of vacant and abandoned properties and are not anticipated to see investment in the foreseeable future. This concept allows city officials to adjust the development footprint to better align with the needs of current and projected population levels. Elmira could focus its resources on making the City a vibrant place for 30,000, rather than spreading resources too thin trying to maintain a built environment that was constructed for 50,000.

There are areas in Elmira with a high number of vacant properties, deteriorating infrastructure, and sub-standard building stock. The land use in many of these areas is residential mixed with some industrial and commercial uses. These areas have high rates of poverty and a relatively low number of owner-occupied housing units. The City should further evaluate these areas to determine whether it makes sense to sustain the existing uses, which will likely require significant public investment, or to transition them to a use that requires fewer services and would allow for the existing infrastructure to be downgraded or eliminated.

### **Case Studies**

Youngstown, Ohio was the first city to publicly embrace this approach as the backbone of a citywide plan. Youngstown 2010 “proposed an ambitious civic agenda: to stabilize the population, consolidate infrastructure and public services, redefine the local economy, focus revitalization efforts in viable residential areas and commercial nodes, improve public safety and education, and retool the city’s public image.”<sup>5</sup>

Detroit, Michigan is also facing the future with a different kind of plan. Detroit Future City (2012) is a “long-range framework (that) proposes sweeping strategies for revitalization as a permanently smaller city. These include finding creative, productive uses for vacant land; focusing resources and density in low-vacancy, job-rich areas; and coordinating with a variety of stakeholders.”<sup>6</sup>

### **Greening the City**

Not all communities utilize their planning process to focus on transition, as Youngstown and Detroit have done. Another approach is the use of a greening plan to address vacant land and blight. When a greening plan is done well, the focus of the plan is not limited to parks, community gardens, beautification and single-purpose vacant land strategies. Instead a greening plan can be broader and address urban form, sustainability, food, economic development, transportation, energy and social issues, as well as the connections between all of these factors.

Economic development solutions can be developed to maximize the availability of human capital, using long-term strategies that involve multiple phases over multiple years. Community gardens are nice, but urban agriculture can be scaled to provide economic and workforce development, on top of localized food production.

Other common vacant land strategies include land banking, land leasing, vacant property policies and energy generation. One land bank program that has been successful in Detroit is a side-lot buying initiative, which allows homeowners to buy an empty plot of land next to their home. The empty plots typically are left behind after strategically demolishing abandoned homes. The side lot program allows the remaining homeowners to enjoy larger yards.

Strategies related to urban form should involve enhancing the urban core and reconfiguring the use of land to promote high-density, mixed-use, and mixed-income development. A variety of housing and demolition scenarios are typically part of these greening strategies. Demolition must be strategic to create usable parcels of land and not

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<sup>5</sup> Bertron, Cara. *Rightsizing Right*. (Summer 2013). National Trust for Historic Preservation - Forum Journal Vol. 27, No.4: Preservation in the City.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

leave behind a pockmarked landscape of unkempt vacant lots sprinkled throughout every neighborhood.

**The Right Solution in the Right Place**

A pragmatic approach to historic preservation is useful in the process of reimagining transitional neighborhoods. Older and historic neighborhoods typically have desirable characteristics, such as architectural character, walkable neighborhoods, mixed-use commercial districts, and proximity to jobs and transit.

Considering solutions for only select neighborhoods is not “a practically useful or politically tenable solution. Rightsizing efforts must address all neighborhoods in a city, and reinvestment can take many forms: from demolition, land banking, and urban agriculture to rehabilitation and development incentives. Long-range sustainability has different meanings in a neighborhood with many vacant properties and a declining population, and a neighborhood with a stable population but a struggling commercial corridor.”<sup>7</sup> To reimagine areas in transition, thorough data collection and analysis is necessary to be able to put the right solution in the right place.



<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

Update the existing zoning code or implement a new one to implement the community’s vision and encourage healthy urban growth.

**Zoning**

Zoning—laws regulating the use of land—are major policy tools communities use to shape their form and character. As Elmira seeks to transform into a City composed of thriving neighborhoods, appropriate zoning must be implemented. Strong zoning codes facilitate healthy growth of every parcel. Proper zoning is a fundamental part of achieving the desired future land uses areas and supports many of the goals of Comprehensive Master Plan.



*Elmira currently features Euclidean zoning, but other kinds of zoning should be explored.*

Currently, Elmira relies on Euclidean Zoning. Euclidean Zoning is characterized by the segregation of land uses into geographic districts. These “use” districts have dimensional standards that place limitations on development within each district. Euclidian zoning does a few things well. It is familiar and therefore easier to implement and it has a long-established legal precedent. However, typical Euclidean zoning has led to a number of problems. Most notably is the fact that most new development does not reflect local design character, is not walkable or bikable and lacks the sense-of-place and design predictability that many of our communities once had. By contrast, form-based codes address many of these design related issues.

The City must determine what type of zoning code should be developed. There are two zoning methods that could best serve Elmira. They include:

- Form-based code – a full replacement of the existing Euclidean zoning code based on the Transect model, promoting mixed-use development with special emphasis on the form of development
- Hybrid code – update existing zoning to include more emphasis on regulating form and character while also changing permitted uses

The development of a form-based code would be a very effective but an expensive option because it would be an entirely new code. A hybrid code would be more affordable and a less intensive process. In either case, the development of a zoning code must include a process of significant community input and critical thought.

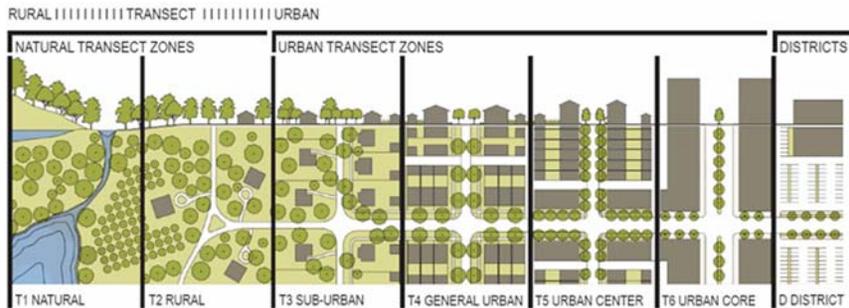
### **Form-Based Code**

Form-based codes address the relationship between building and the public realm, the relationship of buildings to one another, and the scale and types of our streets and other public spaces. Regulations are presented in both diagrams and words and are typically based on a regulating plan that designates development types rather than land-use districts, as found in typical Euclidian zoning. Rather than prioritizing land use, form-based codes prioritize design and form. This does not mean land use is ignored. It just means that it is not the priority.

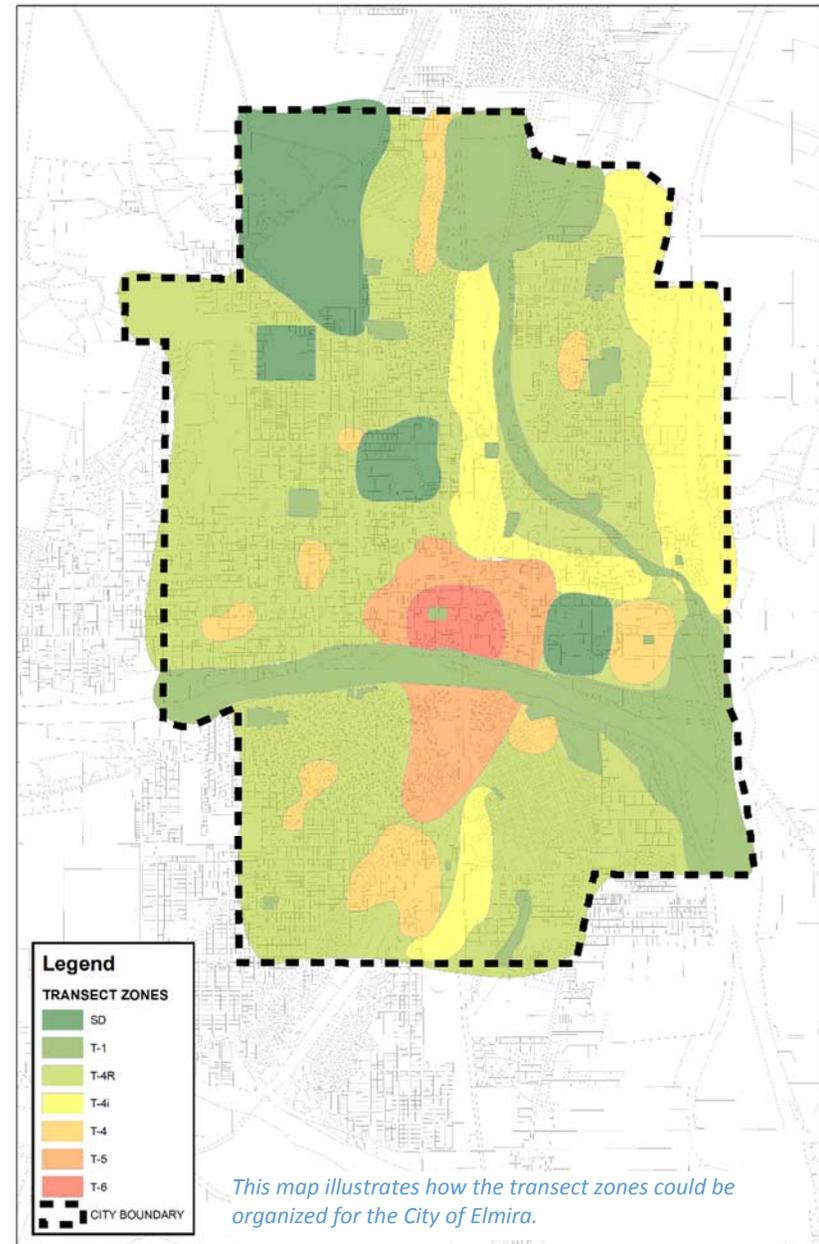
A form-based code would be reliant on the “transect” as fundamental to the new zoning regime. The Transect is a model that includes zones for every area from the downtown to the rural landscape. It divides cities into six major zones and reinforces neighborhoods of mixed-uses and more complex densities of development, as opposed to districts with homogeneous use and form. The Transect model supports a gradual density of development from the urban core to the urban edge. Although some communities may not have all of the transect areas present, the urban transect zones (T4, T5 and T6) are most appropriate for cities such as Elmira.

**Hybrid Code**

Hybrid zoning takes the design emphasis of form-based codes and combines it with elements of traditional Euclidian zoning. Rather than focusing primarily on land use (e.g. Euclidian zoning) or primarily on form (e.g. form-based zoning), the hybrid approach looks to find balance between the two. It often uses much of the organizing framework found in Euclidian zoning codes but includes additional standards in regards to building placement, massing, and scale. These are articulated and supported with both diagrams and words.



*The City of Elmira contains several distinct zones, which follow the transect model.*



*This map illustrates how the transect zones could be organized for the City of Elmira.*

**Strategy 2: A New Vision for Land Use & Regulation**

Create Neighborhood-Based Identities, Plans & Implementation Strategies

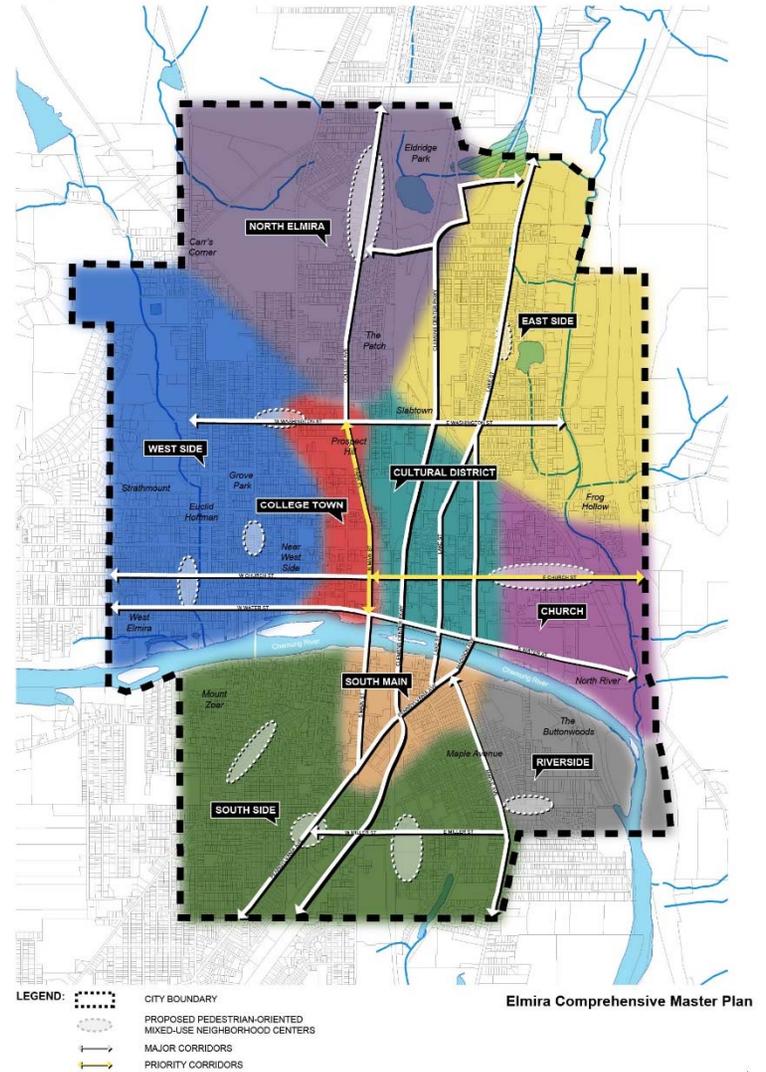
Neighborhood Mapping & Identity

Neighborhoods have existed for as long as cities. They create and form communities. They are places where residents share things in common like housing, a school, or local businesses and jobs. Neighborhood identity connects people to place and with it comes community pride. This often leads to social and economic ownership and investment, which are important components to strong neighborhoods.

