Transitional Space: Finding a Common Ground Between Neighborhood and Industry

by
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Abstract

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Schneekloth and Shibley state that providing the stage for dialog brings people’s experience of the place and the specialist’s knowledge to a common ground. It is at this common ground where shifts in the knowledge about places occurs. This community project draws upon placemaking strategies to develop a unique community identity.

This capstone project focused on Solvay, New York, a community in upstate New York that has retained its industry within the boundaries of the urban village. Though industry founded, shaped and continues to define this village, the relationship of the existing industry to the rest of the community now presents many challenges related to scale, land use, visibility and community image.

Through a series of community workshops in the fall of 2002 and spring of 2003, this project drew upon residents to identify and document a vision for the village. The project then focused on developing design scenarios for Milton Avenue, the main commercial and industrial corridor of the village. Values expressed by community members laid the foundation for decision-making, resulting in design approaches that express history, industry, and community as the identity of Solvay.
Introduction

Purpose of Study:
The purpose of this study was to explore the value of a community-based participatory process to generate design solutions for an urban industrial village.

Problem Statement:
How can community-based participation inform design studies to:

• Re-establish a common ground between neighborhood and industry?

• Express an identity that reflects the unique qualities of the community?

Explanation of Terms:

Council for Community Design Research (CCDR):
The CCDR is a public service and research component of the SUNY ESF Faculty of Landscape Architecture. Established in 1998, the Council provides community outreach services to New York State communities. The CCDR works in collaboration with communities, elected officials, agencies, and not-for profit organizations to provide technical assistance, educational programs, and research projects that build community capacity to guide future decisions. This capstone project is being developed in coordination with CCDR and the Solvay Vision Committee, as a next step identified in the Solvay Vision Plan.
Solvay Vision Committee:

The Solvay Vision Committee is a group formed at the request of the CCDR to organize the vision planning process for the village. The committee is comprised of representatives from the schools, local businesses and the village board. Along with the CCDR, the Solvay Vision Committee met several times to coordinate workshops and discuss the progress of the vision plan.

Vision Planning:

In this project, vision planning refers a collaborative process that uses open forms of communication help the community better understand itself, and set a direction for the future. It serves as a guide for the community to make planning decisions and develop other initiatives such as a comprehensive plan. The vision planning process identifies community values, concerns and opportunities. By prioritizing these issues, the vision plan seeks to set goals and outline action steps for implementation.
Project Overview

Project Background:
This capstone project focused on Solvay, New York, a village in the central region of New York State. It is a unique community in upstate New York that has retained its industry within the boundaries of the urban village. Unlike many other communities in upstate, where industry has left for office parks or other areas of the country, Solvay has continued to attract a variety of manufacturing companies. Though these factories have defined and shaped the village since its late nineteenth century beginnings, the relationship of the existing industry to its neighborhood now presents many challenges. Changes in land use, the loss of historical resources, and the methods of modern manufacturing in the village landscape have eroded much of the economic, social and physical interdependence between the industrial areas and the rest of the village.

Despite the challenges faced by this village, the community has many devoted residents that are interested in the quality of their village. In 2002, these community members from the Village of Solvay coordinated with the Council for Community Design Research (CCDR) in the SUNY ESF Faculty of Landscape Architecture to seek assistance with a vision for the future. They developed a Solvay Vision Committee that was responsible for initiating the project, and provided resources to move it forward.
In the fall of 2002, the CCDR conducted a series of three community-driven participatory workshops in Solvay to aid the development of the vision plan. During initial meetings with the CCDR, the community expressed several design concerns and issues, including yard appearance, façade deterioration and the lack of village gateways. The community also expressed concerns over the poor appearance of the main commercial and industrial corridor through the village. From this initial dialog, and from continued discussions with community members, ideas were documented to guide future decision-making for the village.

**Project Description:**

This capstone project evolved as an extension of the CCDR vision planning involvement with the Village of Solvay. In the early stages of the village visioning workshop sequence, a clear concern emerged among residents and the business community involving the appearance of a primary vehicular corridor through the village. Milton Avenue is the main east/west route through the area, serving as the main commercial road through the village. It also marks the junction between the commercial and residential areas on the south side of the street, and the active industrial areas immediately to the north.

The participatory visioning process for the village in the fall of 2002 examined the broad challenges and opportunities
within the community. The village vision plan, developed by the CCDR as a result of this process, served as a contextual framework for understanding the role of Milton Avenue within the village and region. As a design component of this project, community members then participated in a visioning process and the development of design scenarios for the Milton Avenue corridor. Image areas developed for the corridor during the village visioning process were re-examined, and new vision possibilities were explored. Implemented during the spring semester, this study drew upon village history, the existing site, and examples of projects that other communities have initiated to engage community participants in hands-on design explorations.

Site Description:

Solvay has been an industrial village since its late nineteenth century beginnings. The Solvay Process Company (or “Solvay Works”) had a heavy hand in shaping the development of the village from the 1890's into the 1950's. Like many factory towns, the industry executives played a leading role in the community. Under the direction of these executives, the village developed the necessary road infrastructure, a fire department, social halls, recreational centers, schools, and worker housing. The factories operated and expanded on the north side of Milton Avenue, while the commercial and residential areas quickly expanded south from Milton Avenue. The families of the executives built elaborate country estates on the hill above the industrial area, and constructed company
worker housing adjacent to the factory, and on the lower blocks of the village. The housing accommodated the large numbers of German, Irish and Italian immigrants who were among the first people to settle in these areas of the village (Solvay Centennial 11).

This paternalistic village structure developed by the Solvay Process Company and other key factories that opened in the early 1900's created a strong functional and visual link between the industry and the rest of the community. Guild Hall, part of the Solvay Process factory complex, served as the community recreation and activity building. The building was a social, cultural, educational and recreational gathering place with clubrooms, gyms, day-nurseries and training schools, as well as dances, weddings and graduations. Outside the hall, concerts, ceremonies and parties were held on the grounds (Solvay Centennial 16). Guild Hall was not the only gathering place in the village, however. The physical relationship of Milton Avenue along the industrial/residential edge allowed for businesses to thrive. As Solvay’s Centennial Book states, Solvay was a “thirsty village” (39). In the early to mid-1900’s, Solvay had over 30 bars and taverns, most lining the south side of Milton Avenue. These establishments served thousands of factory workers, day and night, with to accommodate continuous 24-hour factory shifts.

Though Solvay’s defining industries remained active into the 1980’s, the village was not immune to the de-
industrialization that occurred in much of upstate New York and the northeastern United States. In 1985, Allied Chemical (formerly Solvay Process Co.) closed its doors. A cornerstone of the community for over 100 years, the closing marked the loss of 1500 jobs and an important tax base. This large factory complex that employed generations of Solvay residents, was demolished by Allied Chemical in the years following. Unable to generate necessary funds to preserve these buildings, village residents even saw Guild Hall, its social center, and “the Castle,” the landmark office buildings of the Solvay Process Company disappear. The Pass and Seymour manufacturing facility, in operation for over 100 years, also closed its doors in the early 1990’s (Solvay Centennial 102). Portions of this complex that have not been demolished have been renovated into the Pass and Seymour headquarters building. Other parts along Milton Avenue remain vacant.

