SYRACUSE NEAR SOUTHSIDE PLANNING STUDY

SUMMER 2004
NEAR SOUTHSIDE PLANNING STUDY

Syracuse Department of Community Development
Southeast Gateway Community Development Corporation
Faculty of Landscape Architecture - SUNY College of Environmental Science & Forestry

Summer 2004

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE OF CONTENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goals, Issues, Opportunities and Constraints</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land Use Map</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study Area Map</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study Site One</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study Site Two</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study Site Three</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study Site Four</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study Site Five</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

This project is a planning study for the Near Southside Neighborhood of Syracuse, New York. It is, in part, a follow up to the 1999 Southeast Gateway Urban Design Study, the geographic parameters of which were Burt Street on the north, Interstate 81 on the east, Kennedy Street on the south and Cortland Avenue on the west. This project, funded by the Syracuse Department of Community Development, has broader boundaries: Adams Street on the north, Interstate 81 on the east, Brighton Avenue on the south and Onondaga Creek on the west.

The clients for this project are the Syracuse Department of Community Development, the Syracuse Department of Parks, Recreation and Youth Programs; the Southeast Gateway Community Development Corporation, and the people of the Near Southside Neighborhood.

The purpose of the project is not to duplicate the many housing and community revitalization efforts of existing public, private and not-for-profit organizations in Syracuse, but to address issues of connectivity, coherence and function in the community’s landscape. These issues, which are currently largely ignored, have interesting implications for the future. They are defined as follows:

Connectivity - the “good” neighborhood is one that is attached to adjacent neighborhoods in ways that enhance function, circulation, economic development and public quality of life.

Coherence - the “good” neighborhood has a strong sense of identity based on the scale, forms, patterns, colors, materials, detailing and orientation of streets, buildings, public spaces, natural systems, signage, and human behavior.

Function - the “good” neighborhood does work, providing public works, housing, employment, recreation, shopping and space for natural systems such as waterways and woodlands.

These affect and are affected by human behavior. The intention here is to have the landscape of the Near Southside Community reflect a sense of connection to, and participation in, successful currents that are underway in adjacent neighborhoods and districts.

With the above in mind this report addresses five locations in the Near Southside neighborhood:

(1) Martin Luther King Gateway & Castle Street Corridor
(2) Sears Building Triangle
(3) Kirk Park Gateway.
(4) Billings Park Gateway
(5) Wallie Howard Plaza and New Africa Crossroads
Goals, Issues, Opportunities, and Constraints

**GOALS:**
To contribute to the functional and visual qualities that make up a good neighborhood  
To enhance the connections between the Near Southside and surrounding communities  
To stimulate local jobs for people of all skill levels  
To announce and celebrate the Near Southside  
To provide neighborhood access to fresh foods  
To attract citizens from a variety of economic backgrounds

**NEAR SOUTHSIDE AREA**

**ISSUES**
- Empty Lots / Vacant Buildings
- Blank walls
- Low Population Density
- Poor physical connection to Downtown
- No apparent connection to University Hill

**OPPORTUNITIES**
- Active citizens and community organizations
- Well-articulated community needs

**CONSTRAINTS**
- Perception of violence
- Lack of public safety
- Older housing stock

**BILLINGS PARK**

**ISSUES**
- Few trees on site
- Poor pedestrian connections

**OPPORTUNITIES**
- Historic character of park
- Gateway between Downtown and Near Southside

**CONSTRAINTS**
- Traffic junctions along Warren Street and South Salina Street

**KIRK PARK**

**ISSUES**
- Sewer trunk line installation

**OPPORTUNITIES**
- Onondaga Creekwalk
- Arboretum and Botanical Garden
- Reforestation

**CONSTRAINTS**
- Maintenance of existing successful aspects of the park (i.e. sports programs, etc.)

**WALLIE HOWARD PLAZA**

**ISSUES**
- Plaza is actually a parking lot
- No buildings hold the corners of South Salina Street and Brighton Avenue intersection