Elmira once had identifiable neighborhoods with names like “The Patch”, Prospect Hill”, and “Frog Hollow.” Over the years many of these neighborhoods have lost that identity.

Elmira should have a neighborhood revitalization initiative. It must begin the process of building neighborhood pride and it starts with identification. Neighborhood names can be new, historic, or a combination of both. The critical thing is that they should not be contrived. They should stem from something that people identify with whether it is historic or current or social or physical the names cannot be artificial or unrealistic.

City of Elmira Evolving Neighborhood Plan



## Neighborhood Land Use & Development Strategies

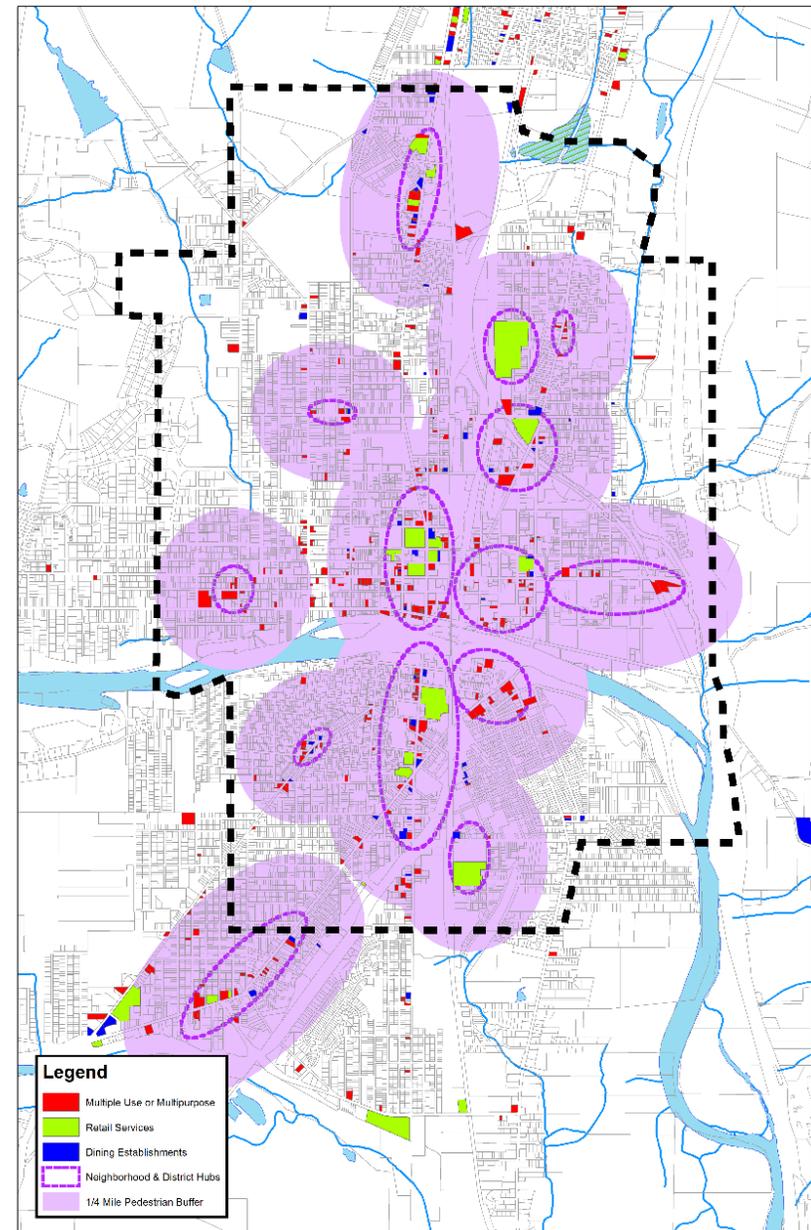
Mixed-use commercial and retail nodes are often the life-blood and iconic identity for neighborhoods. These nodes support community within the neighborhood by providing services and goods within walking distance to their residential and office markets – and often at a higher density of development. The strengthening of these mixed-use nodes can mean the strengthening of the neighborhood.

For Elmira to again have healthy neighborhoods, revitalization requires both a physical and a mental transformation. It requires strategies aimed at making the neighborhood a more desirable place to live and invest. It takes community pride and social capital. The people that live in Elmira’s neighborhoods are the most powerful agents for change but they need support. They need leadership and organization. It will take identifying who the leaders are and mobilizing them.

There are numerous neighborhood revitalization initiatives and models for Elmira to consider. Fundamental components that are included in successful initiatives typically include:

- Engaging local residents and identifying local leaders.
- Developing partnerships with local and national organizations and programs.
- Utilizing data to drive strategies and evaluate results.
- Targeting financial and human resources to get results.

Elmira’s neighborhood revitalization strategy must not only include support and focus on struggling neighborhoods. It must also include strengthening stable ones.



## Strategy 2: A New Vision for Land Use & Regulation

### Promote Downtown as the Civic, Entertainment, Living, Learning & Working Core - with Density & Focus

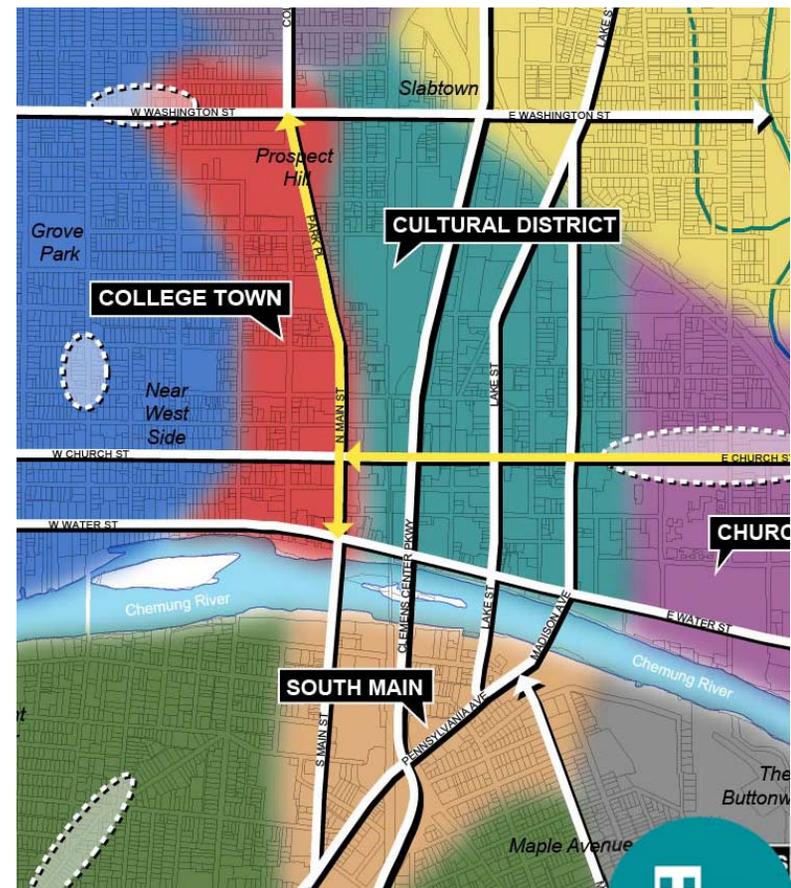
Downtowns are the most important part of cities and urban regions. The primary Central Business District (CBD) of a region typically contains the highest concentration of that region's jobs, entertainment venues, and unique cultural assets. They function as the regional heart and house the majority of community and government services. Healthy downtowns also thrive on the adjacency of healthy neighborhoods, and vice-versa. Elmira's downtown is no different.

**It's pretty much a universal truth: vibrant cities have growing downtowns and stagnating cities have declining downtowns.**

-John Karras – creator of UrbanScale

Many Downtowns, including Elmira's, have experienced more than fifty years of neglect, abuse, and abandonment. Factors that have contributed to this indifference toward our central cities include several decades of bad public policy, private market forces, as well as individual prejudices.

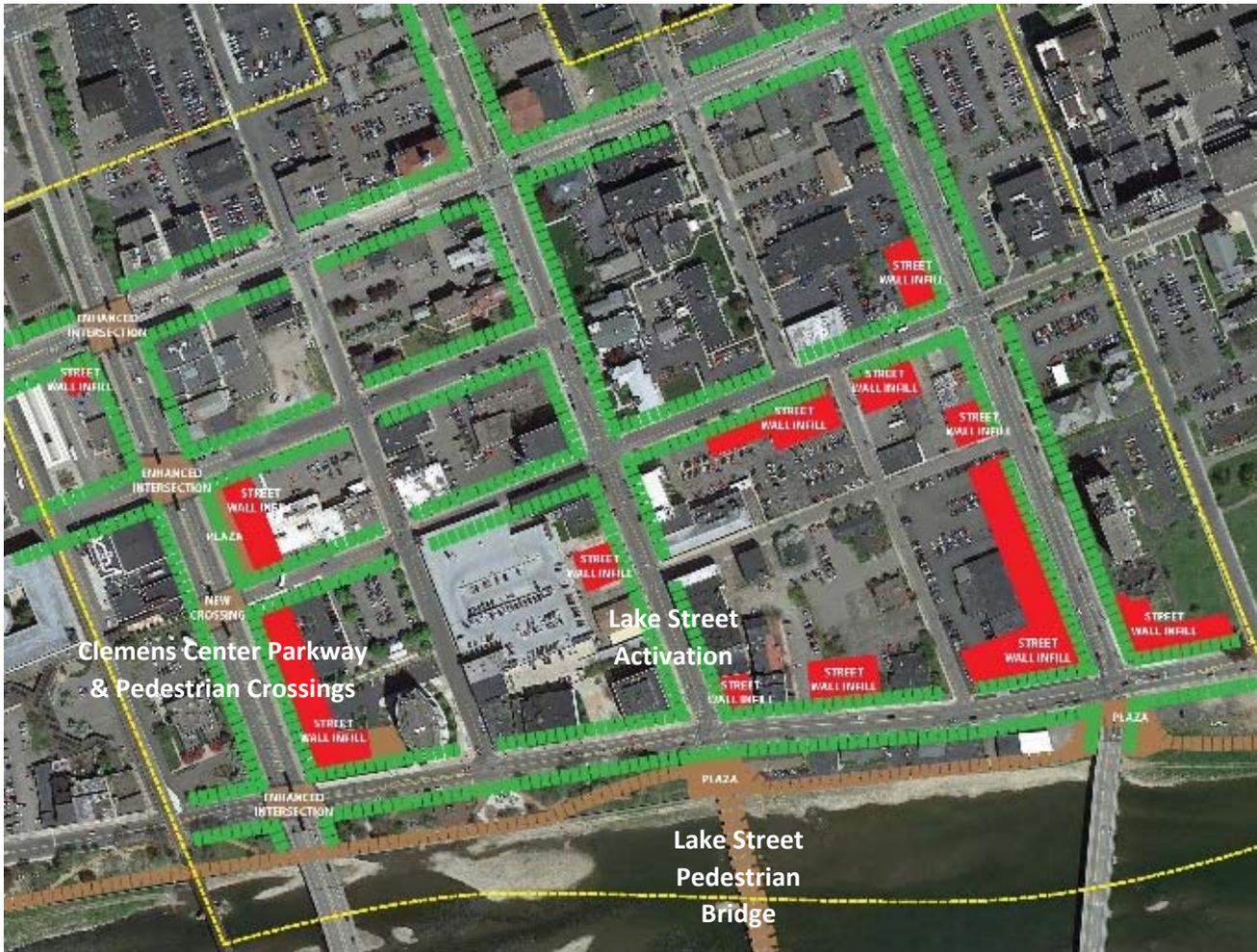
Nationally, over the last two decades, this trend has slowly begun to shift. Today, cities of all sizes have implemented plans to revitalize, re-grow, and reinvent their downtowns. It is the City of Elmira's time to do the same – and to do it in partnership with Chemung County and the Southern Tier Region.