With the closing and down sizing of factories in Solvay, many of the businesses lining Milton Avenue lost their regular customers. No longer a street with thousands of factory workers in close proximity, many of Milton Avenue businesses declined and closed in the late 1980’s and 1990’s. Though several shops and taverns remain, several others along highly visible areas of the street are deteriorating.

Despite the loss of key industries, the village continues to attract new manufacturing companies. Since the Village
of Solvay maintains its own electric company at rates far lower than the rest of New York State, new industries have been attracted to the inexpensive source of power. These new industries have formed a different relationship to the village than the prior industries. Contemporary methods of manufacturing used in these factories are highly mechanized, no longer needing thousands of workers to operate. In the village landscape of Solvay, these contemporary manufacturing methods translate to inwardly focused production areas and large shipping/receiving areas. Though vital to the future of the community, the relationship of these industries to the rest of the village presents challenging design issues for Milton Avenue and its role within the village.
Goals and Objectives:
The focus of this project was to build on the work conducted during the community visioning process for the Village of Solvay. As a result of the community visioning process, a vision plan was established and approved by the Solvay Village Board. This plan set a framework of action steps for the village to guide future decision-making. One of the primary action steps outlined by the community in this plan was to further address the image concerns for the Milton Avenue corridor. Through a community-based participatory process, a collective vision for the corridor was developed that celebrates the role of industry in the village. The broad goals for this project included developing a partnership with community members to generate design scenarios for the corridor, producing materials that will help to further the vision, and informing the larger community of these efforts.
Goal 1: Develop an understanding of community-based research tools and facilitation techniques used to engage participants and generate dialog.

Objectives:
1. Apply literature on placemaking and participatory research to guide:
   · involvement with the Council for Community Design Research
   · development of workshop activities for the community
2. Evaluate workshop activities to reflect on their effectiveness and usefulness for future applications.

Goal 2: Develop skills for representation and facilitation that help the community develop a critical understanding of its resources and allow participants to imagine new ways of experiencing a place.

Objectives:
1. Work with professionals at the CCDR to gain an understanding of the methods used in the participatory process.
2. Participate in the workshop series by working with residents, local officials, and the business community to help facilitate an understanding of collective values.
3. Develop graphic skills to facilitate and communicate and place-based research that is easily understandable and allows community participants to become actively involved in the activities and discussions.

4. Visually communicate design and development scenarios for use in future decision-making strategies.

Goal 3: Develop an understanding of projects that resolve conflicting land uses and establish a common ground between neighborhood and industry.

Objectives:

1. Research examples and case studies of design and planning strategies that:
   
   · address abrupt changes in scale and land use.
   
   · challenge the common planning treatment of concealing industry.
   
   · draw upon the cultural identity of a place to celebrate its distinctiveness.
   
   · stimulate investment in a community’s existing resources.

2. Share innovative precedents with community members.
Goal 4: Develop meaningful design that is unique to the place and is grounded in shared community values.

Objectives:

1. Develop an understanding of the history of the village and the forces that shaped it.
2. Develop strategies that respond to the environmental and economic realities of the community.
3. Continue a dialog with community members that generates an active exchange of ideas to confirm the direction of the design.
Literature Review

The Milton Avenue corridor presents a wide range of conditions and unique challenges, requiring a variety of literature topics to inform the project methodology. Because the focus of this project involves partnering with community members, the notion of placemaking has been used as a framework to guide the literature review. Under this framework, the literature review discusses the roles of action-based research and placemaking as a methodology for bringing change and community building. The review then discusses contemporary planning and design strategies for industrial and post-industrial sites, and concludes with a look at the design of streets, and how they serve as important community places.

The Designer’s Role in Revealing Identity:
Since Fredrick Law Olmsted founded the profession, landscape architects have been engaged in capturing a feeling of place in designed landscapes. This has been through the relationship of the site to its surroundings, the choice of materials used in the landscape, and the names given to these places. With heightened attention given to the importance of everyday landscapes, contemporary landscape literature offers an insightful view of understanding ordinary places in landscape design. Because everyday places are often working landscapes, they are, by nature, in a constant state of change. Spirn writes that the traces of former activities in these landscapes are erased over time. Despite the loss of these earlier activities in working landscapes, memories are often embedded in street names and remnant buildings (161). Hayden states that it is a necessary role of the designers and artists to reveal these former urban landscapes and the people who lived and worked on them. She says that this practice of revealing stories of the past helps to develop a strong sense of place (160). Spirn writes that this practice of revealing layers of landscape is more than mimicking the forms and materials of the local or regional landscape, and it is the challenge of the designer to distinguish between “deep” contexts, such as the underlying factors that shaped the natural environment and settlement patterns of a landscape, and surface contexts
that only represent a visual understanding of a place. She adds that landscape architects are particularly valuable contributors to placemaking. Often landscape contextual patterns must be scaled and brought into the human range to be understood. Landscape architects have a distinctive role of working at a range of scales, from the garden to the region, and this range is necessary to understand landscape contexts (173).

Contemporary landscape architects are now engaging in transforming landscapes often overlooked by design professionals in the past. Corner takes an interesting viewpoint on the treatment of regions he calls “borderlands,” or the forgotten fringe, such as industrial and utility areas. He suggests that rather than looking at these areas as division lines, one can draw upon lessons learned from ecological studies, where the edge between two conditions is the most lively, active place. It is the area where the forces of one system interact with another. While these areas are often contested spaces, they can also serve as places of “hybridity” or exchange. The work of his office seeks to build on this concept to highlight new, unconventional relationships between the two sides, while respecting their distinctiveness (54). For graphic representation of these strategies, Corner’s drawings have a diagrammatic quality. Since he is concerned with the activities of a space, this intentional strategy focuses the client’s attention on the functional relationships and exchanges along a border rather than stylistic representations of the space (55).

Participatory Action Research:

Though there are many ways to conduct research, action research involves the collection and analysis of information for the specific intentions of taking action and bringing about change (Barnsley 6). Sanoff states that action research is a proactive approach to research built on the notion that a participant must act on a system to be able to truly understand it. It is intended to bring social and political relevance to the research process to take on a more activist role of influencing outcomes (63). In a community setting, participatory action
research is conducted with the purpose of improving the situation of people in a community through not only a product, but also through the process by strengthening skills and knowledge about a place and its people (Barnsley 6). The long-term goal of this form of research is the empowerment of people to bring social, political, and physical change. This shift from conventional planning attitudes of “research for the people,” to attitudes of “research by the people” provides citizens the ability to critically evaluate future decisions (Sanoff 63).

Sanoff states that this form of research requires professionals and specialists to expand their role to encompass facilitation. It also requires a shift in time and devotion to the pre-planning stages of a project. This shift in resources can eliminate second-guessing of client/user needs and preferences, and heightens the respect of the project and professional in the community. Sanoff also writes that the importance of this research focuses on an evolving process of communication, and does not place emphasis on developing unalterable finished solutions (64).