**OPPORTUNITIES**
- Gateway between Near Southside and Brighton Districts
- Dunk & Bright's community investment

**CONSTRAINTS**
- Parking needs within plaza

**MLK PLAZA**

**ISSUES**
- Ontrack Station
- No apparent connection between Near Southside and University Hill
- MLK Elementary School nearby
- Orange wall

**OPPORTUNITIES**
- West Campus Expansion Potential

**CONSTRAINTS**
- Topography change
- Maintenance of traffic flow (Castle Street, I-81, Fineview Place, Ontrack)

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City of Syracuse Department of Community Development  
State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry  
Summer 2004
This area is about connecting the Near Southside Neighborhood to University Hill. The Southside Community has long been cut off from the activities of University Hill and thus cut off from participating in, and benefiting from, the uplifting activities of research, education, social interaction with people from all over the world and other pursuits that help provide a sense of faith in the future and a sense of attachment to the successes of the greater Syracuse community. A direct connection to University Hill is especially important in an era of the City’s history when education and medical research and care are the dominant aspects of the region’s economic development and identity.

The benefits of the activities on University Hill have always flowed east toward Westcott Street and north toward Genesee Street. From the geographic center of University Hill, Salina Street is as close as Westcott Street. The City of Syracuse will be socially and economically healthier if the Near Southside Community and University Hill are better connected.

Our proposal calls for negotiating the escarpment that separates University Hill from the Near Southside Community through the following elements:

1. The extension of the residential elements of University Hill – perhaps a “new village” including housing for undergraduate and graduate students at Syracuse University, SUNY-Upstate Medical University and the SUNY College of Environmental Science & Forestry – west to Fine View Place.

2. The establishment of a public plaza on the west end of the “new village” that leads to a grand stairway that descends to a terrace on top of the (new and expanded) University Hill train station.

3. A new and expanded University Hill train station that includes a community market place, restaurant and other activities.

4. A continuation of the grand stairway from the roof of the University Hill train station to ground level at Castle Street.

5. A community market place and/or farmers’ market on the south side of Castle Street nestled between Interstate 81 and the rail line.

6. The extension of the design vocabularies, especially lighting and street furnishings, of the train station/market place complex along Castle Street to the sculpted Martin Luther King Gateway next to the Martin Luther King School at the intersection of East Castle and South State Streets.

7. The further extension of related lighting and street furnishings along Castle Street to the intersection with South Salina Street.

The intention of this complex is to celebrate the connection between University Hill and the Near Southside by extending and joining neighborhood functions at the unlikely location of the University Hill (and “Near Southside”) train station. The connection should also be symbolic of educational, programmatic and economic relationships, including job opportunities and appropriate training, between the institutions on University Hill and the large pool of aspirations, energy and talent that is the Near Southside Community.
Existing Conditions - Area between University Hill and Route 81

The existing conditions between Fine View Place and Townsend Street, where the neighborhood fabric commences, are dominated by the presence of Route 81. This is an interstitial area, with very little pedestrian activity or access. The area marks a hard and impermeable boundary between the universities and the nearby southside. The topography further impedes circulation between these two areas. The steep incline up to University Hill changes approximately 60 feet vertically over a 300 foot span, with two vertical drops where retaining walls have been created. Finally, there is no direct route for either vehicular or pedestrian traffic to travel between the near southside neighborhood and the university area. This results in an abrupt disconnect between the two adjacent neighborhoods, with a seeming wasteland of highway between the two.

The Ontrack creates an obstacle to both the vehicular and pedestrian access between the Near Southside and University Hill, forcing both to detour considerably in order to cross between these districts.

The chain link fence and vertical drop between Fine View Place and the Ontrack platform both impede pedestrian circulation between the Near Southside and University Hill.