## COLLEGE TOWN & THE MAIN STREET CORRIDOR

The most intact area of Elmira's historic downtown fabric is located within a block of Main Street, from the River, north to Church Street. This area has great potential to be reinforced as a vibrant urban neighborhood with focused public and private sector investment. Another historically intact downtown environment exists at Elmira College. Knitting these two special places together along a North Main Street corridor should be a priority of the City of Elmira, Elmira College, and other City stakeholders. A Main Street streetscape project, street trees, adaptive re-use, infill development and public realm improvements are recommended for this Corridor. Redevelopment of the "Clemens Square" block is a priority.



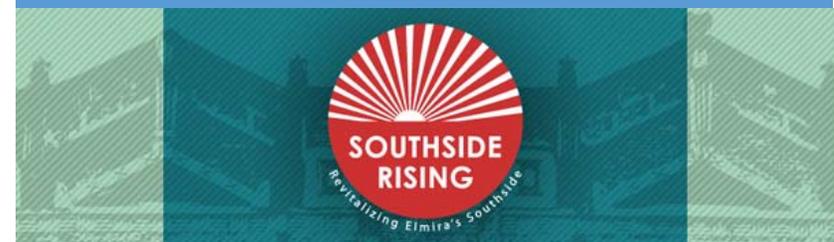
## THE CULTURAL DISTRICT

Much of Elmira's history and architecture is found within a 20 +/- block area north of the Chemung River, east of the railroad tracks, and including Church Street. This area included the historic Chemung Canal alignment and Lake Avenue, which was the original travel way to Watkins Glen and points north. The area became the center for government, and continues to house Chemung County's administrative campus and Elmira City Hall. Although this area was impacted greatly by flooding in 1972, much of the historic architecture and infrastructure remains, and represents the largest opportunity for growth.



## SOUTH MAIN & HOWELL AREAS

The south side of the Chemung River has a design vision driven by the Southside Rising Plan prepared in 2014. The Plan recommends streetscape improvements, infill construction and public open space. The implementation of that Plan is recommended as part of this comprehensive strategy.





## CHURCH STREET GATEWAY

Church Street is the primary gateway street for both residents and visitors to Elmira. The street connects Exit 56 of Interstate 86 to Elmira's CBD. Recent street upgrades addressed automobile circulation, but did not adequately address Complete Street objectives. An opportunity exists to improve a landscaped arrival park at the eastern end of the corridor, adopt new form – based approaches to development along Church Street, and infill gaps in the streetwall with the expansion of educational and mixed- uses. The enhancement and expansion of the St. Josephs Medical Campus and Corning Community College's Elmira Campus provides an opportunity to brand Elmira with anchor this area with jobs



## Examples of Elmira Downtown Projects

**Complete Streets:** The following downtown streets are priorities to be developed as Complete Streets, with particular emphasis on pedestrian amenity and a density of mixed-uses.

- North Main Street: As a connection between Elmira College and the core of Downtown Elmira
- Church Street: As the primary Gateway into Downtown Elmira
- Clemens Center Parkway: To reduce its impact as a barrier to east-west pedestrian and bicycle circulation and to create an urban, rather than suburban environment
- Water Street: As a primary historic and recreation corridor
- South Main Street: To promote the implementation of the Southside Rising Plan
- Lake Street: To augment the historic and architecturally rich street
- Gray Street: As a human scaled east-west connector street
- Market Street: As a human scaled east-west connector street

### Plazas, Public Spaces & Promenades:

- Chemung River Waterfront: Implementation of the 2011 Haas/Hunt Mark Twain Riverfront Park Plan, with focused attention on street end access (including the riverfront ends of College Street, Main Street, Baldwin Street, Lake Street and Madison Avenue) and the linear trail
- Wisner Park: Provide a high level of pedestrian detail and traffic calming to the portion of Main Street that bisects the Park, with a goal of unifying the two sides of the Park
- Lake Street Bridge: Rehabilitate and re-imagine the Bridge as a pedestrian bridge with park-like amenity and an iconic character
- Clemens Center Entry Plaza: Provide pedestrian gathering space, traffic calming and street crossing improvements at the main entry to the Clemens Center

### Infill Development Opportunities:

- STEG West Water Street Site: Develop a mixed-use model for appropriate Elmira Urbanism; incorporate a high density of new and marketable housing stock and provide active first floor uses that engages the Water Street public realm
- Future LECOM Location: Identify a downtown infill site or the adaptive re-use of a downtown building to house LECOM
- Langdon Plaza: Re-imagine and redevelop Langdon Plaza and it's site with increased density and urban form

### Adaptive Re-Use/Redevelopment Opportunities:

- Iszard's building: A building in a critical and visible location on Main Street and within a focused redevelopment corridor
- Midtown Plaza Building: A building in a visible location on Main Street and within a focused redevelopment corridor
- Langdon Plaza: Re-imagine and redevelop Langdon Plaza and it's site with increased density and urban form
- Lake Street Block: A historically intact row of buildings that add great value to the Cultural District and complement existing investment in historic buildings on Lake Street
- Historic Post Office Building: Activate a historic building in a very visible gateway location
- Howell Building on River: Leverage a Riverfront location in a way that has not been done to date
- First Baptist Church (on Wisner Park): Activate a historic building in a very visible location – and protect an important element of Wisner Park
- East Water Street Properties: Highly visible location with great views of the Chemung River
- Baldwin Street Block: Historically intact buildings in a highly visible location
- Star Gazette Building: Historic building in visible location

### **Critical Intersection Improvements**

- Five Clemens Center Parkway Intersections: Perform traffic modeling to determine the best Complete Street models for the Clemens Center Parkway as it traverses the City's CBD
- Main & Water Street: Ensure that pedestrian access to and across this critical intersection is primary over automobile crossing
- Lake & Water Street: Address the new pedestrian nature of the Lake Street Bridge by closing the south leg of Lake Street and creating an intersection that ensures that pedestrian access to and across the intersection is primary

### **Parking & Infrastructure Opportunities**

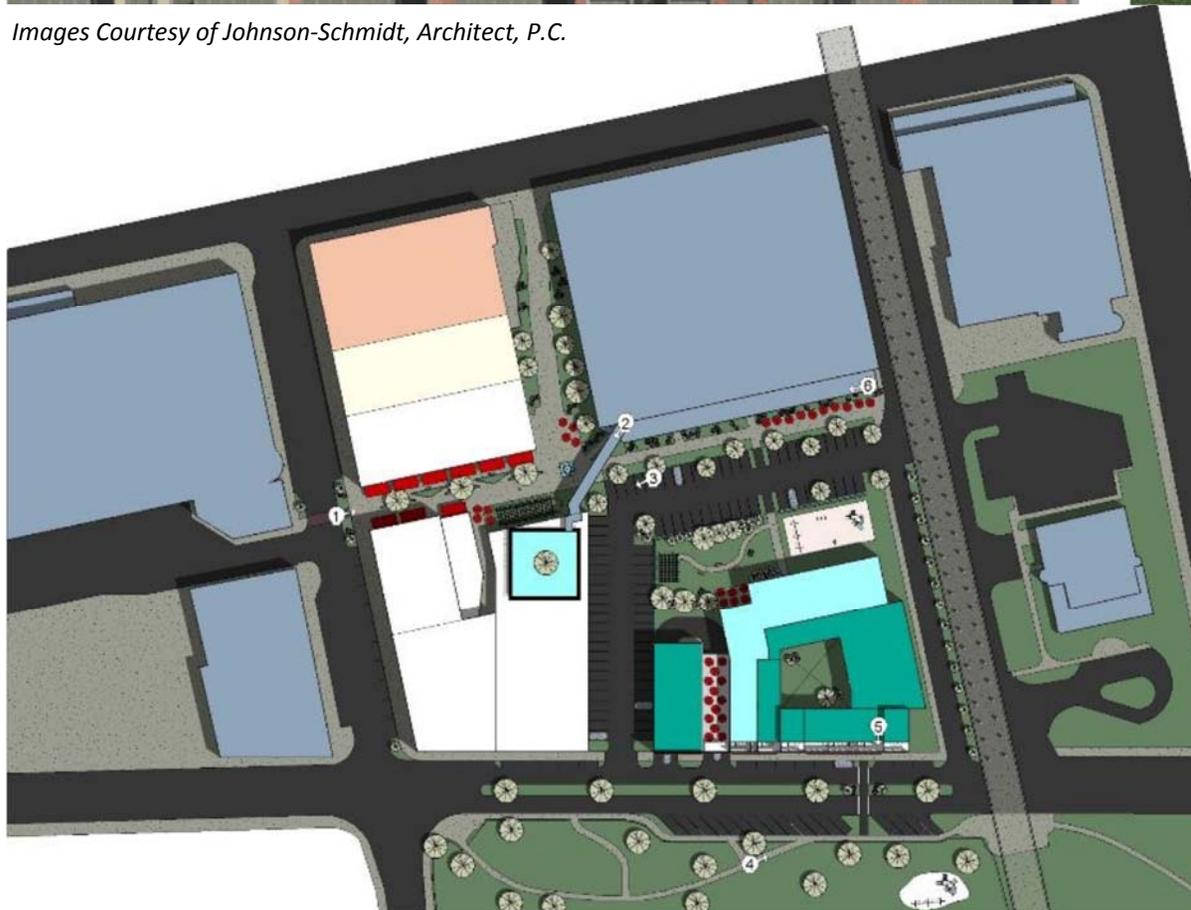
- Clemens Square Parking Structure: Rehabilitate the Parking Structure to preserve the structural integrity, to reinforce urban design integrity and to create a more marketable parking product; Develop the first floor of the Grey Street and extended Market Street frontage with pedestrian interest, scale and amenity
- On-Street Parking: Explore free, and/or pay for parking scenarios that best accommodate downtown customers in a manner that can compete with suburban parking models; maximize on-street parking for short and mid-term parking accommodations
- Other Public Parking: Provide off-street public parking lots on transitional mid-block parcels and/or semi-permanent mid-block locations
- Private Parking: Encourage private parking to be located mid-block within development parcels and that transitional parcels be designed and maintained to compliment the urban design fabric

### **Feasibility Study:**

- Downtown Athletic Facility: Study the potential for an indoor sporting facility located in downtown



Images Courtesy of Johnson-Schmidt, Architect, P.C.



## CLEMENS SQUARE INFILL SITE

A prime urban infill site has the opportunity to act as a design and land-use model for Elmira's downtown core. Located just at the edge of the College Town area of Elmira on a block being called Clemens Square, this priority site has the ability to offer an exciting new housing product, strengthen the urban fabric, house destination attractions on a first floor, animate the streetscape, leverage existing parking availability, connect people to the Chemung River, build a downtown residential market to support local retail and commercial businesses, and much more. A moderate/high density of development (3-6 stories) is recommended in order to best leverage this prime location.