*Placemaking:*

In this project, the process of bringing about change along Milton Avenue did not take the traditional “top-down” approach to planning. Instead, the visioning process for Milton Avenue seeks to build a partnership with community members, recognizing the deep understanding of village history, politics and pride the community possesses. To inform this process, literature on placemaking has been selected to establish a methodological framework for community-based participation.

Schneckloth and Shibley describe placemaking as the way we transform the place in which we find ourselves into the place we live. It consists of daily acts of renovating, maintaining, and representing places, and of special, celebratory one-time events such as moving into
a new place, or designing a new building. They say that placemaking is not only about the connection of people to places, but relationships “among people in places” (1).

Schneekloth and Shibley are critical of the societal roles for creating and maintaining places. Our society assigns the tasks of creating places to professionals, reducing placemaking to a technical process of specialists. They feel this disempowers others because it denies the ability for people to have a say in shaping their events and places. This specialization also distances professionals from the clients and users they are meant to serve. However, as people collectively transform and maintain places where they live and work, they offer a method of studying professional practice that focuses on facilitation and empowerment, while incorporating professional assistance with planning, design representation, and maintenance tasks (5). Placemaking focuses on people as the basic unit of place, as a “frame through which any intervention occurs.” The knowledge that people have about a place, referred to as subjugated knowledge by Schneekloth and Shibley, is often challenging to draw from, yet it represents a deep, complex understanding of a place (6).

Placemaking tries to give legitimacy to all forms of knowledge. It also considers relationships between people and place as fundamental to the process. The process gives importance to creating a dialog for people to affirm, inquire, and develop the knowledge they need to make and maintain the places they live and work. In this process, the specialist is one of many important voices. While this specialized knowledge is critical to placemaking, the empowerment and insight of non-professionals in the process enables greater success (2).

Henry Sanoff refers to this empowerment of non-professionals in placemaking as community building, where the community plays a central role in project planning and implementation. He says that it grows from a collective vision for how the community is to function, which stems from its strength and aspirations. Sanoff outlines the principles of community-building as:
1) involving residents in setting goals
2) identifying the assets and challenges of a community
3) working in communities of realistic size
4) developing strategies that are place-specific
5) reinforcing community values while realizing opportunities
6) developing partnerships with local institutions.

Sanoff describes the empowerment of citizens as the key component of participatory action research. In this form of research, the community is placed in charge of project inquiry by helping to create and confirm each phase of the research process. The viewpoints of all involved are included in the discussion, and continuous agreement should arise from the dialog. This forms the basis for action and implementation (7).

Schneekloth and Shibley propose there are three tasks to placemaking: setting a stage for dialog, confirming and interrogating, and the framing of action. The first task is to create an open space for dialog through developing a relationship with people in the community. This dialogic space is critical because it is the time when decisions are made. The commitment of everyone involved brings people’s experience of the place and the specialist’s knowledge to a common ground where shifts in the knowledge about a place can occur (7).

Allen Cheadle states that community members should be involved from the earliest stages of project development. He proposes that the community should be involved in defining the organization of the project and the initial goals. Community members should then have enough influence to guide the project direction, and ensure that the original goals are being accomplished (9).

The second task of placemaking outlined by Schneekloth and Shibley is the work of confirmation and interrogation that occurs within dialogic space. Confirmation examines the
context of the work: the experiences of the place and the activities and people that have
and continue to shape it (6). It requires the knowledge of who is and who is not being
represented in the dialog, and also requires the translation of the various goals into a
framework of shared understanding. The confirmation of everyday experiences occurs
through discussions in workshops, meetings and interviews that record the participant’s
beliefs and values. They then must be shared and made public through media resources and
displays (9).

The confirmation process should continue to engage all people involved throughout the
process. Cheadle states that the specialist’s interpretations and translations should constantly
be tested through the public realm through collective dialog. He states that the community
should have input into the research findings to ensure that the views of the members are
being heard (9). Sclove says that these forums for participation are crucial for creating dialog.
Those directly involved in the process need a forum to interact with the specialists that are
developing the end product to ensure that the interpretations from the specialist are accurate
(69).

Interrogation of the context explores questions through critical perspectives. It seeks to
find gaps between the physical place and the attitudes of participants, and brings them
into discussion. Interrogation involves the principles of critical theory. Schneekloth and
Shibley describe the construction of critical theory as a process of seeking empirically
accurate descriptions of places, and an awareness of the implications of these constructed
descriptions. Using the principles of critical theory to understand how a place is defined
and the implications of these definitions, questions for interrogation are constructed in
three layers. The first layer, the empirical layer, involves what is, the second involves why this
condition exists, and the third uncovers of the underlying structure and how this impacts the
conditions that are present (10).
The third task proposed by Schneekloth and Shibley is the *framing of action*. Placemaking requires that players be defined, and boundaries and rules for action be constructed. There are no guidelines for selecting the players in a community. Instead the selection must be done through values and beliefs, insuring that exclusion is not made to serve specific interests. Through the processes of confirmation and interrogation, an understanding can be gained as to who should be included in the process. These processes reveal the opportunities and constraints of the project, and begin to establish priorities for the focus of action (15).

The framing of boundaries has important influences over the success of placemaking goals. Opposition can be silenced, or supporters can be empowered depending on the boundaries created. Rules for action are the methods for intervention. They must come out of specific issues developed, and cannot be overlayed on the participatory process. They can be developed out of methods and research developed in social sciences and architecture, but the approach must arise from the issues of the place (Schneekloth 15).

There are several methods for intervention used in the participatory process. Richard Sclove states that creative methods that engage participants are key to a project’s success. Mock-ups and computer visualization can engage participants to imaging new ways of working and living (23). Another method is the SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) for participation in rural and neighborhood environments. This method seeks to gain an understanding of internal and external conditions of the community through an “environmental scan.” The information collected is categorized into physical, social, or economic conditions (Sanoff 223). For clarity of representation, Sanoff states that it is often useful to compile or summarize these categories through mapping techniques. He notes that one useful technique for integrating the data collected is to compose scenarios of continued or reversed trends, enabling the community to imagine the implications of future paths (224).
Once information is gathered and analyzed, and decisions made, it is important for the relationship between participants to continue after the life of the project. Allen Cheadle believes that the partnership between the researchers and community members should develop into a relationship that extends beyond the project timetable. This is important to ensuring that the benefits of the research process continue to be incorporated into ongoing community decisions. He believes that the process should help to empower citizens to initiate their own future projects. This is important for establishing a collective identity (9).

Contemporary Planning and Design of Industrial and Post-Industrial Sites:
To understand the possibilities that exist along Milton Avenue in Solvay, it is useful to draw from a variety of industrial conditions. In this project, industrial and post-industrial site projects are both examined to inform the research process. They serve to inform design issues in Solvay on different levels by their treatment of scale and infrastructure, and the stories they reveal. Because many of these contemporary industrial and post-industrial reuse projects deal with landscapes that have evolved within urban areas, they are challenged to operate functionally at the site scale and contextual scale.