The few existing pedestrian paths are characterized by a general state of disrepair and are in some cases unusable or dangerous. The most direct staircase to traverse the change in topography is now walled off. The only remaining staircase is crumbling and difficult to locate.

An orange wall greets both vehicular and pedestrian traffic approaching University Hill from the Near Southside. This has been interpreted by many to send a clear message that the universities are attempting to exclude and turn their backs on the adjacent neighborhood.

Route 81 looms large over the entire area which mediates between the universities and the Near Southside. It bisects the city creating a chasm between clearly demarcated districts.

SYRACUSE NEAR SOUTHSIDE STUDY
City of Syracuse Department of Community Development
State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry
Summer 2004
Martin Luther King, Jr. Gateway

The area between Route 81 and University Hill can be reinvigorated by a design embracing and enhancing its existing qualities as a transportation hub. Rather than a dead space between neighborhoods, this area can function as a destination point, activated by a constant flow of energy and users. The Ontrack provides access to destinations throughout the city and the presence of the platform in this location can be celebrated as a nodal point drawing pedestrian traffic. An expansion of Syracuse University is planned in this direction as well, which will generate a consumer base for a variety of goods and services. In order to capitalize on this influx of population and build an increasing energy in the area, this proposal calls for a pedestrian viaduct over the Ontrack, terminating at grade in the open space on the south side of Castle Street. The viaduct will house a public market complex over the train tracks, as well as further markets at the Castle Street terminus. By creating a pedestrian connection, as well as a series of destinations along the way, the design can help to mediate a more natural flow between the two previously divided neighborhoods.

PRECEDENTS:

STEPs
Montmartre, France

There are many successful precedents for large public staircases moderating steep topographical changes along pedestrian connections.
The Spanish Steps in Rome are a major destination and tourist attraction, as are the Montmartre Steps in France. Although the design calls for 66 total steps, there are landings with benches at regular intervals to allow for rest.

MARKETS
Historically, marketplaces naturally sprang up around railways, and remnants of this trend served as precedents for the MLK Gateway. The Reading Terminal Market in Philadelphia is an outstanding example of a marketplace originally located at an active train station. While Reading Terminal has ceased to perform its transportation function, it remains a vibrant and active community market and tourist destination.

The design for a pedestrian connection is derived from traditional railroad viaduct forms with the positions of train and pedestrian inverted.

SYRACUSE NEAR SOUTH SIDE STUDY
City of Syracuse Department of Community Development
State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry
Summer 2004
Martin Luther King, Jr. Gateway

The recommended design solution includes a pedestrian connection between the Near-Southside neighborhood and University Hill: a series of markets serving as pedestrian destinations along the way, and signature gateways that announce and unify the district. The markets are fully enclosed buildings intended for year-round use, with space between for open air stalls during the warm months.

Marketplaces provide natural pedestrian destinations, and if provided with plenty of public seating, can provide attractive gathering spaces and a constant sense of activity.

Public Pedestrian Viaduct

Ontrack

University Neighborhood Expansion

Fine View Place

N

Public Overlook Marketplace

ROUTE 81

Underpass treatment can include elements linking the space to the overall MLK Gateway design to create a seamless connection.

Gateway articulation as shown above will be repeated three times to define and unify the district. It will occur at the corner of Castle and State Streets, at the marketplace east of Route 81 just prior to the grand stairway, and again at the University Community just to the east of Fine View Place. A consistent system of banners, and site fixtures and furnishings will be used throughout the gateway area.

MLK Gateway entrance - Castle Street at intersection with Townsend
The Sears Building Triangle is as important as University Hill, perhaps more so! If this aspect of the plan is not realized, the rest of the recommendations in this report are for naught! The Near Southside Community MUST have more places for work – training opportunities, employment opportunities, and entrepreneur opportunities. Especially for the young people in the community, it is important that legitimate employment be abundantly present and visible.

Our recommendations call for the following:

1) Renovation of the former Sears Building and the related former automotive repair complex that faces on Cortland Avenue and the former supermarket at the intersection of South Salina and Tallman for office, industrial, entrepreneurial incubation or training activities.