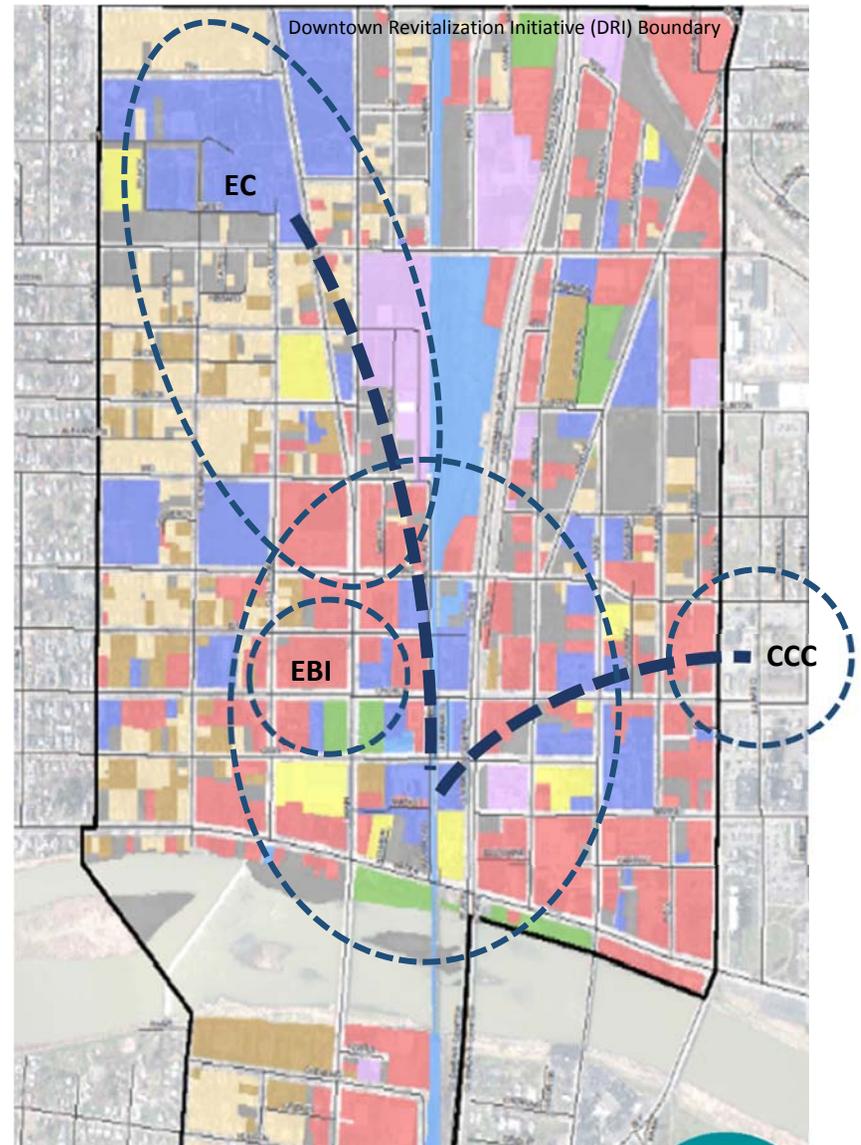
**Strategy 2: A New Vision for Land Use & Regulation**

Expand the presence and participation of higher education & workforce development within the community

**College Towns**

Generally, a college town is a relatively small community including one or more institutions of higher education that impact the economy and culture of the community beyond the physical campus. A college town is often a community with a strong “town-gown” relationship, meaning the government and the institution partner to achieve common goals. Like Elmira, they tend to be communities with high employment at educational institutions and a place with a high student population.

Healthy college towns are strong communities that attract more than students. These communities are attractive places for entrepreneurs, existing businesses, and long-term residents. They can leverage their institutional presence to bolster the whole economy. Because the economy of the 21<sup>st</sup> century relies on a highly educated workforce, college towns have an advantageous position over other small cities. The presence of a large student population can improve the economy of a college town by providing a labor market and advancing research that benefits the entire community. In healthy College Towns, advanced cultural and educational opportunities extend to the whole community and benefit quality of life.



## The Colleges & the City of Elmira

Elmira College is a small, private liberal arts college with its campus located less than a mile north of Downtown. The traditional collegiate atmosphere of the campus and undergraduate student population of over 1,000 are community assets. In addition to Elmira College, Corning Community College has a small campus on Madison Avenue and Elmira Business Institute (EBI) is located on Church Street within downtown. Although these colleges are tremendous assets to the City, there are moves that must occur to improve the synergy between the City and colleges to make Elmira a true college town.

## Land Use & Urban Design

The urban design of the colleges and the surrounding areas represent an opportunity to connect the City's neighborhoods with the colleges. The interface between the college campus and the surrounding neighborhoods should be places of exchange and opportunity rather than a boundary between different groups or interests.

The City should encourage mixed-use development near the campus edges by changing the zoning to allow for such development. Mixed-Use development with commercial retail uses on the ground floor and apartments or offices on upper floors would be most effective to support both the colleges and local neighborhoods. Parking lots, such as those along West 5<sup>th</sup> Street near Elmira College, should include appropriate buffering to improve the friendly walkability of the street. Parking lots should be buffered with trees, shrubs and plants. Parking lot fences or buffers made of attractive wood, stone or metal materials should also be considered. North Main Street and Park Place should receive streetscape improvements and pedestrian-oriented mixed-use development. These streets should be transformed with some of the amenities found in complete streets including street trees, crosswalks, street furniture and more.

## Policy

Currently, Elmira College imposes an on-campus residency policy, which greatly limits the exchange between the College and City communities. In many college towns, off-campus housing is a major part of the local economy. In these communities, students are an important part of the labor and market for a diverse array of goods and services. Due to the residency policy and other factors, the City and College are missing an opportunity to benefit from one another. The City should work with the colleges on programs that mix students into the neighborhoods, job market and culture of the City.

According to the Census Bureau ACS 5-Year Estimates for 2010-2014, Elmira residents aged 25 and up with a bachelor's degree or higher consisted of only 14.1% of the population. The national percentage was far higher at 29.3%. Although there are many factors affecting this rate, there is an opportunity for Elmira to focus on its desirability for graduates of local colleges and universities. Policies or programs aimed at retaining graduates should be considered including marketing, homeownership incentives, business development assistance, etc.

Both the City and the colleges should consider policy adjustments to promote economic and cultural exchange between the academic and the City communities. Such policy changes could include modifying the on-campus residency policy for Elmira College to allow off campus living, additional on-campus programs open to the public, and additional City-focused research or internship opportunities.

To truly make Elmira an urban college town, the City and the local colleges must work together. It will take more than marketing. It will take a commitment from both sides to put the land use, urban design, and local policies in place to make it happen.



# Strategy 3: Provide the Infrastructure Necessary for Success



The City of Elmira will continue to play a critical role in “setting the table” for the private sector to help the City thrive. This public infrastructure goes beyond the traditional provisions of sewer, water, stormwater, power and roads. In order to compete with other places to live, grow a business and learn, the City must now be a partner in assuring good and varied housing stock, as well as high quality and accessible internet service. Traditional street infrastructure must function as more than just vehicular circulation. The City’s right of ways must function as an important element of the public realm – supporting many alternative modes of transportation, acting as a front porch to houses and businesses, and creating/connecting great spaces.

Three Transformational Planning Ideas highlight an approach to infrastructure investment, and are outlined on the following pages.

- Implement a Strategic Housing Initiative
- Improve Elmira’s Walkability and Quality-of-Life through Development of Complete Streets
- Insure the Maintenance, Availability & Efficiency of Infrastructure

**Strategy 3: Provide the Infrastructure Necessary for Success**

## Implement a Strategic Housing Initiative

### Housing Objectives

The purpose for creating a new housing initiative for the City of Elmira includes:

- Improved safety and security
- Stabilized home values and taxes
- Reduced concentrated poverty
- Revitalized the neighborhoods and retail core
- Balanced home ownership and rentals

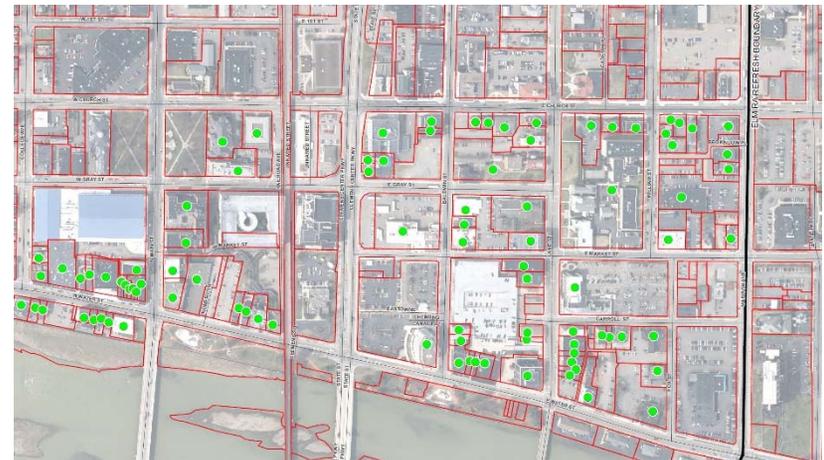


### New Contemporary & Urban Housing Stock

Aggressively pursue and support private sector housing initiatives that offer a new housing project in Elmira, that targets a new and emerging demographic. Specifically, pro-actively support walkable, mixed-use, and mixed-income housing development within Elmira’s urban core. Pursue housing developers to develop upper floors of existing downtown buildings.

### Fund to Close Market Gap

In order to support new and contemporary housing development, create a new targeted housing area to receive incentives that are designed to close the financial gap between construction costs and the ability of the end user to pay for housing (Refresh Elmira Zone).



### Land Bank

Collaborate with Chemung County as the foreclosing entity, NYS Land Bank Association, and New York State Empire Development to create a community Land Bank to control the disposition of foreclosed properties and to provide strategic focus for the redevelopment of both vacant and foreclosed properties. Seek NYS funding to organize and capitalize the venture. Establish program goals that encourage guaranteed reinvestment, local control and/or other means of owner accountability.

### Neighborhood Repair

As described in the Southside Rising Plan, reduce density in targeted single family Housing neighborhoods in order to maximize residential value and to encourage home ownership. Protect densities by scrutinizing the conversion of single family homes to multi-family homes. Create a selective building demolition program to reduce the number of vacant properties in residential neighborhoods. Target transitional neighborhoods for potential wholesale demolition of buildings and abandonment of infrastructure. Identify appropriate transitional uses including open space and business development. Create higher maintenance standards to maintain neighboring housing values. Encourage local and home ownership over absentee landlords.

### Supporting Current Projects

Provide administrative and political support for housing projects that are currently underway, and that meet the goals of this strategy. Project examples include Housing Vision’s Scattered Sites Project (Chemung Crossing) that supports the Southside Rising Plan – as well as an initiative to develop a new urban housing product along the Main Street corridor for current LECOM residents, physicians, faculty, staff and students - and future Elmira College students.

### Program Assessment & Consideration

Further assess existing or model programs as tools for Elmira to implement its housing goals, including, but not limited to:

- Homesteading Program: Utilize a potential Land Bank and/or other means to create a program for selling properties with a low acquisition price that is contingent on a modest investment in, and sustained use of, the property
- Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (NORCs): Either formally utilize the National NORC program to encourage aging in place, or develop local program that encourages walkable, mixed-use neighborhoods for seniors that have excellent access to health care and services.
- Home Ownership Programs: Utilize HUD Incentivized programs to encourage home ownership within targeted neighborhoods
- Work with property owners to replace or significantly renovate housing projects that have exceeded their design life

### Strategy 3: Provide the Infrastructure Necessary for Success

## Improve Elmira’s walkability and quality-of-life through development of Complete Streets

### Complete Streets in New York State

In 2011, Governor Andrew Cuomo signed the Complete Streets Act into law. The law requires that all federal and state-funded transportation projects conducted by state, county or local agencies consider the needs of all road users. Complete Streets are roadways that feature equitable planning and design. They consider the needs of pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and transit users.

Although the Complete Streets law is broad in scope, transportation projects fully funded by localities are not covered by the law. However, localities may adopt their own complete streets policies to ensure that all projects conform to both the values expressed in the state act and the values of the local community.

#### **Why is walkability important in a college town?**

Simply put, cars are expensive; walking is not. Between 2001 and 2009, the average yearly number of miles driven by 16 to 34-year-olds dropped a staggering 23 percent.

<sup>8</sup> Smart Growth America, National Complete Streets Coalition. (2015). *Safer Streets, Stronger Economies: Complete street project outcomes from across the country.*

### Benefits of Complete Streets

Although Complete Streets are sometimes associated with only providing pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, such improvements can benefit motorists. A Smart Growth America study<sup>8</sup> looked at traffic collision data from dozens of Complete Streets projects. The study compared the collision rates from before and after implementation of Complete Streets. The majority of cases experienced a decline in collision rates. The survey also found economic and health benefits through increased employment and property values and the facilitation of active transportation.