A. Designing for Industry in the Community:
Though land uses can sometimes conflict when distinct activities are within a close proximity, well-functioning villages and city neighborhoods contain a network of commercial, residential and industrial uses. Robert Lane states that if the goal of a community is to revitalize its neighborhoods, industrial districts need to do more than just address the programmatic requirements of manufacturers. The suburban industrial park model is often inadequate in this respect. Inward-focused industrial parks have a blighting influence on the surrounding neighborhood, and these districts need to reconnect, or weave back in to the community by combining with other uses. Lane believes that industry has a
place in urban areas if designed sensitively, with the neighborhood in mind. There is ready access to complementary activities, including marketing and sales services, as well as large consumer and business markets. He states, however, that industrial development in these areas must become more fine-tuned. For industrial development to succeed, it must integrate building design to accommodate smaller-scale businesses. The combination of higher valued office and studio space above ground floor mixed industrial uses creates one such typology that complements the surrounding community. The challenge is to overcome the suburban office park model that neglects the community, and to move toward a model that engages the surrounding industrial neighborhood (16-17).

Todd Bressi goes further to suggest elements of design that can enhance the urban fabric. He says that to connect an industry with the surrounding neighborhoods, the design should consider defined streetwalls, plantings, signage, and street furniture scaled to pedestrians, as well as buildings that make industrial processes apparent from public spaces. He also states that there should be sets of organizational and design principles for distinct areas of industrial sites. In his example of the Bayer Corporation site in San Francisco, production spaces have large, simple volumes with bays and high roofs, allowing for adaptability and exchangeability. Office and reception areas serve as a transition from the larger-scale production and storage areas. They also lend a human scale to the spaces surrounding the building. The buildings and surroundings for these activities are more “finely scaled and independently roofed” with eaves, recesses other elements that cast shadows and establish a division in the facades, giving definition to the entrances and other spaces of activity. Surrounding spaces are also defined in location to the building and the surrounding streets. For example, entry courts around offices and gathering spaces have human-scaled plantings and site furnishings (28).

In addition to industrial buildings, Gary Strand states that the infrastructure systems
often found in these transitional areas should be factored into the design process. Due to their scale, and their inability to be hidden, infrastructure systems are an essential visual component in urban communities, yet there is no coherent placement of these systems in the landscape. Placement relies on the random uncoordinated decisions of many disciplines. Designers rarely view infrastructure systems as opportunities and essential functional components that could be revealed. Instead, designers have relied on masking these systems with beautification that is merely a surface covering (48).

B. Planning of Industrial Sites
Cooperative efforts are being initiated in cities like Milwaukee and Chicago to retain urban industry by improving and redeveloping declining industrial sites. Realizing the value of these lands, and the implications of their decline to the surrounding neighborhoods, these initiatives take a realistic approach to encouraging further investment and promoting land reclamation. The literature examined highlights the importance of establishing a network of groups and partnerships to lead these initiatives.

Like many other rust-belt cities, Milwaukee experienced continuous decline in manufacturing throughout the late 1970’s until the early 1990’s. Henkin writes that the 30th Street industrial corridor was especially hard hit, losing 60% of its manufacturing jobs and surrounding neighborhoods still experience high unemployment rates. In the early 1990’s, local businesses and a local community association established the Industrial Corridor Corporation to attract new industries to the area. Working collaboratively with a local landscape architectural firm, they developed a master plan and several possible strategies for the corridor. Among the team’s goals was a strategy of developing a commerce center to serve as a neighborhood anchor to fuel residential and commercial investment in the corridor. Because several parcels of land were contaminated, the team worked closely with city, county, and the EPA to acquire grants for clean-up (16-17).

A similar initiative developed in St. Paul, Minnesota. Henken states that the east side of St.
Paul lost 2,000 jobs since the early 1980’s. In the early 1990’s, the Phelan Corridor Initiative was developed by a combination of businesses, non-profits and government agencies. Working as a community partnership, priorities were set by the group. Among the main priorities were job creation, brownfield remediation, and redevelopment. Still in the early stages of development, the ambitious goal of this initiative is to create 2,000 jobs, remediate 100 acres of brownfields, and ultimately redevelop 11 sites along the corridor (18-19).

In a slightly different context, the Wilkinson Boulevard corridor in Charlotte, NC started as a tree-planting scheme to connect the corridor to center city. Henken states that the initial approach of planting trees continued to expand for several years until, in 1988, the residents of Charlotte approved a $5 million dollar street bond to improve the gateways into the city. Through this expansion of the initial vision, the residents, the business community, and the city developed a partnership to transform “dead-zone” areas along the edge of center city. By adaptively reusing the infrastructure that existed, they developed a vision to attract small-scale commercial businesses, light industry and residential development (Henken 20).

In Chicago, Sonoc Architects worked with a steel manufacturing plant to redesign the site and the broader industrial corridor. To better respond to the surrounding residential community in the industrial corridor, the designers met with local community groups, city departments, and local development corporations to discuss their needs for the neighborhood. After obtaining feedback, the plan called for upgrading the site and surrounding streets to functionally and aesthetically integrate with the surrounding residential neighborhoods, as well as improve traffic. The improvements to the corridor included elements such as steel entrance arches, historical information plaques, seating, coordinated signage, lighting, fencing and plantings. The architects also convinced the steel plant to open its large overhead doors to reveal the manufacturing process to passers by (Sonoc 1).
C. Planning and Design of Post-Industrial Sites

Though the Milton Avenue corridor is largely comprised of active industrial sites, many contemporary approaches to post-industrial landscapes offer realistic design strategies that can be applicable to working landscapes. These strategies often address issues of scale in relationship with the surrounding context, display industrial infrastructure, and reveal layers of past uses. In a working neighborhood context, where former activities are often visually erased, attention to these issues helps to develop a landscape that better relates industry to its surrounding community.

In post-industrial landscapes, design professionals must make conscious choices about the treatment of the site that respond to the goals of the project and the relationship to its context. Rebecca Krinkle writes that several design strategies can be used for recovering degraded sites. One strategy is to integrate the site into its surroundings, visually and ecologically—usually to restore a healthy ecosystem. Another design strategy is to clearly reveal the hand of the designer. This strategy displays human intervention with the site. She writes that the “earthworks” of Robert Smithson and Peter Eisenman’s notion of the site as palimpsest have served to inform designers. They have influenced the contemporary treatment of nature as process and not simply scenery (Manufactured Sites).

Emscher Park is a former industrial area located in Germany’s Ruhr Valley. Developed as a strategy for regional reinvestment, the park has become a symbol and stimulus for environmental change. Actually a system of distinct parks, their designs build upon the traces and remnants of the existing industrial infrastructure. Many of the parks within Emscher Park treat the factory structures as monuments and ruins, and the surrounding landscape as systems to be preserved and enhanced for recreation (Brown 68).
Brown states that the park was the result of nearly 100 art, architecture, landscape architecture and engineering projects, all with the intentions to give new significance to industrialized landscapes, to heal the channelized Emscher River system, to develop high quality commercial locations, to construct new housing, and to convert “industrial monuments” to new uses. The managing director of the park stated that through the initiative, the Ruhr has become proud of its historical achievements, and has developed the courage to experiment with new ideas. It has attracted the interest of the media, not because it is a beautiful place or an economic success story, but because it is “tackling difficult problems with courage and imagination and is thus an exciting place to be.” To further promote the park to tourists as an educational and recreational experience, the route industriekultur (Route of Industrial Heritage) was developed. It promotes tour routes of the area with a regional signage system and informational material. (70-71).