2) Construction of up to five new buildings within the triangle for the purposes listed above.

3) The development of on-site parking for employees and access for trucks engaged in shipping and receiving.

4) A retail complex at the northwest corner of the intersection of West Castle and South Salina Streets.

5) A distinctive streetscape that offers a new identity to this location and softens the impact of the business and industrial park on Cortland Avenue, South Salina Street and West Castle Street.

The proposed business & industrial park would have strong urban design impact, filling in major gaps – architectural, social and economic – along South Salina Street and Cortland Avenue and spurring development in the immediate area, especially along the east side of South Salina Street. It would also be a node where links to the lower Southside (via Cortland Avenue and South Salina Street), the Southwest Community (via Tallman Avenue), Downtown (via South Salina Street) and University Hill (via Castle Street) come together. Most important, the proposed complex would be a statement of intent to assure the economic revitalization of the Near Southside and surrounding neighborhoods.

The local precedents for the development of this proposed business & industrial park include the East Fayette Street business park the also includes the Samuel Williams Business Center and the Erie Boulevard West Business Park located on the former Penn Central rail yards between Erie Boulevard and West Fayette Street. David Michel, Commissioner of Economic Development was the lead person in developing the Fayette Street and Erie Boulevard sites. He should be asked to repeat the process at the Sears Triangle. The AIA Urban Design Center is a good place to seek specific ideas for the articulation of built form on this site.
Existing Conditions - Between South Salina Street, Cortland Street, and Castle St.

The area bounded by South Salina Street, Cortland Street, and Castle Street is currently characterized by vacant buildings and brownfields surrounded by a sea of surface parking. These contribute to a gap-toothed look in the urban fabric. Rather than providing the dense character associated with an urban setting, the vacancies and parking lots begin to generate a pattern of almost suburban sparsity as well as disinvestment. The district does not seem contiguous with the central business district, despite its proximity. The overall sense of transition into an entirely new zone is exacerbated by the change in setbacks from the street and scale of buildings. This certainly could be mediated by appropriate streetscape elements in place.

The industrial district to the west of the area offers an opportunity to build on and extend existing successes. A sensitive design could effectively mediate between the industrial area to the west and the more commercial development on the east side of Salina Street.

Vacancy creates a sense of disinvestment, but also provides an opportunity in the existing infrastructure available for future businesses.
South Salina Street - Sears Building Business Park

The area between South Salina Street and Cortland Avenue north of Castle Street could easily become an extension of the pre-existing area of successful light industry to its west. An aggressive infill of industry would provide high wage jobs for local residents, within walking distance of their homes. The vacant building that previously housed Sears makes an ideal site for a business incubator for the entire complex. Redeveloping under-utilized urban properties for industry could not only revitalize the local economy, but could also prevent unnecessary suburban or rural greenfield development. This approach is simultaneously an economically and ecologically sustainable practice.

In order to make this approach successful for the Salina Street corridor, design guidelines must require that new buildings engage the street. This can be accomplished by providing windows at the pedestrian level, facades oriented to Salina Street, and streetscaping elements targeted to pedestrian use.

INAPPROPRIATE INDUSTRIAL BUILDING TYPOLOGIES
The lack of windows creates a disconnection between the buildings and the street. This is exacerbated by the lack of any streetscaping to mediate between the buildings and pedestrians or passing cars.