Complete Streets improvements are generally targeted at arterial and collector roads, which carry moderate to high traffic volumes. However, local streets can be a very important part of an active street network. Elmira’s grid network of streets provides low-volume, low-speed streets with connectivity to destinations. These roads allow pedestrians and cyclists the ability to avoid busy intersections and fast vehicles. They are more comfortable for novice cyclists and people concerned about the negative effects of vehicle traffic. Hoffman, Davis (north of Church) and Sullivan Streets feature advantageous conditions, which make them candidates as bicycle boulevards and stronger pedestrian streets.



## A Local Complete Streets Law

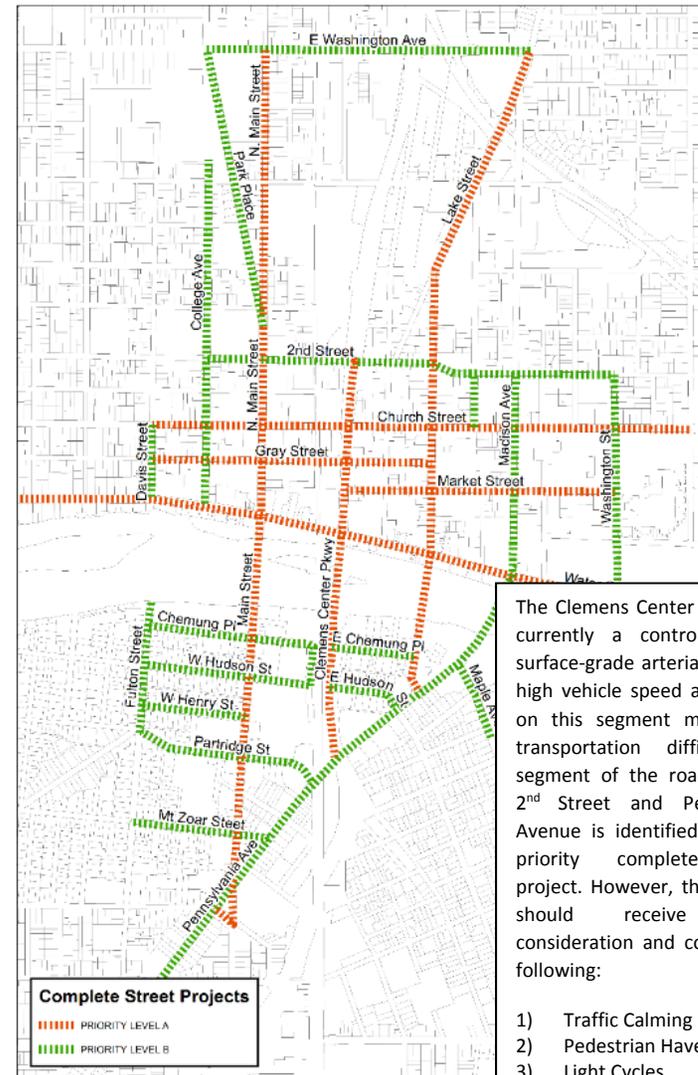
The City of Elmira should develop a local complete streets law. This act would set a new standard of equity in City-funded transportation projects. A complete streets law would align with the goals of the Elmira-Chemung Transportation Council’s 2015 “Bicycle Pedestrian Trail 2035 Plan.” The law would benefit the ongoing land use changes in the “Refresh Elmira” project and future changes activating downtown’s underutilized land and streets.

Fortunately, Elmira would not be alone in developing a local complete streets law. The cities of Binghamton, Jamestown and Rochester each have such a law. These laws can serve as a model for Elmira to refer to. At a minimum, Elmira’s law should include each of the following general topics:

- Ensure that all active transportation users, motorists and persons of all ages and physical abilities are covered by the law;
- Identify that all aspects of transportation infrastructure are covered by the act including planning, design, construction etc; and
- Resolve to use transportation projects to facilitate public health and other existing planning goals (e.g. Southern Tier Regional Sustainability Plan).

## Elmira Complete Streets Projects

Several streets located in downtown have the potential to be complete streets. As shown in the adjacent figure, the red streets are considered the highest priority streets and those in green are secondary priority. Complete streets should offer recreation, support space for business, become a venue for events and festivals, provide shade and shelter for users, and be an attractive experience for guests and residents.



The Clemens Center Parkway is currently a controlled-access, surface-grade arterial road. The high vehicle speed and volume on this segment make active transportation difficult. The segment of the road between 2<sup>nd</sup> Street and Pennsylvania Avenue is identified as a high priority complete streets project. However, this segment should receive special consideration and consider the following:

- 1) Traffic Calming
- 2) Pedestrian Havens
- 3) Light Cycles
- 4) Study Speed Limit
- 5) Sight Lines/Delineators

**Strategy 3: Provide the Infrastructure Necessary for Success**

## Insure the Maintenance, Availability & Efficiency of Infrastructure

### Green Practices

Promote the use of green infrastructure practices within the City as outlined in Chapter 5 of the *NYS Stormwater Design Manual*. Incentivize the use of these practices by modifying the existing stormwater regulations for development within the City and outlining potential grants through NYSDEC, NYSEFC and other Agencies.



### Minimize Storm Drainage in Combined Sewer and Floodway

Reducing stormwater in the combined sewers will reduce Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs) to the Chemung River, Newtown Creek and other waterways. Investigating the implementation of green practices, separate storm drainage systems and additional overflow storage will reduce impacts to the adjacent waterways.

### Flood Control

The City is protected by flood control devices that are maintained and operated by NYSDEC and USACE. Much of this gray infrastructure impacts the appearance of the Downtown Corridor. The implementation of artwork or greening of these structures will beautify the Downtown Corridor. Also investigate the Nature Conservancy grants for improvements to the floodway/floodplain.

### Sanitary Sewer

The City is served by the Chemung County Elmira Sewer District (CCESD). Coordination with potential improvements to the sanitary sewers whenever roadways are improved.



## Water

Public water is provided by the Elmira Water Board (EWB). The initial construction of the system occurred in 1914. The EWB consistently spends \$400k-\$500k annually for the replacement of watermains. The EWB is investigating leveraging that funding for the cost-share for NYSEFC Water Grants.

## City-Wide Broadband

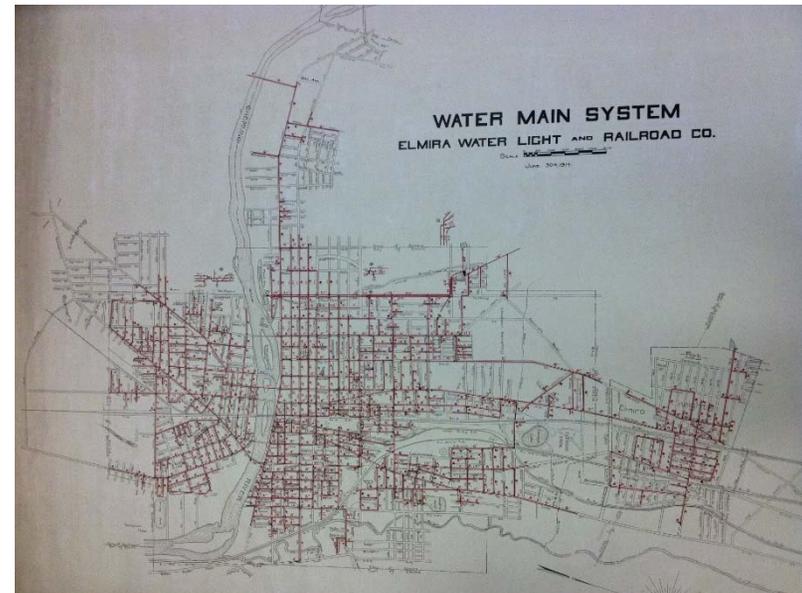
Southern Tier Network (STN) has established a Dark Fiber backbone throughout the County. Portions of this backbone have been constructed within the City and the feasibility of extending the system throughout commercial and residential areas are ongoing by STN as well as third party providers Empire Access and Finger Lakes Technologies Group.

## Electric:

The City has partnered with other organizations to receive a NYSERDA Microgrid study to investigate the feasibility of generating electricity locally and removing portions of the City from the Grid.

## Communications

As part of creating a vibrant Downtown and in conjunction with the introduction of Broadband to the City, investigate the implementation of free Downtown WiFi.





# Strategy 4: Offer a High & Equitable Quality of Life



Of primary importance to the community, is their safety, health and a positive quality of life. Embodied in almost every recommendation in this Comprehensive Plan, should be considerations that support healthy lifestyles, outdoor enjoyment, safety, and environmental sustainability. Elmira’s creative and historic culture should be celebrated, and its great assets - particularly its architecture, notable personalities and the Chemung River – should be leveraged.

Four Transformational Planning Ideas highlight an approach to improving the quality of life in Elmira, and are outlined on the following pages.

- Promote Healthy & Safe Living
- Encourage City-Wide Sustainability Efforts
- Leverage Elmira’s Culture
- Celebrate the Chemung River

**Strategy 4: Offer a High & Equitable Quality of Life**

## Promote Healthy & Safe Living

Sustaining the health of a community is challenging. Defining “what a healthy community is”, varies based on the perspective politicians, public health workers, health practitioners, and community leaders. All agree on its importance, but disagree on what it is. Communities across the country have been searching for indicators and factors to address needs and measure progress to their respective visions and goals. Economic indicators such as GNP, material possession, and social indicators such as health, illness, poverty, mobility and social participation have taken a top-down view. While other communities have taken grass roots approaches to realize a vision of health, focusing on physical, social, economic and behavioral factors to gauge their health. The proposed recommendations specifically address.

- Creating great walkable and bike-able city/neighborhoods
- Improving access to health care
- Reducing poverty
- Enhancing public safety
- Improving the quality of life



Community health and sustainable development have become an important alternative, offering real, lasting solutions to strengthen our future. Sustainable development seeks to guides us to take approaches that benefit our local communities, environment and quality of life. **STEEPE** is an approach that integrates two sets of long-standing ethics: one that encompasses people's relationship with the environment, and a second set regarding the current generation's responsibilities to future generations. For a community to be truly healthy, it must consider an approach that includes these factors,

### Social & Cultural

Social and cultural factors have profound influence on the health of a community. How people relate to each and participate affect the quality of life.

### Technology & Education

Education is the light of the future. Teaching our children about sustainability - how we are managing our resources to meet our current needs and to enable meeting their future needs - will impact countless generations to come.

### Environment & Ecological

Considering our natural resources, built environments, and the way a population interacts is for a sustainable approach. Resources should be used wisely and for the highest and best uses. Since Nature

has limits, communities - the human part of the equation - must take responsibility for protecting and enhancing their resources.

### Economic Stability

Economic activity should serve the common good, be self-renewing, create strategic alliances, and build local resources and self-reliance.

### Political & Legislative

By working to establish policies that positively influence social and economic conditions and those that support changes in individual behavior, a community can improve health for large numbers of people in ways that can be sustained over time. Improving the conditions in which we live, learn, work, and play and the quality of our relationships will create a healthier population, society, and workforce. The City should work aggressively through the Empire State Poverty Reduction Initiative to accomplish poverty reduction objectives.

### Equity

Healthy communities provide, to all of their members, the opportunity for full participation in all activities, benefits and decision-making of a society. A healthy community strives to provide equal access and opportunity to everyone.

The City of Elmira should take a mixed approach and align itself to the goals and objectives outline the U.S. Department Health and Human Service's HealthyPeople 2020 program, as described on the following pages.