The Steelworks Park at Bochum, Germany incorporates a similar design approach. Leuchter states that the layers of history at the site serve as a timeline of uses. The construction and dismantling of machines, buildings and rail lines, and the piles of industrial byproducts created layers of landforms that were incorporated into the design. The spoil tips were incorporated into the design to resemble a terraced landscape that was then enhanced with steps and bridges as linking elements to the structures (29).

Stratton writes that most former industrial sites are often naturally green. He states that the “complex mosaic” of rail lines, deteriorating factories, roads, and canals often comprise a complex habitat for urban wildlife, though this important attribute of urban land is often neglected in search of new uses (25). At Steelworks Park, however, spontaneous vegetation was retained to emphasize the regenerative nature of the site. Pioneer species of birch, willow and poplar provided an aesthetic and habitat quality that was celebrated and enhanced. Old pathways were retained for use and enhanced with new connections along the
outer rim of the site. The author described the park as re-using the left-overs of the past for the benefit the city residents, and business development, while providing a cultural attraction for visitors (Leuchter 30).

In addition to preserving industrial artifacts, many industrial area regeneration projects use contrast in materials to emphasize the contrast between old and new through sensitive contemporary design. Stratton writes that high-tech modernism materials like polished metal and plate glass are compatible if carefully proportioned because of their simplicity and industrial overtones. If done sympathetically, this use of contemporary materials can highlight historic industrial areas by way of contrast (26).

Many post-industrial redevelopment projects have relied on community participation to guide the process. Sanoff writes that case studies suggest resident-driven projects have a greater chance of success because of the depth of knowledge they hold about their environment (7). Sue McNeil and Deborah Lange state that the most successful brownfield development projects have also engaged community members in the process. They say that participation has been key to understanding alternative site uses, as well as “maintaining the momentum” throughout a process that can often be long and difficult (Manufactured Sites, 2000). Taggart writes that developing a vision for development of a site is essential in defining the role of the site and its broader function to the community. This identification of the function also helps to promote and gain support for a project (80).

*Streets as Places:*

The conditions that exist within the industrial, commercial and residential areas of the Milton Avenue corridor cannot be divorced from the experience of the street, itself. For this project, it was necessary to examine the role of streets as important community places, and the design components that make them engaging to users. Though much of the literature looks at pedestrian-oriented streets, many of the principles relating to experiential quality can be applied to vehicular roadways like Milton Avenue.
Though the importance of street experience was neglected for many years to engineer roads for speed, Ken Greenberg states that designers have again realized the importance of street design as placemaking (20). Allan Jacobs writes that the best streets have places to walk with leisure and safety. They are comfortable, which often means shady in the summer and sunny in the winter. They also have definition, which can be established by buildings or trees, or both. They have a feeling of transparency where one has a sense of the activities going on around them, even beyond surfaces though which there is a physical separation. The best streets also engage the eye. They cause one’s eye to move around through variety, movement and shadow. Jacobs says that clear beginnings and ends of the street are critical to its design. They are “breathing places” along the street, often marked by ceremonial gates, fountains, sculptures, columns and obelisks, and (mini) parks (Places 1997).

As an emerging trend in practice, Greenberg states that there are now combinations of urban designers, engineers, architects, landscape architects, industrial designers and artists working collaboratively on street projects (20). The Radnor Gateways Enhancement Strategy just west of Philadelphia is a project that involved art, landscape and infrastructure projects to address identity and gateway issues. The goal of the project was to redefine a central space in the business district, establish distinct entry points to the township, and create a “rhythm of elements” to provide continuity at the suburban highway scale. The author also states that the project not only stitched together the fragmented roadscape, but it united a “bland, self-absorbed suburban community that once viewed township government as a strictly maintenance operation” (21-22).

The project drew upon the cultural heritage of the historic milestone markers, using symbolic stone groupings and markers. The designer emphasized the placemaking qualities of public art, and used the talents of sculptors, artists, landscape designers and planners, as well as the D.O.T., the town commissioners, and community participants to inform the strategy (22).
Despite being primarily a vehicular corridor, the placement of Milton Avenue within the village still demands an attention to design that transcends all successful streets. Dimensional guidelines taken from pedestrian streets would not address the scale transitions that exist along Milton Avenue. Likewise, traditional streetscape treatments such as flowerpots and historic lighting along the corridor would misrepresent the history of this working landscape, and neglect the current realities of a roadway that is no longer a true pedestrian street. Though most of the writings on street design focus on pedestrian-oriented streets, the literature examined helps to inform the basic design principles and issues of village identity that apply to this project. The literature also offers insight into the important role of collaboration in community projects. This was crucial for the Village of Solvay, requiring an ongoing dialog between residents, industrial workers and leaders, businesspersons, local government and surrounding municipalities to shape the future of Milton Avenue.
Methods

The methods for implementing this project were organized into five categories, including site research, the village visioning process, the research of project precedents, the Milton Avenue visioning and design study, and the implementation strategy. These methods were initiated in the fall of 2002 as part of the broader visioning process for the Village of Solvay, and continued with the Milton Avenue visioning and design workshops in the spring of 2003.

Site Research

Investigate readily accessible sources of information for the Village of Solvay:

- In the fall of 2002, research was conducted in local historical repositories to gather information on the development of the Village of Solvay and Milton Avenue. Historical images and news articles were gathered from the Onondaga Historical Association and the Solvay Public Library for use in the visioning process for the village to gain an understanding of the historical function of Milton Avenue as a main street and the reasons why it no longer maintains that function. It also proved to be valuable information to develop design ideas for the future of the corridor.

- During the fall, local planning agencies were contacted to gather current village information, such as, maps, zoning ordinances and aerial photography. In January, the Onondaga County planning agency was contacted for further information on the village, particularly aerial photography for the Milton Avenue corridor. This material also included low-altitude oblique aerial images that were useful for sketching with throughout in the design process.
• A visual narrative was produced to document the evolution of the village and the role of Milton Avenue throughout its history. This narrative included a combination of text and images in a timeline format. The timeline was compiled digitally to enable flexibility of presentation format.

Visual timeline of stories, events and images of the village and Milton Avenue.

**Village Visioning Process**

Prepare for village visioning workshop activities:

• During the fall semester, meetings were conducted between CCDR participants and the village organizing committee to discuss the structure and details of the village visioning workshops. During these discussions, the Milton Avenue project was also introduced and contact information was obtained.

• As a member of the CCDR group participating in the village visioning process, activities and summary materials were produced using current and historical images gathered from local repositories. The activities included:

  1. mapping of image areas, favorite places, places of concern, underutilized resources and opportunities.
  2. brainstorming.
  3. setting and review of priorities, goals and action steps.
· For communication purposes, these materials (maps, images, and text) were assembled into reproducible, flexible formats for fliers, handouts, poster boards and digital projection.