APPROPRIATE INDUSTRIAL BUILDING TYPOLOGIES

SYRACUSE NEAR SOUTHSIDE STUDY
City of Syracuse Department of Community Development
State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry
Summer 2004
KIRK PARK GATEWAY

The purpose of the Kirk Park Gateway is to connect the Near Southside Community to the Southwest Community and, by extension, to the Strathmore Community through the Onondaga Botanical Garden and Arboretum. The original master plan (which was funded by the City of Syracuse and strongly augmented by funding from Congressman James Walsh) for this facility included Upper and Lower Onondaga Park, the Onondaga Creek Corridor (including the west side of Kirk Park) south to Newell Street and along Newell Street, Valley Drive and Glenwood Avenue to, and including, Elmwood Park. The decision to include all of Kirk Park came with the delivery, by Senator Clinton of a host of cherry trees along the south side of Kirk Avenue. The placing of these trees spurred the consideration of other plant exhibits along Onondaga Creek and at the Midland Avenue entrance to the park. This means that the Onondaga Botanical Garden & Arboretum would have a presence and an entrance in the Near Southside Community along Midland Avenue and would extend east almost to the Salina Street Historic District.

The Onondaga Botanical Garden & Arboretum is planned to be a major regional educational facility contained within existing City parks and without fencing or charging for admission. It is intended in part to foster educational cooperation among the Near Southside Community, the Southwest Community, the Strathmore Community, the SUNY College of Environmental Science & Forestry, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Onondaga County, the Syracuse Department of Parks, Recreation & Youth Programs and the Syracuse City School District. An assumption is that the Onondaga Botanical Garden & Arboretum's annual calendar of events would kick off with the Cherry Blossom Festival in Kirk Park!

Our recommendations include the following:

(1) An extension of the line of cherry trees along the west and south ends of the athletic fields and reforestation along the Onondaga Creek Corridor.

(2) A yet-to-be determined plant exhibit at the Midland Avenue entrance.

(3) A formal gateway at the east end of the pedestrian bridge over Onondaga Creek connecting the main body of Kirk Park to the west side of the Creek and the main body of the Botanical Garden & Arboretum.

The greening of Kirk Park will make a new aesthetic statement and allow the park to become a more multi-faceted facility for the Near Southside Community and connect the Community to funded educational and recreational opportunities available for the Onondaga Botanical Garden & Arboretum and adjacent neighborhoods. Implementation should be lead by the Syracuse Department of Parks, Recreation & Youth Programs. Assistance should be available from Cornell Cooperative Extension of Onondaga County and the SUNY College of Environmental Science & Forestry.
Existing Conditions - Kirk Park

Kirk Park is an existing asset in the Near Southside neighborhood. The park is a popular spot for various sports, and is heavily used. Kirk Park also borders on several other community assets including the proposed Onondaga Creekwalk, the proposed Onondaga Park Botanical Garden and Arboretum, and the existing South Salina Street Historic District. This is a major nodal point which should be highlighted as a selling point for the neighborhood. Currently the park is sorely lacking any shady areas, which has been area residents’ major complaint. By approaching the park as an opportunity for an aggressive tree planting scheme, park users are offered respite from the heat, while the neighborhood is further connected to the nearby Botanical Garden and Arboretum plan.

The large areas of open lawn required for athletic fields leaves Kirk Park with few shady areas for users to find reprieve from the sun.

Onondaga Creek is located directly to the west of the park. The implementation of the proposed creekwalk would further connect the neighborhood to other areas of the city.

Kirk Park is located between community assets such as the South Salina Historic District and Onondaga Park.
Kirk Park Gateway

Kirk Park is an existing asset in the Near Southside neighborhood. The park is a popular spot for various sports, and is heavily used. Kirk Park also borders on several other community assets including: the proposed Onondaga Creekwalk, the proposed Onondaga Park Botanical Garden and Arboretum, and the existing South Salina Street Historic District. This is a major nodal point which should be highlighted as a selling point for the neighborhood.

Currently the park is sorely lacking any shady areas, which has been area residents' major complaint. By approaching the park as an opportunity for an aggressive tree planting scheme, park users are offered respite from the heat, while the neighborhood is further connected to the nearby Arboretum plan.

Image taken from the Onondaga Park Botanical Gardens and Arboretum Master Plan (Summer 2004)

South Salina Street Historic District

A promenade along a tree-lined path leads through Kirk Park, providing shade and making a connection between neighborhoods on the east and west sides of Onondaga Creek.