## Goals and Objectives for a Sustainable and Healthy Elmira

<u>Topic</u>	<u>Goals</u>	<u>Objective</u>
POPULATION	Stabilize the population by 2030	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Increase the population</li> <li>▪ Reduce Poverty</li> </ul>
HOUSING	Stabilize the housing market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Increase the number of housing units</li> <li>▪ Reduce vacant units</li> </ul>
ECONOMIC	Stabilize and create economic opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Increase Employment Opportunities</li> <li>▪ Redevelop Downtown Retail Opportunities</li> </ul>
SOCIAL DETERMINANTS	Improve the quality of life in the City of Elmira	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Increase Life Expectancy</li> <li>▪ Reduce Childhood Poverty</li> <li>▪ Reduce Low Birth Rates</li> </ul>
HEALTHY PEOPLE 2020	Improve access to comprehensive, quality health care services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Reduce the proportion of persons who are unable to obtain or delay in obtaining necessary medical care, dental care, or prescription medicines</li> </ul>
HEALTHY PEOPLE 2020	Increase the quality, availability, and effectiveness of educational and community-based programs designed to prevent disease and injury, improve health, and enhance quality of life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Increase the proportion of elementary, middle, and senior high schools that provide comprehensive school health education to prevent health problems in all priority areas</li> <li>▪ Increase the number of community-based organizations (including local health departments, Tribal health services, non-governmental organizations, and State agencies) providing population-based primary prevention services</li> <li>▪ Increase the inclusion of counseling for health promotion and disease prevention content in undergraduate nursing</li> </ul>
HEALTHY PEOPLE 2020	Promote health for all through a healthy environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Increase trips to work made by bicycling</li> <li>▪ Increase trips to work made by walking</li> <li>▪ Reduce the number of U.S. homes that are found to have lead-based paint</li> </ul>
HEALTHY PEOPLE 2020	Reduce foodborne illnesses by improving food safety-related behaviors and practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Increase the proportion of consumers who follow the key food safety practice of “Clean: wash hands and surfaces often.”</li> </ul>

<i>(Continued)</i>		
<u>Topic</u>	<u>Goals</u>	<u>Objective</u>
HEALTHY PEOPLE 2020	Use health communication strategies and health information technology (IT) to improve population health outcomes and health care quality, and to achieve health equity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Increase the proportion of persons who report that their health care providers always involve them in decisions about their health care as much as they wanted</li> <li>▪ Increase individuals' access to the Internet</li> <li>▪ Increase the proportion of adults who report having friends or family members with whom they talk about their health</li> </ul>
HEALTHY PEOPLE 2020	Improve health-related quality of life and well-being for all individuals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Increase the proportion of adults who self-report good or better physical health</li> </ul>
HEALTHY PEOPLE 2020	Prevent unintentional injuries and violence, and reduce their consequences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Reduce fatal and nonfatal injuries</li> <li>▪ Reduce motor vehicle accidents and related injuries</li> </ul>
HEALTHY PEOPLE 2020	Promote health and reduce chronic disease risk through the consumption of healthful diets and achievement and maintenance of healthy body weights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Eliminate very low food security among children</li> <li>▪ Reduce household food insecurity and in doing so reduce hunger</li> <li>▪ Reduce consumption of calories from solid fats and added sugars in the population aged 2 years and older.</li> </ul>
HEALTHY PEOPLE 2020	Improve the health, function, and quality of life of older adults	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Increase the proportion of older adults who are up to date on a core set of clinical preventive services</li> <li>▪ Increase the proportion of older adults with reduced physical or cognitive function who engage in light, moderate, or vigorous leisure-time physical activities</li> </ul>
HEALTHY PEOPLE 2020	Improve health, fitness, and quality of life through daily physical activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Reduce the proportion of adults who engage in no leisure-time physical activity.</li> <li>▪ Increase the proportion of adolescents who meet current Federal physical activity guidelines for aerobic physical activity</li> <li>▪ Increase the proportion of trips made by walking</li> <li>▪ Increase the proportion of trips made by bicycling</li> <li>▪ Increase legislative policies for the built environment that enhance access to and availability of physical activity opportunities</li> </ul>
HEALTHY PEOPLE 2020	Create social and physical environments that promote good health for all	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Reduce proportion of households that spend more than 30% of income on housing</li> <li>▪ Reduce proportion of households that experience housing cost burden</li> </ul>

#### **Strategy 4: Offer a High & Equitable Quality of Life**

### Encourage City-wide sustainability efforts.

#### What is Sustainability?

Despite the overuse of the word, sustainability is a key development concept. In the most basic sense, sustainability refers to the ability (of a community) to continue a defined behavior indefinitely. Most definitions of this concept include the idea of living within certain limits – usually ecological limits – as well as the equitable distribution of resources and opportunities. Any substantive discussion of sustainability must also address the three key parts of the concept: social, economic and environmental sustainability. However, the interconnected nature of these factors can make sustainability difficult to measure. Triple-bottom-line sustainability (TBL) is an accounting framework that incorporates these interconnected dimensions of performance: social, environmental and financial. The TBL framework allows businesses, organizations, and municipalities to evaluate their performance with respect to people, profits and the planet. The City should promote this approach to sustainability through measures that are incorporated into daily policy and decision-making, especially major capital projects and maintenance operations. The following sections identify areas where this new approach to sustainability can be established.

#### Great Urban Design

When the average person thinks about sustainable behavior or the environment, it is likely that they first consider things they can do with their stuff. Things like recycling. Reusing. Maybe even reducing. However, great urban design is something that a community can do that will allow local residents to have a far greater impact. People enjoy well-designed places. Living in an urban area generally has more opportunities for citizens to reduce their ecological footprint. Great urban design, including innovative solutions to create density, develop mixed use, and improve access to services, encourages people to live in a city. These solutions are described in the Future Land Use section.

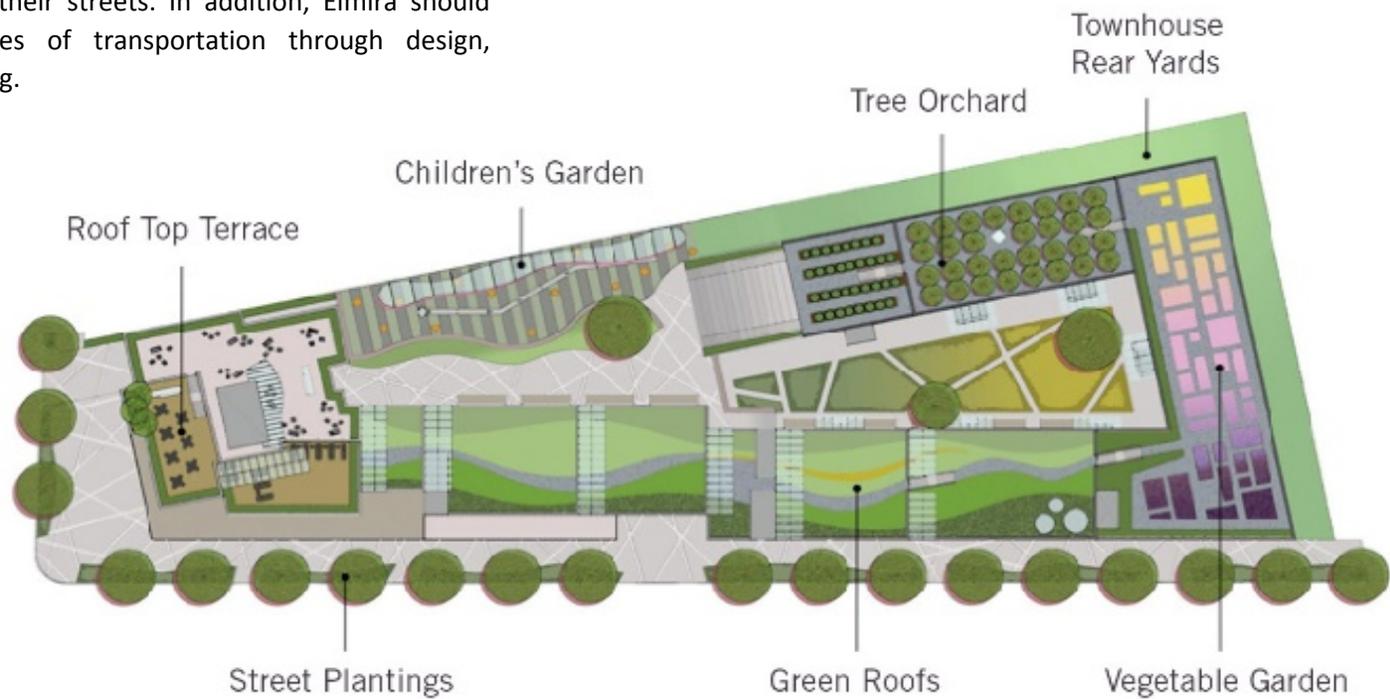
#### Green Infrastructure

Green infrastructure strategies are natural means of addressing water quality, water quantity and climate change. Recommended solutions include decentralized storm water practices, natural flood controls, improved infiltration, rainwater collection and green roofs. The City should integrate green infrastructure practices, incorporate the approach into municipal codes, and seek funding for further implementation.



## Transportation

Great design makes communities more walkable and bike-able, and improves the usefulness of public transit. These improvements, in turn, reduce the dependence on single-person automobile trips and lessen the environmental impact of transportation. Improving the safety and availability of alternative modes of travel also addresses the “equitable distribution of resources” portion of sustainability, too. The Complete Streets section outlines transportation changes that Elmira can make to their streets. In addition, Elmira should support alternative modes of transportation through design, planning, policy and funding.



## LEED

Leadership in Environmental and Energy Design, or LEED, is an ecology-oriented building certification program run by the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC). LEED is the most widely used third-party verification for green buildings in the world. LEED has five different rating systems: Building Design and Construction (BD+C), Interior Design and Construction (ID+C), Building Operations and Maintenance (O+M), Neighborhood Development (ND), and Homes. The City of Elmira should strive to provide Leadership in Environmental and Energy Design at the regional, municipal or neighborhood level – much as outlined in the Land Use section.



LEED-ND offers guidance on appropriate densities, connected development, access to services, mixing of uses, green infrastructure and alternative means of transportation. The City should pursue LEED certification (using LEED BD&C) for new City buildings, and incorporate guidance into local codes. Incremental savings on heating, cooling and electrical use can save money and reduce climate impacts.

### Energy Savings & Production

Local savings and production of energy and electricity reduces dependency, saves money and reduces loss. The City should pursue opportunities for such benefits in all capital projects. In addition, the City should encourage energy savings through municipal energy efficiency strategies. These might include promoting energy efficiency programs that already exist (through NYSERDA and otherwise), and partnering with local agencies and organizations to reduce energy consumption.

## Urban & Local Agriculture

Eating and growing locally is healthier and saves energy through transportation costs and handling. There are many farms and community-supported agriculture (CSA) programs in the Elmira area. The City should encourage residents to support local farms and markets, including potential zoning revisions.

Urban gardening is another way to save energy, eat locally and reduce a community's ecological footprint. Urban gardens can often be an excellent use for vacant or underutilized land. This approach is described in the Areas in Transition section. The City should promote and support urban agriculture, both small-scale as well as large-scale efforts. Large-scale efforts should be part of a strategic approach to using vacant land, and could include work force development.

Examples of community gardens working in Elmira include the Quatrano Park Community Garden managed by the ARC of Chemung County and Katy Leary Park Community Gardens sponsored by the Friends of the Chemung River Watershed.



**Strategy 4: Offer a High & Equitable Quality of Life**

## Leverage Elmira's Culture

Elmira's culture, arts, heritage and future should be celebrated. The Plan will provide guidance and recommendations regarding the following opportunities.

### Branding

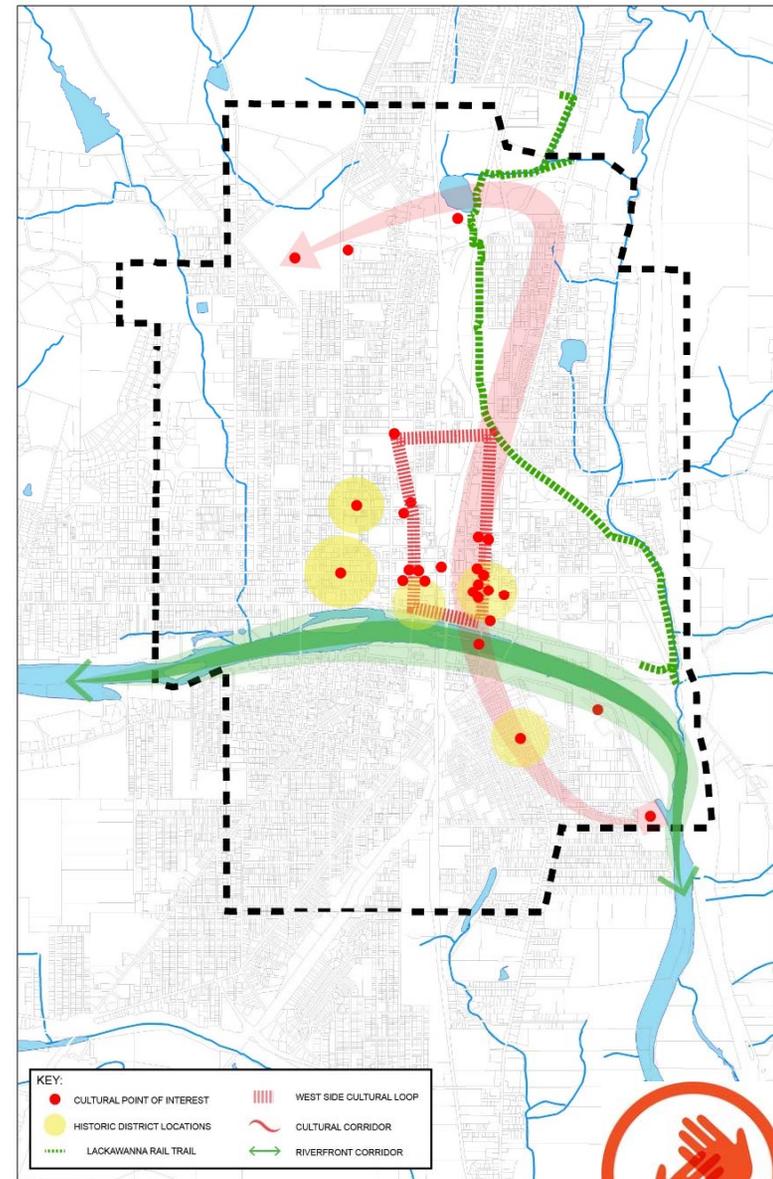
Brand Elmira as a creative, educated and cultural place to live, work, learn and play.