Facilitate visioning workshop activities:

· During the three workshops, the facilitation tasks involved introducing the activities, facilitating dialog and recording participant views and ideas. The size of the workshop groups was generally between 8 to 15 community participants.

· A major goal of the activities was to promote an open dialog between these participants to explain their viewpoint and to develop a deeper understanding of issues within the group. These viewpoints were recorded graphically through text and mapping over aerial photographs and on note boards.
Precedent Research

- To serve as a transition from the village visioning process to the Milton Avenue study, projects from other cities and regions were examined. The research of these examples started during November of the fall 2002 semester, drawing upon projects from Cleveland, Detroit, Chicago, Germany, and was completed prior to the Milton Avenue workshops in February 2003. Images were compiled into a digital format and categorized by design strategy. The research examined:
  - design approaches for industrial buildings and lands
  - post-industrial reuse projects
  - projects that draw upon the industrial language of the area

Milton Avenue Visioning and Design Study

Prepare for Milton Avenue workshops:

- A Milton Avenue vision group was developed in the spring 2003 semester to further the work generated in the village visioning workshops. The Milton avenue project was announced at the third village visioning workshop during the fall of 2002, and several participants expressed an interest. These interested community members were contacted in mid January about further details of the project through mailings, and a sign-up sheet was displayed at the final village visioning session in late January.

- A schedule was developed for the Milton Avenue vision group. The scope of the project was outlined and tentative meeting dates and locations were proposed at each workshop. As the project progressed meeting dates were finalized through Mary Valerio, a community member who served as the primary contact for the visioning committee.

- Several CCDR participants contributed to facilitating the workshops. The facilitators participated in the fall 2002 Solvay workshops, and were familiar with the issues of this community. Participants included CCDR Director Cheryl Doble and Assistant Director Maren King, as well as CCDR staff of Ellen Micoli Soffa and Heather Brubaker.
In addition to the research of precedents, sketches and plans of distinct areas along Milton Avenue were prepared prior to the Milton Avenue workshops. These materials were used as the basis for discussion and workshop activities. The sketches were constructed using hand graphics and combination hand graphics/digital image techniques.

Prepare a Communication Strategy:

- Fliers were assembled prior to each workshop, and distributed to the businesses along Milton Avenue and to village residents through the electric bill monthly mailings.
- A journal was developed to record research ideas and participant ideas. It recorded the evolution of the Milton Avenue visioning and design process, reflecting on the effectiveness of workshop activities, the attitudes of participants, and the design responses.
- Images of workshop activities and outcomes were compiled digitally to allow for a variety of formats. Poster board sheets were developed for display and Powerpoint presentations from the workshops were placed on the CCDR website to inform the larger community not attending the workshops.

Facilitate Milton Avenue workshop meetings:

- Starting in mid-February, the Milton Avenue visioning and design process consisted of three community workshops. The focus of these workshops was to develop a partnership with the community to rethink Milton Avenue as a unique condition in upstate New York, emphasizing that the corridor is related to, but no longer the center of the village.

At the first workshop, community participants were given an overview of the workshop series, and were introduced to several possible design approaches for areas along the Milton Avenue corridor. These strategies included projects that:
1. address abrupt changes in scale and land use.
2. use design to reveal industry.
3. reveal a cultural and regional identity.
4. stimulate investment in a community.

Using visual narratives of several landscape and architectural design projects from the United States and Europe, five design strategies were discussed. These strategies were organized into five categories:

- framing industrial entrances and corridors
- revealing infrastructure and celebrating industry
- telling stories and interpreting history
- reclaiming underutilized lands
- programming and theming districts

After the slideshow of images was presented, participants broke into two discussion groups. Using flip charts containing images, the five strategies were sequentially evaluated by the community members. Participants first discussed their general likes and dislikes about the projects presented, then discussed the strategies they felt could be used in Solvay along the Milton Avenue corridor. Participants also discussed specific areas along where they could imagine certain strategies used.

Workshop two was organized similarly to workshop one. Summary materials and new ideas were shared with the community, and this was followed by group discussion. First, a summary of the previous workshop was presented through a slide presentation.
that recapped the five strategies and reviewed the ideas generated in workshop one. Mapping the strategies onto the aerial photograph allowed participants to see how their ideas related spatially within the corridor. Next, a series of photo-simulations of areas along the corridor were presented to participants, and a critique of the alternatives was conducted. These images were generated from ideas developed by community members in the first workshop. They addressed:

- Village gateways
- Village center entrances
- Highly visible intersections
- Factory roadfronts

The presentation included a photograph of existing conditions followed by two or three landscape improvement alternatives. These improvements included signage, lighting, vegetation, new gathering spaces and structures. The alternatives were then discussed sequentially using flip charts and the images. In addition to community members discussing the likes and dislikes of each alternative, the discussion was open for suggestions of other ideas to be documented. These ideas addressed issues of traffic safety and visibility at intersections in addition to comments on the design’s image or appearance. The intention of the critique was not to narrow the options to one choice, but to reveal alternatives that display an understanding of the unique possibilities that exist in Solvay.

One of several design scenarios developed for community members to help visualize improvements along Milton Avenue.
The intent of workshop three was to follow a similar format to the previous two workshops. A summary of the materials produced during the Milton Avenue workshops was displayed and the results workshop two activities were recapped. After this, a schematic plan for the eastern portion of Milton Avenue was presented to the community for comments. Following this discussion, representatives of Solvay Paperboard presented their design for a park they will be constructing along Milton Avenue. They sought comments and suggestions for the details and finishing materials of the park.

Materials Development

Develop materials to support the community’s next steps.

- A project brief or summary was developed as a final outcome of the workshop sequence. It brings together ideas generated from the workshops and recaps the outcomes of the process.

- The intent of this brief is to provide the community with a product shaped by its own participants. This product will allow Solvay to seek funding for a design competition, further design studies, or project implementation. If a design competition is sought by the community, further assistance may be provided by the CCDR.
The focus of this study is to collectively express the unique qualities of Milton Avenue through landscape design. Through community workshops, participants shared their ideas and concerns. They then suggested design approaches for the corridor that address village concerns, recognize the importance of history, and celebrate the future of Milton Avenue. This document contains the results of these efforts.
The Bridge Street corridor represents a major entrance to the village due to its connections with Interstate 690 and the New York State Fairgrounds. Because views to the intersection of Bridge Street are experienced from an expansive distance, community members feel that improvements should address the image of this intersection. In addition to the intersection, the Bridge Street corridor lacks the image quality desired by residents as a successful gateway. This is mostly due to the expansive views into the privately-owned lands adjacent to the right-of-way.
Improvements to the Bridge Street/Milton Avenue area include consistent planings along Bridge Street and the rail corridor, and a more substantial focal area at the Milton Avenue intersection. At the intersection, paving, plantings and expanded sidewalk width gives this area a central focus.
Bridge Street Entrance

Treatment alternatives for the Milton Avenue/Bridge Street intersection. The first scenario illustrates a private investment scenario while the second scenario improves the image with a park-like approach for this highly-visible area.
This portion of Milton Avenue known as the “the hill” includes the village center entrances of Woods Road and Orchard Road, as well as the roadfront stretch of the Solvay Paperboard building. Workshop participants found that the intersections of Milton Avenue that connect with the village center do not adequately address the importance of these streets to the village. In addition, village residents feel that the scale of the Paperboard building and its proximity to the road create a challenge for visually making this industrial area part of the community.