Gateway Vignette

Kirk Park Gate connecting to the proposed Onondaga Creekwalk (view looking West from Kirk Park)
BILLINGS PARK GATEWAY

The Billings Park Gateway would connect the Near Southside Community to Downtown Syracuse. Adams Street is the southern boundary of Downtown and when heading south along South Salina Street the relatively barren Billings Park, the empty former Central High School and the empty former Four Seasons Psychiatric Center are a sorry welcome into the Near Southside Community. This is exacerbated by a much-too-wide intersection of South Warren and South Salina Streets south of the park – an intersection that encourages vehicular speed and dangerous pedestrian crossings.

Fortunately, there is movement toward re-occupying the former Central High School as an educational facility and the former Four Seasons Psychiatric Center as the Salvation Army’s Kroc Center – a potentially major community recreation/education facility. These would be welcome and welcoming activities along South Salina and South Warren Streets adding purpose, human presence and animation to this potentially major urban gateway.

Our recommendations for this gateway are simple and call for:

1. A narrowing of the South Warren/South Salina Streets intersection to encourage safe pedestrian crossings and to discourage vehicular speed.

2. The addition of a traffic light at the above intersection to assist in safer vehicular and pedestrian behavior.

3. Establishment of new dense tree lines along both South Salina and South Warren Streets to emphasize a sense of gateway and to introduce a softer streetscape than is possible in Downtown.

4. The introduction of a relatively dense vegetation pattern in Billings Park to offer stronger vertical definition of the park and a shaded retreat for the soon to be many users of the Former Central High School and the soon-to-be Salvation Army Kroc Center.

5. Tall vertical columns with lights on top flanking South Salina Street just south of Adams Street and offering a strong sense of gateway.

This intersection has the potential to be one of the most visually interesting and one of the most animated in Syracuse. The intent is to offer not only a welcome to the Near Southside, but also a place that offers employment opportunities, important activities that support the life of the City, and a sense of vitality associated with the Community. Project assistance should be sought from the NYS Historic Preservation Office, the Syracuse Department of Parks, Recreation & Youth Programs and Cornell Cooperative Extension of Onondaga County.
Billings Park is at the transition point between Downtown Syracuse and the Near Southside. This park, however, acts more as a highway divider than as a public gathering place. The widening of Salina and Warren Streets is largely the cause of this, but vigorous reforestation could make this site more pedestrian friendly again. An axial pathway divides the park, but this is modeled for outdated pedestrian circulation. Two historic monuments mark the northern and southern ends of Billings Park but without any pedestrian access to highlight these monuments, both are often overlooked. There are many opportunities for a pedestrian to access, but the street crossings are very wide, and the traffic that surrounds this park moves very quickly.

Ultimately, the challenge presented here is to reclaim Billings Park from the automobile. This can be done from two approaches, first by making the park more accessible to pedestrians and second by making it a more welcome location in which to linger.
Components of the Redesigned Billings Park:

- Placement of a dense line of street trees on either side of the South Salina Street corridor to tunnel views
- Narrowing of Warren Street to allow for a more comfortable pedestrian experience into and through Billings Park
- Expansion of sidewalks to incorporate "bump-outs" which would further improve pedestrian safety and provide traffic calming
- Placement of polished black granite columns on the SE and SW corners of Adams Street and South Salina Street to act as an announcement of a change in neighborhood
- Addition of a new traffic signal where South Warren Street separates from South Salina Street
- Reforestation of the park
- Provision of raised walls along walkways within the park to provide for additional seating
- Enhancement of the WWI monument with seasonal floral displays for color and conifer plantings to frame views
- Enframedement of historic monuments within Billings Park to be facilitated by breaking the street tree line along the east side of South Salina Street
- Retention of the historic aesthetic and circulation patterns of Billings Park