### Historic Properties & Districts

Strengthen existing historic districts, in particular, preserve and expand the downtown Historic Districts. Place a very high level of importance on the adaptive re-use of buildings, rather than demolition.

### The Elmira Creative Corridor

The Creative Corridor is envisioned as a swath of cityscape from the northern Elmira Correctional Facility (Reformatory) and Woodlawn Cemetery to the Maple Avenue Historic District running along Lake Street. The Corridor would promote creative arts, cultural activities, historic preservation and interpretation, educational programming, service and entrepreneurial cultural activities. The Creative Corridor would unify north and south Elmira, knit struggling neighborhoods together, connect both the built and the natural environment, and provide a platform for the repurposing of the Lake Street Bridge as the connective Path that traverses the Chemung River.



## Sports, Culture & Entertainment

Focus on downtown for regional sports, entertainment and cultural events and institutions. Promote the location of new facilities to be located within walking distance of the urban core.

## Elmira's Urban Lifestyle

Mix creative, historic and progressive housing into the fabric of Elmira, particularly within the urban core and walkable to sports, culture, entertainment and higher education.

## Celebrate Elmira's Geography!

Elmira is located in a beautiful region of the Country, within the Appalachian Mountain Range and the Upper Susquehanna Rivershed. This natural and geographic context should be recognized, celebrated and marketed.

## Chemung River Corridor

Celebrate the Chemung River corridor as a historic, natural, aesthetic and recreational asset.



## CONCEPTS FROM THE PUBLIC WORKSHOP:

- The "Creative Corridor"
- More arts, cultural, & historic districts
- The CBD spanning the River
- A cultural entrepreneurship program & strategy
- A public art program
- Start downtown and work your way north & south
- Repurpose historic buildings... always
- Use "Fresh" architecture; design matters
- Appeal to new younger market

## BRAINSTORMING PROJECTS OPPORTUNITIES!

- Spectacular & Iconic Lake St. Bridge (Ponte Vecchio)
- The Center for Cultural Entrepreneurship
- Space conversion for artistic innovation
- Expansion of incubation resource in existing Arts & Cultural organizations
- New water feature & destination attraction
- Artist residences
- Outdoor performance centers & movie venue
- Fresh paint

**Strategy 4: Offer a High & Equitable Quality of Life**

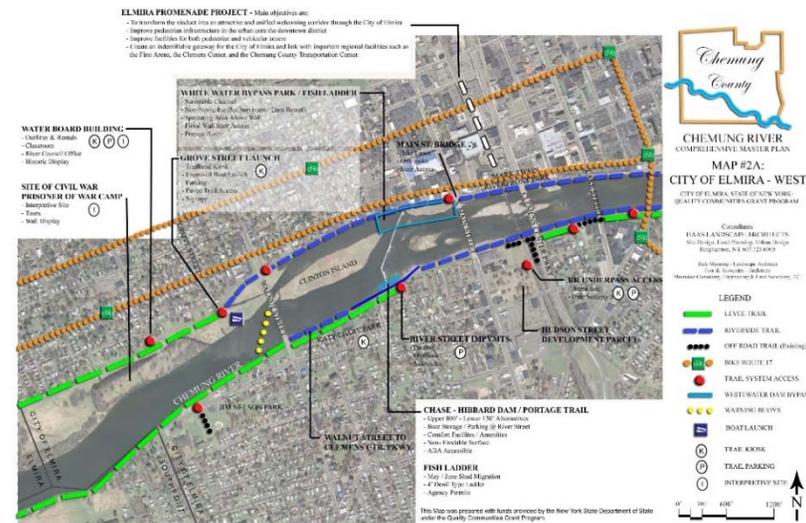
**Celebrate the Chemung River**

Two comprehensive and recent studies offer excellent guidance on how the City of Elmira can leverage its Chemung River asset. The implementation of these two plans should be focused on projects within Elmira’s urban core and those that can best leverage the creation of jobs or the attraction of downtown housing.

**Chemung River Trail: River Trail Assessment & Comprehensive Master Plan (February 2008)**

This Plan describes the opportunity to incorporate Chemung County’s rich river resources and cultural history into its economic goals with recreational improvements along its 20 mile corridor.

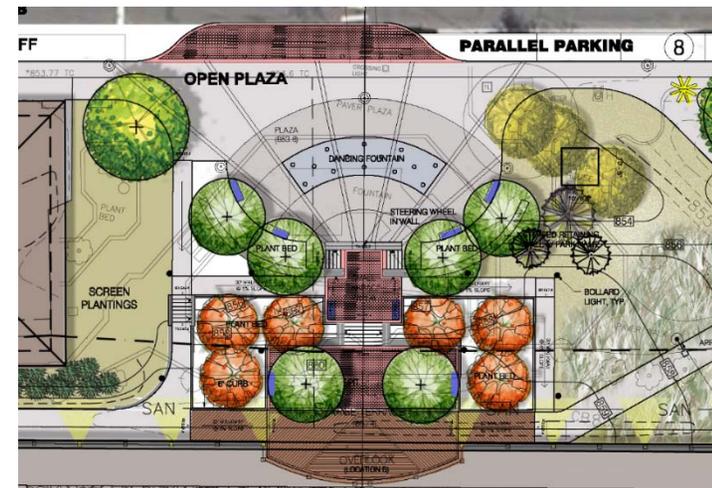
The Plan recommends a network that combines multi-use trails, nature trails, on-road bikeways and scenic byways, and waterway trails to tie key destinations and water access points is expected to provide momentum for implementing key short-term projects along the River greenway. The City of Elmira and Chemung County have a long history and support of trails as demonstrated by the numerous plans prepared in the past twenty years to initiate and coordinate multi-modal trail developments.



## Mark Twain Riverfront Park Plan (2011)

The Mark Twain Riverfront Park Plan provides excellent direction on achieving goals of this Comprehensive Plan. Design and capital improvements would result in both physical and visual access to the River, would connect the urban fabric to the River and would provide linear means to enjoy the River corridor. Priority Riverfront project recommendations include:

- Riverfront Park with River Views: The focus of this park is between Main Street and Lake Street and celebrates the River by mounting and penetrating the River's flood wall
- Performance Venues: The Park Plan incorporates both formal and informal locations for entertainment and activity
- Portage Trail: A portage is designed to assist paddlers around the dam and be able to use the regional River corridor
- Whitewater Paddling: Whitewater features and a course are suggested for future study and excitement





# Strategy 5: Succeed with Inspiring & Dedicated Leadership



Strong Leadership from the City of Elmira is going to come in the form of strong relationship building with Chemung County, Regional and State governments, business and not-for-profits. The City must proactively support local and grass roots leadership within its neighborhoods.

The Transformational Planning Idea that highlights an approach to inspiring and dedicated leadership is outlined on the following pages.

- Utilize Top-Down & Bottom-Up Leadership

**Strategy 5: Inspiring & Dedicated Leadership**

## Utilize Top-Down & Bottom-Up Leadership

### Top-Down

Traditionally, business and government has provided leadership for the City of Elmira. The City has always had working partnerships with Chemung County, Regional planning organizations and New York State agencies.

Today though, more than ever, the City of Elmira must solidify Regional and County relationships. The new structure for economic development, which is based on real economic truths, is at a Regional and State-wide level. These Regional relationships must not only be with governments, but also with business, academia and health care.



### The City of Elmira

Leadership from the Mayor’s office, City Council, the City Manager, Boards & Commissions (ZBA, Planning Board, Historic Preservation Commission), Community Development, Engineering, Legal and Public Safety

### Chemung County

Leadership from the County Executive, the County Legislature, Southern Tier Economic Growth, the Chamber of Commerce, Engineering, Planning, Public Works & Public Safety

### Educational Leadership

Leadership from Elmira College, Corning Community College, Elmira Business Institute, BOCES, Elmira Central School District, Finn Academy, and others

### Business Leadership

Leadership from Industry, Elmira Downtown Development, Elmira Business Institute, Banking, Arnot Health, and the Real Estate industry

### Not-For Profit Leadership

Leadership from Community Action, human service, arts and cultural, philanthropic, and faith-based organizations

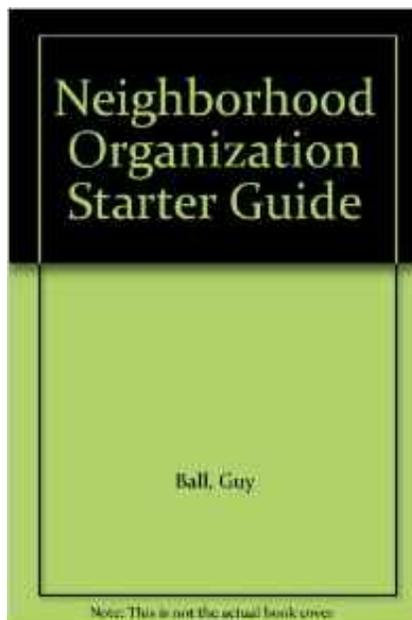


## Regional

Leadership from the Southern Tier Regional Economic Development Council, the Southern Tier Regional Planning Board

## New York State

Leadership from Empire State Development, the Department of Transportation, Environmental Facilities Corporation, NYSERDA, Department of State, Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation



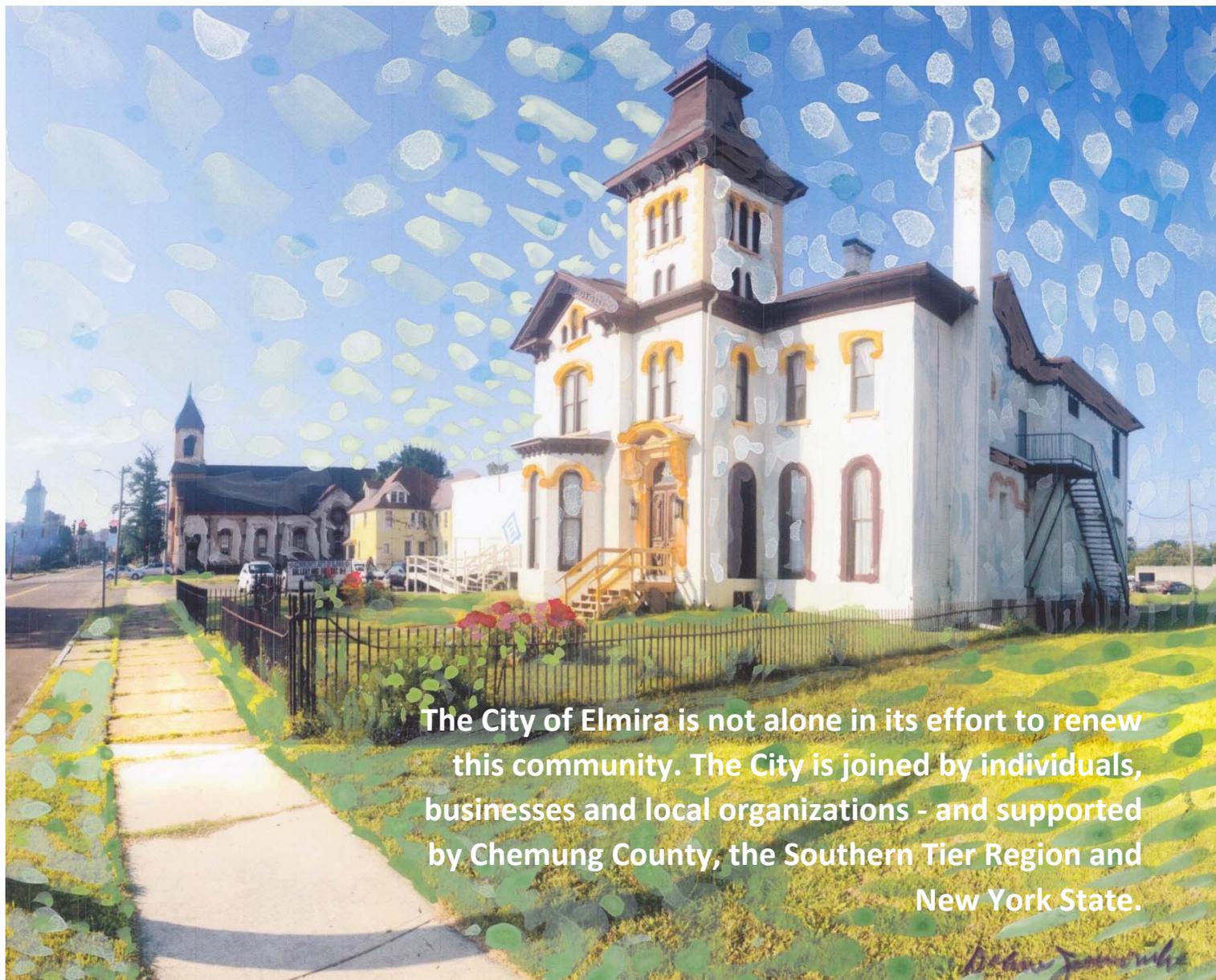
**“ELMIRA  
COMMUNITY  
CONGRESS!”**

## Bottom-Up

Also today, City’s are finding their leadership strength in neighborhood grown organizations – each playing their part in a cumulative revitalization strategy. To coordinate between these grass-roots organizations, and to give a collective voice and liaison to other leaders, it is recommended that a Community Congress of local not-for-profits be formed.

## Potential Community Congress Participants

- Existing neighborhood and business organizations
- Future neighborhood and business organizations
- Higher education
- Arts and cultural organizations
- Local foundations
- Human services organizations
- Health care organizations



**The City of Elmira is not alone in its effort to renew this community. The City is joined by individuals, businesses and local organizations - and supported by Chemung County, the Southern Tier Region and New York State.**

*Community Arts of Elmira; by Diane L. Janowski, 2015*

## CHAPTER VI: MAKING IT HAPPEN

### Leadership & Responsibility

Implementation of the City of Elmira’s Comprehensive Plan will require strong leadership at many levels.

**City of Elmira:** The City of Elmira must provide leadership beginning with the Mayor, City Council and the City Manager, then continuing to Boards, Commissions, heads of departments, and with buy-in from City staff. Towards this end, the Executive Summary of this Plan should be shared, understood and championed at each of these levels.

**Chemung County:** The City of Elmira and Chemung County are recognizing increased opportunity to collaborate, share and consolidate functions. The two municipalities share common interests and location. Southern Tier Economic Growth (STEG) is a County-wide economic development organization, but has strong interest and activity within the City of Elmira, and with significant employers within the City. Similarly, the Chemung County Chamber of Commerce is a County-wide organization, but has significant City business participation. The City must continue to positively work with Chemung County, STEG and the Chamber of Commerce on projects of shared interest – and must communicate this City Comprehensive Plan to the leadership of the County and those organizations.

MAKING IT  
HAPPEN

**‘Grassroots’ Leadership:** Grass Roots and neighborhood leadership will help drive the implementation of the Plan through the actions of local business, institutions, not-for-profits, Elmira Downtown Development, individuals and neighborhood organizations. Similarly, the Executive Summary of this Plan should be shared, understood and championed with, and by, these stakeholders.

Local leadership must be developed, or strengthened, at the neighborhood level. The formation of Neighborhood associations should be encouraged, and facilitated by the City, when possible.

A coordinating body, a ‘Community Congress’, is recommended to be formed as a forum for communication and coordination of local and neighborhood organizations.

**New York State & the Southern Tier Regional Council:** New York State is increasingly utilizing a regional strategy to Upstate New York revitalization. The Southern Tier Regional Economic Development Council is providing leadership in this initiative, with both human and financial resources from the State. The City of Elmira must continue to be aggressively involved in this Regional planning initiative in order to best leverage New York State support.

## Strategic Opportunities

The 5 Strategies contained in the ‘Plan for Growth’ Chapter include 14 Transformational Planning Ideas. The following summary provides examples of projects that support each of the 5 Strategies and their relative Planning Ideas.

### **Strategy 1: Be Market Driven**

- Develop a Strategic Identity & Brand
- Adopt the Southern Tier & I-86 Corridor Regional Economic Development Strategies

### Project Examples:

- ★ **Brand Identification & Promotion Initiative:** Assemble a strong and diverse local team to work through a professionally led process to identify a desired brand, positioning statement, brand graphics and promotions strategy.
- **Center for Technology Infusion:** Lobby for this center to be located within downtown Elmira, perhaps associated with one of Elmira’s higher education institutions. The center would develop advanced technologies for the transportation equipment manufacturing sector in the Southern Tier and be a test bed for new technologies such as energy storage, autonomous vehicles, and new materials, and their application into the sector. It will include research laboratories, prototyping facilities, testing facilities, and meeting areas.
- **Center for Cultural Entrepreneurship:** Develop an incubator, maker-space and co-working space that facilitates entrepreneurship, creativity and start of viable businesses in the arts, culture and entertainment industries.



### **Strategy 2: A New Vision for Land Use & Regulation**

- Implement a Contemporary Mixed-Use & Design-Based Land Use Strategy
- Create Neighborhood-Based Identities, Planning & Implementation
- Develop Downtown as the Civic, Entertainment, Living, Learning & Working Core – with Density & Focus
- Expand the Presence & Participation of Higher Education & Workforce Training within the Community

#### Project Examples:

- ★ **Zoning Code Update:** Prepare an update or a replacement zoning code to reflect the new mixed-use and design emphasized objectives of the land use strategy.
- ★ **Targeted Downtown Revitalization Program:** Prepare a targeted revitalization program in preparation for application to the NYS Downtown Revitalization Initiative. Focus on the downtown core redevelopment, including a pilot project at ‘Clemens Square’, a model mixed-use real estate project on the block defined by Water Street, Gray Street, Main Street and the Railroad.
- **Elmira College, LECOM and Corning Community College & other Higher Educational Campuses & Facilities:** Pro-actively support the development of the Lake Erie College of Osteopathic Medicine (LECOM), the expansion of Elmira College, the growth of Corning Community College and advances of other higher education facilities and training centers.

### **Strategy 3: Provide the Infrastructure Necessary for Success**

- Implement a Strategic Housing Initiative
- Improve Elmira’s Walkability and Quality-of-Life through Development of a Complete Streets Policy and Complete Street Improvements
- Insure the Maintenance, Availability & Efficiency of Infrastructure

#### Project Examples:

- ★ **Neighborhood Repair & Land Bank:** Prepare Neighborhood Plans documenting existing conditions and primary needs. Create a Land Bank as a legal not-for-profit tool that would hold properties that have been foreclosed upon, or otherwise acquired, for disposition in a manner consistent with City objectives and this Plan. Seek redevelopment partners to strategically invest in and strengthen neighborhoods.
- ★ **Complete Streets Initiative (Policy & Priority Implementation):** The City to create and adopt a policy for the capital reconstruction of City streets that results in street right-of-ways that accommodate multiple means of transportation, are pedestrian friendly, and are an important element of the public realm.
- **Gap Financing Program for Adaptive Re-use & Infill:** Create a revolving loan and/or grant fund that would be controlled by an appropriate not-for-profit, to help fund development projects within Elmira’s downtown. The program would fund the difference between the costs of developing projects, and the market rent or sale that the project can justify.
- **Strategic Infrastructure Upgrades:** Work with the Elmira Water Board to systematically and strategically replace the underground public water distribution system in the City of Elmira, to replace aging water lines that are approaching 100 years old. Strategically upgrade the public sewers and other utility infrastructure.

 **THE STAR REPRESENTS HIGHEST PRIORITIES!**

- **Clemens Parkway Complete Street Project:** Together with NYS, change the regulation and design of the 5-block section of the Clemens Parkway between the Chemung River and East 2<sup>nd</sup> Street to accommodate Pedestrian and bicycle transportation, safe pedestrian crossing and traffic calming measures. Reduce the speed limit within the downtown core and allow bicycle traffic on the entire parkway.
- **Consolidated & Centralized Public Safety Facility:** Together with Chemung County, consider the construction of a new Public Safety Facility that would consolidate police, fire, and emergency response programs.
- **Downtown Public Wi-Fi:** Develop a free and public wi-fi system within the downtown area.
- **New Public Parking Rate Program & Marketing Plan:** Modify the rate structure for public parking downtown to encourage the free short term use of on-street parking and to accommodate long-term parking within parking structures.
- **City-Wide Broadband:** Together with the Southern Tier Region, work to provide broadband internet service within the entire City limits.

#### **Strategy 4: Offer a High & Equitable Quality of Life**

- Promote Healthy & Safe Living
- Encourage City-Wide Sustainability Efforts
- Leverage Elmira’s Culture
- Celebrate the Chemung River

#### **Project Examples:**

- ★ **Riverfront Park Implementation:** Implement the Mark Twain Riverfront Park recommendations from the 2010 Haas Master Plan. Reconstruct the Lake Street Bridge as a pedestrian and bicycle neighborhood connection and as an iconic public park.
- **Public Art Program:** Develop a Public Art Program for the downtown, neighborhood centers, public ways and public parks.
- **Wisner Park Improvements/Connection:** Accentuate Wisner Park as an iconic downtown green by visually connecting the two sides of the Main Street and by treating that section of Main Street as part of the Park.
- **Culture & History Signage & Interpretive Plan:** Develop a City-wide interpretive plan that tells the cultural and environmental history of Elmira through signage, driving routes, walking tours, wayfinding apps, interpretive panels, and other means.
- **Healthy People 2020 Plan Participation:** Designate a responsible lead within the City to pro-actively participate in a County-wide effort to attain Healthy People 2020 goals.



**Strategy 5: Succeed with Inspiring & Dedicated Leadership**

- Utilize Top-Down & Bottom-Up Leadership

Project Examples:

- ★ **Comprehensive Plan Adoption, Stewardship & Implementation:** City Council to officially adopt this Comprehensive Plan and bless it as a consensus blueprint for action by leadership at all levels.
- ★ **Neighborhood Identity, Organization & Congress:** The City to facilitate and support the organization of neighborhood leadership and action groups with the purpose of implementing neighborhood scaled projects and creating neighborhood identity. Also, to assist with the organization of a ‘Community Congress’ that would be a collaborative of neighborhood organizations and not-for-profits that would come together to coordinate activities and share knowledge.
- **Participation in Regional Economic Development Council Activities:** City leadership and staff should actively participate in, and play leadership roles, in the Southern Tier Regional Economic Development Council activities. Local business and not-for-profit leaders should be encouraged to participate in the initiative and leverage resulting NYS funding.



# WMI

ADOPTION

November 28, 2016

**RESOLUTION**  
**2016- 361**

By Councilmember MOSS :

**WHEREAS**, the City Council having received the 2016-2026 Comprehensive Plan for the City of Elmira; and

**WHEREAS**, the Council having held a public hearing regarding the Plan at its regular meeting on November 14, 2016; and

**WHEREAS**, the City Council finds that it is in the best interest of the City to have a Comprehensive Plan to establish a sustainable vision for the City and to assist the City leaders "to make rational financial decisions about economic development, neighborhoods, transportation and infrastructure in a manner intended to make efficient use of resources.";

**NOW, THEREFORE**, be it

**RESOLVED**, that the City Council of the City of Elmira, New York hereby adopts the "City of Elmira Comprehensive Plan 2016-2026".

ADOPTED BY UNANIMOUS VOTE

ADOPTED BY THE FOLLOWING VOTE

AYES		NAYS
X	Councilmember Sterner	
X	Councilmember Moss	
ABSENT	Councilmember Bombarger	
X	Councilmember Blandford	
X	Councilmember Waters	
X	Councilmember Duffy	
ABSENT	Mayor Mandell	

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