Treatments to this portion of Milton Avenue include signage to announce important areas of the village, plantings to soften intersections and buildings, and large-scale banners to celebrate history and the role of industry in the village.
The Hill: Woods Road to Lamont Avenue

_Village Center Entrances/ Connections to Milton Avenue_

Community members expressed the need for improvements to important streets leading to the residential and civic “heart” of the village. This important area is the location of the municipal buildings for the village and town, as well as the village library, youth center and village park. Poorly defined street corners and understated entrances were the focus of improvements.

These alternatives establish a gateway to the village center area of Solvay. The first alternative involves the use of planting at the intersection that continues up the hill to enhance the Woods Road intersection. The second scenario uses signage as a gateway to give directional orientation and announce events.
Street Design along the industrial roadfront focuses on segmenting long stretches of staging areas and building facades. Through large-scale signs, images, lighting and planting, a rhythm is established that softens the scale of the area. The sequence of signs, images or sculpture offers an opportunity to tell the history of the village or the story of current industry in Solvay.

In these two alternatives, the sequence of signs, images or sculpture offers an opportunity to tell the history of the village or the story of current industry in Solvay.
The Hill: Woods Road to Lamont Avenue

As a method of revealing the importance of industry to the Village of Solvay, this scenario celebrates the industrial buildings through illumination. It also celebrates the importance of Solvay Electric as a unique resource of the village.

Elevation of Milton Avenue with large-scale banners and plantings. They are used to reduce the building’s dominant scale and add a more lively feeling to the roadfront area.
The eastern-most portion of Milton Avenue is considered by residents to be the most viable commercial area in Solvay. Historically the public entrance to the Solvay Process Company this area also now serves as the entrance to current industrial facilities along Milton Avenue, including Solvay Paperboard. Concerns raised in this area of Milton Avenue include the lack of definition between the Village of Solvay and the City of Syracuse, the visibility into the industrial lands from the road, and the lack of streetscape amenities.

Improvements to this area focus on making this area a more pedestrian-scaled commercial node that emphasizes the historic and industrial nature of the village.
These alternatives mark the village entrance from the City of Syracuse. The first scenario uses plantings to create a gateway into the village. The second and third alternatives use industrial materials and lighting to celebrate the village’s identity—industry and Solvay Power.
This approach uses a linear park design as a transition between the industrial lands to the north and commercial area to the south. The street focused design ties together the linear stretch of commercial buildings on the opposite side of the street with a series of gathering spaces.

The Lamont/Milton intersection is emphasized in this scenario through expanded sidewalks, seating, and pedestrian lighting. Street plantings emphasize the pedestrian-scaled design of this space.
As a design for a shelter along Milton Avenue, this approach uses Solvay's historical railroad tration to guide the appearance of the structure. Using simple materials of steel and limestone, the structure reflects the railroad history of Milton Avenue.
This lighting and signage uses simple materials to tell the story of history and industry in the village. Avoiding ornate details, this design for street furnishings reflects the identity of Milton Avenue, historically and today.
During the workshops, it became evident that improvements to Milton Avenue needed to expand beyond the right-of-way to adequately address image issues. This vision for Milton Avenue must combine initiatives from the village and surrounding municipalities with private landowner incentives. Because community members stated that the adjacent private lands detract from village character along roadways and highways, it is necessary to involve multiple levels of village, town and county government, as well as residents, commercial and industrial landowners.
Bridge Street Rail Crossing

Bridge/Milton Intersection

Improvements to this critical intersection reduce the impact of the automobile-scaled intersection. Through paving material, plantings, and small gathering spaces, this intersection becomes the center to a highly visible and accessible commercial node.

Bridge/Milton Intersection Alternatives

Gateway Node at Bridge Street and Milton Avenue

Solvay Paperboard Elevation 1"=30'-0"

bridge street gateway

Landscape improvements to Bridge Street highlight the importance of Solvay Electric to the village through lighting and coordination of materials. Columnar plantings accentuate the importance of the railroad to past and present Solvay through vertically marking the corridor.
**Milton Avenue Design Study**

**Neighborhood Industry Community**

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**Solray Paperboard Roadfront Alternatives**

**Lighting to Highlight Industry**

**Industrial Roadfront**

Street Design along the industrial roadfront focuses on segmenting long stretches of staging areas and building facades. Through large-scale signs, images, lighting and planting, a rhythm is established that informs the scale of the area. The sequence of signs, images or sculpture offers an opportunity to tell the history of the village or the story of current industry in Solray.

**Future Firehouse Site**

**Village Connections**

Pedestrian trails and tree-lined streets serve as crucial connectors to the heart of the village. Establishing these connections through interesting plantings, pathways and overlook areas refocuses attention to this area of Milton Avenue as an important commercial node and community place.

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**Woods Road Entrance**

This intersection serves as a transition between the industrial/commercial areas along Milton Avenue, and the civic/residential areas to the south. Signage and streetscape plantings are used to distinguish this intersection along Milton Avenue as an important road in the village.

**Solray Center Entrance Alternatives at Milton Avenue and Woods Road**

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**Village of Solray**

*Solray Vision Partnership*
Eastern Solvay/Syracuse Entrance Alternatives

Plan: 1"=60'-0"

Solvay Paperboard

Nixon Gear

Street Node at Lamont/Milton Intersection

Site improvements to this area help to transform this linear stretch of road into a small node of commercial and industrial businesses. Through the use of industrial materials, the site serves as a gateway and tells a story of the role of industry in shaping the village. Gathering spaces for activities, and pedestrian-scaled site furnishings along the street announce this area as an important place on Milton Avenue.

Sequence of Gathering Spaces

Milton

Streetscape Details

Post Office

lamont/milton intersection

Park Shelter

Village of Solvay
Reflection on Lessons Learned

An important aspect of the community participatory process is the reflection on methods that were successful and others that could have been done differently. In this project, several factors were identified as contributing to the successful completion of the study. They include the importance of confirming the direction of the design by providing community members with design choices, the importance of documenting the process, and the importance of developing community contacts.

The importance of confirmation

Throughout the Solvay visioning workshop sequence, the CCDR emphasized the importance of confirming the design direction with community members. In the Milton Avenue workshops, confirmation during the design process continued to be important, especially due to the non-conventional treatment approach of using industry to capture Solvay’s identity.

In the first and second workshops, this process of confirmation effectively reaffirmed the values and ideas of community members. As new material was shared with community members, it was constantly related to earlier information collected. This allowed community members to build on their previous discussions, from the generation of initial ideas to specific design decisions.
In the third workshop, this process of confirmation was not used as effectively. New material was presented to community members, but it was not consistently related to earlier work generated in the first and second workshops. This resulted in some contradiction, where community members were not building on their initial ideas.