PARK - PERSPECTIVE

Lawn area for sun and warmth

Raised seat-walls though park

PARK - PERSPECTIVE

GATEWAY - SECTION

Seating at Base of Column

South Salina Street
WALLIE HOWARD PLAZA - NEW AFRICA CROSSROADS

This location, at the intersection of South Salina Street and Brighton Avenue, is proposed as a gateway similar to that at Billings Park except that this intersection is a crossroads within a district rather than a true separation of districts. The intention is to celebrate the potential for a new community park on the Wallie Howard Plaza site at the northeast corner of the intersection and for the proposed New Africa Project (already in motion) that will include commercial revitalization in the 2800 block of South Salina Street and new housing, parks and an Islamic Center in the block southwest of the intersection that is bounded by South Salina Street, West Brighton Avenue, West Lafayette Avenue and Cannon Street.

Our recommendations call for the following:

(1) A new public park on the parking lot of the Wallie Howard Plaza that includes pedestrian access to existing stores, the retention of existing stores, a park pavilion and trees, shrubs, flowering plants and park furnishings.

(2) A new commercial structure at the south end of the park, facing the intersection of South Salina Street and East Brighton Avenue.

(3) A new group of street trees in front of Dunk & Bright.

(4) Vertical columns, flanking the north side of the intersection, with lights on top like those at the Billings Park Gateway.

(5) The Salina Shoe Salon (now open!) and other renewed commercial enterprises along the 2800 block of South Salina Street.

(6) In the block southwest of the intersection - the residence for men transitioning from incarceration to normal life (through a culinary arts program), associated community gardens and a small farmers’ market, a new Islamic Center with quarters for the Imam and his family, and a small community park.

Like the Sears Building Triangle Business & Industrial Park, this Wallie Howard Plaza / New Africa Crossroads has the potential to stimulate economic development and pride in legitimate work and entrepreneurship. It will also have a strong urban design impact in that it will be an animated new center of commercial, recreational and social activity expressed through new architecture, new parks and gardens, new streetscapes and new energy! Syracuse’s Departments of Community Development, Economic Development and Parks, Recreation & Youth Programs should take an interest in this area.
Wallie Howard Plaza - Existing Conditions

Wallie Howard Plaza has the potential for becoming a community landmark and a southern gateway announcing the Near Southside area. It currently exists as a large under-utilized parking lot with a few shops set back far from the street. There is little greenspace, and the greenery that does exists is neglected. The intersection of South Salina Street and Brighton Avenue has no buildings at the corners, giving the area an empty feel. The plaza is also dominated by the noise and traffic of both streets. The plaza is also visually dominated by two large billboards. The plaza does, however, still have potential to be molded into a neighborhood gathering space and a community image-maker.

The absence of street trees make the pedestrian experience along South Salina Street feel very exposed to the nearby fast-moving traffic.

There is minimal greenspace in Wallie Howard Plaza. Here some of the existing plants are seen to be poorly maintained.

This image is one of the first views one encounters when entering the Near Southside from the south. Currently there exists nothing to announce this community.

Here one can see the emptiness of the existing parking lot.

The plaza is left exposed to the road from both sides, with two large automobile-scale billboards dominating the northern half of the site.

SYRACUSE NEAR SOUTHSIDE STUDY
City of Syracuse Department of Community Development
State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry
Summer 2004
Wallie Howard Plaza Gateway

Components of the Wallie Howard Plaza Gateway:

- Addition of a building along southern side of plaza will provide a sense of enclosure and will effectively hold the corner

- Transformation of the asphalt parking lot of the plaza into a viable community greenspace

- Addition of shaded seating areas and sunny lawn areas

- Replacement of billboards with murals painted by local residents

- Provision of multiple seating options such as chess tables, benches, seating walls, tables and chairs

- Placement of a central pavilion for seating and sheltered community functions

- Implementation of a buffer strip of trees between South Salina Street and interior of the plaza provides for an oasis from automobile traffic

- Creation of a gateway expression using polished black granite columns on the NE and NW corners of South Salina Street and Brighton Avenue

- Enhancement of gateway with a floral garden display around columns
CONCLUSIONS

The recommendations contained in this report are primarily about landscapes of connection. These must be considered in the context of some of the many initiatives currently underway in the City of Syracuse. The SUNY College of Environmental Science & Forestry and Syracuse University are involved in projects that assist the City in areas such as economic development, entrepreneurship, the reuse of vacant and, the revitalization of Onondaga creek, etc. All of these projects have good intentions and should have positive and far-reaching impacts on the City’s future. The authors of this report hope that the current mayoral administration will connect our recommendations to larger goals – especially goals that aggressively address housing and neighborhood renewal and employment opportunities. With this in mind we offer the following additional recommendations:

1) The City must make job-creation in the Sears Building Triangle and the re-opening of Central Technical High School THE Southside priorities during the next four years.

2) The City must work with the University Hill Corporation to establish collective agendas among the hospitals and colleges regarding greater training and employment opportunities for residents from Syracuse’s most challenged neighborhoods. The institutions MUST be convinced that these efforts make the host community more attractive to prospective employees and students. The future quality of the City will largely be determined by the residential choices of university and hospital employees. Municipal policies regarding housing and neighborhood renewal must be addressed with the goal of attracting large numbers of these employees to live in the City and to educate their children in the Syracuse City School District. The hospitals and the institutions of higher education must work directly with the City in walking the extra mile(s) to make Syracuse a place of choice for those with many choices and a place of opportunity for those with fewer choices. Legitimate employment based on real skills must be the dominant activity in Syracuse’s challenged neighborhoods. The seductive power of opportunity, evident on University Hill, must spill over into the Southside neighborhood.

3) Partially in pursuit of the above, the City should work with the Syracuse City School District to re-establish highly visible special programs, honors programs and connections to local and regional universities and colleges. Perhaps each of the City’s high schools could be “adopted” by Syracuse University, SUNY College of Environmental Science & Forestry, Le Moyne College and SUNY Upstate Medical University.

4) The recommendations contained in this report must be complemented by an aggressive and innovative approach to housing. The City must consider fostering the development of a new (old) type of neighborhood. In Santa Rosa, California, the courts ruled that zoning that prevented “granny cottages” was discriminatory (AARP Bulletin, September 2005). Since then, Cobblestone Homes has built 29 single-family homes with granny apartments. If the City of Syracuse wants to offer the most dynamic housing choices in Onondaga County, the City should investigate the possibility of changing its zoning to allow single family homes with granny apartments. This would be one way of accommodating our aging population (which will be a huge cohort in the next 20 years as baby-boomers retire) and allowing older citizens to live with extended family while maintaining a degree of autonomy. This would also work for newly-weds saving for a house or a better apartment. The City of Syracuse needs an increase in population and the best way to get it is to offer more options for maintaining multi-generational neighborhoods. This approach could result in a 50%-100% increase in neighborhood density (thus equaling the pre-suburbanization densities) and, hence, an incentive for neighborhood business areas to expand. This would be revolutionary and could really offer neighborhood enrichment! The suburbs will not try to copy it.

5) Finally, the City should work hard to re-staff the Planning & Development arm of the Syracuse Department of Parks, Recreation and Youth Programs with the intention of restoring traditional forest and garden landscapes that complement active recreation functions and offer environmental benefits while raising property values and neighborhood desirability.

All of the recommendations made in this report are based on sound community development practices from around the United States and in many countries abroad. The City of Syracuse has the assets to move forward in a bold way. It has internationally recognized institutions (and the people who make them great), a highly skilled and varied workforce, excellent natural resources and it has enough vacancy to allow bold new approaches to neighborhood renewal. Perhaps most important at this time is that the City has a second term administration that can take risks and initiate policies and programs that could result in a historically noteworthy legacy.