*The importance of documentation*

Because the capstone sequence evolves over several months, the complexity of the project is far greater than that of a typical design studio project. This complexity requires a level of organization not typically required in other areas of the curriculum. Documentation of design ideas, community reactions, successes and challenges became crucial to guide the direction and tone of the workshops. This documentation helped to distinguish issues that were necessary to examine further from other issues that would be better suited for another study.

This documentation not only aided in decision-making during the workshop sequence, but also gave legitimacy to the design at the end of the project. The design process was particularly important in this project, where the industrial language is used as a design strategy. It was important for people not familiar with the sequence of decisions to see the concepts behind the results.
In a community-based participatory project, there are many tasks associated with developing workshop activities, organizing facilitators, synthesizing workshop results, and developing design solutions. This can become overwhelming when accompanied with the tasks of announcing the workshops, finding a meeting place, and setting a schedule that is compatible with community members. Fortunately, in Solvay, certain community members came forward to take on these tasks. One community member, in particular, was easily reachable, and willing to take on organizational tasks at short notice. Without her help in this project, arrangement of the workshops would have been much more challenging and very time-consuming.
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Appendix: Selected Analysis Materials from Village Visioning and Milton Avenue Workshops

Summary of issues expressed in workshop two for the eastern section of Milton Ave.

1. Old Foss and Seymour area is fenced off and run down. Visibly run-down and unproductive.
2. Recent street improvements deteriorating, not being maintained.
3. Overgrown weeds along rail corridor are unattractive.
5. Off-street parking is very limited.
6. Commercial buildings from Cogswell to Bridge Street are deteriorated. Economists, visual, and image concerns.

1. Potential for gateway or sign for village entrance.
2. Contaminated properties being cleaned, can be developed again.
3. Commercial Development or municipal parking to make abandoned complex productive.

Milton Avenue

Western Entrance

1. Open space is deteriorated. Does not meet village needs and detracts from the village entrance.
2. Intersection is dangerous. Visibility is blocked by parked cars.
3. Contaminated area gives seedy image.
4. Car lots along corridor are unattractive, not maintained.
   1. Potential for gateway or sign for village entrance.
   2. Contaminated properties being cleaned. Can be developed again.
   3. Commercial Development or municipal parking to make abandoned complex productive.
Summary of issues expressed in workshop two for the central section of Milton Ave.

1. Highly visible entrance to the village. Properties visibility unattractive and are not kept up.
2. Parking is essential to public.
3. Commercial buildings boarded up and detract visually, kids hang out.

   1. Connect to backrounds: tap into opportunities.
   2. Visibility could make this an important gateway.
   3. Public Parking along village entrance?

1. Need code enforcement.
2. Utility poles are visually unattractive.
3. Hill dominates and cuts into slope look unpleasant
4. Belknap Paperboard is too massive and close to the road.

   1. Better sidewalks and more trees on entire corridor would make look more pleasant-
   established theme.
   2. Uniform Facade improvements could make area more attractive.
   3. Visual connection with Wood St. civic area where recreation, events and meetings are
   held.
   4. Utility poles could be easily improved to make more attractive and useful.
   5. Lights, streetcape, manuals would reduce mass, buffer, and make more pleasant.
   6. Potential area for apartments (?)
   7. Connections provide waterfront access - highly visible.

Milton Avenue
Summary of issues expressed in workshop two for the eastern section of Milton Ave.

1. Flooding issues during storms.
2. Constant noise pollution.
4. New park can include skate park for kids.
5. Can expand nice tree line in front of Landis for uniformity in design.
6. Commercial area is good place for small businesses. The most in need in this area.
7. Landis Plastics office entrance maintains attractive appearance.

1. Old reservoir area has no maintenance or upkeep. Are there better uses?
2. Where does Syracuse end and Schuy begin? No village entrance. Needs a drastic change to distinguish.
3. Great old buildings. Important to keep historic buildings and better utilize them.
Flier sent out in the Solvay electric bill announcing the workshop series.

Milton Avenue Vision Planning

The Work We Have Done....
Last fall, the Council for Community Design Research from the SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry assisted the residents, businesses, and industries of Solvay in a series of three participatory vision planning workshops. The outcome was a community-based vision plan that was grounded in the workshop discussions and the unique characteristics of Solvay. This vision plan serves as a framework for future decisions affecting village.

A Closer Look at Milton Avenue....
Building on the Fall 2002 workshops, a new workshop series is focusing on the Milton Avenue corridor. The process focuses on building an identity for Milton Avenue that is grounded in Solvay’s rich history, while enhancing the role of the corridor in the village for the 21st century.

Everyone is encouraged to attend.
All ages are welcome and no special skills are necessary.

Workshop Series
Third Workshop
Thursday, April 3, 2003
7:00-8:45 pm
Solvay High School cafeteria

At the first workshop we introduced a variety of design strategies used in other communities. Workshop participants evaluated these strategies and discuss what they could mean for Solvay.

At the second workshop, we used modeling and simulation activities as a way to visualize the strategies generated in workshop one.

At the third workshop, we will evaluate the design scenarios for Milton Avenue and discuss strategies to move the ideas forward.

For more information, please contact graduate student Rob Mooney at 479-7985 or rob_mooney@yahoo.com.
framing and marking industrial entrances

Places for Marking Gateways
- Entrances to the Village
- Entrances to industrial lands
- Entrances to civic areas
- Solvay Power
- Entrances to Solvay Process/Paperboard

Treatments for Marking Gateways
- Large-scale signage
- Illumination
- Use of industrial materials
- Sequence of marking
- Reflection of historic industrial architecture
- Historic symbols
- Consistent identity
- Individual identity

Summary of design strategies presented in Milton Avenue workshop one.
celebrating industry/highlighting infrastructure

**Buildings and Architecture**
Tell story of industry
Soften masses
Opening industries by explaining industrial uses, processes

**Power**
Use of industrial materials
Lighting of structures

**Industrial Yards and Streets**
Tell stories
Unify diverse uses

*Summary of design strategies presented in Milton Avenue workshop one.*
telling stories and history through landscape

Stories of Places
Erie Canal
Transportation
Industrial processes, places
Electric
Salt yards
Ethnic Diversity

Strategies
Revealing hidden resources
Interpreting historic uses
Referencing historic materials
Making connections

Summary of design strategies presented in Milton Avenue workshop one.
reclaiming underutilized space

Places
Eric Canal
Rail Corridor
Pass & Seymour
Roadfronts
Bridge Street intersection
Transfer Station/dump area
Lands between Pass & Seymour and Fraser & Jones

Uses
Recreation fields
Stories of history
Regional attractions
Recycling theme- reused materials
Golf Courses
Recreation trails

Summary of design strategies presented in Milton Avenue workshop one.
programming and theming districts

Places
Industrial lands
Commercial nodes
State Fair

Strategies
Entertainment districts
“Fair Village”
Unified business theme
Clean industry theme
Visual unifying-
common marking, lighting

Summary of design strategies presented in Milton Avenue workshop one.
Summary map of brainstorming activity conducted in Milton Avenue workshop one.